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## “化身诗学”与意义生成

—— 华滋华斯《序曲》的诠释学研究

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**Incarnation as a Means to Generate Meaning**

A Hermeneutic Study of William Wordsworth's Incarnational Poetics in

*The Prelude*

A Dissertation

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## Abstract

Incarnation, as a religious concept, refers to the entering of God into human history in the person of Jesus of Nazareth (the name of an old place in Palestine). But it is also used in literature, either conferring a living feature upon language or as a way of epiphany conveying abstract ideas of ordinary objects or translating a traditional literary work into a specialized form. As a literary technique, incarnation plays an important role in literary creation. This study attempts to analyze the roles of incarnation in William Wordsworth's long autobiographical poem *The Prelude* from the point view of modern hermeneutics.

Chapter One examines the philosophic and religious contexts in which Wordsworth's idea of incarnation was formed. From the perspective of philosophy, several philosophers have some major influence on the formation of Wordsworth's incarnational poetics, although the extent of their influence is different. First, Shelling's idealist idea of nature had some influence upon the idea of Wordsworth's pantheistic nature. Second, Wordsworth's poetic imagination is resonant with Spinoza's third way of knowing. Third, because of his disillusionment about French Revolution and the loss of his relatives, Wordsworth turned to Kant's morality in his later years, and duty became the keynote of his thought. To Wordsworth, "ethics" is incarnational and opposed to the representational and an adequate morality will compensate for an inadequate system of representation. Finally, Hegel took the religious incarnation as "the focal point of dialectic of Spirit coming to consciousness and realizing itself in the world," and Wordsworth applied this principle to the establishment of his poetic incarnation. From the point view of religion, Wordsworth's incarnation is connected with English Anglicanism. As a middle way between Roman Catholic and Protestant churches, Anglicanism

compromises the two extremes, taking into account both the transcendental origin and the earthly incarnation in a flexible way. Wordsworth, being identified with Anglicanism, settled his incarnation on the bases of reality, and distinguished it from that of medieval theology.

Chapter Two studies Wordsworth's incarnational idea about the relation between language and thought. In the Middle Ages in Europe, such Scholastic philosophers as Augustine interpreted God as the word in our language. To these people, word was not the tool for our thought but living things in our life. Thus word was promoted to the position of ontology, and became the basis for everything in the world. Modern hermeneutics in the 20<sup>th</sup> century further strengthened the ancient notion of incarnate language. For example, Gadamer believes that language is not a delimited realm of the speakable, against which other realms that are unspeakable might stand. Rather, language is all encompassing. Wilhelm von Humboldts also insists that every language should be a point of view of the world, not only because tradition is located in language, but also because language is a way of thinking and reasoning. Wordsworth inherits this tradition and believes that word is an active living thing; otherwise it would become the counter-spirit.

Incarnation in *The Prelude* is equally refracted in other aspects besides language. "Spots of time" is a very useful means to generate meanings. Chapter Three begins with Wordsworth's own definition of "spots of time"; then, in the second section of this chapter I will trace the development of this notion in history. After that, I will classify two main kinds of "spots of time" in *The Prelude*: the "spots of time" with the sense of weight of ages and the "spots of time" of supernaturalism. The former shows the poet's worry and anxiety about human life, but their forms to express these feelings are supernatural; the latter expresses the poet's dream and illusion, but they have their firm realistic bases; and for the "spots

of time” with both the supernatural and realistic forms, what they illustrate must be set on objective reality if they convey the poet’s mystic feelings. The duality of Wordsworth’s “spots of time” further accounts for the fact that although incarnation is used by Wordsworth to create what seems to be an artificial distinction between Romantic and Enlightenment systems of thought, the incarnational metaphor cannot be reduced to one side of an oppositional pair, as when we oppose Romantic “organism” to Enlightenment “mechanism”. The foundational role of the incarnation and its Christian context in the culture that produced both Enlightenment and Romantic epistemology can provide a critical perspective that is not tied essentially to the binary oppositions.

Chapter Four deals with this long autobiographic poem’s structure, which also possesses the features of incarnation. When characterizing the text of Rousseau’s *Social Contract*, Paul de Man maintains that a large system or a text is “grammatical” insofar as it is a general, self-sufficient, systematic code indifferent to the specific events. Superficially this poem has a complete structure, because it encodes the relationship between the discursive “I” and his narrative past, placing them into the pattern of opposition whose questionable stability depends on a suspension of reference to the particular encounters with the past. But with the development of this poem, we find that the original grammatical narrative may ultimately be incapable of representing the self that necessarily precedes and outlives the written life story. A way to solve this problem is to make a dialogue between the two selves inside and the outside the text. Another way to go out of the grammar is “gift-giving”, which makes the poem the description of the wavering balance of the mind. For gift-giving indicates the separation of the gift from the giver but it makes the giver enter the space of a dialogue that transcends the individual self. Having left the packaged work of his life in the space of a dialogue

with Coleridge, Wordsworth is able to exit *The Prelude* and retreat into the silence of the post-textural self who will be manifested in a rather philosophical way in the future.

Incarnation is not an isolated phenomenon. It is involved in the conflict between linguistic analytic philosophy and hermeneutic philosophy. From point of view of the relation between language and thought, there have been two opposite groups since the ancient times; one group believed that language is the tool of thought and the other group believed that language is a living thing which can generate meaning itself. Not until the later half of the last century there appeared the tendency of mergence; analytic philosophy is of the features of hermeneutics and hermeneutic philosophy is characteristic of linguistic philosophy. If we put Wordsworth in the context of this development, we can see that Wordsworth had already foreshadowed these two groups' mergence happening in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is because Wordsworth insisted upon incarnation but he did not give up his empiricist tradition, which is in a sense the basis of the mergence of these two groups.

## 摘 要

化身作为一个宗教概念，是指上帝以人的形式进入人类社会。但这一概念也经常出现在文学中，或是赋予语言以生命形式，或是作为一种顿悟的方式表达普通事物背后的抽象意义，或是使某一传统形式的作品转换为一种特定的形式，等等。作为一种文学手法，化身在文学创作中起到非常重要的作用。本论文试图用现代诠释学的方法分析化身在威廉·华兹华斯的传记长诗《序曲》中的作用。

第一章考察了形成华兹华斯化身的哲学和宗教背景。从哲学方面讲，以下几位哲学家的思想对华氏化身的形成有很大作用。首先，谢林理想主义的自然观对华兹华斯浪漫主义的自然观起到一定的作用。其次，斯宾诺莎的第三种认知世界的方式与华氏的诗歌想象观有相通之处。另外，由于华氏对法国革命的失望和丧失亲人的痛苦，他晚年的思想倾向于康德的道德观。最后，黑格尔的宗教化身思想对华氏化身思想的形成有直接作用。从宗教方面看，华氏化身思想的形成与他所信奉的英国圣公会教义有关。该教义在天主教和新教这两个极端教派之间采取中立的立场，既接受超验的上帝的召唤，又采纳世俗的化身思想。这一思想使华氏化身思想有了一定的客观现实基础，从而使之与中世纪纯神学的化身区别开来，使化身与文学较好地结合起来。

第二章研究华氏关于语言与思想的化身关系问题。在欧洲中世纪，一些经院哲学家，如奥古斯丁，把上帝说成是我们语言中的语词，他们认为语词不是思想的工具，而是我们生活中有生命的物体。因此，语言被提高到本体论的高度，成为我们生活中一切事物的基础。二十世纪现代诠释学进一步强化了中世纪语言化身思想。伽达默尔认为语言不应局限于可说的范围，还应包括不可说的范围，它应是无所不包的。洪堡特也认为每一种语言就是一种世界观，语言不仅仅是文化的载体，而且也是思想的方式。华兹华斯继承了这一传统，认为语词是有生命的物体，否则，只能成为思想的外壳(counter-spirit)。



在《序曲》中，化身不只是体现在语言上，还表现在其他方面。“瞬间”（“spots of time”）就是一种意义生成的有效方式。第三章以华氏在诗歌中提到的“瞬间”概念出发；然后，在第二部分中追溯这一概念发展的历史；最后，对华氏的“瞬间”进行分类并给予详细研究。仔细阅读《序曲》，我们会发现诗中“瞬间”不尽相同，有的表达超验思想，但却建立在客观现实之上；有的体现客观的时代精神，但又透出超验性的特征；有的则两方面的特点兼而有之。这表明了华氏化身的复杂性，但在华氏身上不存在浪漫主义与启蒙主义的完全对立。在华氏看来，化身提供了一种有效的将内在世界和外在世界联系起来的隐语形式。

第四章探讨《序曲》的结构问题，分析长诗结构所涉及到的化身的一些特点。在讨论卢梭的《社会契约论》时，保罗·德曼认为一个大的体系或文本如果是一个总体的、自足的、系统的代码，而且不涉及具体事件，它就是“规则性”（grammatical）的。从表面上看，《序曲》有一个完整的结构，因为它所阐释的是散漫的“我”与其过去的我关系，将这两者置于对立的两极，通过搁置过去的特定事件来求得作品结构的稳定。然而，随着诗歌的进一步展开，我们发现原来的那种规则性叙述最终不足以表达那个超越文本的自我。华氏采用了两种解决该问题的有效办法：一是通过对话超越自我，二是“礼品赠与”。首先，从表面上看《序曲》在追溯诗人成长的历史，但在文本之外还有一个自我。这个自我就像高翔的云雀，它既超越了大地又离不开大地。华兹华斯通过文本内外的两个自我的对话，来实现作品的化身意义。其次，华兹华斯把这首当作一件礼物送给在外地疗养的好友柯勒律治，祝愿身体健康。从诠释学的角度看，礼品赠与他人使礼品同主人分离，但却意味着主人同被赠与人进入一个对话的空间，这个对话也将超越自我而获得新的意义。

化身不是一个孤立的现象，它涉及到分析哲学和诠释哲学的斗争。从语言与思想的关系方面看，自古以来就存在着两大流派的对立。一个流派认为语言是思想的工具，而另一个流派则认为语言自身是一个有生命的东西，它自身可以生成意义。直到上个世纪五六十年代以后，出现了两种观念融合的倾向：分

析哲学具有诠释哲学的特征，诠释哲学也吸收分析哲学的精华。如果把华兹华斯放到这一历史发展的语境中，我们会发现早在十九世纪华兹华斯已经在某种程度上预示了发生在二十世纪的两大流派的融合，其原因在于他既坚持化身思想但又没有放弃他的经验主义传统，这也正是当代两大哲学流派融合的基础。

# CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....</b>	<b>I</b>	
<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>II</b>	
<b>摘 要 .....</b>	<b>VI</b>	
<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b>		
<b>INCARNATION AS THE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN</b>		
<b>FINITE AND INFINITE .....</b>		<b>11</b>
1.1 MYSTICISM: THE BASIS OF INCARNATION .....	11	
1.2 FROM SHELLING TO HEGEL.....	13	
1.3 THE MIDDLE WAY OF ANGLICANISM .....	26	
1.4 WORDSWORTH THE POET AS A PHILOSOPHER AND A PROPHET .....	33	
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b>		
<b>LANGUAGE AS THE INCARNATION OF THOUGHT</b>		
2.1 MEDIEVAL SCHOLASTIC INCARNATION AND MODERN HERMENEUTIC LINGUISTIC ONTOLOGY .....	39	
2.2 THE ORGANIC UNITY OF LANGUAGE AND THOUGHT .....	42	
2.3 LIFE AND DEATH OF WORDS .....	53	
2.4 WORDSWORTH’S INCARNATION IN THE ROMANTIC CONTEXT.....	64	
<b>CHAPTER THREE</b>		
<b>“SPOTS OF TIME” AS A BRIDGE TO CONNECTTHE PAST,</b>		

**THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE..... 67**

3.1 TIME OF WRITING AND TIME OF INCIDENTS EXISTING IN THE “SPOTS OF TIME” 67  
3.2 “SPOTS OF TIME”: FROM MEMORY TO EPIPHANY ..... 69  
3.3 “SPOTS OF TIME” WITH THE SENSE OF WEIGHT OF AGES ..... 77  
3.4 “SPOTS OF TIME” OF SUPERNATURALISM ..... 84  
3.5 COMPLEXITY AND DUALITY OF “SPOTS OF TIME” ..... 89

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**INCARNATION AND THE WAVERING BALANCE OF MIND.. 95**

4.1 INABILITY OF A GRAMMAR FOR THE SELF OUTSIDE OF THE TEXT ..... 95  
4.2 INCARNATION BY MEANS OF DIALOGUE ..... 98  
4.3 “GIFT GIVING” AS A MEANS TO MAKE THE POEM ENDLESS ..... 111  
4.4 INCARNATION AND *THE PRELUDE*: FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF HEGEL’S *LOGIC*  
..... 115

**CONCLUSION..... 120**

**NOTES .....126**

**BIBLIOGRAPHY.....138**

## Introduction

Incarnation is a central idea in Christian faith, referring to the entering of God into human beings in the person of Jesus of Nazareth (the name of an old place in Palestine). It is derived from the Latin word *incarnatus* meaning “made flesh”. This word is distinguished from theophany, which refers to the visionary appearance of God in front of man. But incarnation means that the Creator-God joined himself to man in the life of a historical person. Several places in the *New Testament* record men’s original experience of Jesus: (1) Jesus’ contemporaries widely regarded him as a rabbi, a prophet, a healer, and — more distinctive than any of these — a herald of the Kingdom of God (Matt. 5:21-48; 7:28-29); (2) He was occasionally identified as the promised Messiah, the son of David, who would rescue his people (Mark 8: 29; 10: 9-10); (3) The frequent designation “Son of Man” refers not only to the representative of humanity but also to the special agent of God who will appear in the last days (Daniel 7: 13; Luke 22; 69); and (4) Jesus is described as Son of God, not in the general sense in which all men may be or become sons of God, but in the sense of God’s “only son,” (John 3: 16) through whom God performed a unique saving act (Romans 8; 3).

In the early churches this issue of identification of God with man was at the risk of life, leading to some severe punishment, such as the execution of Giordano Bruno and Julius Caesar Vanini by fire, etc. After the Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.) and the Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.), the orthodox tradition of incarnation was established. It was believed that Christ is “God truly and man truly, ... acknowledged in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation.”<sup>1</sup> The modern liberal theology has reformulated the orthodox tradition and purged it of superstition, eliminated metaphysical contradictions and recovered the awareness of the man Jesus, as described in the Gospels. It proposed

several ways of viewing incarnation: the divinity inherent in all men has reached its highest expression in Jesus; in Jesus man's God-consciousness has attained a new level; and Jesus has become the supreme moral teacher and example. Thus the social gospel recalls the attention to his concern for the poor and the oppressed, and emphasizes the ethical contents of incarnation.

Incarnation is not only religious problem, but also of language. At the beginning of "John Gospel" in the *New Testament*, we have the following word: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."<sup>2</sup> Word here is equal to God, from which we can see the intention of God to save the world by Word. In the Middle Ages, such European scholastic philosophers as Augustine interpreted God as the word in our language. Some Romantic and Modern poets and philosophers, such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Thomas De Quency and Hans-Georg Gadamer, etc. also took incarnation as an important conception in human understanding. To these philosophers and poets, words were not the tool for our thought but living things in our life, and their relation to thought is not like that of clothing to body but like that of body to soul. Therefore the idea of incarnation overcomes the limitations of dualistic views that simply oppose incarnation to clothing as comparable analogies for poetic language. So word was promoted to the position of ontology, and became the basis for everything in the world. Coleridge stated in a letter to Godwin that he "would endeavor to destroy the old antithesis of *Words* and *Things*, elevating, as it were, words into things, and living things too."<sup>3</sup> Thomas De Quency noted that the point of the Romantic objection to the Enlightenment view of language as thought's dress is that poetic thought posits, not just a closer relationship between language and thought, but a different kind of relationship:

If language were a dress, then you could separate the two; you could lay the thoughts on the left hand, the language on the right. But, generally speaking, you can no more deal thus with poetic thought than you can with soul and body. The union is too subtle, the intertexture too ineffable — each coexisting not merely with the other, but each in and through the other. An image, for instance, a single word, often enters into a thought as a constituent part. In short, the two elements are not united as body with a separable dress, but as a mysterious incarnation.<sup>4</sup>

In illuminating the role in the generation of meaning, Hans-Georg Gadamer makes a clear distinction between embodiment and incarnation.

Incarnation is obviously not embodiment. Neither the idea of the soul nor of God that is connected with embodiment corresponds to the Christian idea of incarnation... The relation between soul and body as conceived in these theories [of embodiment rather than incarnation]... assumes that soul and body are completely different.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, Wordsworth's attitude towards language is that "words are too awful an instrument for good and evil to be trifled with: they hold above all other external powers a dominion over thoughts."<sup>6</sup>

An important problem concerning the metaphorical incarnation is the materiality of language. Language as "living things" has its objective materiality but not in the sense of the tool of thought. It is a process of spirit becoming event, or a process by which (by analogy with Jesus entering the world) words move from the ideality of thought to things and events in the world which are not separable from thought. In the incarnational analogy in the third "Essay Upon Epitaphs," the explanation of the complex role of the body shows Wordsworth's attitude towards

the materiality of language.

Energy, stillness, grandeur, tenderness, those feelings which are the pure emanations of nature, those thoughts which have the infinitude of truth, and those expressions which are not what the garb is to the body but what the body to the soul, themselves a constituent part and power or function in the thought — all these are abandoned for their opposites, — as if our Countryman, through successive generation, had lost the sense of solemnity and pensiveness (not to speak of deeper emotions) and resorted to the Tombs of their Forefathers and Contemporaries only to be tickled and surprised.<sup>7</sup>

Religious Incarnation means that God gets into the world in the form of a person, or, God gets to animate nature with a human face, but in man's parallel operation to make thought into language, the word-thing he uses has an objective materiality that resists animation, and thus tends towards the "counter-spirit" of mere garment.<sup>8</sup> If words are merely objective things with no life, they will not, as Hegel recognized, efface themselves before a "live" meaning.<sup>9</sup> The linguistic leftovers, as Hegel says in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* will remain as unavoidable but also ---- to continue the culinary analogy ---- "inedible" word-things.<sup>10</sup> To Wordsworth, if words are merely objective things with no life, they will become the garment of counter-spirit, or mere "shrines," which will themselves fade like the monuments in "Harp-Leap Well."<sup>11</sup> This situation is untenable, but it can be resolved only by performing an act of recognizing death fundamental to incarnate life. For words to share human life, they must also share human death. It is only by coming to terms with the mortality implicit in the process of incarnation that the poet will be able to reach the stage at which words can be celebrated as "visionary powers."<sup>12</sup>

Finally, although incarnation is a continuous process of the production of



meaning, it is not simply the problem of deeper connection between thought and language, a connection that denies history, but a problem that has something to do with history. Therefore the significance of incarnation does not lie in its intimation of a representational access to a kind of presence, but in both the problems and solution of the transition from thought to the historical event of language in the world. J. L. Austin often uses the language in marriage as example to illustrate the historical effect of language. To Austin, the words such as those of the marriage ceremony can be thought of as “performative,” which effect action, rather than as “statements,” which describe or represent something.<sup>13</sup>

To discuss Wordsworth’s incarnational issue, I arrange my dissertation in four chapters, followed by a conclusion.

Chapter One examines the philosophic and religious contexts in which Wordsworth’s idea of incarnation was formed. From the perspective of philosophy, several philosophers have some major influence on the formation of Wordsworth’s incarnational poetics, although the extent of their influence is different. First, Spinoza’s third mode of knowing aroused Wordsworth’s interest in the poetic imagination which is the basis of incarnation. Perhaps it was because of Spinoza that Wordsworth came to know that the forms of Nature have a passion themselves. “From Nature doth emotion come, and moods / Of calmness equally are Nature’s gift” (*The Prelude*: Book XII, 1-2). But passion is inseparably bound with the faculty of imagination, and the activity of imagination is most easily aroused by the contemplation of Nature. Thus in his reflective moments, Wordsworth realized that the forms of Nature are the instruments which draw us towards communion with the Soul of God. The true sources of the communion lie in the act of imagination itself, without which there is no Intellectual Love of God.<sup>14</sup>

Because of his disillusionment of French Revolution, and because of the loss of

his relative at his old age, Wordsworth lost his original passions for nature and began to think about some problems about the fate of whole human beings. In such a mood of contradiction, Kant's idea of morality was naturally attractive to him. In Kant's "Kingdom of Ends", there are two types of wills: a will whose activity necessarily coincides with the moral law, and a will that not necessarily experiences the obligation. According to Kant, the moral necessity that this obligation imposes upon the personality is called duty, which occurs only when reason strives to guide a wayward personality. Without duty the will moves in confusion, drawn here and there at the call of impulse. Recognizing duty, the will approaches autonomy. Wordsworth agreed to this idea, and his poem *Ode to Deputy* is almost an explanation of this idea in verse. This shows the ethical dimension of Wordsworth's incarnational poetics.

Hegel was the third philosopher, whose idea more directly helped Wordsworth form his incarnational poetics than the other two mentioned above. For Hegel takes the religious incarnation as "the focal point of dialectic of Spirit coming to consciousness and realizing itself in the world."<sup>15</sup> Wordsworth applied Hegel's principle to the establishment of his own poetic incarnation. For Wordsworth, "ethics" is incarnational and opposed to the representational. But he believes that an adequate morality will compensate for an inadequate system of representation.

From the point view of religion, the formation of Wordsworth's incarnation is connected with his attitude towards English Anglicanism. As a middle way between Roman Catholic and Protestant churches, the English Anglicanism compromises the two extremes, and takes into account both the transcendental origin and the earthly incarnation in a flexible way, which is identified with Wordsworth's interest. In one of his Ecclesiastical Sonnets, Wordsworth gives his idea about Anglicans in this way, "In doctrine and communion they sought / Firmly between the two extremes to

steer.”<sup>16</sup> And in a long poem *White Doe of Rylestone*, he expounds his incarnational idea by a story of a banner in the battle.

Chapter Two studies Wordsworth’s incarnational idea about the relation between language and thought. In the Middle Ages in Europe, such Scholastic philosophers as Augustine interpreted God as the word in our language. To these philosophers, word was not the tool for our thought but living things in our life. So word was promoted to the position of ontology, and became the basis for everything in the world. Modern hermeneutics in the 20<sup>th</sup> century further strengthened the ancient idea of incarnate language. For example, Gadamer believes that language is not a delimited realm of the speakable, against which other realms that are unspeakable might stand. Rather, language is all-encompassing. Wilhelm von Humboldts also insists that every language is a point view of the world, not only because tradition is located in language, but also because language is a way of thinking and a reason. Wordsworth inherits this tradition and believes that word is an active living thing; otherwise it would become the counter-spirit.

If Words be not (recurring to a metaphor before used) an incarnation of the thought but only a clothing for it, then surely will they prove an ill gift; such a one as those poisoned vestments, read of in the stories of superstitious times, which had power to consume and to alienate from his right mind the victim who put them on. Language, if it does not uphold, and feed, and leave in quiet, like the power of gravitation or the air we breathe, is a counter-spirit, unremittingly and noiselessly at work to derange, to subvert, to lay waste, to vitiate, and dissolve.<sup>17</sup>

Now that language is a living thing, it must die. Therefore the death of language becomes the point that Wordsworth concerns. To Wordsworth, the death of language is not at all a bad thing because it is the death of language that the incarnation

occurs.

Incarnation in *The Prelude* is equally refracted in other aspects besides language. “Spots of time” is a very useful means to generate meanings. Chapter Three begins with Wordsworth’s own definition of “spots of time”; then, in part two of this chapter I trace the development of this notion in history. After that, I classify two main kinds of “spots of time” in *The Prelude*: “spots of time” with the sense of weight of ages and “spots of time” of supernaturalism. The “spots of time” with the sense of weight of ages show the poet’s worry and anxiety about human life, but their forms to express these feelings are supernatural; the “spots of time” of supernaturalism express the poet’s dream and illusion, but they have their firm realistic bases; and for the “spots of time” with both the supernatural and realistic in forms, what they illustrate must be set on objective reality if they convey the poet’s mystic feelings. The duality of Wordsworth’s “spots of time” further accounts for the fact that although incarnation is used by Wordsworth to create what seems to be an artificial distinction between Romantic and Enlightenment systems of thought, the incarnational metaphor cannot be reduced to one side of an oppositional pair, as when we oppose Romantic “organism” to Enlightenment “mechanism”. The foundational role of the incarnation and its Christian context in the culture that produced both Enlightenment and Romantic epistemology can provide a critical perspective that is not tied essentially to the binary oppositions.

