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Wordsworth's Religious Philosophy For the Years 1797-1805: A Study of the The Prelude (1805)

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WORDSWORTH'S RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY
FOR THE YEARS 1797-1805,
A STUDY OF THE PRELUDE (1805)

BY
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VITA AUCTORIS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

If Wordsworth's importance as a man and a poet could be gauged by the number and the length of the controversies he has occasioned, he would doubtless deserve the first rank among English poets. Ever since the publication of his Lyrical Ballads (1797) he and his poetry have been in turn questioned and defended on five main counts. Dating from Coleridge's Biographia Literaria down to the present time, Wordsworth's poetic style, his critical principles, his personal character, his politics, and, lastly, his philosophy have found varying and, often, heated interpretations, pro and con, in innumerable critical essays and books. If any literary figure has drawn to him a most devoted and articulate following, Wordsworth is the man. If any has occasioned determined and even virulent opposition, Wordsworth has done so. Indeed, the complex grounds and the ardor of the disputes have, in general, made the truth about Wordsworth difficult to arrive at.

However, not all the issues that concern Wordsworth and his poetry are as lively today as they once were. The arguments, for example, over Wordsworth's poetic style and critical principles, occasioned by the appearance of the Lyrical Ballads, by

his famous preface to the second edition of these poems' (1800), and by The Excursion (1814), are doubtless a thing of the past. They were judged and largely laid to rest by Coleridge, and later critics like Matthew Arnold, Walter Pater, and James Russell Lowell have supplemented Coleridge's work. Moreover, the disputes over Wordsworth's personal character and the political position of his later years, which arose in Wordsworth's own day under the attacks of Jeffrey, Byron, Hazlitt, Landor, and others, while not infrequently echoed today, have to some extent lost their violence. The excellent and, in many ways, balanced studies of Wordsworth's life by E. Legouis, G. M. Harper, C. H. Herford, E. Batho, and A. V. Dicey have done much to present an objective, sympathetic, and favorable picture of Wordsworth. A fifth font for dispute, however, the interpretation of Wordsworth's philosophy and especially the philosophy of his early poetry, remains as lively an issue as ever.

In a sense the question of Wordsworth's philosophy is the most important question raised regarding Wordsworth. The interpretation of Wordsworth's thought looms the larger, because his thought has a paramount bearing on the understanding of his poetry. Wordsworth indeed has justly been called the "most philosophical of all our great poets."¹ Further, the

¹ Cf. George McLean Harper, William Wordsworth, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1916, 2 vol., 1, 3; also Ernest Bernbaum, Guide and Anthology of Romanticism, vol. I, Guide Through the Romantic Movement, Thomas Nelson and Sons, New York, 1937, 131.

interpretation of Wordsworth's early philosophy determines in some measure the validity, from the aspect of content, of his greatest poetry.² A conclusive treatment of Wordsworth's philosophy, thus far absent in critical efforts, stands to affect in a sense his position in English poetry.³

Specifically, the issue regarding Wordsworth's philosophy arises in his early poetry from the nature of the relationship

² Most critics, with H. W. Garrod, fix the years from 1797 to 1807 as the period of Wordsworth's most significant inspiration. During these years were written the Lyrical Ballads and most of Wordsworth's nature poetry, and notably Tintern Abbey (1798), The Prelude (1805 version), the Ode To Duty (1805), and the ode On Intimations of Immortality (1803-6). On these works and the poetry of this period Wordsworth's position in English poetry is mainly predicated.

³ A recent treatment contains the statement that "there has been no thorough study of Wordsworth's philosophy. . . we have failed as yet to produce any study of Wordsworth's philosophy that is both complete and objective." (M. E. Burton, The One Wordsworth, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1942, 24-5.) The statement is largely true. Nearly all studies of Wordsworth's philosophy touch it incidentally. Most treatments stumble on the fact that his thought is contradictory. In consequence, the construction of a verdict from individual lines in Wordsworth's poetry is exposed to the fallacy of partial selection. The latter error has been latent in many efforts at an ultimate criticism of Wordsworth. The current approach, recognizing the contradictory tendencies of Wordsworth's thought, is a cautious withdrawal from any ultimate view, in favor of indicating main tendencies in his poetry.