Chapter Four deals with this long poem’s structure, which also possesses the features of incarnation. When characterizing the text of Rousseau’s *Social Contract*, Paul de Man maintains that a large system or a text is “grammatical” insofar as it is a general, self-sufficient, systematic code indifferent to the specific events. Superficially this poem has a complete structure, because it encodes the relationship between the discursive “I” and his narrative past, placing them into the pattern of

opposition whose questionable stability depends on a suspension of reference to the particular encounters with the past. But with the development of this poem, we find that the original grammatical narrative may ultimately be incapable of representing the self that necessarily precedes and outlives the written life story. Or in terms of the river imagery with which Book IX opens, the grammatical banks of the poem find it increasingly difficult to contain the narrative. According to Gadamer's legal hermeneutics, which bears some analogy to literary phenomenon, a grammar means the suspension of legal cases, but our knowledge of law and morality is always supplemented by individual case, even productively determined by it. Then the grammar in *The Prelude* indicates the suspension of the historical events and the collapse of grammar means Wordsworth's real concern for human problems, which form a contradiction. To solve this problem, Wordsworth has risen above himself as a lark soars above the ground. Then the incarnated "I" often makes a dialogue with the poet who has written the poem, and it is in the dialogue that the meaning of this poem is generated.

In addition to the dialogue of the two selves in this chapter, Wordsworth adopts another technique to break the grammar; throughout the whole poem, he always takes this poem as a gift to his devoted absent friend Coleridge, which makes the poem an endless work. According to Levinas, gift-giving indicates the separation of the gift from the giver but makes the interlocutors enter the space of a dialogue that surpasses the individual self. Having left the packaged work of his life in the space of dialogue with Coleridge, Wordsworth is able to exit *The Prelude* and retreat into the silence of the post-textural self who will be manifested in a rather philosophical context in the future.

Incarnation is not an isolated phenomenon. It is involved in the conflict between linguistic philosophy and hermeneutic philosophy. From the point of view

of the relation between language and thought, there have been two opposite groups since the ancient times; one group believed that language is the tool of thought and the other group believed that language is a living thing which can generate meaning itself. Not until the later half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there appeared the tendency of mergence of these two groups; linguistic philosophy is of the features of hermeneutics and hermeneutic philosophy is characteristic of linguistic philosophy. If we put Wordsworth in the context of this development, we can see that Wordsworth had foreshadowed this mergence happening in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is because Wordsworth insisted upon incarnation but he did not give up his empiricist tradition, which is in a sense the basis of the mergence of these two groups.

# **Chapter One**

## **Incarnation as the Communication between Finite and Infinite**

### **1.1 Mysticism: the Basis of Incarnation**

To call Wordsworth a philosopher would be extravagant. For he did not leave the world is a complete system of doctrines that would be acknowledged his own. And yet his philosophy is a fascinating study, for although many may have understood with great acuteness the numerous doctrines that appear in his poems, very few people could feel their human significance and value with intensity greater than the poet himself. While seeking a criterion of the good and probing into the problem of human freedom, he looks for an explanation of his own strange communion with Nature.

The philosophy in his poems presents different characters at different stages of his life, but one point is the same: the tendency of mysticism. In his early childhood, he was fascinated with the mountains and woodlands of his home. Nature revealed a vast sublimity that both terrified and delighted him and a retired silence that soothed his spirit. At Cambridge, he perceived in his experiences a supernatural import and became aware of a vast spirit that was the reality of Nature. Belief in such a being was not only inspired by mystical insight, a consciousness not to be subdued, but also by a more discursive speculation that accompanied it. He tells us of a spirit that lives a steadfast life underneath all passion. In this vast soul he saw all the things of Nature embedded,

...we are laid asleep  
In body, and become a living soul:  
While with an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony and the deep power of joy,  
We see into the file of things.<sup>1</sup>

The poems he wrote during the spring and summer of 1798 describe a feeling of the unity of man and Nature. It is the result of the quiet contemplation of natural beauty, to which Wordsworth so often surrendered himself. In these moments the world itself seems animated and in love with its creatures. In a short poem “To My Sister”, he says,

Love, now a universal birth,  
From heart to heart is stealing,  
From earth to man, from man to earth:  
It is the hour of feeling.

As he grew older, Wordsworth’s optimism changed. His brother’s tragic death and the collapse of the French Revolution may have swayed Wordsworth in this direction. What he was thinking was not the happiness of the individual but that of man. But this new changed objective attitude did not falter his subjective idea of the infinite at all. In *The Excursion* the Wanderer, the character in many respects resembling Wordsworth, expresses his status at this moment.

One adequate support



For the calamities of mortal life  
Exists — one only; an assured belief  
That the procession of our fate, howe'er  
Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being  
Of infinite benevolence and power;  
Whose everlasting purposes embrace  
All accidents converting them to good.

(*The Excursion* Book IV, 10-17)

Here we can see the idea that man must seek supplementary aid of God. With his own efforts he cannot assure his happiness. Thus Wordsworth turned towards a belief in a future life as a compensation for the evils of the present one.

## 1.2 From Shelling to Hegel

The sources of Wordsworth's mystic experience are complicated, but one point is certain that his communication with Coleridge made his philosophy close to that of Coleridge, through whom to some other Western philosophic ideas.<sup>2</sup> First, Shelling, one of the German idealists and Coleridge's acquaintance when he wrote *Biographia Literaria*, in which he describes Shelling's philosophy as a dynamic one, might be one who had an effect on Wordsworth. The following comment by John Wanton on Shelling's views shows the similarity to Wordsworth's thinking.

Nature is an infinite self-active, realizing itself in the finite, and yet unexhausted in that realization. The various forms in which it manifests itself are therefore only apparent products or completed results; in reality Nature is an eternal process that is

ever fulfilling itself, and yet is never absolutely fulfilled.<sup>3</sup>

Although we are not very sure whether Wordsworth was directly acquainted with Shelling, his idea of Nature is almost identical with that of Wordsworth's

The Spirit of Nature was upon me there;  
The soul of Beauty and enduring Life  
Vouchsafed her inspiration, and diffused,  
Through meager lines and colors, and the press  
Or self-destroying, transitory things,  
Composure, and ennobling Harmony.<sup>4</sup>

Incarnation depends upon imagination. Then, Spinoza's doctrine of intuition paved the way for Wordsworth's idea of imagination.<sup>5</sup> According to Spinoza, we have three ways to know objects. The first way is through mere experience. We may apprehend objects through mere experience, but we cannot grasp the rationale of their activity or of their relations to other objects. And the knowledge we gain in this way is prone to error and confusion. In spite of that, Spinoza sees that mere experience possesses a virtue of warmth and vividness of that which we can immediately sense. The second way to know objects is by reason. Compared with the mere experience, it can promise us the infallibility because it deals only with the common properties of objects, such as the theorems of geometry and the laws of physics, etc., but it obviously lacks the warmth and vividness of the first way. Because of the respective defects of these two ways, Spinoza tries to find out another effective way to know the world. Intuition, as an ideal method of combining the merits of the first two ways, becomes Spinoza's ideal method of knowing the

world.

In addition, Spinoz's admiration for intuition is also because of his idea of the Intellectual Love of God. He offers a strikingly unique conception of God, in which he identifies God with the whole cosmos. His famous formula is *Deus sive Natura*, God or Nature, as if he were saying that these two words are interchangeable. Although this pantheism could be found in Biblical description, what Spinoza emphasizes is not the relation between God and humanity but a basic unity between them: "whatever is," he says, "is in God, and nothing can exist or be conceived without God."<sup>6</sup> The clue to Spinoza's unique conception of God is found in his definition of God: "God I understand to be a being absolutely infinite, that is, a substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence."<sup>7</sup> And still further, Spinoza maintains, all thought is organized in an infinite intellect, the intellect of God, who knows all things, through the third way of knowing objects. If we can know an object intuitively, our mind is completely identical, as far as our act of knowing is concerned, with the intellect of God. When we know an object this way, our knowledge and God's knowledge are the same, otherwise, when in confusion and error, his knowledge, although depending on God's, is not identical with it. For when we are in error, God knows that we are wrong and the reason why we are wrong. If we employ intuition, we are able to be conscious of the identification with the divine mind. Then we know we exist in God who is the sustaining cause of all our activities. Thus when we rejoice in the intuition we rejoice in God. This ecstatic contemplation of the divinity as the source of our highest joy, Spinoza called the "Intellectual Love of God."<sup>8</sup>

In Spinoza's third way of knowing objects, we can see the shadow of Wordsworth's idea of imagination. While Spinoza's interest lies in mathematics and science rather than art, Wordsworth sees the importance of intuition in poetic

imagination as a description of esthetic imagination, and considers it the highest form of knowledge. In his preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, the discussion about the relation between poetry and science suggests his aspiration.

The remotest discoveries of the Chemist, the Botanist or Mineralogist, will be as proper objects of the Poet's art as any upon which it can be employed, if the time should ever come when these things shall be familiar to us, and the relations under which they are contemplated by the followers of these respective science shall be manifestly and palpably material to us as enjoying and suffering beings. If the time should ever come when what is now called science, thus familiarized to men, shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form of flesh and blood the Poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration, and will welcome the Being thus produced as a dear and genuine inmate of the household of man.<sup>9</sup>

From the relationship between poetry and science discussed here, we can see the similarities between Wordsworth and Spinoza. But we should not ignore the fact that Wordsworth goes beyond Spinoza. For in Spinoza's eye, the abstract nature of rational knowledge is opposed to the warmth and intimacy of the intuitive, but Wordsworth seizes upon the truth that the modes of knowledge are not in reality opposed to each other. Mere experience differs from intuition only in that it is hasty and so blunted by habitual repetition that it recognizes an object without grasping it. Therefore, as Wordsworth came to know, what is dull experience to an adult is the glorious intuition to a child. High poetry and commonplace thought are after all essentially one; for intuition is the spirit of them both.

Like Spinoza, Wordsworth also believes the existence of God in Nature. He thinks that the forms of Nature have a passion themselves. "From Nature doth

emotion come, and moods / Of calmness equally are Nature's gift." (*The Prelude*, Book XII, 1-2) And passion is inseparably bound with the faculty of imagination, and the activity of imagination is most easily aroused by the contemplation of Nature. Thus in his reflective moments Wordsworth realizes that the forms of Nature are the instruments which draw us towards communion with Nature, the World-Soul.<sup>10</sup> The true source of the communion lies in the act of imagination itself, without which there would be no Intellectual Love of God.

This love more intellectual cannot be  
Without imagination, which is truth  
Is but another name for absolute strength  
And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,  
And reason in her most exalted mood.

(*The Prelude*, Book XIII 166-170)

Wordsworth's World-Soul is therefore almost the same with Spinoza's Intellectual Love of God, and the living feature of Nature is just the basis of incarnation.

As it is mentioned above, when he was older, Wordsworth concerned himself more with the fate of the whole human being than with that of an individual. It seems impossible for one to achieve his own happiness through his own efforts since an infinite Being controls all. Wordsworth's mind was contradictory at this moment. Once he had wished that man could communicate with the infinite, but now he deplored man's unhappy finitude. To solve the problem of contradiction, he naturally sought aid from others and naturally the philosophy of Kant was attractive to him<sup>11</sup>. In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant tries to present a formula, the famous categorical imperative,<sup>12</sup> by which we may test the rationality of our actions. All activities,

thinks Kant, must have an end for the sake of which it is performed, and the end of human activity should be the preservation of rationality. Thus we should treat human personality, i.e., potential rationality, always as an end and never as a means. We should live, says Kant, as if we were members of a Kingdom of Ends in which everyone's personality is respected. The fact that we are not in such a state matters little; for the value of our actions lies not in the actual results but in the will that prompts us to try our utmost for the good. In this Kingdom of Ends there exist two kinds of wills.<sup>13</sup> A will whose activity necessarily coincides with the moral law, i.e., the will of personality whose desire seeks the good, is a sovereign will, and a will that is not absolutely good experiences obligation. The moral necessity which this obligation imposes upon the personality, is called duty, which occurs only when reason strives to guide a wayward personality. Without duty the will moves in confusion, drawn here and there at the call of impulse. Recognizing duty, the will approaches autonomy.

The problem of human freedom troubles Kant persistently, for he believes that the possibility of experience in space and time demands absolute determination of effect by cause. To extricate himself from this difficulty, he postulates another experience, "intelligible" rather than "sensible," and philosophically speaking, more "real" than the experience of space and time. In the realm of such a purely rational experience, he suggests, human freedom might have its origin. Man, as a metaphysical amphibian, belongs, according to Kant's suggestion, to both of these worlds. He is autonomous when he acts rationally, for then he is claiming his right as a member of the intelligible world, and his action is a logical one determined by ground and consequent. When he fails to use his reason, and when he follows impulse, man belongs solely to the sensible world and is determined in his action by the law of cause and effect.

As regards future life which the righteous man is recompensed for the evils and oppression which he has suffered, Kant is skeptical. For Kant, reason is limited to a narrow sphere, the natural sphere, and when it endeavors to climb beyond, it becomes helplessly involved in contradiction. Thus immortality is like the existence of the intelligible world, a matter for faith to grasp but not for reason to determine, for reason can offer no judgment here. However, for practical purposes we assume that the universe is ordered by a wise and a good God who rules from his seat in the intelligible world, caring for the survival of his creatures after death. Otherwise the aim of all activities, a life that is at once rationally moral and materially happy is but a dream; for in this life happiness and morality are incompatible.

Some of Wordsworth's poems are of the features of Kant's doctrine, which serves as the ethical basis of his incarnational poetics. At the beginning of *Ode to Deputy*, for instance, he exclaims that duty is the stern daughter of the voice of God, which is almost the poetic expression of Kant's doctrine of Kingdom of Ends. For another example, the Wanderer, a character in *The Excursion*, also maintains that all goods of life are unstable, all passions by which we desire them are fickle, and only rational duty can transcend this blight and stand forever immutable.

Possessions vanish, and opinions change,  
And passions hold a fluctuating seat;  
But by the storms of circumstance unshaken,  
And subject neither to eclipse nor wane,  
Duty exists; — immutably survive,  
For our support, the measures and the forms  
Which an abstract intelligence supplies;  
Whose kingdom is where space and time are not.

(*The Excursion*, Book IX, 69-76)

But there are some points at which Wordsworth is different from Kant. In addition to the rational duty, Wordsworth still has faith in his mystical communication with Nature, even though at the later stage of life. One of the examples occurs in *The Excursion* when the Wanderer answers the question of the skeptic Solitary. There are times, he holds, when the universe itself

doth impart

Authentic tidings of invisible things;  
Of ebb and flow, and ever-during power  
And central peace, subsisting at the heart  
Of endless agitation.

(*The Excursion*, IV, 1126-30)

As to the future life, Wordsworth is not as skeptic as Kant. While Kant wishes a good God to rule from his seat in the intelligible world, caring for the survival of his creatures after death, Wordsworth insists the World-Soul of his earlier thought and the “active principle” of *The Excursion* (*The Excursion*, Book IX, 1-15). It is true that Wordsworth once accepted Kant’s idea about the limitation of human reason, whose faculty he condemned when he wrote in *The Excursion*:

Man is of dust; ethereal hopes are his,  
Which, when they should sustain themselves aloft,  
Want due consistence; like a pillar of smoke,  
That with majestic energy from earth



Rises; but having reached the thinner air,  
Melts and dissolves, and is no longer seen.

(*The Excursion*, Book IV, 140-45)

But this does not trouble Wordsworth severely. For it is mainly the positive side of Kantian ethics that Wordsworth received in most of his poems.

If Spinoza and Kant had their effect on the formation of Wordsworth's incarnational poetics indirectly, Hegel's absolute Spirit had a direct influence on Wordsworth in the relationship between ethics and epistemology. Incarnation occurs paradigmatically in the Eucharist, where the bread and wine become signs of a divine presence and disappear as mere things through transubstantiation. Hegel used the Incarnation, and particularly the death of Jesus, as "the focal point of dialectic of Spirit coming to consciousness and realizing itself in the world."<sup>14</sup> In *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel talks about the complete unification of the infinite and the finite in the process of God becoming man.

That absolute Spirit has given itself implicitly the shape of self-consciousness, and therefore has also given it for its consciousness — this now appears as the belief of the world that Spirit is immediately present as a self-conscious Being, i.e. as an actual man... [T]his God is sensuously and directly beheld as a Self, as an actual individual man, only so is this God self-consciousness.<sup>15</sup>

Later in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century, Romantics reappraised the traditional Christian beliefs in terms of the idealist perception of "the world as the material outworking of a spiritual reality."<sup>16</sup> Wordsworth was certainly part of this movement, although his concrete poetic consciousness could not rest easy with a

simple dialectical relationship between the finite and the infinite.<sup>17</sup>

The relationship between morality and expression, between ethics and epistemology, is one of the central problems in Wordsworth's philosophy. For Wordsworth, "ethics" is the incarnational and opposed to the representational. His intention to ground thought in the affective sphere has a natural result in the idea that an adequate morality will compensate for an inadequate system of representation. Charles Taylor believes that the priority of ethics to epistemology is inevitable because our notion of truth is inevitably set upon our tendency towards the good. But since Enlightenment philosophy goes to utilitarianism, their theories become "debarred by the ontology they accept from formulating and recognizing their own moral sources... This means that the place of this moral sources in the philosophy... is strange."<sup>18</sup> Wordsworth's idea about this problem is that the epistemology without understanding its moral sources and refuse to make "sense.../ Subservient still to moral purposes" (*The Excursion* Book IV, 1247-48), will ultimately show its impulse toward pure epistemology, which is the demonstration of subjectivism.

To Wordsworth, despite the priority of morality over epistemology, we should not deny the union of the representational and the ethical, which constitutes the second relationship between incarnated ethical life and systems of signification. The use of moral law is, not as an alternative to epistemological representation, but as the ground for systems of representation. In *The Excursion*, the problem of ethics is actually the problem of the role of epistemology in moral theology, or how one thinks of the human, ethical implications of the theology — from faith to works — within or near the epistemological problems of "knowing" God through a system of representation, how, in the Wanderer's words, Sense is made Subservient to moral purposes, Auxiliary to divine, (*The Excursion*, Book IV, 1247-49)

The relationship between ethics and epistemology vividly expresses itself in the

following metaphor that Wanderer gives when he comments on the Pastor's venture into a carefully grounded perspectivism:

“We see, then, as we feel,” the Wanderer thus  
With a complacent animation spake,  
“And in your judgment, Sir! the mind's repose  
On evidence is not to be ensured  
By act of naked reason. Moral truth  
Is no mechanic structure, built by rule;  
And which, once built, retains a steadfast shape  
And undisturbed proportions; but a thing  
Subject, you deem, to vital accidents;  
And like the water-lily, lives and thrives,  
Whose roots is fixed in stable earth, whose head  
Floats on tossing waves.”

*(The Excursion: Book V, 558-69)*

There are two parts of the water-lily: the visible part above the water and the invisible part under the water. If the visible part represents the objective “mechanic structure” produced by “naked reason”, the invisible part indicates the unrepresentable moral truth. But these two parts are a closely connected unity. Although the part above the water is always floating on the tossing waves, the invisible part in water is firmly fixed. So the author's intention here is obvious: the representational epistemology and ethics are opposed, but if the representation of epistemology takes root in the moral ethics, then the binary, epistemological representation is the only way back to the ethical and incarnational.

In Book IV of *The Excursion*, there is a story which places moral and rational

sources into a complex relationship.

The Shepherd-lad, that in the sunshine carves,  
On the green turf, a dial — to divide  
The silent hours; and who to that report  
Can portion out his pleasures, and adapt,  
Throughout a long and lonely summer's day  
His round of pastoral duties, is not left  
With less intelligence for moral things  
Of gravest import. Early he perceives,  
With himself, a measure and a rule,  
Which to the sun of truth he can apply,  
That sun shines for him and shines for all mankind.

*(The Excursion, Book IV, 800-810)*

Like the previous example, here is the distinction between an external dial carved on the turf and the internal dial for “the sun of truth”. The boy carves the dial on the ground in order to waste his time or to portion his pleasure. But in his mind, the boy has another dial which is for the sun of truth that shines for him and for all the mankind.

In the history of Western philosophy, the image of the sun is a problem at stake. Plato compared the idea of God to the source of knowledge and truth to the sun of light. At the beginning of the John Gospel of the *New Testament*, God's life is taken as the light of all people.<sup>19</sup> Augustine also joined these traditions and ground a rational vision of cosmic order in the notion of a loving God.<sup>20</sup> All these traditions emphasized the ethical significance of the sun. But it was not until Descartes and

some other rationalists in the 18<sup>th</sup> century that the ethical priority of sunlight changed. However, Christian source of the image of sun as the origin of the light of love helps counter the representational vision of reality. For Wordsworth, the image of the sun is a complex metaphor. In Book X of *The Prelude*, he makes the sun rise naturally but makes it set as an artificial “gewgaw.”<sup>21</sup>

Here in *The Excursion*, the sun as the image of illuminating the world, including the sundial carved on the ground, is changing into the sun as the object, i.e. the sun of truth, being measured by the dial in the boy’s mind. Obviously we are in a paradox. For the natural sun is shining the sun which the boy measures with his internal moral sundial, but the sun measures with the moral sundial is usually taken as the source of external light. And on the surface, the internal sundial seems an objective ethical instrument, but the object being measured is the same as the sundial’s source of illumination. That means the standard of measurement must in turn depend upon the object to be measured; the representational tool depends on the sun in order to function even as it “measures” the sun. Actually the contradiction between the sun and the internal dial represents the conflict between epistemological representation, which depends on an instrumental concept of reason (we represent the world by systematically applying representational tools to it) and representation based upon moral sources (we represent the world as we do because our moral orientation — “we see, then, as we feel”).

In order to solve the contradictory problem, we need a standard of measurement with which we actually link the ethical and the epistemological reasons. Such a standard comes from the mergence of the two standards mentioned above, so that God’s ethical influence in the world is seen in epistemological and representational terms. At this time, the same image of the sun functions both as the object to be measured by representational tool and the moral source by which that act of

representation is grounded. In this poem, the boy begins with his representational organizing of his “long and lonely summer’s day”, but when the analogy turns to the inner dial that is both ethical and representational, he has access to a shared experience of “the sun of truth... / That shines for him, and for all mankind,” a much wider experience of truth.

### **1.3 The Middle Way of Anglicanism**

It is generally agreed that the Church of England at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century sank to its lowest point, just as the words of the *Edinburgh Review* described:

The thermometer of the Church of England sank to its lowest point in the first thirty years of George III. Unbelieving bishops and slothful clergy, had succeeded in driving from the Church the faith and zeal of Methodism which Wesley had organized within her pale. The spirit was expelled, and the dregs remained. That was the age when jobbery and corruption, long supreme in the State, had triumph over the virtue of the Church; when the money-changer not only entered the temple, but drove out the worshippers; when ecclesiastical revenues were monopolized by wealthy pluralists; when the name of the curate lost its legal meaning, and, instead of denoting the incumbent of a living, came to signify the deputy of an absentee.<sup>22</sup>

Such kind of situation is also reflected in literary works. A poem named “Village” by Grabbe, for instance, gives the description of a pleasure-seeking parson:

A jovial youth, who thinks his Sunday’s task,  
As much as GOD or Man can fairly ask;

The rest he gives to Loves and Labors light,  
To Fields the morning and to Feasts the night;  
None better skill'd the noisy Pack to guide,  
To urge their chace, to cheer them or to chide;  
A Sportsman keen, he shoots through half the day,  
And skill'd at Whilst, devotes the night to play;  
Then, while such honors bloom around his head,  
Shall he sit sadly by the Sick Man's bed,  
To raise the hope he feels not, or with zeal  
To combat fears that ev'n the feel? <sup>23</sup>

The account of the situation in *Edinburgh Review* and the description of the slothful and pleasure-seeking parson in the poem were actually the demonstrations of the struggle between religion and politics. The close ties between religion and politics that had led to so much violence in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and continued in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. In England, tensions mounted between Anglicans, who wished to continue the traditions of the Anglican Church as established by the Elizabethan settlement, and Puritans, who wished to purify the Anglican Church of non-biblical elements along Calvinist lines or even to separate it entirely. These religious differences, combined with political and economic issues, resulted in the outbreak of civil war between the Anglican Royalists and the Puritan Parliamentarians. Although Parliament won and England under the commonwealth was subjected to strict Puritan laws, with the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 the Anglican Church recovered its status and has since remained the established church. Other Protestants, called Nonconformists, or Dissenters, and Catholics suffered various political restrictions, which were only gradually removed.

The forces of religion and politics can be seen as polar opposites, standing for entirely different things, but each implies the existence of the other merely by its own existence — just as the opposite poles of a magnet cannot exist without each other. Each of these two “poles”, or rather, dynamic forces within the nation is itself the product of a similar dialectical tension.<sup>24</sup> In the State were two opposite poles which Coleridge called the “permanent” and “progressive.”<sup>25</sup> The former was identified with the landowning interest, the latter stood for the manufacturing commercial. The two poles, actually the Tories and the Whigs, were not just warring, self-seeking factions, but did actually represent real conflicts and tensions within the country’s political life. In the Church were also two opposite poles: the “National Church” and the “Church of Christ”. It is admitted that there is nothing inherently Christian about a “National Church”. But Coleridge did not think that the clerisy<sup>26</sup> the National Church is set against its polar opposite, the “Church of Christ”. The two ideas are entirely separate and distinct, yet, by a “blessed accident”, they coexist within and animate the same institution.

As the olive tree is said in its growth to fertilize the surrounding soil, to invigorate the roots of the vines in its immediate neighborhood, and, and to impose the strength and flavor of the wines; such is the relationship of the Christian and the national Church. But as the olive is not the same plant with the vine ... even so is Christianity ... no essential part of being of the National Church, however conducive or even so a National Church might exist, and has existed, without ... the Christian Church.<sup>27</sup>

Such sense of connection is just the philosophic and religious basis of Anglicanism. As a middle way between Roman Catholic and Protestant churches, the Anglicanism compromises the two extremes — “In doctrine and communion



they sought / Firmly between the two extremes to steer.”<sup>28</sup> It takes into account both the transcendental origin and the earthly incarnation in a flexible way.

A long poem by Wordsworth *White Doe of Rylestone* deals with the relationship of the two extremes most explicitly. This poem tells a story of a Catholic uprising. Norton, the head of this event, carried a banner with a cross, which was embroidered before the battle by his daughter against her will. Misunderstanding the representational function of the banner as a sign signifying the cross and his own political intentions, and ignoring his daughter’s reluctance to let him launch the campaign, he treated the banner as a thing that would affect victory:

This Banner (for such vow I made)  
Should on the consecrated breast  
Of that same Temple have found rest:  
I would myself have it high,  
Fit offering of glad victory! <sup>29</sup>

Francis, his son, also opposed his father’s enterprise, but he had to carry the banner away from the battle at his father’s dying request. He was shot dead because he was recognized to carry the banner. Although he did not treat the banner, like his father, as a thing of efficacy, the banner tragically played the role of signification. He was killed because of the banner that represented his father’s ambition.

The Implication of the story is explicit: the opposition of the Catholic misappropriation of images. Wordsworth himself pointed out in an 1816 letter that this poem “objects the Banner, for instance, derives their influence not from properties inherent in them, not from what they are actually themselves, but from such as are bestowed upon them by the minds of those who are conversant with or affected by those objects”. <sup>30</sup>This statement indicates on the one hand the denial of

the independent efficacy, and on the other hand, it stands for a more complicated relationship between objects and mind. When the banner did function as a representational image, what we feel about the banner is no longer the sign of the Catholic uprising, but a real-life mingling of the blood of Francis's blood with the blood of the Christ. Francis's blood tinges "the embroidered show / Of His whose side was pierced upon the Rood!"<sup>31</sup> It is as if the very tragedy of representation resulting from the banner's mistaken status as a thing that could act rather simply represents a new kind of nonrepresentational thingness. This is equal to William Wordsworth's formula about incarnation and counter-spirit in "Essay Upon Epitaphs": representational language, like the coat of Nessus, though it begins a mere piece of clothing, results in a violent interaction. The language of counter-spirit reveals a powerful materiality in the apparently transparent sign — mere clothing becomes a thing that can kill — that is linked to the materiality of language as incarnation.

From the description of the church in *The Excursion*, we can feel Wordsworth's Anglican middle way between Catholicism and Protestantism. In the Pastor's vale people can see "a gray church-tower, / Whose battlement were screened by tufted trees" (*The Excursion* Book V, 80-81), "Here traceable, there hidden — there again / To sight restored, and glittering in the sun" (*The Excursion* Book V, 85-86). Here the state of being half hidden and half traceable symbolizes a special role of the church: both protecting man from the "deserts infinite," in which his affections would otherwise be swallowed, and protecting itself from the theological extremes. In Book VI, the poet calls for a prayer for the English church and State,

That mutually protected and sustained

They may endure as long as the sea surrounds  
This favored Land, or sunshine warms her soil.

*(The Excursion Book VI, 14-16)*

The description and the prayer show Wordsworth's concern over the church as a locus of truth and political power. Being an Anglican, Wordsworth seemed natural to consider more of its social and political institution, and its objectivity is securely contained within the "earthly" side of the incarnational relation.

But when they are described in their personal and human contexts, the churches become involved in the whole of the rhetoric of incarnation.

Not raised in nice proportions was the pile,  
But large and massy; for duration built;  
With pillars crowded, and the roof upheld  
By naked rafters intricately crossed,  
Like leafless underboughs, in some thick wood,  
All withered by the depth of shade above.  
Admonitory texts inscribed the walls,  
Each, in its ornamental scroll, enclosed;  
Each also crowned with wing'd heads — a pair  
Of rudely-painted Cherubim. The floor  
Of nave and aisle, in unpretending guise,  
Was occupied by oaken benches ranged  
In seemly rows; the chancel only showed  
Some vain distinctions, marks of earthly state  
By immemorial privilege allowed;  
Though with the Encincture's special sanctity

But ill according.

(*The Excursion* Book V, 113-160)

First, this description is to show the ecclesiastical sanctity, but the church is not described with a divine perfection: the pile is not raised in proportion, the pillars are crowded, and the naked rafters are like leafless underbough all withered by the depth of shade above, etc. All these descriptions actually put divine sanctity in the context of human life. Next, the description of the church also exhibits human intention rather than representations of the divine. The chancery's marks of vanity, for instance, indicates the church's incarnational ability to incorporate otherness into itself even as that otherness is critiqued. The cherubim are "rudely painted" traces of poor human endeavor.

For William Wordsworth, both poetry and religion demand the incarnational translation of spirit into things. He once described the "affinity...between religion — whose element is infinitude, and whose ultimate trust is the supreme of things, submitting herself to circumscription, and reconciled to substitutions; and poetry — ethereal and transcendent, yet incapable to sustain her existence without sensuous incarnation."<sup>32</sup> This difference implies that poetry is more problematic than religion and explains the ambiguity of the role of ecclesiastical institutions in poetry. Wordsworth speaks from the position of a poet, for whom the "sensuous incarnation" is even more important than religion. Thus the church in Wordsworth poetry is seen through the double vision of a theology submitting itself to the circumscription of our world, and a poetics for which, despite its theological connections, such worldly "circumscription" is fundamental.

## 1.4 Wordsworth the Poet as a Philosopher and a Prophet

Wordsworth's mystical experience as the basis of his incarnational poetics is connected with both his philosophic and religious backgrounds and we cannot separate one from the other completely. The separate discussion here about his philosophical and religious contexts is just for convenience of explanation. Upon the relation of Wordsworth's philosophy and religion Ernest de Selincourt makes the following comment, "His philosophy, as far as he was a philosopher, was his religion; ... His faith was a passionate intuition of God present in the Universe and in the mind of man; his philosophy no more than the struggle of his reason to account for it."<sup>33</sup> From the previous sections of this chapter, we see that while Shelling's idealism of the relation between the finite and the infinite and Kant's rational Kingdom of Ends laid a foundation for Wordsworth's transcendentalist idea of Nature, the middle way attitude of Anglicanism made Wordsworth believe that man is no longer regarded as a detached observer but deemed as inseparable from his environment.

If we take the ideas of Shelling and Kant as ontology, the doctrines of Spinoza, Hegel and the Anglicans are then about epistemology. But they share a common ground that on the one hand they all emphasize the importance of spirit, on the other hand they do not ignore ethics in our life. Spinoza thinks highly of intuition because it can overcome the shortcomings of both mere experience and pure reason. It seems to him that only when we know the object intuitively, our mind is completely identical with "the Intellectual Love of God." The purpose of Hegel's application of the Eucharist Incarnation to his epistemology is to find an ideal way for his dialectic of Spirit coming to consciousness and realizing itself in the world. For he maintains that the absolute Spirit has given itself implicitly the shape of self-consciousness.

And the middle way of Anglicanism is not at all an expedient measure, but the practical way to solve the controversial problems in religion.

It was on the basis of these ideas that Wordsworth's ontology and epistemology were founded. We can sum up Wordsworth with Coleridge's words in his *Religious Musings*. Revelation sometimes flashes upon him when "the light of sense goes out", and "laid asleep in body,"<sup>34</sup>; at this moment he become deeply conscious of the presence of God within him. In the highest mood of ecstasy this consciousness of complete oneness with God is so overcoming that his other attributes as man seem to fall from him, and he knows only that

one interior life

In which all beings live with God, themselves

As indistinguishable as this cloudless east

Is from the cloudless west, when all

The hemisphere is one cerulean blue.<sup>35</sup>

But as a man there is always the great paradox, and it is simply by the proper exercise of eye and ear that man reaches his full moral and intellectual status, so that he can recognize

In Nature and the language of the sense

The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,

The guide, the guardian of my heart, the soul

Of all my moral being.<sup>36</sup>

The divinity of a poet makes him a prophet. The prophecy in most of Romantic

poems is incantational because these poems convey poet's mystic feelings, but it in turn depends upon reality. Shelley, for instance, takes poets as hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration, the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which the futurity casts upon the present, the words which express what they understand not; the trumpets they sing to battle, and the unacknowledged legislators of the world.<sup>37</sup>

Wordsworth makes the astonishing assertion in *The Prelude*:

That poets, even as Prophets, each with each  
Connected in a mighty scheme of truth,  
Have each for his peculiar dower, a sense  
By which he is enabled to perceive  
Something unseen before.

(1805 version, *The Prelude* XII, 301-5)

But he continues to point out that even the humblest would possess such an insight as long as he gets in touch with nature.

At the beginning of this poem, having alluded to the "lost Eden" (I, 10-14), Wordsworth designates himself as a prophet with a priestly office:

To the open fields I told  
A prophecy: poetic numbers came  
Spontaneously to clothe in priestly robe  
A renovated spirit singled out,  
Such hope was mine, for holy services.

(*The Prelude*, Book I, 50-54)

But Glimpses of an order of things different from the secularized world came to him early. When he heard in storm winds “the ghostly language of the ancient earth,” he would “drink the visionary power,” deeming such moods “kindred to our pure mind / and intellectual life” (Book II, 307-22), that is kindred to that portion of our thought life deeper than the empirical, which is dominated by sensory cognition of things, and beyond the rational, which is dominated by fixed method.

The connection of prophecy with reality might have something to do with the publication of a book named *Lectures on Sacred Poetry of Hebrews* by Robert Lowth in the mid-eighteenth century. Before Lowth, the Bible had been read in terms of allegory and typology as a timeless compendium of divinely inspired revelation. But Lowth took it as a literary work.

He who would perceive the particular and interior elegancies of the Hebrew poetry, must imagine himself exactly situated as the persons for whom it was written, or even as the writers themselves, he is to feel them as a Hebrew... nor is it enough to be acquainted with the language of the people, their manners, discipline, rites and ceremonies; we must even investigate their inmost sentiments, the manner and connection of their thoughts; in one word, we must see all things in their eyes, estimate all things by their opinion; we must endeavor as much as possible to read Hebrew as the Hebrews would have read it.<sup>38</sup>

This passage has the implication that the clue to the relationship between the prophecy and poetry of the Bible lies in a detailed study of the social setting from which they arose. For example, there existed, Lowth believed, a certain number of prophets who devoted themselves entirely to the exercises and study of religion.<sup>39</sup> They were called “Nabi” in Hebrew, with the ambiguity of “ a Prophet, a Poet, a



Musician,” under the influence of divine inspiration.<sup>40</sup>

In elaborating his idea of the relationship between prophecy and poetry in the context of social reality, Lowth had in some cases anticipated the later Romantic principles. Foreshadowing Wordsworth’s preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, for instance, he described the language of poetry as the product of “enthusiasm”, “springing from mental emotion”<sup>41</sup> Even more similar was Lowth’s praise for the “simple and unadorned” language of Hebrew verse, that gained its sublimity not from elevated diction but from the depth and universality of its subject-matter.

Of course, some historicists, deists and materialists retorted Lowth’s idea of the unity between prophecy and poetry in the context of social reality. Among them were Eichhorn, a German historicist and biblical critic. Generally speaking, he was in agreement with Lowth that the prophets were also the poets of Israel, but on some points they were different. For instance, Eichhorn argued that if Ezekiel was the greatest artist among the prophets, he was to that degree the least authentic visionary among them, for to be an artist involves the notion of deliberate creation, fabrication and even deceit. “All these raptures and visions,” declared Eichhorn uncompromisingly, “are in my judgment mere cover-up, mere poetical fancies.”<sup>42</sup> Here, we notice, “poetical” is no longer a term of praise from aesthetics, but implies something that is historically untrue. The word has come full circle from Lowth: from praise to abuse.

Those who had the same idea as that of Eichhorn were not a minority both in Germany and in England, such as the English novelist Mrs. Umphry Ward and the critic Matthew Arnold, etc. But to many Romantics, it was unacceptable. Coleridge, for instance, rejected the division between artist and visionary, and the downgrading of the “poetic”

It perplexes me to understand how a man of Eichhorn’s Sense, Learning, and

Acquaintance with Psychology could form, or attach belief to, so cold-blooded a hypothesis. That in Ezekiel's Vision Ideas or Spiritual Entities are presented in visual symbols, I never doubted; but as little can I doubt that such Symbols did present themselves to Ezekiel in Vision — and by a Law closely connected with, if not contained in, that by which Sensations are organized into Images and mental Sounds in our ordinary sleep.<sup>43</sup>

Unlike Lowth and Eichhon, Coleridge did not take a work of art as a conscious artifact, but as an expression of man's deepest powers, which involved both conscious and unconscious minds, and able to say more than its author intended or knew. "The Scriptures," said Coleridge, "are nothing less than the living educts of the Imagination", conveying their meaning in "a system of symbols." Their contents "present to us the stream of time continuous a Life and a symbol of Eternity, in so much as the Past and the Future and virtually contained in a Present."<sup>44</sup> Coleridge clarified this by explaining what he meant by a symbol. It is characterized "Above all by the translucence of the Eternal through and in the Temporal. It is always partakes of the Reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as living part in that Unity, of which it is the representative."<sup>45</sup> In other words, it both particularizes and focuses a general principle in a particular example, while at the same time bearing an organic relationship to that general principle. Wordsworth's main substance of his prophecy, like Coleridge's idea, is the vastness of what is within the human consciousness, including unconsciousness, which can be constitutive of man's world.

## Chapter Two

### Language as the Incarnation of Thought

#### 2.1 Medieval Scholastic Incarnation and Modern Hermeneutic Linguistic Ontology

Incarnation is an important idea of Christianity, according to which God gave will power to man in the time of the creation and thus man had the ability to choose to be good or evil, but later on man was adduced to eat the forbidden fruits from the Tree of Knowledge and lost the free will and became weak and dull. Of course, as man was still with reason, he was not completely separated from God, but reason for man was largely restricted. He was challenged in all the aspects of his feeling, memory, understanding and imagination, etc., and he could no longer return to God as a completely perfect man. In order to save man, God made Virgin Mary conceive Jesus from the Holy Spirit, and let him carry out the salvation of man in the world. In short, incarnation is the representation of God's will through Jesus.

The idea of incarnation is also closely connected with the problem of language. The beginning of "John Gospel" in the *New Testament* reads: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."<sup>1</sup> Word here is equal to God, from which we can see the intention of God to save the world by Word. In the Middle Ages in Europe, the Scholastic philosophers such as Augustine interpreted God as the word in our language. To these philosophers, word was not the tool for our thought but living things in our life. So word was promoted to the position of ontology, and became the basis for everything in the world.

Modern hermeneutics in the 20<sup>th</sup> century further strengthened the notion of incarnate language in ancient times. Gadamer maintains that the object of understanding has the features of language. For it is by language that a text can exist in our history, it is in the text that exists the communication of the past and the present and it is through language that a text can be understood. In his article *Man and Language*, Gadamer denies language as a tool.

Language is not one of the means by which consciousness is mediated with the world. It does not represent a third instrument alongside the sign and the tool, both of which are also certainly distinctively human. Language is by no means simply an instrument, a tool. For it is in the nature of the tool that we master its use, which is to say we take it in hand and lay it aside when it has done its service. That is not the same when we take the words of a language, lying ready in the mouth, and with their use let them sink back into the general store of words over which we dispose. Such an analogy is false because we never find our selves as consciousness over against the world and, as it were, grasp after a tool of understanding in a wordless condition. Rather, in all our knowledge of ourselves and in all our knowledge of the world, we are always encompassed by the language that is our own. We grow up, and we become acquainted with men and with ourselves when we learn to speak. Learning to speak does not mean learning to use a preexistent tool for designating a world already somehow familiar to us; it means acquiring a familiarity and acquaintance with the world itself and how it confronts us.<sup>2</sup>

Obviously the analogy here emphasizes the universality of language. According to Gadamer, language is not a delimited realm of the speakable, against which other realms that are unspeakable might stand. Rather, language is all encompassing. There is nothing that is fundamentally excluded from being said, to the extent that

our act of meaning intends it. Our capacity for saying keeps paces untiringly with the universality of reason and makes dialogue with reason. Hence every dialogue also has an inner infinity and no end. Gadamer supposes that one once breaks the dialogue off, either because it seems that enough has been said or because there is no more to say. But every such break has an intrinsic relation to the resumption of the dialogue.

At the beginning of the development of human beings, especially at the time of early Greeks, people believed that word and thing were united. The name is the part of the thing it refers to. But since Plato word and thing were separated. In his *letter VII*, Plato took word as an outside and obscure element. But Plato insisted that behind things there existed the real essence, i.e., the pure idea, which is the result of the dialogue of man's soul itself. Logos is the currents from the pure idea, and the utterance from mouth. Although he did not involve the relation between language and its object of the world, Plato revealed the true relationship between language and idea.

If we look at Plato's idea of logos from the point of view of modern hermeneutics, we can see that if man masters a language he possesses reason and the point view of the world. Superficially man lives according to his desire and will, but actually he is living under the control of language. Maybe that is the reason why Wilhelm von Humboldts says every language is a point view of the world, not only because tradition is located in language, but also because language is a way of thinking and a reason. We should not take language as a tool; on the contrary, we are the tools of language. If we live, we must use language. We cannot avoid from language but live in language.<sup>3</sup>

## 2.2 The Organic Unity of Language and Thought

Language as the incarnation of thought shows itself first in the organic unity of language and thought. Their relation is identified with that between the subject and the object discussed by Hegel in his *Phenomenology of Mind*. Hegel believes that being is “the process of its own becoming.”<sup>4</sup> The self, Hegel says, is “unrest”<sup>5</sup>; to constitute an other, a not-self, in order to see itself as an independent entity and separate identity it has to negate itself. On the other hand, the act of construing what is outside the self brings it into a living relationship with externality. And the living relationship with externality which has been created by the self’s act of negation, the construction of not-self, the “labor of negative”<sup>6</sup> reinstates the self in its sense of autonomy, and cancels the negation of the self by reaffirming its freedom. Being is mediation or transition; it is the continual and reciprocal construction and deconstruction of self and other. It is the perpetual movement between subject and object. It is neither static subject, nor static subject against static object, but the continual movement by which one recreates the other. Reality is not outside the self; it is the act of relationship. Without meditation the self would be incapable of becoming “objective to itself,” incapable of “reflection into self” and therefore incapable creating relationship with the other.<sup>7</sup> The principle of being is a movement. “True reality is merely this process of reinstating self-identity, of reflecting into its own self in and from its other and is not an original and primal unity as such... It is the process of its own becoming.”<sup>8</sup> Mediation, therefore, presupposes both an active interaction between subject and object, and a condition in which the subject does not come into being without an object. The subject is not placed in an autonomous or prior existence to the object.

When talking about the difference between fancy and imagination, Coleridge gives his idea about the organic unity. The image he uses in his discussion is the growth of a plant:

In the world we see everywhere evidences of a Unity, which the component parts are so far from explaining, that they necessarily pre-suppose it as the cause and condition of their existing *as* those parts; or even their existing at all...That the root, stem, leaves, petals, & etc. [of this crocus] cohere to one plant, is owing to an antecedent Power or Principle in the Seed, which existed before a single particle of the matters that constitute the size and visibility of the crocus, had been attracted from the surrounding soil, air, and moisture.<sup>9</sup>

In addition, Coleridge declares that in an organism the whole spreads undivided through all the parts. “The physical life is in each limb and organ of the body, all in every part; but is manifested as life, by being one in all and thus making all one...”<sup>10</sup>

Coleridge also applies his formulae to poetic creation:

The spirit of poetry, like all other living powers... must embody in order to reveal itself; but a living body is of necessity an organized one, — and what is organization, but the connection of parts to a whole, so that each part is at once end and means!<sup>11</sup>

No doubt, the philosophy of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially the idea of Coleridge had an effect upon the formation of Wordsworth’s idea of incarnation of language. Wordsworth believes that the language incarnation is a metaphorical matrix inherent from Christian incarnation, which enters his language from English religious poems, from the relations he witnessed among self, God and earth. In the third of his “Epitaph”, Wordsworth says,

If Words be not (recurring to a metaphor before used) an incarnation of the thought but only a clothing for it, then surely will they prove an ill gift; such a one as those poisoned vestments, read of in the stories of superstitious times, which had power to consume and to alienate from his right mind the victim who put them on. Language, if it does not uphold, and feed, and leave in quiet, like the power of gravitation or the air we breathe, is a counter-spirit, unremittingly and noiselessly at work to derange, to subvert, to lay waste, to vitiate, and dissolve.<sup>12</sup>

At the end of Book V of *The Prelude*, there is a passage about “the mystery of words”, in which Wordsworth directly expounds his idea of organic unity in the form of verse.

#### Visionary power

Attends upon the motions of the wind,  
Embodied in the mystery of words:  
There, darkness makes abode, and all the host  
Of shadowy things do work their changes there,  
As in a mansion like their proper home.  
Even forms and substances are circumfused  
By that transparent veil with light divine,  
And, through the turnings intricate of verse,  
Present themselves as objects recognized,  
In flashes, with a glory scarce their own.

(*The Prelude*, Book V, 619-29)



From the last few lines of this passage, readers seem to be able to see the objective world represented by the “forms and substances” through the “transparent veil”. Can the intricate verse here really determine the way in which we see the world and relationship, or can the veil of language be really a transparent medium? It does not appear like that, since the “shadowy things also work their changes there” in words or in visionary powers. The mansion of medium of words is with two implications here. On the one hand, it is a building that neither mind nor world can be released from the structure of language, which is their “proper home”, their origin and source and the place where they have their being. On the other hand, language is a “transparent veil” enabling things to “Present themselves through the turnings intricate of verse”. The “turning” here is a key word. It does not only refer to the turning of rhythm and cadence but also refers to the turning of syntax. For words often “turn” in different relationships towards one another, and simultaneously face in different directions, and therefore “turn” the relationship they construct. Thus the nature of language allows for not merely the transformation of relationships, but for more than one possibility between relationships. And so it is proper for Wordsworth to speak of “visionary power” as “Embodied” in “the mystery of words”, for it is the given form that comes into being and is expressed through the physical structure of words and the mysterious capacity of language to reorder and create multiple construction of the world.

In addition, all the things themselves in the mansion contain contradictions. First, the visionary power can be taken as both an active and passive agent. For the sentence “attends upon the motions of the winds” can be understood either as facing towards the winds or as being faced by the winds. Then the shadowy things are also ambiguously insubstantial and substantive. They work their changes in language, but the openness of their change in the transparent veil allows them the possibility of

working upon something other than themselves. Finally, the forms and substances do not just stand for physically solid things, but they can even refer to abstract things because they are lighted with light divine. In order to combine the separate entities in one identity, Wordsworth uses a syntax characteristic of mergence. “Circumfused” in this sentence plays an important role of blending the forms and substances together and covering with and being seen through the transparent veil of language. Here the veil of language enables the objects of its discourse to be transparent. In this sense, the forms and substances are identified with words. But later, “Circumfused” is followed by “with light divine”, and therefore language becomes the agent by which forms and substances are fused, either with God-like insight from the consciousness or irradiated with divine light which participates in their being. By this stage it is clear that the syntax of this sentence has offered and fused cause and effect, entity and identity, subject and object, and the “light divine” moves freely between two possibilities. It might come from God or from self.

In *The Prelude*, we can find some obvious opposite elements, but even between them there exists the unity. The passage in Book VI when the poet and his companion descend from the Alps is a typical example.

The immeasurable height  
Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,  
The stationary blasts of waterfalls,  
And everywhere along the hollow rent  
Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,  
The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,  
The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,  
Black drizzling crags that spake by the wayside  
As if a voice were in them, the sick sight

And giddy prospect of the rowing stream,  
The tumult and peace, the darkness and the light —  
Were all like workings of one mind, the features  
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree;  
Characters of the great Apocalypse,  
The types and symbols of Eternity,  
Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.  
*(The Prelude, Book VI, 556-72)*

Such a long passage is actually only one sentence. It simultaneously holds everything it describes in one unitary experience and yet allows each clause to fall apart from the others as discrete items. Then these separate items in turn form antitheses: the fettered clouds and region of the Heavens, tumult and peace, the darkness and the light, etc. But there is something unusual about these antitheses. They exist harmoniously and one cannot see their contradictions. One cannot see where he gets the opposites. Tumult, but where is peace? Darkness, but where is the light? They were all the workings of the same mind, all the features of the same face, and all blossoms upon the same tree. It is as if the sentence tries to exact reconciliation and resolution out of itself.

The pair of concepts that seem to be puzzling are Apocalypse and Eternity, since one is ending, destruction, while the other is endlessness, permanence. This sentence can be read in two ways. Apocalypse might be subsumed appositionally into the types and symbols of Eternity and the last line is an affirmation of this resolution — the end of time becoming timelessness — “Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.” Or Apocalypse can be taken as the opposite of Eternity. They remain irreconcilable in this landscape, simultaneous but disjunctive, an image of destruction and an image of permanence. Thus the final line breaks apart into a

series of points, severed by time. But among the separate points are those of the midst. Whether vainly or successfully, they turn between the first and the last. They exist in the midst of time and space, and must be the Eternity.

Actually there are two universes concerning the development of this passage: the reciprocal universe of self and other, and the reflexive mind-constructed universe. Both the universes finally collapse into one another. In the first universe, readers can feel the signs of the Apocalypse since everything is disassociated with each other. Clouds are unfettered from the region of the Heavens. Torrents shoot from “the clear blue sky”, out of it, or away from it as if tearing themselves apart from it. Brook and road, to begin with “fellow-travelers”, become disassociated as the “giddy prospect of the raving stream” moves from the “drizzling crags that spake by the wayside”. In spite of the breaks, the nature of things, however, become almost arbitrarily fused with those of other categories. For example, woods are decaying temporally, but the immeasurably high trees are not to be decayed. When the spring comes, they will be luxuriant again. As the passage proceeds, the sense of the individual identity of the perceiver and the world to be perceived becomes lost. Both the “sick sight” and the “giddy prospect” of the landscape are the possession of the poet’s sickness and giddiness. They coalesce with the objects of perception and become identified with them.

The “bewildered and forlorn” aspect here reminds us of the static and sick sea of Coleridge’s *Ancient Mariner* — the “dull red image of the moon” on the water changes its shape but not its nature like a “snake”. But accompanied by the “bewildered and forlorn” are the signs of life. Surprisingly, the verse is trying to sum up the experience as the opposite of what it seems. The mind was not a “mean pensioner / On outward form”. The confidence refuses to recognize failure — “to my soul I say — I recognize thy glory.” And so the poet is self-consciously aware,

with a reflex act of contemplation, of his own power. The invisible world of infinitude is ambiguously the world of mind, released from sense to consciousness which projects, combines and synthesises experience because it is in a state of need and desire. The poet needs to shape the life by creating possibilities which give it meaning and value. Therefore the naively optimistic rush through France, the disappointed anticipation of Mont Blanc, the non-climax of crossing the Alps, are not to be undervalued because hopes were not realized. A soulless image “need not usurp upon a living thought”, because it is precisely imagination’s “strength / Of usurpation” which creates living thought: the passage is a corrective in advance to the willed, static unity exacted from the descent, offering something “ever more about to be, ” becoming instead of completeness. It is, of course, an intervention by the poet, who reads his poem retrospectively, with a significance it cannot know, and can only offer to him by having been written in the form it has taken up to this point.

In addition to the organic unity between words and their thought, meaning exists in syntax. Romantic syntax is fluid and coalescing, because it restructures its own elements and discovers ambiguous relationships as it forms. Coleridge talked of ‘the modes of connections ... the breaks and transitions’ in Wordsworth’s poetry.<sup>13</sup> Parts of speech transform themselves as you read, and the meaning of a sentence is the transition, the movement which transforms, not the sum of its ambiguities. Line breaks shift the relationship of parts of a sentence, subjects duplicate or coalesce with objects, subject and object change places, concord is ambiguous, tense changes transform temporal relationships; prepositions, the minute particles which denote relationship, have multiple functions. All these elements interact together. The syntax is the process of its own becoming.

O there is blessing in this gentle breeze

That blows from the green fields and from the clouds

And from the sky: it beats against my cheek,

And seems half-conscious of the joy it gives.

O welcome messenger! O welcome friend!

(*The Prelude*, Book II, 398-342)

With limpid, unostentatious subtlety, the syntax here is constantly reordering relationships. It discovers that breeze and blessing — the breeze's blessing or Wordsworth's blessing, or both — blow together: and the blessing is in the breeze, fused with it. The mild, self-effacing virtuosity reverses the expected sequence: blessing and breeze blow from the earth upwards and outwards until they blow from the clouds and sky which include them and the earth so that blessing and breeze include themselves in themselves. The gathering of "from...from...from" and its expansive movement intensifies one sense of "from": blessing and breeze blow directly out of, as if from their sources; fields, clouds, sky and consciousness include and are included by the gathering energy. But another application of 'from' establishes a simultaneous countermovement. Blessing and breeze also blow from the direction of fields, clouds, sky, towards the poet, and the movement outward returns upon itself, consolidated by "it beats against my cheek." His blessing returns to the poet. My cheek, not *the* ear: characteristically Wordsworth uses a possessive pronoun. The wind beats invasively against, infused with physical life, not distantly "strikes ... to hear." Wordsworth's own awareness is allowed to partake of the objects of perception and, more importantly, his awareness of his awareness. For he experiences himself as an object, as other to the wind, even though the syntax simultaneously establishes the breeze as an aspect of his own consciousness. And with 'And seems half-conscious' the movement is reversed: the wind is other to the poet; and yet with the doubleness of "seems" — appears or seems to me — the poet himself invests the breeze with half-consciousness. The breeze is almost conscious,

but also precisely half-conscious: consciousness is shared between breeze and poet. Again, the action and interaction is reversed, for the breeze seems half-conscious of the joy it gives. The joy is the wind's possession, and yet other to it because it is the poet's joy. "O welcome messenger! O welcome friend!" if "welcome" is a verb, the onrush of emotion is towards the messenger or breeze. If it is an adjective, the welcome faces towards Wordsworth, a gift of the breeze, welcome, joyous, to *me*. The action and reaction of the syntax here has created the rhythms of a reciprocal, reflexive experience in which the consciousness is reflected back from the objects of perception, and in which the world is included within the self but is simultaneously other to it. The backwards and forwards movement is there in the flow, hesitation and flow, of the verse. Here Wordsworth is doing what Theseus says of the poet in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, feeling or apprehending joy and comprehending the binger of that joy; blessing and breeze, expressing the life of feeling, but also moving outwards to comprehend or include the breeze which blesses him as part of himself.<sup>14</sup>

Book VI has a passage describing one of Wordsworth's journeys, which also indicates syntax's conferring life on language.

O'er paths and fields

In all that neighborhood, through narrow lanes  
Of eglantine, and through the shady woods,  
And o'er the Border of Beacon, and the waste  
Of naked pools, and common crags that lay  
Exposed on the bare fell, was scattered love,  
A spirit of pleasure, and youth's golden gleam.

(*The Prelude*, Book VI, 239-45)

In structure, this is a periodic sentence with the effect of unexpectedness. It retrospectively transforms the contours of the sentence from the rear, lighting up new possibilities in the syntax as if it were conferring on it the “gleam” of fresh experience which belongs to love, to spirit and to youth — those states which so unexpectedly enter the end of the sentence. Initially the syntax modestly proposes a progressive physical movement as if the sentence started out on a walk through a substantive landscape from woods to waste — “O’er...In...through...o’er”. But when the verb appears, it changes the original intension of the sentence. “Scattered” over the landscape are feeling and emotion, love, spirit and pleasure. This verb, as a metaphor, it implies that while these feeling and emotion are offered as pure categories of affective experience, it plays like a seed allowing them the physically generative power and propagative properties of organic life. It allows that love as pure feeling can take root in physical objects, and the “golden gleam” is also scattered over the landscape and shares the fertilizing possibilities offered in “scattered”, for both light and seed can be “cast” on things.

The special syntax offers a slippery evaluation of the passage. “O’er”, “through”, no longer possess the immediate sense of physical passage, but their energies are transferred to the meaning of diffusion and organic penetration into external objects. With the development of the passage, one will become more and more depressed with the barren surroundings, but the poet puts all these surroundings into a neighborhood which emphasizes the kinship. It suggests that the disparate elements are now standing in its unity. “Neighborhood” sometimes suggests a unified group of friends and friendly feeling. Pastoral and barren landscapes belong to one another because they are equally in possession of the largesse of scattered love. Feeling bestows living passion on the inorganic stone of common crags, bringing the dead to life and reclaiming the barren landscape.



The harmonious effect of transformation of feeling seems to be guaranteed by the language. Here the subject is the object itself. Although “love” is the subject, the verb “was scattered” abstains from denoting the source of scattering. Love might be the subjective feeling of men in the neighborhood. Or “love”, as autonomous feeling, possessed of external objective being, acts on landscape and the human beings included in it alike, and is returned to them from outside themselves, as something other to them. The passive verb enables “love” to be the subject of the sentence and yet to be strangely independent of an agent. “Love” is its own agent, acting upon itself, and thus “youth’s golden gleam” is equally cast on the world and refracted back to itself as “golden gleam”, as other to itself. If love redeems the landscape and seen itself reflected in it, the landscape is there for love to root itself in, and Wordsworth can claim both the reflective, self-creating powers of mind which makes the world categories of itself, and a reciprocal relationship in which the self is an object for the landscape as much as the world is an object for itself. The contradictions are disguised because the sentence offers the vital process of feeling as the primary joy, a running in stress, shared in relation to both forms of object or otherness. It is quietly miraculous in its avoidance of the strains of incompatibility.

### **2.3 Life and Death of Words**

The relationship of language to what it expresses is not just that they are in such a state of organic unity but also that language possesses the characters of life and death. Here we see again the trace of medieval scholastic incarnation and modern hermeneutics in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In Christianity, the bread and wine are things resting on the table, yet through transubstantiation they become signs of a divine presence and disappear as mere things. Seen representationally, the combination of unity (the bread and the body are one entity) and difference (the bread represents the

body) requires a double process of splitting that can only be resolved in the structure of a secret. Louis Marin gives the analysis of the process in his work *Food for Thought*:

The identity of the thing is split twice. The first time, it divides into a thing and a sign; the second time, the nature of the sign requires a distinction between the thing that does the representing and the thing that is represented, even as the thing being divided is supposed to remain what it is. Moreover, the aporia — constituted by an absolute difference within an absolutely maintained identity — can only be overcome by modeling the structure to the sign-representation on that of the secret: something is indeed hidden, but not totally, for then the secret would disappear.<sup>15</sup>

In another word, the bread must divide itself between being bread (a thing) and being a sign of divine presence, but then as a sign it must embody a second distinction between two things: the representing bread and the represented body of Christ. The structure of the secret is necessary because things hide whereas signs reveal: “Since a thing can be at once a thing and a sign (two different states), it can hide the very thing that it reveals in the form of a sign.”<sup>16</sup> Thus, insofar as the bread remains a thing, it hides the body of Christ, covering it up by the materiality of the bread. Insofar as it becomes a sign, it reveals the body of Christ, effacing itself as a thing.

In modern hermeneutics, Gadamer notes a similar situation applying to the picture, which is neither a sign, whose own existence is effaced before that to which it points, nor a symbol, which is reversed as a tangible thing as it replaces that to which it refers: “A picture is situated halfway between a sign and a symbol. Its representing is neither a pure pointing-to-something nor a pure taking-the-place-of-something. It is this intermediate position that raises it to a

unique ontological status.”<sup>17</sup> In the title essay to *The Relevance of the Beautiful* Gadamer points out that art’s facticity combines revealing and concealing:

Alongside and inseparable from this unconcealing, there also stands the shrouding and concealing that belongs to our human finitude... This fact that [the work of art] exists, its facticity, represents an insurmountable resistance against any superior presumption that we can make sense of it all.<sup>18</sup>

The same process that takes place on the table of the Last Supper and a picture will happen to words when they gain the “facticity” of “living things” The idea that words can be things has many different ramifications in both Romantic and contemporary theories. William Blake says, “the moment I have written, I see the Words fly around the room in all directions. It is then published. — The Spirits can read and my MS: is of no further use.”<sup>19</sup> John Keats provides a muted auditory version of this when he suggests in the “Ode to a Nightingale” that “Forlorn! The very word is like a bell / To toll me back from thee to my sole self!”<sup>20</sup> Poststructuralists Saussure and Levi-Strause also let us know the materiality of word (signifier) by trying to separate the sign into arbitrarily related material and conceptual elements.<sup>21</sup> But Wordsworth’s sense of word’s materiality shows its complexity: in terms of incarnation and “counter-spirit”:

Energy, stillness, grandeur, tenderness, those feelings which are the pure emanations of nature, those thoughts which have the infinitude of truth, and those expressions which are not what the garb is to the body but what the body to the soul, themselves a constituent part and power or function in the thought — all these are abandoned for their opposites, — as if our Countrymen, through successive generations, had lost the sense of solemnity and pensiveness (not to speak of deeper emotions) and restored to the Tomb of their

Forefathers and Contemporaries only to be tickled and surprised.<sup>22</sup>

Here Wordsworth emphasizes the materiality of language, but it is not merely the “clothing” covering the body, but the “body” to the soul, and it can finally efface itself before what it refers to.

At the beginning of Book V, Wordsworth first admits that books play an important role in the development of human civilization, but when he thinks that “the immortal being / No more shall need such garments”, he feels “Abject, depressed, forlorn, disconsolate.”

Hitherto

In progress through this verse my mind hath looked  
Upon the speaking face of earth and heaven  
As her prime teacher, intercourse with man  
Established by the Sovereign Intellect,  
Who through that bodily image hath diffused  
A soul divine which we participate,  
A deathless spirit. Thou also, man hast wrought,  
For commerce of thy nature with itself,  
Things worthy of unconquerable life;  
And yet we feel — we cannot chuse but feel —  
That these must perish. Tremblings of the heart  
It gives, to think that the immortal being  
No more shall need such garments; and yet man  
As long as he shall be the child of earth,  
Might almost ‘weep to have’ what he may lose —  
Nor be himself extinguished, but survive

Abject, depressed, forlorn, disconsolate.

(*The Prelude*, Book V, 10-27)

This is a lament for the possible loss of man's language. But the last few lines of this passage give man a very complex status. The basic comparison is that as God created Nature, humanity creates books. But man's creation of books is different from God's creation of Nature. God's creation of Nature is presented as a human incarnation of the divine: nature has the very human "speaking face" and is a "bodily image" with a "soul divine". The analogy between God and human remains intact but the other side of this analogy — Nature and books — does not hold up. Although humanity is immortal, the linguistic "things worthy of unconquerable life" is mortal. In the third "Essay Upon Epitaph", Wordsworth also deplores that what should be incarnation becomes garments whose relation to "immortal" being is transitory. In short, God gets to animate nature with a human "speaking face", but in man's parallel operation the word-things he uses has an objective materiality that resists animation, and thus tends towards the "counter-spirit" of the mere garments.

How to solve the problem of word-things' resistance of animation? Wordsworth, as what is done in the Eucharist, performs the act of recognizing death as fundamental to incarnate life. As the passage above suggests, Wordsworth's natural world is already infused with animism, because Nature can incarnate God. For language to incarnate thought, however, word-things must be similarly animated. To Wordsworth, the only way to animate language is to grant them the possibility of death. In that way word-things, like the bread standing for the body of Christ, will efface themselves as the objective garments, and therefore, they can gain the ability to generate the meaning before what they express.

There is a fragment, which was cancelled in later versions, in the manuscript of

*The Prelude*, describing the contour of a horse when the poet was climbing Snowden Mountain:

With one leg from the ground the creature stood,  
Insensible and still; breath, motion gone,  
Hairs, color, all but shape and substance gone,  
Mane, ears, and tail, as lifeless as the trunk  
That had no stir of breath. We paused awhile  
In pleasure of the sight, and let him there,  
With all his functions silently sealed up,  
Like an amphibious work of Nature's hand,  
A borderer dwelling betwixt life and death,  
A living statue or a statued life.<sup>23</sup>

Here the horse becoming a statue indicates death and the change of spirit into a thing, but this incarnation is connected with the spirit of Nature. To become a thing means to be enclosed in a process that cannot be described clearly in human language. The way in this poem is the same as that of the Lucy poems in which death is also unexpressed. Death is the most certain thing we have, but our "knowledge" does not reflect that certainty because the anticipatory certainty of death is way ahead of and incompatible with our usual sense of experiential knowledge. The route to an authentic relation to death must begin with inauthenticity of a representational relation, but it cannot end there. In Cavell's terms, the poet must find a way to "acknowledge" her death (or acknowledge her as dead) in a way that unite the impossibility of a non-skeptical knowledge with the human desire for an effective link that must be ethical rather than epistemological, a way of living rather a way of

knowing, and therefore we must look behind the epistemological problems to their ethical backgrounds.<sup>24</sup> Charles Taylor also points out that, especially after the Enlightenment turn from theology to scientific reasoning, moral grounds for epistemological positions are largely unarticulated.<sup>25</sup> One of Wordsworth's concerns in this poem of the horse and Lucy poems is to reset through incarnation epistemological questions in their ethical context.

To Wordsworth, the "materiality" of word is inescapably connected with life and death. Epitaph as an example of achieving this status is typical. Like the dead Lucy and the quiet horse, epitaph achieves the identity of a thing in the process of linking life and death. It has an effective power but is not a transparent and arbitrary sign. In Book V of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth gives us a story of Arabian Quixote who is going to "bury" books to some place. Like the epitaph, the dead "thing" must be "closed" in a fixed "grave". The purpose of his action is, on the one hand, to cut the separation with the living world, on the other hand, to establish the link with the living world through the commemoration of the dead. Of course, Wordsworth is not intentionally expressing death, but death is very important for man to express the relation between man and the world. This idea reminds us of some of the elegies in the history of English literature, such as Milton's *Lycidas*, Shelly's *Adonais*, and Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, all of which play the same role. Even Wordsworth's own *Elegiac Stanza*, which shows his own memory of his brother, takes death not as the reading to make people in deep sorrow or as something of religious rituals but as the guarantee to realize the aesthetic value and real feeling.

The incarnation of death can be used to explain the art of Book V of *The Prelude* because it represents the process of word from frail "shrine" to "visionary power". In this part there is a story of a boy of Winander Lake. In his life the boy found by chance a kind of education that was quite different from that of mechanical

and rational education. By comparison, he came to understand the “non-rational development of this world”, which was just what the saints neglect. Then he wanted to establish a relation to this world by imitation:

And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands  
Pressed closely palm to palm, and to his mouth  
Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,  
Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls,  
That they might answer him; ...

*(The Prelude, Book V, 370-74)*

Although he did not get the answer from the birds of the forest, the sense was made in the imitation of the world, since the boy experienced a Wordsworthian way of communication with the world, or the communication of spirit with the world. When “a lengthened pause / Of silence came and baffled his best sill,”

... the visible scene  
Would enter unawares into his mind,  
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,  
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received  
Into the bosom of the steady lake.

*(The Prelude, Book V, 384-388)*

If we say the boy failed, we mean that he did not succeed in creating a set of arbitrary signs. But it is in his failure that the incarnation from thought to event occurred. For at this moment even the Winander Lake had become a living thing that



possessed a beating bosom receiving the all the solemn imagery.

Before his life the boy often appeared in the beautiful scenery of the lake and mountains, but he left his schoolmates for another world when he was only twelve. He was buried in the hillside behind his school. From then on, death comes into the poem. First, death brings silence. The scene of the grave seems to hinder the progress of communication. At this moment the poet has already stood quietly beside the grave, “A long half hour together I have stood / Mute, looking at the grave in which he lies!” (V 395-396)

But the silence does not last long. After some changes, the death of the boy comes into the language again,

Even now methinks I have before my sight  
That self-same village church: I see her sit —  
The throned lady spoken of erewhile  
On her green hill, forgetful of the boy  
Who slumbers at her feet, forgetful too  
Of all her silent neighborhood of graves,  
And listening only to the gladsome sounds  
That, from the rural school ascending, play  
Beneath her and about her.

*(The Prelude, Book V, 423-31)*

In a shift of the writing present (the moment of the actual creation of the poem’s language), the syntax presents a classic Wordsworthian ambiguity: does “forgetful” in line 426 and 427 modify “I” in line 424 or the “throned lady” in line 425? The context of the passage quoted here suggests that the poet is being forgetful, and then

listening, but the syntax allows for both, the “throned lady is closer to the first “forgetful”, and the personification of the church as the one who actively beholds this scene is suggested in the following lines: “...May she long / Behold a race of young ones like those / With whom I herded.” The boy is both objectified and forgotten by either the speaker or the personified church, “dying” a second time into the system of the “silent neighborhood of graves.” His humanly active, metaphorically alive “slumbering” metonymically shifts to the silence of “graves” — inanimate memorial objects in the landscape — and this enables a shift to the living children above the ground. The personified village church effects this transition from death to life by an act of forgetting — the memorializing function of the churchyard must itself “die” so that a conceptual link back to life can be made. The speaker has an ambivalent relation to this process: on one reading of the syntax he performs this act of de-animation, objectification, and self-forgetting. On the other reading, if we ascribe this forgetting to the “throned lady,” the speaker implicitly critiques the process. For him, the narration of the church’s act of forgetting as an act of remembering, and incorporation of the Boy’s death into an active process of memorization. The fact that the very syntax of the poem allows us to see the speaker as both sealing the dead Boy into a forgotten inanimate grave and as implicitly critiquing that act in a gesture toward incarnate life suggests the depth at which death plays a dual role.

The boy has achieved eternity in the poem, and the language has therefore got the life force from the process of incarnation. But the drowned man of Esthwaite showed the function of incarnation of language from the reverse side of the matter. The poet saw a pile of garments on the bank of the river, but he took them as signs representing the absent swimmer:

Twilight have was coming on, yet through the gloom,  
Appeared distinctly on the opposite shore  
A heap of garments, as if left by one  
Who might have there been bathing  
(*The Prelude*, Book V, 435-438)

The sense was made in the process of the separation of the signifier and the signified. The longer the garments were not claimed, the clearer it indicated that they belonged to a dead person. "...The succeeding day, / Those unclaimed garments telling a plain tale...." Finding those garments indicates finding a dead person, but the poet did not fear at all,

... for my inner eye had seen  
Such sight before, among the shining streams  
Of fairyland, the forests of romance.  
Their spirit hallowed the sad spectacle  
With decoration of ideal grace;  
A dignity, a smoothness, like the works  
Of Grecian art, and purest poesy.  
(*The Prelude*, Book V, 453-59)

The separation of garments with the swimmer indicates the separation of the signifier and the signified, which means the garments become arbitrary signs. Garments have no meaning themselves; only when they are connected with their owners, they have their meanings. Here the poet does not concern the meaning of the garments, but treat them as arbitrary signs. As signs, they might be controlled by

another mode outside of a system. That's why the garments did not leave any fear or sorrow in the mind of the poet.

## **2.4 Wordsworth's Incarnation in the Romantic Context**

From the analyses above we can see that Wordsworth's emphasis on the incarnation of language makes his point view somewhat mysterious with rich color of Christianity. But we should not forget its historical context. Since Descartes and Locke, Western thoughts began to advocate rationality. Descartes' famous dictum "I exist because I think" indicates that man can exist because of his ability of thinking. German Christian theologian Wolff maintains that God is the "pure rationality", and the world seems to operate like a machine according to the logic of some regulations. English poet Alexandra Pope believes that only reason surpass any other abilities. The scientific achievements at that time, especially the laws of Newtonian mechanics, made known that everything in the world can be known, and the way to know something is by reason. All these thoughts and achievements prevented the development of the spirit of humanism. In order to break the deadlock of rationalism, people had to try to offer the world a life and express the existence of the world with a living language. Coleridge, for example, says in his poem *Frost at Midnight* that the lovely shapes and intelligible sounds of eternal language are uttered by God.<sup>26</sup> Thus the intention of Wordsworth and some other Romanticist to offer life to language was a reaction against rationalism, which paved the way for modern hermeneutics and some other life philosophy.

Another point that we should notice is that although Wordsworth was influenced by Christian theology, he did not give up the tradition of English empiricism and therefore his idea of language is not completely the same with the idea of

incarnation of Augustine. For Augustine, the purpose of incarnation is to keep the relation with God, while for Wordsworth incarnation has its eye on the objective world. Wordsworth's incarnation of language inclines to the process, events and materiality of language. The manifestation of this difference is the reversion of the importance of sight and hearing, which is one of the basic problems in modern hermeneutics. Since Augustine takes light as the image of God, the inner word as the incarnation of God can be seen, but the outer word can only be heard, and outer word is the sign of the inner word, and only the inner word has the right to be called real word. Wordsworth changed their relation. In his poem "Tintern Abbey" Wordsworth despises what we see but praises the ability to hear "the still, sad music of humanity". Finally, Augustine takes incarnation as the extension of theology, but Wordsworth takes incarnation as the explanation of poetry. Wordsworth's poems have a lot of Christian elements, but it does not mean his secularization of theology, for he knows that poetry is not theology after all. In dealing with the relation between rationality and feeling, he noticed the difference between theology and poetics. In his "*Essay Supplementary to the Preface*" he says,

The commerce between Man and his Maker cannot be carried on but by a process where much is represented in little, and infinite Being accommodates himself to a finite capacity. In all this may be perceived the affinity between religion and poetry...between religion — whose element is infinitude, and whose ultimate trust is the supreme of things, submitting herself to circumscription, and reconciled to substitutions; and poetry — ethereal and transcendent, yet incapable to sustain her existence without sensuous incarnation.<sup>27</sup>

From the quotation above, we know that religion gives itself to substitute of

incarnation and is restricted by that substitute, but poetry cannot exist without feeling. The expression of this feeling cannot depend on mechanic representation but by living incarnate language. In short, although the finite and the infinite entangle each other in Wordsworth's poems, the distinction between the divine infinity and the poetic experience is clear. He expresses the divine infinity with a finite poetic form.



Wordsworth believes outward sense is but the obedient servant of her will, the definition of this term contains the elements of both objectivity and imagination. First, Wordsworth believes in the independent existence of the external world and insists that the imagination must in some sense conform to the external world. Once again he sees the issue illustrated by childhood:

a plastic power

Abode with me; a forming hand, at times

Rebellious, acting in a devious mood;

A local spirit of his own, at war

With general tendency, but, for the most,

Subservient strictly to external things

With which it communed.

*(The Prelude, Book XII 76-82)*

For Wordsworth the imagination must be subservient to the external world, because that world is not dead but living and has its own soul, which is, at least in the life that we know, distinct from the soul of man. Man's task is to enter into communion with this soul, and indeed he can hardly avoid doing so, since from birth onward his life is continuously shaped by nature, which penetrates his being and influences his thoughts. Wordsworth believed that he helped to bring this soul of nature closer to man, that he could show "by words / Which speak of nothing more than what we are" (The Prelude, Book XII 185-6) how exquisitely the external world is fitted to the individual mind, and the individual mind to the external world. To Wordsworth nature was the source of his inspiration, and he could not deny to it an existence at least as powerful as man's. But since nature lifted him out of himself, he sought for a



higher state in which its soul and the soul of man should be united in a single harmony. Sometimes he felt that this happened and that through vision he attained an understanding of the oneness of things. Wordsworth believes that when he has known something often enough in the past, he thinks that it still comes to him, as it came when he heard the cuckoo and was transported to another world as in childhood. “Spots of time”, therefore, become the bridge connect the past, the present and the future.

Herbert Lindenberger has noticed that there is a kind of resonance in Wordsworth’s “spots of time” passages. The reader, he says, is always aware of at least two points of time: the time at which he supposes Wordsworth to be writing and the time of the incident. The reader cannot therefore lose himself in the past, for he is always recalled to the “present” of the poem, the time of writing. The use of “spots of time” is Wordsworth’s characteristic method of probing the past. In one sense this method is a literary necessity. Wordsworth is telling a story, albeit a true one, and consequently the occasions of the moments of vision are always introduced casually, as if he were about to recount an anecdote merely. But the “spots of time” are more subtly organized than mere anecdotes would be, for the past has become a means of setting emotion at a manageable distance. At the same time, the interaction of the past and the present set free long-forgotten feelings, giving new life and energy to the present. As Lindenberger says, “The energies latent in Wordsworth’s memories are like rays of light that pass through a prism and reveal constantly new possibilities of color to the observing eye.”<sup>1</sup>

### **3.2 “Spots of Time”: from Memory to Epiphany**

Generally speaking, traditional western philosophies before the 19<sup>th</sup> century

often went to extremes in many problems. Since many philosophers took body and soul as the opposites, the memory as the result of sensitive activities of the body was believed lacking the merits of imagination. Thus the long time separation between body and soul resulted in the contradiction between memory and imagination. In order to solve this problem, the Romantics tried to look for a way to reconcile the two aspects of the same problem. Wordsworth tried to distinguish imagination from other two conceptions of fancy and memory, which were often confused with imagination before the 19<sup>th</sup> century. If he just wanted to separate fancy from imagination, Wordsworth's idea of imagination would not be a perfect notion because it lacks its basis: memory. Wordsworth believed that memory served as the foundation of imagination, and that the relation between memory and imagination indicates that man was a special creature who cannot escape either from the finite or from the infinite.

The first one who connected poetry with memory is Homer, who maintained that it was the daughter of memory the Muse who gave the poet inspiration.<sup>2</sup> Thus people began to believe that the images stored in poet's mind can bring up imagination and that poet can make people's memory imaginable. A few centuries later, however, Plato compared a magnetite to a poet's inspiration whose invisible "magnetic force" connects the poet and his audience, and a poem is the result of ecstasy.<sup>3</sup> But his pupil Aristotle did not agree with him. He took imitation as the basis of inspiration.<sup>4</sup> Since Aristotle, the idea of imitation occupied people's mind almost the whole Middle Ages.

It was not until the Renaissance period that people began to consider Aristotle's idea with Neo-platonism.<sup>5</sup> One of the examples of this attempt was the lines in William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*:

The lunatic, the lover, and the poet  
Are the imagination all compact.  
...  
The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;  
And as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shapes, and gives to aery nothing  
A local habitation and a name.<sup>6</sup>

People in the Renaissance period moved further than Plato. They believed that poetry opens a way to truth beyond reason, since imagination is a divine bridge between Heaven and earth, which is the abyss of suffering because of man's degeneration. Obviously this is the product of Christian Neo-platonism. In his "The Defense of Poesy", Sir Philip Sidney intentionally combined Plato with Aristotle, declaring "Poesy therefore is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termth it in the word mimesis — that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring picture — with this end, to teach and delight."<sup>7</sup> But when he compared the art of other occupations with the art of the poet, the tone of his words was that of Plato's. "Only the poet, distaining to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigor of his own invention, doth grow in effect another nature, in making things either better than nature bringth forth, or, quiet anew, forms such as never were in nature, ... and such like: so as to goeth hand in hand with nature, not enclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely ranging only within the zodiac of his own. Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as divers poets have done; ... Her world is brazen, the poets only delivers a golden."<sup>8</sup>

Empiricists in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries further strengthened the relation between memory and imagination. In his “Answer to D’Avenant” (1650), Hobbes maintained that time and education result in experience; experience results in memory; memory results in judgment and fancy; judgment results in power and structure; and fancy results in decoration of poetry.<sup>9</sup> Here Hobbes is expressing the idea that imagination and memory are fundamentally the same because they are both motions in our bodies, so that imagination and memory are but one thing, which for divers considerations has divers names. In creation, he believed, a poet is as carefully looking for images in his mind as one looks for cards in an archive, or as someone is looking for treasures by sweeping a room or as a dog is hunting a prey in a field.<sup>10</sup> To Hobbes, writing is no longer ecstatic although a writer may reach this state in his uncontrollable fancy, but a form of memory, which can find out the sensual images in mind and arrange them in a new pleasant form once the images are fit for a certain purpose. And since imagination comes from memory, it cannot create new things. But it can go out of the restriction of history. Thus a poet seems to Hobbes superior to a historian but not to a philosopher.

On the basis of the thinking of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, people in the 18<sup>th</sup> century transferred the idea of memory to a conception of association. In *Spectator*, No. 417, Joseph Addison said:

We may observe, that any single Circumstance of what we have formerly seen often raises up a whole Scene of Imagery, and awakens numberless Ideas that before slept in the Imagination; such a particular Smell or Color is able to fill the Mind, on a sudden, with the Picture of the Fields or Gardens where we first met with it, and to bring up into View all the Variety of Images that once attended it. Our Imagination takes the hint, and leads us unexpectedly into Cities or Theatres, Plains or Meadows. We may further observe, when the Fancy thus reflects on the Scenes that have past in it formerly, those,

which were at first pleasant to behold, appear more so upon Reflection, and that the memory heightens the Delightfulness of the Original.<sup>11</sup>

Memory is the cause of association or imagination. But where does it come from? When talking about the mechanics of the memory, David Hartley, an English physician and a philosopher, explains that sensation is the beginning of people's consciousness, then come the simple concepts or images as the copies of sensation or feelings and perceptions left in people's mind when the object being perceived leaves, and finally the integrated conceptions on the basis of simple become concepts. These three steps can be summed up as sensation, memory and thinking. Obviously Hartley is using the way of physiology to explain the process of thinking of man: the stimulation of a sense organ by an object causes the vibration of nerve system and brain, and when the outside stimulus is moved away the vibration continues although no longer as strong as before, and the vibration invokes memory and association.

Hartley's idea of association reminds us of Wordsworth's idea that meditation forms feeling, which is an important start for his idea of imagination. But in Wordsworth's eye, memory has been out of control of experience, being the unity of the past and the present, which cannot leave the fact but is not the fact, or the fact of spirit. This start indicates that Wordsworth both inherited and abandoned the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries thinking. It is believed that Wordsworth made his contribution to English Romantic poetics in the following two points.

First, he made a distinction between memory and imagination. When we talk about the "Preface to the Edition of 1815", we often refer to the distinction made by Wordsworth between imagination and fancy. But in fact this preface also discusses the difference between imagination and memory. When he mentions the ability of man's observation and description, Wordsworth believes that the things stored in the

memory are just the things “unmodified by any passion or feeling existing in the mind of the describer.”<sup>12</sup> Here we can see Hartley’s idea that memory refers to the primitiveness of these things since he wants “to observe with accuracy things as they are in themselves and with fidelity to describe them.”<sup>13</sup> But imagination, according to Wordsworth, is quite different from memory in that the former is the ability “to modify, to create, and to associate.” Wordsworth’s idea of imagination can be taken as the last step of Hartley’s idea of thinking. The process of thinking or imagination is a process to deal with the raw materials in the mind. “These process of imagination are carried on either by conferring additional properties upon an object, or abstracting from it some of those which it actually possesses, and thus enabling it to re-act upon the mind which hath performed the process, like the new existence.”<sup>14</sup> Thus memory among the five abilities cited by Wordsworth for writing poetry just serves as the basis of imagination in spite of being a necessary one, and Wordsworth takes whether the objects being operated by mind as the standard to distinguish imagination from memory. Since “operations of the mind” is a token of Romantic poetics, it seems that Wordsworth set something important of Romanticism in the context of the criticism of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

As the follower of Locke, Hartley believes that the sensation of man to the outside world is passive like a piece of paper on which is void of all characters and without any ideas, and the mechanics of the mind is similar to that of a electronic calculator when the data is inputted, it will begin to work. But this point is different from Wordsworth. To Wordsworth, although imagination is based on memory, it is the transcendence of memory and from the memory something new is incarnated because of imagination. It is true that many of Wordsworth writings are the works of memory, but these memories have become weaker than before, which indicates the notion that man’s life like that of nature will always, no matter how luxuriant they

are, have the day of withering. On the one hand, Wordsworth is trying to recollect the past faded events; on the other hand, he is deploring the popularity of the past. This is a common problem of a sensual individual trying to hold his own fate. Wordsworth experienced the problem of a poet, but he tried to make memories as the materials of imagination so as to overcome the trouble. With the time past and his experiences enriching, Wordsworth's memory became more and more entangled with his contemporary feelings, and he wrote these entangled feelings into his poems, which were the "spot of time" he called.

In modern poetry and prose-fiction, people have adopted another term "epiphany" for the revelation of an ordinary object or scene. Originally the word "epiphany" was used to signify a manifestation of God's presence within the created world. In modern literature, however, it refers to a sudden flare into revelation of an ordinary object or scene. In *Stephen Hero*, James Joyce let the hero of this work give the definition of this term:

This is the moment which I call epiphany. First we recognize that the object is *one* integral thing, then we recognize that it is an organized composite structure, a *thing* in fact: finally, when the relation of parts is exquisite, when the parts are adjusted to the spiritual point, we recognize that it is that thing which it is. Its soul, its whatness, leaps to us from the vestment of its appearance. The soul of the commonest object, the structure of which is adjusted, seems to us radiant. The object achieves its epiphany.<sup>15</sup>

By the end of Chapter IV of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, this term is used to indicate the revelation that Stephen experiences at the sight of the young girl wading on the shore of the sea. Stephen the Daedalus, with a lust of wandering in his feet that burned to set out for the ends of the earth, wades up a rivulet in the

strand, “happy and near to the wild heart of life.” That deliberate overstatement might make us wary of his progress. The embroidering of emotion, the preciousness, could be a prelude to farther deflation, yet Stephen suddenly confronts the girl on the strand, who is magically transformed. He is momentarily taken out of his indulgent stream of consciousness: the other and relationship to it are clearly established. All his efforts have succeeded in his reaching what he calls later a stasis, a suspended moment, paradoxically the condition of anonymity, and he can only let out a cry of relief at the confrontation with the girl. The rhythms of Joyce’s prose at this moment lyrically outline the sensual contours of the girl’s body and the quiet flow of the stream, until Stephen’s cry of “profane joy” turns again to more overstatement, just to remind us of the adolescent limitations of his ecstasy and the pressing solipsism of his claims for selfhood. The spring of his consciousness is uncoiled for the first time, but his outburst reminds us that it will have to be rewound over and over again. Eric Goluld believes that “in *Dubliners*, *Stephen Hero*, and *Portrait of the Artist*, the major effort of Joyce’s art activity is to reach ‘epiphany.’”<sup>16</sup>

Although Wordsworth uses the expression “spots of time” to describe only two specific occasions: the Codrake Quarry incident (Book XII, 225-66) and the period of waiting for the coach to take him home for the Christmas holidays during which his father died (Book XII, 287-335), the expression is, nevertheless, applicable to many of the other moments of his mystical apprehension, including the moments of joy as well as the visionary dreaminess. If we examine the “spots of time” carefully, we may see that some of them have the strong bases of objectivity and some emphasize the supernaturalism of an event. But the common ground of the “spots of time” is that Wordsworth was exploring intentionally the truth existing in these events.



### 3.3 “Spots of Time” with the Sense of Weight of Ages

In Book V, Wordsworth tells us his dream of a crazed Arab, who hurries across the desert to secure the products of man’s mind from destruction by “deluge, now at hand.” The way Wordsworth tells his story shows a constant conflict between the intention of a grammar and divergence from the grammar. As some other stories, this one gives an objective introduction to the dream. Even the sensuous background of the dream seems to be the real world around the poet, perceived through the lightest veil of sleep and absorbed instantly into the dream. The verse is sonorous with the moan of the sea and the beat of the breakers, reverberating and humming round the cave where Wordsworth drowns.

“This,” said he,  
“Is something of more worth;” and the word  
Stretched forth the shell, so beautiful in shape,  
In color so resplendent, with command  
That I should hold it to my ear. I did so,  
And heard that instant in an unknown tongue,  
Which yet I understood, articulate sounds,  
A loud prophetic blast of harmony;  
An Ode, in passion uttered, which foretold  
Destruction to the children of the earth  
By deluge, now at hand. No sooner ceased  
The song, than the Arab with calm look declared  
That all would come to pass of which the voice  
Had given forewarning....

(*The Prelude*, Book V: 88-101)

What is described here is a dream, but we can see its objective bases. First, It is a man who has not been properly asleep hears buzzing noises in his ears. Those varied *o* and *u* sounds, sometimes combined with the nasal consonants in which the lines abound, and the rhythmic emphasis on “sounds,” “loud,” “Ode,” and “foretold,” suggest the murmuring and booming of the sea, distanced by sleep and yet made resonant by the acoustic cave. Yet these effects are not obtrusive; the words chosen are reasonable ones for the narrative purpose. But the sounds are there, inescapably accompanying the events; they are dream noises from the wilderness. The visual imagery also suggests the figural grammar of the dream. In a light sleep the eye may blink open for a second or two, half-seeing the waking world. Hence the sandy wilderness, black and void, is created from the sandy beach seen in a glimpse from within the dark cave. The glittering light of the far away deep waters may be produced by the same a similar half-wakeful flickering of the eyelids, revealing sunlight on a worldly sea. Even the Arab and his dromedary may be the shadows of a passerby — a horseman, perhaps, pausing to make sure that the man in the cave is merely sleeping.

With the start of the dream, however, the divergence begins. In the distress and fear in the dream, Wordsworth sees a plain of sandy wilderness stretching boundlessly before him, and an uncouth shape upon a dromedary in the desert. Strange as the shape is, the figure may still be created by the memory of Don Quixote and the sands glimpsed from the mouth of the cave. The sandy wilderness suggests an Arab and the book suggests Cervantes’s hero. The composite figure indicates conflicts between a grammar and the divergence from the grammar. In addition, the dreamer himself becomes a composite figure — partly Wordsworth and

partly Sancho Panza,<sup>17</sup> he is skeptical, seeing the stone as a stone and the shell as a shell, yet caught by the logic of the crazed enthusiasm and determined to “cleave unto the man.” From the dream fear, we can see the value Wordsworth sets on both principal forms of human culture. The stone and the shell, according to Thomas De Quincey, were meant to “illustrate the eternity, and the independence of all social modes or fashions of existence, conceded to those two hemispheres, as it were, that compose the total world of human power — mathematics on the one hand, poetry on the other.”<sup>18</sup> Mathematic thought represents immutable pure reason, which is the most reliable and clear bond between man and man. But literature, the prophetic voice, is a god with power to cheer and console the human heart. If the world is to be deluged again, these works of man must be made safe.

Later, when he sees the Arab’s countenance more disturbed, Wordsworth is even more unsure and anxious about the fate of human beings on the earth,

Looking backward when he looked, mine eyes  
Saw, over half the wilderness diffused,  
A bed of glittering right: I asked the cause:  
‘It is’, said he, ‘the waters of the deep  
Gathering upon us’; quickening then the pace  
Of the unwielding creature he bestrode,  
He left me: I called after him aloud;  
He heeded not; but with his twofold charge  
Still in his grasp, before me, full in view  
Went hurry o’er the illimitable waste,  
With the fleet of waters of a drowning world  
In chase of him....

(*The Prelude*, Book V, 127-139)

What we are experiencing in reading this passage of the poem is disquietude, anxiety, despair, and even madness. What does the depressed feeling consist? What can we see behind it? Of course, it is the current affairs of his time. Wordsworth's early rejoicing in the success of the French Revolution was soon modified, first by the intervention of Britain, then the atrocities of the Reign of Terror brought 'a sense of treachery and desertion, culminating in his loss of 'all feeling of conviction,' his faith in nature and in man. In France the domestic carnage had filled the whole year, the old man from the chimney-nook, the maid from the cradle of her babe, the warrior from the field all perished. Friends, enemies, of all parties, ages and ranks were all beheaded one after another, but the heads were not enough for those who bade them fall. They kept going on looking for their joy in killing (*The Prelude*, Book X. 356-374). Facing the crimes the young poet could not fall asleep for a long time. Even in his sleep, the scene of murder suddenly appeared, and the unbroken dream entangled him in long orations. He strove to plead before unjust tribunals, with a voice laboring, a brain confounded and a sense of treacherous desertion, felt in the last place of refuge — my own soul (*The Prelude*, Book X 409-415).

Compared with these physical sufferings he witnessed, Wordsworth's ideological crisis shocked him the most. In order to make man start out of his 'earthly worm like snail', Wordsworth had been seeking some way constantly. Just at that time, there were some welcome speculative schemes that promised to abstract the hopes of man out of his feeling. It was to Wordsworth a tempting region. Therefore, he was entangled in precepts, judgments, maxims and creeds. Sometimes he believed, and sometimes he disbelieved these ideas with impulses, motive, right and wrong till he lost all feeling and he was sick, wearied out with contrarities and

yielded up moral question in despair.

This is the crisis of that strong disease,  
This the soul's last and lowest ebb; I drooped,  
Dreaming our blessed reason of least use  
Where wanted most

(*The Prelude*, Book XI. 306-310)

For such a crisis, Wordsworth did not write directly his sufferings of his mind but let them expressed naturally in a dream. This is a good application of his incarnational poetics in his writing. In “the preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*”, Wordsworth asks, “What is a poet?”... A man, it is true, endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind.” In the light of these observations, we should think of Wordsworth’s “spots of time” as a strategic exhibition of the enhanced and creative sensibility that separates the artist from other people. The “spots of time” serve as the most eloquent testimony to this sensibility: they are the purest and most compressed form of the artist’s visionary power.

Wordsworth possesses the ability to draw abstract ideas from very ordinary things. The memory about the walk on the Leven’s sands in Book X is another example of the ages.

O Friend! Few happier moments have been mine  
Than that which told the downfall of this Tribe  
So dreaded, so abhorred. The day deserves

A separate record. Over the smooth sands  
Of Leven's ample estuary lay  
My journey, and beneath a genial sun,  
With distant prospect among gleams of sky  
And clouds, and intermingling mountain-tops,  
In one inseparable glory clad,  
Creatures of one ethereal substance met  
In consistory, like a diadem  
Or crown of burning seraphs as they sit  
In the empyrean. Underneath that pomp  
Celestial, lay unseen the pastoral vales  
Among whose happy fields I had grown up  
From childhood. On the fulgent spectacle,  
That neither passed away nor changed, I gazed  
Enrapt...

(*The Prelude*, Book X, 511-28)

The literal meaning of this episode is clear. By comparison, Wordsworth expresses his happiness after hearing the death of Robespierre, leader of Jacobin group under whose regime the Reign of Terror was instituted. But this moment of rapture is not Wordsworth's supremely happy moment referred to in the first line of this passage. For he immediately moves to another death, the death of his schoolmaster, whose grave he had visited that morning. Why could he associate two irrelevant incidents? One might say they are both the cases of death, but the association shows Wordsworth's religious belief by which he transcend ordinary things. According to the 1805 version of *The Prelude*, the grave of his schoolmaster was in "Cartmell's

rural Town” (1805 Version, *The Prelude*, Book X, 533), where there was another ruined shrine, something whose history Wordsworth might have known, and whose condition at that time was rather dramatically symbolic of the capacity of a religious tradition to survive hostile attack and physical destruction. In the whole passage about the Chapel Island, Wordsworth makes a contrast between the grave of his school-master and the death of Robespierre: the poet seeks out the grave of the good, unknown schoolmaster and weep there; crowds cheer and rejoice at the death of the evil public man. It seems to Wordsworth that there is a kind of heavenly council presiding above earthly affairs and that fair council of gods has brought the downfall of the Tribe.

The passage of Leven’s sands gives the impression that the excitement is not closely defined; one may suppose that jubilation is not connected with the downfall of a dictatorship but is simply a chauvinistic joy of seeing major troubles in the enemy camp. This might be identified with Wordsworth’s middle way of Anglicanism. To Wordsworth, that the Jacobins were overthrown by “the might of their own helper” — the terror which they themselves established had defeated them — suggests a divine irony by which God sometimes seems to assert his justice. Hence the jubilation indicates Wordsworth’s gratitude not to the opportunist group in the French National Convention who caused the Jacobin downfall, but to “everlasting Justice, by this fiat / Made manifest.” But this anxiety is revealed not in the way of the description of psychology but in a way of supernaturalism.

### **3.4 “Spots of Time” of Supernaturalism**

One of the incidents, which *The Prelude* specifically identifies as a “spot of time”, is about the child scanning a wild landscape in the hopes of spotting a friend. But the incident is at once more emotionally intense and more intellectually complex. The boy is lost on the moors above Penrith. Searching for the companion from whom he has been separated, he stumbles instead upon the site of an old gallows where a murderer’s corpse has been left rot and the name of the murderer has been carved in the turf by some local citizens. In flight, he climbs up to a summit marked by an ancient beacon and sees at a distance a girl carrying a pitcher of water against a gust of wind. In this spot of time, the “inscription in the turf” witnessed by the boy is not “read” at all; that is, the author does not let readers know the story by a normal way of reading a systematic code of signification that leads to the truth of the execution. As Thomas Weiskel points out, the letters are in the “liminal space where the signifier appears but is not yet fully — consciously — read”.<sup>19</sup> The divergence from a grammar initiates the perception of the “visionary dreaminess” and forces readers to “read” the scene in tropological rather than grammatical terms.

The significance of this “spot of time” lies in its connection of death and grammatical unreadability. In the death scene, the implements of death are in ruin or absent (“The gibbet-mast of death was mouldered down, the bones / And iron case were gone”), but death is preserved by an anonymous inscription and by the clearing away of grass to avoid the encroachment of nature. Because of this action, death here is reinscribed into the temporality of a very human language whose meaning is in turn grounded in that death, and therefore the relationship between the living and the dead is established. This significant relation cannot be achieved through a representational but an incarnational rhetoric. Just as Jesus enters the world, the act of ritualistic clearing away of grass does not only make meaning into language, but inserts human into nature and makes him open to that which is beyond the horizon



of any concept of human temporality.

Another “spot of time” that Wordsworth refers to is the event that he was waiting to be collected at the end of a school term. Leaving his brothers, Wordsworth took up a position on a high crag so that he could watch both roads on which the horses to take them home might appear. And these things become the poet’s later memory all his life. For it was in the vacation that his father died. Since then he was in deep chastisement. He describes his state of mind after his father’s death:

The event,  
With all sorrow which it brought, appeared  
A chastisement, and when I called to mind  
That day so lately past, when from the crag  
I looked in such anxiety of hope,  
With trite reflections of morality,  
Yet in the deepest passion, I bowed low  
To God who thus corrected my desires.

*(The Prelude, Book XI, 367-74)*

The chastisement is not easy to understand. Why did his father’s death make him in such deep sorrow? What made him to bow low to God who thus corrected his desires? If we explain it in the idea of gift of hermeneutics, we might see its incarnational significance. Lewis Hyde shows that the logic of gift is asymmetrical and anti-economic; like the “gift” of incarnation and its repetition in the Eucharist, what is “consumed” by the recipient is not thereby depleted (as it would be in an economic exchange) but rather increased. Hyde describes “what seems first to be a

paradox of gift exchange: when the gift is used, it is not used up. Quite the opposite, in fact: the gift that is not used will be lost, while the one that is passed along remains abundant.”<sup>20</sup>

Within the rhetoric of incarnation, the death of the father can be seen as a sacrifice like God’s incarnation into the world. Thus it must be thought of in terms of the excess of logic of gift, and the superfluity permits an increase in being: the childhood events conditioned by the death of the father become to the poet

Spectacles and sounds to which  
I often would repair, and thence would drink  
As at a fountain.

(*The Prelude*, Book XI, 382-84)

The memories thus become a repeated source of meaning which, like a fountain, can continue to pour out of itself seemingly without depletion. Levinas has the similar opinion and he believes that the very ability to become an incarnated subject capable of experiencing infinity is founded on the experience of being accused.<sup>21</sup> Thus the fact that Wordsworth is chastised by God indicates that he has obtained the ability to experience infinity.

An account in Book XIII of a nocturnal hike up Mount Snowdon by sea in Wales presents a climatic version of conflict between figural structure and incarnational rhetoric.

I looked about, and lo,  
The moon stood naked in the heaven at height  
Immense above my head, and on the shore

I found myself of a huge sea of mist,  
Which meek and silent rested upon my feet.  
A hundred of hills their dusky backs upheaved  
All over the still ocean, 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.  
Meanwhile, the moon looked down upon this shew  
In single glory, and we stood, the mist  
Touching our very feet; and from the shore  
At distance not the third of a mile  
Was a blue chasm, a fracture in the vapour,  
A deep and gloomy breathing-place, through which  
Mounted the roar of waters, torrents, streams  
Innumerable, roaring with one voice.  
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.

*(The Prelude, Book XIII, 40-65)*

This episode begins with the description of a huge sea of mist. It is a figure of the sea, the representation of the “real sea”. It is meek and silent, subject to the control of the viewer, because it resides in the controllable grammar. Undoubtedly this can

be taken as a systematic relationship that the figurative seas are paired with the real seas. But the tropological divergence gradually appears when the sea of mist breaks out of its figural mold. The sea of mist is no longer “meek and silent”. It up heaves over the still ocean and its vapors change themselves into various shapes. Compared with the mist sea, the real sea seemed dwindled and would give up its majesty. Finally, when the mist is fractured and a chasm appears at distance, the relationship between the mist and the real sea dissolves, since this is a sudden interruption of the figural scene. This is a gloomy breathing-place through which mounts the roar of water, torrents and streams, roaring with one voice. This sentence is a metaphor in which the words of “breathing” and “one voice” indicate a living thing. In “The Poetics of Prophecy”, Hartman says, “should a God-Word precede in Wordsworth, it is rarely foregrounded, but tends to be part of the poem’s ground as an inarticulate, homeless or ghostly, sound”.<sup>22</sup> It is, in Harman’s classic formulation, an “omphalos,” a “place of places,” which is “at once breach and nexus, a breach in nature and a nexus for it and a different world.”<sup>23</sup> A. C. Bradley in his “Oxford Lectures on Poetry” also remarked, “Everything here is natural, but everything is apocalyptic.”<sup>24</sup>

All voices below fix into one, mount up through the fracture and become a “homeless” voice. This can be understood that words of autobiographical narrative language, like Jesus’ return to the Father, dissolve into the source of that language in the extra-textual self of the poet. Once the words disappear into meaning as into “streams / innumerable, roaring with one voice,” they become unintelligible or silent, in contrast to the single winding stream of the autobiographical narrative with which Book IX opens, or even the river from whose progress one can draw “the feeling of life endless, the one thought / By which we live, infinity and God.” (*The Prelude*, Book XIII, 183-84) But the words do not disappear. Their transcendental side is read

in a complex rhetoric in this episode. In Book X, the poet had pictured himself as “a clouded ...moon”, but here the image of the moon is different, which illuminates the landscape of the imagination, “stood naked in the heavens at height / Immense above my head,” and later “the moon looked down upon the shew /... in single glory.” So the moon guarantees and legitimizes the poet’s position above this scene. Everything can be reflected in the moon. As Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy remarked that Romanticism sees the desired “auto-production” of the subject-as-work in terms of “reflection.”<sup>25</sup> So when the poetic voice of *The Prelude* withdraws from the text into the silence of the extra-textual life, readers are presented with the kind of figural, reflective structure in which nature and mind mirror each other and unite together. As Wordsworth had marveled in *The Recluse* how external nature and mind were suited each other, the external things have suggested three mental faculties (reason, understanding and sense), and the process of nature that brought that complex spectacle is called an emblem of the imagination, the “glorious faculty” that put together and completes the apprehensions of the other three; achieves a coalescence of the past, present, and future; and creates “a like existence”. “Such minds are truly from the deity.” (*The Prelude*, Book XII, 112)

### **3.5 Complexity and Duality of “Spots of Time”**

If the characteristics of the weight of ages and supernaturalism in the “spots of time” discussed in the last two sections are distinctive, then there is no obvious distinction in his recollection of a visit with some schoolboys to Furness Abbey. With the technique of contrast, Wordsworth reveals the unity of subject and object, and of the past and present.

The antique walls  
Of Nightshade, to St Mary's honor built,  
Stands yet a mouldering pile with fractured arch,  
Belfry, and images, and living trees,  
A holy scene! Along the smooth green turf  
Our horses grazed. To more than inland peace  
Left by the west wind sweeping overhead  
From a tumultuous ocean, trees and towers  
In that sequestered valley may be seen,  
Both silent and both motionless alike:  
Such the deep shelter that is there, and such  
The safe guard for repose and quietness.  
Our steeds remounted and the summons given,  
With whip and spur we through the chantry flew  
In uncouth race, and left the cross-legged knight,  
And the stone-abbot, and that single wren  
Which one day sang so sweetly in the nave  
Of the old church, that — though from the recent showers  
The earth was comfortless, and touched by faint  
Internal breezes, sobbings of the place  
And respirations, from the roofless wall  
The shuddering ivy dripped large drops — yet still  
So sweetly “amid the gloom the invisible bird  
Sang to herself, that there I could have made  
My dwelling-place, and lived ever there  
To hear such music.

*(The Prelude, Book 2, 102-28)*

What they visit is a ruined abbey. Here there are old fane, where once the druids worshipped, antique walls, and a pile with fractured arch, etc. But the present participles Wordsworth uses suggest continuous actions. For example, the phrase “mouldering pile with fractured arch” lets us see the process of crumbling going on. Another phrase “living trees” suggests a truly visible motion of life. It seems that Wordsworth intentionally puts these scenes together as a contrast.

This is a dilemma in our imaginative and associative thinking. Just from these present participles we cannot decide which is the symbol of the endurance, the motionless but decaying ruin or the living, therefore, moving trees. While readers are still trying to formulate and identify their impressions, Wordsworth pronounces confidently and unambiguously, “A holy scene!” What is the holiness of the scene? The poet does not give the answer directly. But he quickly shifts to the horses grazing along the smooth green turf. This shift is interesting because it avoids the sense of time and leaves a large space for reader’s imagination. For our glance is now directing to the horses, neither timeless, nor holy, but merely grazing.

In the next five lines, the scene of timeless is strengthened by the emphasis on the seclusion of the sequestered valley. The strong wind from the tumultuous ocean sweeps overhead. If the strong wind represents the time and events outside world, the valley then is again in the state of timelessness of the mouldering pile: “Both silent and both motionless alike.” The schoolboy visitors here are also sequestered from the time outside; the valley is “the safeguard for repose and quietness.” The calm suggested is the weight of ages, for the phrases set off long historical echoes. The abbey had for centuries enjoyed a special kind of repose and peace, being sequestered from the world and change in a very literal sense.

While readers are still sequestered like the ruined abbey in a motionless state, the poet makes the schoolboys suddenly rush out of the ruin on their horses. Their agile activities of climbing up and spurring the horses remind us of the knight of the past in the battle. Their muscular energy again makes a contrast with the ruined abbey, which indicates they are alive and finite. But the contrast does not stop here. For Wordsworth emphasizes the following point: the boys “flew / In uncouth race, and left the cross-legged knight, / And the stone-abbot...” We might assume that the cross-legged knight and the stone-abbot represent a reality in the remote past when they could move about the abbey like the boys. This contrast of the living boys with the stone statues is like the contrast of the living trees with the mouldering pile. So it is in these contrasts of life and death, past and present, that the poem triggers reader’s imagination and make them shuttle rapidly among the several points of time.

There is another point worthy of our attention. Among the mouldering pile and stone statues is an invisible little wren which sings so sweetly that the poet is reluctant to leave. But in this long sentence, the poet inserts an attributive clause “which one day sang so sweetly in the nave...” Does this phrase “one day” refer to a certain particular time? It might not be taken so. For in a larger context, the passage is introduced with reference to habitual visits to such places (II. 95-103). It can be supposed that this description is introduced from poet’s memories of several visits. So the phrase “one day” is a visionary moment out of many similar days. To express the past experience, Wordsworth introduces a characteristically animist kind of imagery in “Internal breezes, sobbings of the place / and reparations,” which suggests a genius of the place mourning for the present ruin. However, the sweetness of the bird’s song is in contrast: the earth is comfortless, but the birds to be a comforter, offering sweetness “mid the gloom” and having about it hint of spiritual



endurance. The bird therefore begins to gather to itself suggestions of the Holy Spirit. Although unobtrusive, it allows both occasions, the day the wren sang so sweetly and the day the horses grazed. In short, the random small phrase unites the past and the present.

In the above analysis, we can notice complexities and cross-references that seem to promote confusion, a coalescing of time and place. Perhaps that was what Wordsworth wanted to promote vague sensations of numinous, nebulous feelings of spiritual presence. But those experiences were based on reality. Wordsworth did adjust his youthful experience with the memories, but that does not mean he simply fabricates anything. We should say that his experience does seem to have been mystical in the traditional sense. For example, the schoolboy's coming to Furness Abbey ruin by riding must exert great muscular effort, involving strict physical control, bodily equilibrium, and nervous and physiological alertness of a high order. Again, the last three lines: "... I could have made / My dwelling-place, and lived for ever there / To hear such music" is also a realistic basis for their past experience. Why should he live forever there? Just to listen to the music? This is hyperbole of saying how delightful the wren's singing was. But the whole passage suggests the sense of relaxation. As we know, at this stage of life Wordsworth was orphaned, and his home was not his father's house but Ann Tyson's cottage. Naturally he had the needs to be relaxed because of physical and spiritual difficulties. Richard Rorty's comment upon the similar situation might be pertinent.

The transition from tenseness, self-responsibility, and worry, to equanimity, receptivity, and peace, is the most wonderful of all those shiftings of inner equilibrium, those changes of the personal center of energy, which I have analyzed so often; and the chief wonder of it is that it so often comes about, not by doing, but by simply

relaxing and throwing the burden down. This abandonment of self-responsibility seems to be the fundamental act in specifically religious, as distinguished from moral practice. It antedates theological and is independent of all philosophies.<sup>26</sup>

If we compare the “spots of time” of Furness Abbey with those discussed in the previous two sections, we may easily find the duality of “spots of time”. The “spots of time” with the sense of weight of ages show the poet’s worry and anxiety about human life, but their forms to express these feelings are supernatural; the “spots of time” of supernaturalism express the poet’s dream and illusion, but they have their firm realistic bases; and for the “spots of time” with both the supernatural and realistic in forms, what they illustrate must be set on objective reality if they convey the poet’s mystic feelings. The duality of Wordsworth’s “spots of time” further accounts for the fact that although incarnation is used by Wordsworth to create what seems to be an artificial distinction between Romantic and Enlightenment systems of thought, the incarnational metaphor cannot be reduced to one side of an oppositional pair, as when we oppose Romantic “organism” to Enlightenment “mechanism”. The foundational role of the incarnation and its Christian context in the culture that produced both Enlightenment and Romantic epistemology provided a perspective that tied essentially the binary oppositions.

## Chapter Four

### Incarnation and the Wavering Balance of Mind

#### 4.1 Inability of a Grammar for the Self outside of the Text

*The Prelude*, as its subtitle indicates, is about the growth of a poet's mind. Wordsworth seeks for a complete development of a whole life. From the structure, it has a resemblance to Milton's *Paradise Lost*.<sup>1</sup> Consisting of 14 books, nearly 9,000 lines of blank verse, the poem is roughly divided into 3 sections. In the opening section (Book I to II), the poet describes his growing conscious union with nature during his childhood and his growing awareness of nature's power, maintaining that a spiritual devotion to nature awakens and informs the poet's faculties. The middle part (Books III to XI) includes descriptions of his years at Cambridge, two separate episodes of living in London, his experience in France during the Revolution and his acceptance of Godwin's philosophy, which caused him to examine the nature intellectually and lose the easy communion of his youth. In the last section (Books XII to XIV), Wordsworth's imaginative power is restored when he dedicates his life to celebrating the nobility of humanity and the beauty of nature. Up to now, the poem has completed the narration of a circle of the poet's life.

When characterizing the text of Rousseau's *Social Contract*, Paul de Man believes that a large system or a text is "grammatical" insofar as it is a general, self-sufficient, systematic code indifferent to the specific events. "Just as no text is conceivable without grammar, no grammar is conceivable without the suspension of referential meaning. Just as no law can ever be written unless one suspends any consideration of applicability to a particular entity...grammatical logic can function

only if its referential consequences are disregarded.”<sup>2</sup> The narrative structure of *The Prelude* is a grammar since it encodes the relationship between the discursive “I” and his narrative past, placing them into the pattern of opposition whose questionable stability depends on a suspension of reference to the particular encounters with the past that tend to subvert the figural model. When talking about the formation of liberty and French struggle, for instance, Wordsworth obviously ignores the historical events:

The historian’s tale  
Prizing but little otherwise than I prized  
Tales of the poets, as it made the heart  
Beat high, and filled the fancy with fair forms.  
*(The Prelude, Book IX, 283-286)*

The identification of personal history with that of French Revolution is just such a poetic interpretation of history, a reading of events that can remain within the grammar of poetry only by suppressing the historical events that make the identification possible.

The poet’s intention of grammar also shows itself in Wordsworth’s telling the lovers’ tale in the form of a melodrama in order to represent the French Revolution as a historical phenomenon.<sup>3</sup> Vaudracour, a character in the 1805 version, canceled in later version, represents the post-revolutionary Englishman, fearing invasion while coming to terms with his own disappointment at the failure of the Revolution. Readers at that time would recognize the melodramatic form as a moderate alternative to tragedy, the other available model of historical process. While tragedy is revolutionary, heroic, but ultimately reactionary — responsibility shifts to the

inexorable forces of history — melodrama suggests a more open-ended attitude towards revolution, a sense that its business remains unfinished. It represents social evil but not the possibility of taking action against it. Vaudracour is a victim of the ancient regime's injustices, but he passively accepts this arbitrary authority by capitulating to his father's wishes and finally withdrawing into silence. The story "Vaudracour and Julia" is thus a revisionist commentary on the Revolution, and expresses a view consistent with Wordsworth's impassioned letter to the Bishop of Llandaff in 1783: the tale's true significance is not biographical, but historical.

But later, especially when his own country intervened French Revolution and the atrocities of the Reign of Terror in France brought a sense of treachery and desertion, culminating in his loss of all feeling of conviction, his faith in nature and in man, Wordsworth seemed to face the possibility that the original grammatical narrative may ultimately be incapable of representing the self that necessarily precedes and outlives the written life story. Or in terms of the river imagery with which Book IX opens, the grammatical banks of the poem are finding it increasingly difficult to contain the narrative. In Book XIII, we can see the poet's intention of breaking the limit of grammar. When he rises above the scene at the top of Snowdon Mountain, with the mist at his feet, he feels himself as a lark soaring:

anon I rose

As if on wings, and saw beneath me stretched  
Vast prospect of the world which I had been  
And was; and hence this song, which like a lark  
I have protracted, in the unwearied heavens  
Singing, and often with more plaintive voice  
Attempered to the sorrows of earth —

Yet centering all in love, and in the end  
All gratulant, if rightly understood.

(*The Prelude*, Book XIII, 377-85)

We should not completely equal the “I” here with the poet himself, since the “I” at this moment has literally risen above the scene of ordinary activity. He is very different from the discursive voice that says, “I am lost” in Book XI, or who describes “Imagination! Lifting itself / Before the eye and progress of my song ” in Book VI. He is no longer the poet who has been struggling through *The Prelude*’s tropological maze, not the self who is writing the poem, but the very different self who is defined as having written the poem. He has actually become a “post-textual” reader of the preceding text. This post-textual voice is the inaccessible origin of the poet’s unconsciousness.

## **4.2 Incarnation by Means of Dialogue**

Now that the grammar is incapable of representing the self outside of the text, is there any other way for the outside life to realize itself in the text? Wordsworth’s method is to hold a dialogue between the two selves inside and outside of the text. In this aspect, the legal hermeneutics may drop some suggestion. Gadamer maintains,

Legal hermeneutics serves to remind us what the real procedure of the human science is. Here we have the model for the relationship between the past and present that we are seeking. The judge who adapts the transmitted law to the needs of the present is undoubtedly seeking to perform a practical task, but his interpretation of the law is by no means merely for what reason an arbitrary revision... The judge seeks to be in accord

with the “legal idea” in mediating it with the present.<sup>4</sup>

Gadamer’s idea of legal hermeneutics indicates that our knowledge of law is always supplemented by individual cases, even productively determined by them. The judge not only applies the law concretely, but also contributes through his very judgment to developing the law. If we adopt the idea of legal hermeneutics in our discussion of the two selves, we can see that the outside abstract self must resort to the inside concrete self to express itself.

As he talks about the role of incarnation, Gadamer emphasizes that incarnation is not to deny the history but to affirm its foundation:

If the Word became flesh and if it is only in the incarnation that spirit is fully realized, then the logos is freed from its spirituality.... The uniqueness of the redemptive event introduces the essence of history into Western thought, brings the phenomenon of language out of its immersion in the ideality of meaning, and offers it to philosophical reflection. For in contrast to the Greek logos, the word is pure event.<sup>5</sup>

The notion of incarnation allows us to see human word not in Greek terms the adequate representation of transcendental logos, but in terms of an event in history, with all the temporal difference that implies. From the elaboration of the relation between language and thought, we may further see the attitude of the self of the outside should assume towards the inside self.

As it is talked about in the first section of this chapter, this poem traces the growth of a poet’s mind. As an autobiography, the poem seems to be a complete fragment and have its own totality, but fragmentariness is in a close and complex relation to totality. According to Lacoue Labarthe and Nancy, “The empty space that a garland of fragments surrounds is a precise drawing of the contours of the Work.”<sup>6</sup>

The absolute incompleteness of the fragment indicates its detached individuality as well as the totality beyond it:

Each fragment stands for itself and stands for that which it is detached. Totality is the fragment itself in its completed individuality. It is thus identically the plural totality of fragments, which does not make up a whole (in, say, a mathematical mode) but replicates the whole, the fragmentary itself, in each fragment.<sup>7</sup>

Although Wordsworth tries to create the totality in this poem, it certainly partakes of some of the logic of fragment. Its contours, for example, cannot be traced in terms of a totalizing grammar, but in the way of fragmentation, or by examining some specific events, such as the “spots of time” and the ascent of the Snowdon Mountain. About the fragmentariness of this poem, De Quincey described: “*The Prelude* therefore, complete as it is with regard to a period of the poet’s life, is only a fragment, and one more example of the many which the last generation could produce of the uncertainty of human projects and of the contrast between the promise of youth and the accomplishment of manhood.”<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the fragmentariness of the work, De Quincey’s comment also implies that the fragments are about the uncertainty of human project and the contrast between the promise of youth and accomplishment of manhood. These two points are identical each other: uncertainty is characteristic of fragmentariness, and fragmentary form best expresses the feature of uncertainty.

As it is discussed in the last section of this chapter, when the poet has risen above the scene of the Snowdon Mountain, he seems to become a lark with the mist and the earth below him, and at this moment he has become a self who is trying to communicate with the self in the text, through which to reveal the truth of the text.



But it is not that the dialogue does not begin until the end of this poem. In fact this kind of communication begins from the beginning and runs through the whole poem. In the preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth points out that poetry depends, amongst other things, upon repetition. This is clearly the case with *The Prelude*. If we compare the idea of repetition with Milton's idea of echo, we may find the difference of the two poets is that while Milton relies on a relentless forward movement: the spiritual and chronological narratives carry us forward to the expulsion from Paradise, Wordsworth's work shall "justify itself" to Coleridge only as he, in turn, goes back to that original moment in memory. As Wordsworth puts it in Book III, "each man is a memory to himself", those "rememberable things" might allow him to move on, to move forward, and memory takes him back to where it all began. Thus it is through the repeated recalling of the past that the two selves carry on their dialogue and therefore the whole poem has become the representation of wavering balance of the poet's mind.

The construction of *The Prelude* is radically achronological, starting not at the beginning, but at the end — during Wordsworth's walk to "the Vale that I had chosen" (*The Prelude*, Book I, 100), which telescopes the circumstances of two or more occasions but refers primarily to his walk to the Vale of Grassmere, that "hermitage" (Book I, 115) where he has taken up residence at the stage of his life with which the poem concludes. Wordsworth does not tell his life as a simple narrative in past time but as the present remembrance of the things past, in which forms and sensations "throw back our life" (*The Prelude*, Book I, 660-1) and evoke the former self, which coexists with the altered present self in multiple awareness that Wordsworth calls "two consciousnesses." It is true that there is a wide "vacancy" between the 'I' now and the 'I' then. But the poet is aware of the near impossibility of disengaging "the naked recollection of that time" from the

intrusions of “after-meditation” (*The Prelude*, Book III, 644-8). In a fine and subtle figure for the inter-diffusion of the two consciousnesses, he describes himself as one bending from a drifting boat on a still water, perplexed to distinguish actual objects at the bottom of the lake from surface reflections of the enviroing scene, from the tricks and refractions of the water currents, and from his own intrusive but inescapable image (that is, his present awareness). “Incumbent o’er the surface of past time” the poet, seeking the elements of continuity between his two disparate selves, thus conducts a persistent exploration of the nature and significance of memory, of his power to sustain freshness of sensation and his “first creative sensibility” against the deadening effect of habit and analysis, and of manifestations of the enduring and the eternal within the realm of change and time. Only intermittently does the narrative order coincide with the order of the actual occurrence. Instead Wordsworth proceeds by sometimes bewildering ellipses, fusions and as he says, “motions retrograde” in time (*The Prelude*, Book IX, 8)

So far as his sense of self is concerned, the existence of the gap between past and present is paramount. Characteristically, he first expresses this with a paradoxical notion of a peaceful weight in Book II. Even at this early stage of the poem, he works by opposites:

A tranquilizing spirit presses now  
On my corporeal frame, so wide appears  
The Vacancy between me and those days  
Which yet have such self-presence in my mind  
That sometimes when I think of them I seem  
Two consciousness ---- conscious of myself  
And of some other being.

(*The Prelude*, Book II, 27-33)

For some time he cannot escape his sense of bewilderment, “a strangeness in my mind, / A feeling that I was not for that hour / Nor for that place.” “But wherefore be cast down? Why should I grieve? I was the chosen son.” His sense of strangeness and his bold recognition of his religious election proceed side by side till Book III where he feels himself free, “I was a freeman — in the purest sense / Was free — and to majestic ends was strong.” (*The Prelude*, Book III, 89-90)

Book III is the first step for William Wordsworth’s social life. Here he confronts the superficialities of Cambridge, showing his disillusionment with its education. He compares Cambridge to a stage of the whole human life, where he can see “loyal students faithful to their books / Half-and-half idlers, hardy recusants, / And honest dunces.” (*The Prelude*, Book III, 66-68) And in the examination days “the man was weighed / As in a balance!” (*The Prelude*, Book III, 69-70) and after that is the “tremblings withal and commendable fears, / Small jealousies, and triumphs good or bad, / Let others that know more speak as they know.” (*The Prelude*, Book III, 71-73) He has no interest in these “outward things / Done visibly for other minds” (*The Prelude*, Book III, 176-77), and does not want to run into Fortune’s way among the conflicts of substantial life. He really enjoys touching what “lies far hidden from the reach of words” (*The Prelude*, Book III, 187), and he wishes his mind returned into herself. Only in this way could he ascend to such a community with highest truth. (*The Prelude*, Book III, 125)

The whole book is the curious combination of ‘grave and gay’. At the end of this book, he realizes the complexities of memory, the relation of past and present.

Of these and other kindred notices

I cannot say what portion is in truth

The naked recollection of that time,  
And what may rather have been called to life  
By after-meditation.

(*The Prelude*, Book III, 644-48)

Wordsworth gives several implications of his own self-awareness here: “We see but darkly / Even when we look behind us” (*The Prelude*, Book III, 492-3). But this hint of dark passages and blind alleys has another aspect, again ‘teasing us out of thought’:

Caverns there were within my mind which sun  
Could never penetrate, yet did there not  
Want store of leafy arbours where the light  
Might enter in at will.

(*The Prelude*, Book III, 246-9)

Obviously, he does not want to dwell in the darkness: it is enough that he feels at least the light of the sun.

One of the major paradoxes of this poem is the entanglement of the claim and the loss in Books IV, which shows the conflict of the two selves once again. Wordsworth admits, “Strange rendezvous my mind was at that time, / A parti-coloured show of grave and gay, / Solid and light, short-sighted and profound; / Of inconsiderate habits and sedate, / Consorting in one mansion unreprieved.” (*The Prelude*, Book IV, 399-43) His recollections of the returning home, the beautiful scenery of mountains, the sweet melody of birds and the warmth of his countrymen evoke his claims:

Ah, need I say, dear friend, that to brim  
My heart was full? I made no vows, but vows  
Were then made for me; bond unknown to me  
Was given that I should be, else sinning greatly,  
A dedicated spirit...

(*The Prelude*, Book, IV, 333-9)

This is a kind of Christian purification of the poet's mind. The newly born self is aware of his noble, although not very nervous, duty for the future life.

He wanted to do something for his noble claim, but some moments occasionally rise up to disturb his happy mood. A swarm of gawds, feast and dances all conspired to lure him from the realization of his noble aim. The conflict of these two selves often makes him move from the sense of celebrating spiritual victory, as Moses does "Gently did my soul / Put off her veil, and self-transmuted stood / Naked as in the presence of her God (*The Prelude*, Book IV, 140), to the bewildering sense of his being a second Nessus:

The very garments that I wore appeared  
To prey upon my strength, and stopped the course  
And quiet stream of self-forgetfulness.  
Something there was about me that perplexed  
The authentic sight of reason, pressed too closely  
On that religious dignity of mind  
That is the very faculty of truth.

(1850 Version; *The Prelude*, Book IV, 292-8)

Wordsworth's noble claim is also manifested by his admiration for the

steadiness of a discharged soldier. Although a mysterious figure representing “A desolation, a simplicity / To which the trappings of a gaudy world / Make a strange background” (*The Prelude*, Book IV, 401-3), the man has his steadiness, a sense of being “fixed to his place,” which seems, to Wordsworth, to be needed for an enterprise. Finally from the action of rising from the ground, Wordsworth got his revelation.

Slowly from his resting place  
He rose, and with a lean and wasted arm  
In measured gesture lifted his head  
Returned my salutation...

(*The Prelude*, Book IV, 410-413)

The action of rising is simple, but from the stately air of mild indifference, Wordsworth understands the significance of the tale of a soldier. This suggests the poet’s determination to rise from the gaudy world.

Returning to school, Wordsworth is in a state of isolation. The bond of indolent society has relaxed their hold of him and he feels he is living more to himself than. What’s more, although he can skim, devour, or studiously pursue some books, he has no settled plan. But in isolation, he can embrace perplexity and sublimity. For instance, in the winter evening he often walks alone in the forest in his college. There he sees a tree with a sinuous trunk and exquisitely wreathed boughs. It is beautiful. For the whole tree is clustered green with ivy from ground almost to the top and its lightsome twigs and outer spray are stirring lightly in quiet breeze. But what moves Wordsworth in the frosty moonlight is the Creator’s magic fiction. The sublimity of the other half, he says, his verse perhaps can never tread:

but scarcely Spenser's self  
Could have more tranquil visions in his youth,  
Nor could more bright appearances create  
Of human forms with superhuman powers,  
Than I beheld loitering on calm clear nights  
Alone, beneath this fairy work of earth.

*(The Prelude, Book VI, 88-94)*

Towards the end of this book, the relation between loneliness and sublimity is clearly expressed in his idea about imagination. To Wordsworth, the existence of imagination is because of the incompetence of language, and its power rises from the mind's abyss of a lonely traveler. He feels he is this kind of traveler:

I was lost;  
Halted without an effort to break through;  
But to my conscious soul I now can say ----  
'I recognize thy glory': in such strength  
Of usurpation, when the light of sense  
Goes out, but with a flash that has revealed  
The invisible world, doth greatness make abode,  
There harbors, whether we be young or old.

*(The Prelude, Book VI, 596-603)*

Although imagination is connected with unhappiness, with imagination man can see from the ordinary things such as infinity, hope, struggle, and desire. Because of this spirit, Wordsworth realizes that the soul seeks for no trophies and struggles for no spoils. What it wants is the perfection of self, and he wishes the self could be strong

enough for the beatitude of others like the mighty flood of Nile poured from his fount of Abyssian clouds to fertilize the whole Egyptian plain. Here the poet shows the reader a self quite different from the idle one when he just returned to school. In addition, from the Alps Wordsworth also sees sublimity of nature. Although the Alps is not as great as he has expected, in the vale from the flowing clouds and the sky above he sees that the whole nature is changing with turmoil and peace, with darkness and brightness. He believes that this is the “Characters of the great Apocalypse, / The types and symbols of Eternity, / Of first, and the last, and midst and without end.” (*The Prelude*, Book VI, 638-40)

In Contrast with the beauty of nature, the world metropolis of London is almost the wasteland. In this place as gloomy as a coffin are full of albinos, painted Indians, dwarfs, the horse of knowledge, the learned pig, the stone-eater, the man that swallows fire, giants, ventriloquists, the invisible girl... all jumbled up together to compose a Parliament of monsters and one vast mill. (*The Prelude*, Book VII, 707-721) Strangely enough, the naturalist poet Wordsworth does not, like such modernist poets as T. S. Eliot, lose his hope in front of the dirty and deserted place. He insists that if we examine the sight carefully, we might see some order in the confusion and have a sense of the whole. Here Wordsworth shows us not only his intention but also the means to reach a perfected self. His method is to communicate with God. It seems to him that man’s ability to observe can be developed by many acquisitions and different modes of education, but attention, comprehensiveness and memory all come from the converse with the works of God. It is because of the communication with God that Wordsworth has finished his purification of mind even in the “vanity of fair” of London:

The Spirit of Nature was upon me there;



The Soul of Beauty and enduring life  
Vouchsafed her inspiration, and diffused,  
Through meager lines and colors, and press  
Of self-destroying, transitory things,  
Composure, and ennobling Harmony.

*(The Prelude, Book VII, 765-771)*

Generally speaking, from Book VIII on the poem is about the poet's retrospect, or as the subtitle of this book indicates, "Love of Nature Leading to the Love of Mankind." The country fair on Helvellyn, the happy life of the people in the countryside and the beautiful scenery of nature, etc. all become the countervailing power against the "Spirit of evil" in humankind, helped maintain for him "a secret happiness" (*The Prelude*, Book XIII, 41-43) in a place safe from outwardness, from the insupportable pain that arose from outward accidents:

And you, ye groves, whose ministry it is  
To interpose the covert of your shades,  
Even as a sleep, between the heart of man  
And outward troubles, between man himself,  
Not seldom, and his own uneasy heart:  
Oh! That I had a music and a voice  
Harmonious as your own, that I might tell  
What ye have done for me. The morning shines,  
Nor heedeth Man's perverseness; Spring returns, ----  
I saw the Spring return, and could rejoice,  
In common with the children of her love.

*(The Prelude, Book XII, 24-34)*

But Wordsworth does not merely attempt to discover the meanings of those “visiting” but tries to establish the continuity of the immaterial self that had betrayed itself into becoming a thing in the world of things, subject to the judgment of history, of others. He believes that the self that is true does not, and has never, committed itself to a human place and time, nor to the dictates of reason or judgment, those faculties that generally inform purposeful action. Instead, the true self should be identified with the mind that can exult at the imaginative and spontaneous mastery over senses demonstrated in the past experiences.

There are in our existence spots of time,  
That with distinct preeminence retain  
A renovating virtue, whence, depressed  
By false opinion and contentious thought,  
Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight,  
In trivial occupations, and the round  
Of ordinary intercourse, our minds  
Are nourished and visibly repaired;  
A virtue, by which pleasure is enhanced,  
That penetrates, enables us to mount,  
When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen.  
This efficacious spirit chiefly lurks  
Among those passages of life that give  
Profoundest knowledge to what point, and how,  
The mind is lord and master — outward sense

The obedient servant of her will.

*(The Prelude, Book XII, 208-223)*

In such “spots of time” does Wordsworth gradually approach the true self by carefully stepping his way back through the tumult of history, of “false opinions and contentious thought,” and “of heavier or more deadly weight”. In these “spots of time” we can see the mind’s “power” or “motions” or “visionary dreariness” into his surroundings, obliterating the embodied boundaries between self and the world and appropriating that world as the contents of his own dream.

### **4.3 “Gift Giving” as a Means to Make the Poem Endless**

The idea of gift in hermeneutics is a paradoxical but important notion. Lewis Hyde shows that the logic of gift is asymmetrical and anti-economic, like the “gift” of incarnation and its repetition in the Eucharist, what is “consumed” by the recipient is not thereby depleted (as it would be in an economic exchange) but rather increased. Hyde describes “what seems first to be a paradox of gift exchange: when the gift is used, it is not used up. Quite the opposite, in fact: the gift that is not used will be lost, while the one that is passed along remains abundant.”<sup>9</sup> This theory of gift provides answers to the dilemma faced by Hegel: the problem of the persistence of the objective materiality of language, the word that cannot be “read away” into pure love but must remain in their historical contingency.<sup>10</sup> Hegel was leaning toward something like a Derridean theory of the supplement, or the idea that the persistent materiality and historicity of the signifier, always involved in endless chains of other signifiers, can never successfully disappear before a signified.<sup>11</sup> The gift of incarnation, like the Father’s gift to his Son, is an “emanation” involving an

overflowing and increase of meaning that is not conserved in an economic exchange, and which is thus unearned and extra. As Gadamer says, “Essential to an emanation is that what emanates is an overflow. What it flows from does not thereby become less.... For if the original One is not diminished by the outflow of the many from it, this means that being increases”.<sup>12</sup> Augustine talks of both the divine and the linguistic incarnation in a similarly non-economic way: “Both that word of ours becomes flesh, by assuming it, not by consuming itself so as to be changed into it.”<sup>13</sup>

In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth often packages his life of story as a gift to others. In the passage between the two “spots of time”, he does not desire to represent “substance”; rather he wishes to “give / as far as words can give / A substance and a life” to what he feels (*The Prelude*, Book XI, 338-40), making it clear that poetic incarnation follows the logic of the gift. At the end of the whole poem, he almost abandons the narrative in favor of a dialogue in which his interlocutors are specifically named Dorothy, Coleridge and Calvert, and he declares that the poem is the most important gift to Coleridge. By presenting *The Prelude* to Coleridge as a gift, Wordsworth tries to affirm the self outside of the text. First, a gift is specifically something that is separated from the giver and sent off into the space of a dialogue that transcends the individual self. Second, after a gift is given, the giver usually departs, having left a memorial to himself in the gift.<sup>14</sup> Thus the gift of the narrative to Coleridge helps to palliate the absence that, according to Marin, accompanies narrative’s elision of the discursive “I”. The narrative, because it is of past events, leaves the present, discursive “I” on the outside, but as a gift that narrative can be packaged up and presented to Coleridge in the full enunciation of dialogue discourse. Having left the packaged work of his life in the space of dialogue with Coleridge, the poet is able to exit *The Prelude* and retreat into the silence of the post-textural self who will be manifested in philosophical rather than autobiographical poetic

texts in the future.

Dialogue possesses the feature of fluidity in which truth emerges from interaction instead of appearing as the conclusions of an argument. Thus truth resides, not in the telos of a concept or law, but in exemplary life of an inter-subjectively constituted person. In the dialogue between the poet and Coleridge comes a self-transcendental truth: “What we have loved / Other will love, and we may teach them how” (*The Prelude*, Book XIII, 444-45). In this sense, the dialogue can be both an exemplary “figure” which will provide a “grammar” within which a redemptive plan can be read expectedly and in the same gesture a source of a repeated “auto-production,” which, as we have seen, takes place in the tropological divergence from figural grammar. By repeating the process that Wordsworth has narrated and experienced in *The Prelude*, “the mind of man” can trace the process of incarnation in order to become, according to the poem’s last line, “of substance and of fabric more divine” (*The Prelude*, Book XIII, 446-52). This mimetic apotheosis is an appropriate ending for the poem, because this is also the point at which the incarnate language of the autobiography dissolves into the silence of its source in the extra-textual self.

The dialogue at the end of this poem is, like the Eucharist, both representational and incarnational. From the point of view of structure, it is representational, since this dialogue takes place at the end of the poem, which seems to be the completion of a grammar. But it also functions as an example that will lead to future ethical acts of love: “What we have loved / Others will love, and we may teach them how” (*The Prelude*, Book XIII, 444-45). Charles Altieri, in an effort to define an “expressivist ethics”, draws on Nelson Goodman and Kant to argue that examples, as opposed to arbitrarily illustrative signs, perform an ethical communication that does not depend on rational categories: “Because examples possess and do not simply refer to

properties, they can themselves provide forms that judgment can use without relying on abstract understanding.”<sup>15</sup> In addition to providing such forms, Altieri believes, examples, unlike abstract representations, testify to their own truth by demonstrating how “the truth is rendered or performed”, and also “allow us a range of projective sympathies so that we come to appreciate what is involved in given choices”<sup>16</sup> In this sense the dialogue makes *The Prelude* not at all abstract, but eventful and historical. By emerging from a developing life and a communicative interaction with Coleridge into an exemplary act of love, this device has the performative, ethical dimension that Altieri attributes to examples, and which is a fundamental part of Wordsworth’s incarnational rhetoric.

The spaciousness of his chosen form allows Wordsworth to introduce some of the clutter and contingency of ordinary experience. In accordance with his controlling idea, however, he selects for extended treatment only those of his actions and experiences which are significant for his evolution toward an inherent end, and organizes his life around an event which he regards as the spiritual crisis not of himself only, but of his generation; that shattering of the fierce loyalties and inordinate hopes for mankind which the liberal English — and European — intellectuals had invested in the French Revolution.

Not in single self alone I found,  
But in the minds of all ingenuous Youth,  
Change and subversion from his hour.  
  
(*The Prelude*, Book XIV 156-158)

In short, the structural end of *The Prelude* is its own beginning; and its temporal beginning is Wordsworth’s entrance upon the stage of his life at which it ends. The conclusion goes on to specify the circular shape of the whole. Wordsworth

asks Coleridge to “Call back to mind / The mood in which this Poem was begun.” At this time,

I rose  
As if on wings, and saw beneath me stretch'd  
Vast proposed of the world which I had been  
And was; and hence this Song, which like a lark  
I have protracted....

(*The Prelude*, Book XIII, 377-381)

This song, describing the prospect of his life which had been made visible to him at the opening of *The Prelude*, is the whole composition he is even now concluding. (*The Prelude*, Book XIII, 74-80)

#### **4.4 Incarnation and *The Prelude*: From the Point of View of Hegel's *Logic***

In talking about the development of philosophy, Hegel points out in his shorter *Logic*, “philosophy exhibits the appearance of a circle which closes with itself.”<sup>17</sup> But it is not that simple. He also says,

Each of the parts of philosophy is a philosophical whole, a circle rounded and complete in self. In each of these parts, however, the philosophical Idea is found in a particular specificity or medium. The single circle, because it is a real totality, bursts through the limits imposed by its special medium, and gives rise to a wider circle of circles.<sup>18</sup>

In the same work, Hegel tells us that his philosophy consists of three parts: logic, the philosophy of nature and the philosophy of spirit. The logic begins with the concept of “Being,” which involves, by a successive dialectical spiraling of concept into antithesis and back into higher concept, until it achieves its highest and final conceptual form “the Absolute Idea.” This means a return to the idea with which the logic began, but the achieved idea is higher than the original Being. To Hegel, “The Idea which is independent or for itself, when viewed on the point of this its unity with itself, is Perception or Intuition, and the percipient Idea is Nature. But as intuition the idea is, through an external “reflection”, invested with the one-sided characteristic of immediacy, or of negation. Enjoying however an absolute liberty, the Idea does not merely pass over into life, or as finite cognition allow life to show in it: in its own absolute truth it resolves to let the “moment” of its particularity, or of the first characterization and other-being, the immediate idea, as its reflected image, go forth freely as Nature.”<sup>19</sup> After the second circle of philosophy of nature, we move on to the third region of Hegel’s philosophy of spirit by a similar dialectical process. This last dialectical circle begins with the emergence of subjective spirit out of nature and close with “Absolute Spirit.” Therefore, the total design of vast Hegelian system is an evolution of small dialectical circles which compose a continuum in the shape of three large circles, spiraling upward and widening outward until they constitute one great *Kreis von Kreisen* or *Circle by Circulation*, that comprehends everything.

Hegel’s dialectic of thought is very useful for us to understand the process of “the growth of the poet’s mind.” At the early age, the poet’s mind is united with nature. He opposes to “analytic industry” his own “observations of affinity / In objects where no brotherhood exists / To common minds,” (*The Prelude*, II, 384-386) with the eventual result that “in all things / I saw one life, and felt that it was joy.”



(*The Prelude*, Book II, 429-430) In a manuscript passage, he says that one's relation to the world should be the undifferentiated oneness of self with nature, and with God.

Such consciousness seemed but accidents  
Relapses from the one interior life  
Which is in all things, from that unity  
In which all being live with God, are lost  
In god and nature, in one mighty whole  
As undistinguishable as the cloudless east  
At noon is from the cloudless west when all  
The hemisphere is one cerulean.<sup>20</sup>

But the unity is shattered in the growth of the poet's mind. He began to be aware of the existence of the opposite forces. "I grew up / Forster'd alike by beauty and by fear." (*The Prelude*, Book I 305-306) Related to this opposition between incitation by beauty and discipline by terror are other contraries which constitute the poles between which flow the forces of "this active universe." "Calmness" and "emotion", "peace and excitation," "stillness" and "energy" — "these two attributes / Are sister horns that constitute her strength" (*The Prelude*, Book V, 235-237) In London he "felt in heart and soul the shock / Of the huge town's first presence (1850 Version; *The Prelude*, Book VII, 66-7). The "blank confusion" of the metropolis terrified Wordsworth by a double threat to his sense of individuation-in-unity: by fragmenting unity into anarchy of unrelated parts, and by assimilating the parts into a homogeneity in which no individuality survives,

melted and reduced

To one identity, by differences

That have no law, no meaning, and no end.

*(The Prelude, Book VII, 341-343)*

He describes the process of his breakdown as the cumulative fragmentation and conflict of once integral elements.

To overcome the difficulty, Wordsworth resorted to abstract reason, but it does not rectify the broken heart, for it sets up the kind of inert contraries which cannot be resolved: "Sick, wearied out with contraries," I "Yielded up moral questions in despair. / This was the crises of that strong disease" (*The Prelude, Book XI, 304-306*). He returned to nature to look for support for his failing hopes. In touch with nature, he gradually recovered from all that had been divided: his faculties, senses, feelings, his past and present self, and he finally re-achieved the integrity of being that he had lost. But the integrity at this moment is higher than that when he was a boy, for the love of nature has led to the love of man.

Behold the fields

In balmy spring-time full of rising flowers

And joyous creatures; see that pair, the lamb

And the lamb's mother, and their tender ways

Shall touch thee to heart;

*(The Prelude, Book XIV, 170-76)*

And the love of man has further led to the love of God.

There linger, listening, gazing, with delight  
Impassioned, but delight how pitiable!  
Unless this love by a still higher love  
Be hallowed, love that breathes not without awe;  
Love that adores, but on the knees of prayer,  
By heaven inspired, that frees from chains the soul,  
Being, in union with the purist, best,  
Of earth-born passion, on the wings of praise  
A mutual tribute to the Almighty's Throne.

*(The Prelude, Book XIV, 179-187)*

## Conclusion

Ever since the ancient times, there has been the conflict concerning the relationship between language and thought. The school that takes language as the way of tool insists upon a binary system of representational signs. It regards language as clothing for thought. In the eighteenth century, this tradition was developed into an idea that language as a set of arbitrary tools. This is the limited, instrumental use of language to which Gadamer opposes hermeneutics by saying, “signs...are a means to an end. They are put to use as one desires and then laid aside.”<sup>1</sup> Based on the development of natural science, this mode of thinking sees epistemology as separate from ethics in the claim that we can know something in a way that is not dependent on a particular moral orientation. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this tradition was further developed into analytic philosophy. According to Peter Lamarque, the recognizable traits of analytic philosophy are “the prominence of logic and conceptual analysis, the striving for clarity and rigor in argumentative strategy, the definition of terms, the explicit formulation of theses, the quasi-scientific dialectical method of hypothesis / counter-example / modification, the eschewing of rhetorical figures and the tendency to tackle narrowly defined problem.”<sup>2</sup> D. S. Clarke also set the following statements as its philosophic premises: (1) The end of philosophy is to analyze and describe the structure of mind; (2) This analysis is not based on the study of the introspective psychology; (3) On the contrary, the method of analytical philosophy is through linguistic analysis.<sup>3</sup>

Opposite to analytic philosophy is hermeneutic philosophy which maintains that language is not locked in a binary relationship with thought, but instead an “incarnation” of thought in Gadamer’s sense that through language thought enters the world as historical event. Thus this mode of thinking requires that epistemology

should not be separated from ethics. To put it in Charles Taylor's terms, the self that articulates thought should not be an autonomous agent that detach itself from its systems of knowledge and thereby deny its moral dimension but be itself constituted by its moral orientation to the world: "Selves are not neutral, punctual objects; they exist only in a certain space of questions through certain constitutive concerns. The questions or concerns touch on the nature of the good that I orient myself by and on the way I am placed in relation to it."<sup>4</sup>

Each mode of thinking has both its advantages and disadvantages. Analytical philosophy's emphasis on language is reasonable in its affirmation of the traditional logical functions of language, but it shows a marked indifference to its own ideological or sociological presuppositions. The hermeneutic philosophy attaches importance to the esthetic value, but it lacks the unassailable logic of its way of interpretation. In order to overcome these disadvantages, some philosophers attempted to merge these two traditions. Karl-Otto Apel, for instance, admits that the divergence of analytic philosophy and continental philosophy is striking, but he thinks it necessary to reconcile the method of subjective understanding with the method of objective explanation of some action.<sup>5</sup> Apel's idea of the convergence between post-Wittgensteinian analytical philosophy and the German hermeneutic tradition is also taken up in Habermas's *On the Logic of the Social Sciences* (1967) and *Knowledge and Human Interest* (1968), the philosophical anthropology of cognition. Both thinkers engaged in the 1970s with a linguistic grounding of social sciences and then turned to a discourse theory derived from speech pragmatics. Another one with the same interest is American philosopher Rorty. His first book, *The Linguistic Turn* (1967), contained a long introduction on the "Metaphilosophical difficulties of linguistic philosophy," which signaled many of his reservations about the analytical-linguistic tradition (from which he originated), as well as revealing his

interest in the nature and place of hermeneutic philosophy.

Putting Wordsworth in the context of the development of the philosophy of language, we may find that although his incarnational poetics was raised in the nineteenth century, it had foreshadowed the analytic and hermeneutic philosophical merger happening in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. From its contents, though incarnation is used by Wordsworth to create what from our perspective may seem an artificial distinction between Romantic and Enlightenment systems of thought, the incarnational metaphor cannot be reduced to one side of an oppositional pair. The foundational role of the incarnation and its Christian context in the culture that produced both Enlightenment and Romantic epistemology can provide a critical perspective that is not tied essentially to the binary oppositions. The usefulness of his incarnational poetics is to offer a metaphorical structure that could overcome his own difficulty caused by his predecessors. For he found himself trapped between an inescapable system of representation for which language was no more than a series of arbitrary signs and an intuition of the possibility of harnessing the power of words as incarnation of thoughts, of making self-consciousness turn into language. It would demonstrate how the relationship between signs and things is legislated: “The complex and unitary space of the eucharistic model is organized in such a way that the binary oppositions pertaining to the classificatory criteria are dissolved into a mysterious unity that provides the theological and theoretical origin of their diversification”<sup>6</sup> In this sense, Wordsworth’s incarnational poetics has surpassed Romantic hermeneutics. As Hans-Georg Gadamer points out, Romantic hermeneutics itself made the mistakes of simply inverting oppositions such as reason versus feeling and art versus nature, without escaping that structure of oppositions: “Precisely because romanticism has a negative attitude to this development [the Enlightenment ‘conquest of mythos by logos’] it takes over the

schema itself as an only reverse the evaluation of it.”<sup>7</sup>

Another point to show the fact that Wordsworth approaches modern hermeneutic philosophy is his attitude towards the relationship between the inner and outer languages. Early Christian incarnation-language consideration against representation had a paradox because of its understanding of the opening of John’s Gospel. Since John uses human language to talk about the Son of God as the “Word” of God, an analogy between divine and human expression was inescapable: we have to depend on the meaning of human word if we are to understand what John is talking about. Therefore, there has to be a connection between the Word of God and the word of man. But if we put the analogy in terms of actual spoken language, we would commit the mistake of subordinating the Word to human language because of the contingency and inadequacy of human language to thought. To solve the problem, Augustine imagined the existence of “inner word”, which is produced by consubstantial with thought, just as the Son was begotten by but consubstantial with the Father:

That word of man ... which is neither utterable in sound nor capable of being thought under the likeness of sound, such as must needs be with the word of any tongue; but which precedes all signs by which it is signified, and is begotten from the knowledge that continues in the mind, when that same knowledge is spoken inwardly as it really is.<sup>8</sup>

The inner word can connect both the Word of God and the word of man, which Augustine calls “the articulate sound of word.” What Augustine wanted to say about such kind of inner word is that this word precedes a specific language, but is actively produced in a process of begetting, continuing, and even speaking. This “true word concerning a true thing” is not a subordinate representation of thing, but neither is it

an idealization; it actively expresses knowledge gained from contingent human sources:

All those things, then, both those which the human mind knows by itself, and those which then it knows by the bodily senses, and those which it has received and known by the testimony of others, are laid up and retained in the storehouse of the memory, and from these is begotten a word that is true.<sup>9</sup>

Clearly the aim of Augustine's theory of inner word is to make the incarnational event of thought's enter into historical language, but because of his mysterious divinity he makes himself isolated in the world of inner word.

Modern hermeneutic philosophy also requires a process of inner dialogue: "Because our understanding does not comprehend what it knows in one single inclusive glance, it must always draws what it thinks out of itself, and present it to itself as if in inner dialogue with itself."<sup>10</sup> But the process of inner dialogue is not that of Augustine's inner word because it gives up the divinity and focuses on the psychological basis of understanding. Gadamer emphasizes that the articulation of the inner word is not the result of a reflective process by which we can decide to link a word and a concept. On the contrary,

in thinking, a person does not move from the one thing to the other, from thinking to speaking to himself. The word does not merge in a sphere of mind that is still free of thought.... In fact there is no reflection when the word is formed, for the word is not expressing the mind but the thing intended.<sup>11</sup>

This shows modern hermeneutics' objective basis different from that of the early



Christian incarnation.

Like the philosophers of early Christian hermeneutics, Wordsworth believes that language is the incarnation of thought and that the incarnation is a process from the ideality to the things and events which are not separated from thought. But Wordsworth, true to his empiricist heritage, sees language incarnated as “living thing”, as part of the animated material world. In the note to “The Thorn,” he calls for words to be of interest “not only as symbols of the passion, but as things, active and efficient, which are of themselves part of the passion.”<sup>12</sup> Although the link to a vital, divinely derived source that Augustine in the concept of the inner word is preserved, the foundational principle of incarnational thought is moved from Augustine’s inner world to the world with the strong materiality that British empiricism had brought to consciousness, which is similar to the inner dialogue of the modern hermeneutic philosophy.

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## Notes

### Introduction

- <sup>1</sup> See “Incarnation”, *Encyclopedia Americana*, International edition, vol. 14 (Danbury: Americana Corporation, 1829) 893
- <sup>2</sup> *Holy Bible*, King James Version, (Nashville: Crusade Bible Publishers, INC, 1970) 848
- <sup>3</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Collected Letters 1785-1800*, 6 vol. ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956-71) 625-26.
- <sup>4</sup> Thomas De Quency, *Collected Writings* 10: 229-30. quoted in *Prose Works of William Wordsworth* 2:115
- <sup>5</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad, 1990) 418
- <sup>6</sup> William Wordsworth, *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974) vol.2, 84.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid. 84-85.
- <sup>9</sup> “This return [of objective to the subjective] may perhaps in this respect be compared with the thought which in the written word becomes a thing and which recaptures its subjectivity out of an object, out of something lifeless, when we read. The simile would be more striking if the written word were read away, if by being understood it vanished as a thing, just as in the enjoyment of bread and wine not only is a feeling for these mystical objects aroused, not only is the spirit made alive, but the objects vanish as objects. Thus the action seems purer, more appropriate to its end, in so far as it affords spirit only, feeling only, and robs the intellect of its own, i.e., destroys the matter, the soulless.... But what prevents the action [of eating and drinking] from becoming a religious one is just the fact that the kind of objectivity here in question is totally annulled, while feeling remains, the fact that there is a sort of confusion between subject and object rather than a unification, the fact that love here becomes visible in and attached to something which is to be destroyed.” See G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978) 251.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>11</sup> William Wordsworth, *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, 5 vol. (Oxford: The

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Clarendon Press, 1952), Vol. 2, 249-254

- <sup>12</sup> William Wordsworth, *The Prelude 1799, 1805, 1850*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M. A. Abrams and Stephen Gill (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1979) Book V, 595-605
- <sup>13</sup> J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975) 4-6, 12-13.
- <sup>14</sup> Quoted from *Philosophy: History & Problems* fifth edition, Samuel Enoch Sumpf, McGraw-Hill, Inc. New York, 1994), also see *The History of Western Religions* by Lu Daji (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 1994) 191-195.
- <sup>15</sup> Collin Brown, "Jesus in European Protestant Thought, 1778-1860," *Studies in Historical Theology* 1 (Durham, N. C.: Labyrinth Press, 1985) 95
- <sup>16</sup> William Wordsworth, "Ecclesiastical Sonnets XL" *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, 5 vol. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1952), 381
- <sup>17</sup> William Wordsworth, *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, 3 vol., ed W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1974) vol.2, 84-85

## Chapter One

- <sup>1</sup> William Wordsworth, "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour" *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, vol.2 (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1952) 260.
- <sup>2</sup> Wordsworth himself admits that Coleridge was a source of his philosophical inspiration. See William Wordsworth, "Letter to George Beaumont, written while Wordsworth was at work on Recluse" *The Prelude* ed. Professor de Selincourt (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1952) 608.
- <sup>3</sup> John Watson, *Shelling's Transcendental Idealism*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1882) 92-97.
- <sup>4</sup> (*The Prelude* Book VII, 766-771) All the quotations of *The Prelude* in this dissertation are from the 1850 version except it is specially mentioned.
- <sup>5</sup> As the evidence of Coleridge's knowledge of Spinoza, Newton P. Stallknecht makes a summery: In *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge writes (Chapter 10) that while he was living by the Quantock Hill, (the time of his closest intimacy with Wordsworth) his head was with Spinoza but his heart with Paul and John. In later life he spoke with respect of Spinoza, placing his *Ethics*, with Novum Organum and the *Critique of Pure Reason*, as one of the three

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great works that have appeared since the introduction of Christianity (B. L. ch. 9, note 16). That Coleridge's conversation was full of Spinoza around 1798 and later is very probable. While in Germany at this period we know that he conversed frequently of Spinozism, giving the following concentrated definition thereof: "Each thing has a life of its own, and we are all one life." (See note 20 and text.) Then there is the famous anecdote, to be found in Chapter 10 of *Biographia Literaria*, in which Coleridge and Wordsworth are overheard discussing one Spy Nozy, during their stay on the Quantock Hills. See *Wordsworth and Philosophy* (New York: Naskel House Publishers Ltd., 1975) 12.

<sup>6</sup> Spinoza's position on nature of reality is called pantheism, for he believes that God constituted the whole of reality. It follows from this belief that everything in nature, including the individual person, are modes or aspects of God's being. Spinoza was also a thoroughgoing determinist, for he believed that all things existed and happened by necessity. Even God does not act from freedom of the will, because his actions flow from the necessities built into his own nature. Furthermore, God's nature could not be other than it is, for either this would mean that God was caused by something outside himself and, thereby, he would not be supreme, or it would mean that God's nature was the cause of his own nature, which would be absurd since the effect would be identical to the cause. Hence, for Spinoza, "all things follow from the eternal decree of God, according to that same necessity by which it would follow from the essence of a triangle that its three angles are equal to two right angles." Spinoza thought that we could find peace of mind if we realized that all things are as necessarily must be. He claimed this philosophical viewpoint would free us from the tyranny of our emotions, because it is useless to be agitated by the emotions of fear, anger, regret, hope, or joy when the details of our lives are as necessary as the properties of a triangle.

The implications of Spinoza's position for freedom of the will are clear. Free will is an illusion based on inadequate knowledge of the divine nature and of how the whole scheme of things logically proceeds from that nature. Spinoza suggested that if a stone traveling through the air were conscious, it would feel as though it were free and were choosing to move and land where it does. See William F. Lawhead, *The Philosophical Journey: an Interactive Approach*, (New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2000) 350-351

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.351

<sup>8</sup> Spinoza, *Ethics V*, trans. George Eliot, ed. Thomas Deegan, Salzburg Studies in English Literature, Romantic Reassessment, No. 102 (Salzburg: Institut of Anglistik and

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Amerikanistik, University of Salzburg, 1981) 32

- <sup>9</sup> William Wordsworth, "Preface to Lyrical Ballads" *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* vol.2, sixth edition, (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993) 141-147
- <sup>10</sup> Some philosophers argue that if the universe is in harmonious celestial motion, there must be an animating principle or soul to control it, just as the human soul control the human body. Accordingly, the world should be viewed as an animated living organism, the soul of which is the world-soul. They believe that the human soul should be modeled on the world-soul to achieve harmony among its different parts. This doctrine of the world-soul was developed in Stoicism and Neo-platonism and through them in medieval philosophy. It was revived by Shelling later. He says, "Already in the most ancient times it was believed that the world was pervaded by an animating principle, called the world-soul." — Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, Introduction.
- <sup>11</sup> Of course, it was through Coleridge that Wordsworth received Kant. In 1815, in Chapter Nine of *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge said that he had been acquainted with Kantian teaching for fifteen years, and after that period of time he still read all of Kant's productions "with undiminished delight and increasing admiration." See Coleridge *Biographia Literaria*
- <sup>12</sup> He believes that the distinctive character of reason is its universal application, and that if we can universalize a contemplated action, i.e., if we can conceive all men acting thus under similar conditions, without having to admit that the universality of the act undermines the possibility of its performance, we may consider it a good act. See Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, tran. Lewis White Beck, (Beijing: China Social Sciences Publishing House Chengcheng Books Ltd, 1993) 72.
- <sup>13</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Lewis White Beck, (Beijing: China Social Sciences Publishing House, 1993) 64
- <sup>14</sup> Collin Brown, "Jesus in European Protestant Thought, 1778-1860", *Studies in Historical Theology* vol. 1 (Durham N. C.: Labyrinth Press, 1985) 95.
- <sup>15</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978) 459.
- <sup>16</sup> Colin Brown, "Jesus in European Protestant Thought, 1788-1860", *Studies in Historical Theology I*. (Durham, N. C.: Labyrinth Press, 1985) 78.
- <sup>17</sup> David P. Haney, *William Wordsworth and the Hermeneutics of Incarnation* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993) 50.
- <sup>18</sup> Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, (Cambridge: Harvard

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University Press, 1989) 338.

<sup>19</sup> *Holy Bible*, King James Version, (Nashville: Crusade Bible Publishers, INC, 1970) 848.

<sup>20</sup> Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) 128

<sup>21</sup> William Wordsworth, *The Prelude (1799, 1805, 1850)*, ed. Jonathon Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1979) 411.

<sup>22</sup> Anon. Cited by Lady Holland, "Memoir of the Rev. Sidney Smith", *Edinburgh Review* (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1855), Vol. 61-2

<sup>23</sup> George Crabbe, "The Village", *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* vol. 1, sixth edition, (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993) 2494

<sup>24</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Church and State*, ed. H. N. Coleridge, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, (London, 1839) 60

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* 61

<sup>26</sup> This is a collective term for National Church's guardians, both clerical and lay. It includes not merely the clergy of the Church of England, but also those he calls "the learned of all denominations," such as the teachers in the universities and the great schools. He sees them as the defenders and upholders not just of religion, but of culture in its broadest sense, the parson and the schoolmaster providing in effect a representative of civilization and learning in every parish in the kingdom. See Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Church and State*, ed. H. N. Coleridge, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, (London, 1839)

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* 40. 10-11.

<sup>29</sup> William Wordsworth, "The White Doe of Rylstone" *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1947) Vol. 3, 1275-1279

<sup>30</sup> William Wordsworth, *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, 3 vols. ed. W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974) 276.

<sup>31</sup> William Wordsworth, "The White Doe of Rylstone" *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1947) Vol. 3, 132.

<sup>32</sup> William Wordsworth, *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, 3 vols. ed. W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974) 3: 65.

<sup>33</sup> Ernest de Selincourt: *An Introduction to The Prelude; or Growth of a Poet's Mind by William Wordsworth*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926) Xv-lxii.

<sup>34</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Religious Musings", *The Oxford Book of English Mystical Verses*,

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ed. D. H. S. Nicholson and A. H. E. Lee, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1917) 69.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry", *Norton Anthology of English literature* Vol. 2 (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993) 765.

<sup>38</sup> Robert Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, tran. G. Gregory, (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1981) vol.1, 113, 114.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., II, p.12

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., II, p.13

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., I, p.336.

<sup>42</sup> Cited by E. S. Shaffer, "*Kubla Khan*" and "*The Fall of Jerusalem*", (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975) 88

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.89.

<sup>44</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "The Statesmen's Manual", *Norton Anthology of English literature* Vol. 2 (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993) 398-400

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 399.

## Chapter Two

<sup>1</sup> *Holy Bible*, King James Version, (Nashville: Crusade Bible Publishers, INC, 1970) 848.

<sup>2</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Man and Language" *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. & ed. David E. Linge (University of California Press, 1976) 59

<sup>3</sup> Wilhelm von Humboldt, *On Language: The Diversity of Human Language-Structure and Its Influence on the Mental Development of Mankind*, trans. Yao Xiaoping (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2002) 40.

<sup>4</sup> J. B. Baillie, trans. & ed., *Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind*, (Beijing: China Social Sciences Publishing House, 1999) vol.1, 16.

<sup>5</sup> 'The realized purpose, or concrete actuality, is movement and process of development. But this very unrest is the self.' See *Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind*, p.20.

<sup>6</sup> 'The portentous power of the negative' paradoxically reinstates selfhood. It is the energy of thought, pure ego. 'Death, as we may call that unreality, is the most terrible thing, and to keep and hold fast what is dead demands the greatest force of all...But the life of mind is not one that

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shines death, and keeps clear of destruction; it endures its death and in death maintains its being.’  
See *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Mind*, pp.30-31.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. vol.1 pp. 22, 23

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. vol.1, p. 44.

<sup>9</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, (London: William Pickering, 1848). 40-41.

<sup>10</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Church and State*, ed. H. N. Coleridge, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, (London: William Pickering 1839) VI, 101,

<sup>11</sup> Gordon Mckenzie, “Organic Unity in Coleridge”, *Shakespeare Criticism*, (New York: Univ. of California Publications, 1930) vol.1, 223.

<sup>12</sup> William Wordsworth, *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974) vol. 2, 84-85.

<sup>13</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. J. Shawcross, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1907), vol.2, 83.

<sup>14</sup> William Shakespeare, “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” *Riverside Shakespeare*, (Boston:Houghton Mifflin Company. 1974) p. 242

<sup>15</sup> Louis Marin, *Food for Thought*, trans. Mette Hjort, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989) 11.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 10.

<sup>17</sup> Hans-George Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donal G. Marshall. (New York: Crossroad, 1990) 154.

<sup>18</sup> Hans-George Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, ed. Robert Bernasconi, trans.

Nicholas Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) 34.

<sup>19</sup> cf. Henry Crabb Robinson, *Blake’s Poetry and Design*,

<sup>20</sup> John Keats, “Ode to a Nightingale”, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* vol. 2, sixth edition, (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993) 790.

<sup>21</sup> Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature* (London: Routledge & Jengan Paul, 1975) 8.

<sup>22</sup> William Wordsworth, *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974) vol. 2, 84

<sup>23</sup> MS W-64-73, in the Norton edition of *The Prelude* 498

<sup>24</sup> Stanley Cavell, *In Quest of the Ordinary: Lines of Skepticism and Romanticism*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988) 124.

<sup>25</sup> Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, (Cambridge: Harvard



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University Press, 1980) 337-40.

<sup>26</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Frost at Midnight" *Norton Anthology of English Literature* Vol. I, (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993) 366.

<sup>27</sup> William Wordsworth, *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W. J. Owen and J. W. Smyser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974) vol. 3, 65.

## Chapter Three

<sup>1</sup> Herbert Lindenberger, *On Wordsworth's "Prelude,"* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963) 153.

<sup>2</sup> Homer, "Odyssey", *The Norton Anthology of World Masterpiece*, expanded ed. (W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1995) 219.

<sup>3</sup> Plato, *Great Dialogue of Plato*, trans. W. H. D. Ronse (New York: The New American Library, Inc, 1965) 83.

<sup>4</sup> At the beginning of chapter 4 in his "Poetics", Aristotle gives his idea of imitating. "Generally speaking, it seems that there are two causes that account for the origins of poetry, both of them natural. Imitating is natural to human beings from childhood onwards: man differs from other animals in being extremely imitative; his first steps in learning are made through imitation, and all people get pleasure from imitations. An indication of this is what happens with works of art: there are things that give us great pain when seen in the flesh, yet we enjoy looking at pictures of them that are exact likeness ---- things such as the most repellent animals and corpses." See *The Philosophy of Aristotle: a New Selection with an Introduction and Commentary*, ed. Renford Bambrough, trans. J. L. Creed and A. E. Wardman (New York: The New American Library, Inc. 1963) 414.

<sup>5</sup> Neo-platonism, which was the last philosophical system of the classical world, explained the origin of the world in terms of Plotinus' three hypostases (the one, nous and the soul) and the process of emanation. Neo-platonism attempted to reconcile the two supposedly incompatible system of Plato and Aristotle, by considering Aristotle's philosophy as an introduction to Plato's higher wisdom. This attitude led many Neo-Platonists to comment extensively on both Plato and Aristotle and thus contributed greatly to the history of philosophy. Neo-platonism advocated polytheism and mysticism, and had a favorable attitude towards theology. Hence it became the main opposition of early Christianity, which it directly attacked. See *Dictionary of Western Philosophy: English-Chinese* ed. Nicholas Bunnin and Jiyuan Yu (Beijing People

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Publishing House, 2001) 672.

- <sup>6</sup> William Shakespeare, “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” *Riverside Shakespeare*, (Boston:Houghton Mifflin Company. 1974) p. 242.
- <sup>7</sup> Sir Philip Sidney, “The Defense of Poesy”, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, sixth edition, (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993), Vol. 1, 483.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid. 482-483.
- <sup>9</sup> Samuel Encoch Stumpf, *Philosophy: History and Problems*, (New York: Vanderbilt University, 1994) 229.
- <sup>10</sup> Thomas Hobbes, “On Imagination Series” *Levithan*, Chinese Version, translated by Li Sifu and Li Tingbi, (Bejing: Commercial Press, 1985) 15.
- <sup>11</sup> Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, ed Joseph Addison, Richard Steel, and Others. Ed. by G. Gregory Smith In 4 Vols. Vol. III, No. 417. Pp.295, 1945
- <sup>12</sup>. William Wordsworth, *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974) Vol. 2 432.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid. 432
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid. 438.
- <sup>15</sup> James Joyce, *Stephen Hero*, (New York: New Direction, 1963) 213.
- <sup>16</sup> Eric Gould, *Mythical Intention in Modern Literature*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981) 147.
- <sup>17</sup> Sancho Panza is Don Quixote’s servant in *Don Quixote*. See “Don Quixote” *The Norton Anthology of World Masterpiece* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1995), vol. 1, 2565.SS
- <sup>18</sup> Thomas De Quincey, *Selected Writings of Thomas De Quincey*, ed. Philip Van Doren Stern, (New York: Random House, 1949) 422.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid. 422
- <sup>20</sup> Lewis Hyde, *The gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* (New York: Random House, 1983) 21.
- <sup>21</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, “Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence”, trans. Alphonso Lingis, Martinus Nijhoff *Philosophy Texts* vol. 3 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981) 78..
- <sup>22</sup> Geoffrey Hartman, “The Unremarkable Wordsworth”, *Theory and History of Literature* vol.34 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987) 179.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid, p.122
- <sup>24</sup> A. C. Bradley, *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*, (London: Lincoln-Rembrandt Publishing, 1909)

- <sup>25</sup> Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, “The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism,” trans. Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester, *Intersections: Philosophy and Critical Theory* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988) 341.
- <sup>26</sup> Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1979) 10.

## Chapter Four

- <sup>1</sup> Milton’s *Paradise Lost* has also twelve books. But *The Prelude* spills over 13 books, 14 books in the final version in 1850.
- <sup>2</sup> Paul de Man, “Political Allegory of Persuasion,” *Allegory and Representation: Selected Papers from the English Institute, 1979-1980*, ed. Stephen J. Greenblatt (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1981) 668.
- <sup>3</sup> “Melos” is Greek for song, and the term “melodrama” was originally applied to all musical plays, including opera. In the early nineteenth-century London, many plays were produced with a musical accompaniment that (as in modern motion pictures) served simply to fortify the emotional tone of the various scenes; the procedure was developed in part to circumvent the Licensing Act, which allowed “legitimate” plays only as a monopoly of the Drury Lane and Covent Garden theaters, but permitted musical entertainment elsewhere. The term “melodrama” is now often applied to some of the typical plays, especially during the *Victorian Period*, that were written to be produced to musical accompaniment. See M. H. Abrams’ *The Glossary of Literary Terms*, (Fort Worth Philadelphia: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1999) 154.
- <sup>4</sup> Hans-George Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donal G. Marshall. (New York: Crossroad, 1990) 327-28.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 419.
- <sup>6</sup> Lacoue-Labarthe, Philippe, and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*, translated by Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester, *Intersection: Philosophy and Critical Theory*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988) 47.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 43.
- <sup>8</sup> Thomas De Quincey, “Wordsworth’s Autobiographical Poem,” *Gentleman’s Magazine* 34

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(1850): 459-68, quoted in the Norton *Prelude* 553.

- <sup>9</sup> Lewis Hyde, *The gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*, New York: Random House, 1983, p.21
- <sup>10</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, translated by T. M. Knox (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975) 251.
- <sup>11</sup> Love is less than religion, and this meal, too, therefore is not strictly a religious action, for only a unification in love, made objective by imagination, can be the object of religious veneration. In a love-feast, however, love itself lives and is expressed, and every action in connection with it is simply an expression of love. Love itself as an emotion, not as an image also. The feeling and the representation of the feeling are not unified by fancy. Yet in the love-feast there is also something objective in evidence, to which feeling is linked but to which it is not united in an image. Hence this eating hovers between a common table of friendship and a religious act, and this hovering makes difficult the clear interpretation of this spirit. See G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978) 248.
- <sup>12</sup> Hans-George Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donal G. Marshall. (New York: Crossroad, 1990) 140.
- <sup>13</sup> Saint Augustine, *On the Holy Trinity*, ed. Philip Schaff (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 191) 209.
- <sup>14</sup> This sense of gift giving as a separation of the gift from the giver relies on Levinas's notion that "giving has meaning only as a tearing from oneself despite oneself." See Levinas's "Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence," trans. Alphonso Lingis, Martinus Nijhoff, *Philosophy Texts*, vol.3, (Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981) 78.
- <sup>15</sup> Charles Altieri, *Canons and Consequences: Reflections on the Ethical Force of Imaginative Ideals* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1990) 246.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 247.
- <sup>17</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *The Logic of Hegel*, trans. Wallace, M. A. , LL.D. (Beijing: China Social Science Publishing House Chengcheng Books Ltd, 1999) Section 17, p.28
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* Section 15, p.24.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* Section 244, p.379.
- <sup>20</sup> William Wordsworth, MS RV (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 525.

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## Conclusion

- <sup>1</sup> Has-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, edited and translated by David E. Linge, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976) 87.
- <sup>2</sup> Peter Lamarque, "Criticism, Aesthetics and Analytic Philosophy," in *Literary Criticism: Twentieth-Century Historical, Philosophical and Psychological Perspective*, Vol. 9, ed. Christa Knellwolf and Christopher Norris, (London: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 237.
- <sup>3</sup> D. S. Clarke, *The Origin and the Development of the Analytic Philosophy: Philosophy's Second Revolution, --- Early and Recent Analytic Philosophy*, (Illinois: Open court / Chicago and La Salle, 1997) 1.
- <sup>4</sup> Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989) 50.
- <sup>5</sup> Kark-Otte Apel, *Analytic Philosophy of Language and the Geisteswissenschaften*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1967) in summary.
- <sup>6</sup> Louis Marin, *Food for Thought*, translated by Mette Hjort, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1989, p.9
- <sup>7</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, second revised edition, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad, 1990) 242.
- <sup>8</sup> Saint Augustine, *On the Holy Trinity*, edited by Philip Schaff, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church 3. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917, p.210
- <sup>9</sup> Saint Augustine, *On the Holy Trinity*, edited by Philip Schaff, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church 3. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917, p.212
- <sup>10</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, second revised edition, translated by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, New York: Crossroad, 1990, p.422
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid, p.426
- <sup>12</sup> William Wordsworth, *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, Vol. 2, edited by Ernest de Selincourt, second edition, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963-66, p.513

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