Wordsworth claimed between man, nature, and God.⁴ The problem of Wordsworth's philosophy has a religious aspect, insofar as Wordsworth's early work proposes a kind of natural religion characterized by mystic insight into the profounder meanings of the universe about us. It has acute philosophical interest, since Wordsworth's system supposes a radical theory of mind and

⁴ Regarding the philosophy of Wordsworth's later years, there has not been much question. It is generally taken to have been conservative and dominantly orthodox from the point of view of religion. From 1808 on, Wordsworth was a regular church-goer. The Wordsworth of The Excursion and especially The Ecclesiastical Sonnets (1819) was an Anglican, his poetry and thought colored by the imagery, sympathies, and beliefs of a Christian, though liberal, faith. Evidence, however, of a contrary inspiration for the years preceding 1808 has posed the problem of the "two Wordsworths." The publication in 1926 of the 1805 version of The Prelude has substantiated the antecedent opinion of Harper and some earlier critics that Wordsworth's thought enjoyed, in point of political, religious, and philosophical convictions, two separate phases: an early and more radical phase as opposed to a later conservative and orthodox period. On the evidence of his poetry in general and on the basis of the substantial modifications of sympathy and idea found in the later 1839 version of The Prelude (published in 1850 and included in all standard editions of Wordsworth's works), most critics now accept the existence of the "two Wordsworths." Thus: Bradley, Harper, Garrod, Herford, de Selincourt, Gingerich, Fausset, Rader, and Read. Two recent treatments of the question, however, The Later Wordsworth, by Miss E. C. Batho (The MacMillan Company, New York, 1933) and Miss Burton's book, take exception to the majority view. Miss Batho argues for one picture of Wordsworth, predicating a consistent orthodoxy and conservatism in politics, religion, and thought, of the early and later years. Miss Burton, on the other hand, insists on Wordsworth's consistent radicalism throughout his life. As a matter of fact, there is even question whether Wordsworth's early period itself is entirely consistent. Among others, Gingerich, de Selincourt, Rader, Dunn, and Beach discern a change in Wordsworth's opinion between the writing of Tintern Abbey and the completion of The Prelude. They

a cosmology, in bent naturalistic, characterized by the "unity of all." One question is, to what extent is Wordsworth's mysticism compatible with Christian asceticism? The really fundamental question is, does Wordsworth's early system imply pantheism?

As of today, the question turns mainly upon the interpretation of Wordsworth's great autobiographical poem, The Prelude, in its original or 1805 version.⁵ This poem de Selincourt has called "the essential living document for the interpretation of Wordsworth's life and poetry."⁶ Picturing the growth of Wordsworth's mind up to 1797 and the sum of his convictions in 1805, The Prelude is an elaborate and somewhat systematic statement of Wordsworth's early thought. Of importance, too, are other poems, among them Tintern Abbey, some lines of which especially occasion the charge of pantheism, and the so-called "Fragment" of The Recluse (1799-1800)--perhaps the best statement in brief of Wordsworth's philosophical intentions. The supreme value of The Prelude lies in the opportunity it affords for a reconstruction of Wordsworth's philosophical

tend to interpret Wordsworth's mind in 1798 as leaning more or less to outright pantheism, but by 1805 inclining to a qualified theism.

⁵ W. Wordsworth, The Prelude, or Growth of a Poet's Mind (Text of 1805), edited from the manuscripts by Ernest de Selincourt, Oxford University Press, London, 1926, reprinted in condensed edition in 1933. Unless otherwise noted, this text is used throughout the thesis.

⁶ Ibid., ix.

system.⁷ This opportunity has perhaps existed only since the appearance of de Selincourt's work. Because de Selincourt's Prelude offers new and more forthright evidence, the question of Wordsworth's early philosophy has today an altered basis and

⁷ The reliability of The Prelude (1839 version) as strictly representative of Wordsworth's mind at the age of thirty-five is open to large question. Wordsworth's modification of his original radical faith seems clear on the basis of de Selincourt's variorum edition of the five separate manuscripts of The Prelude. The 1839 manuscript portrays, not the young Wordsworth (1797-1805), but the elderly Wordsworth whose religion, thought, and politics had considerably altered during the thirty-five years between the writing of the original and final manuscripts. In consequence of the changes Wordsworth introduced into successive manuscripts of the poem, The Prelude in the original or 1805 version probably should be acknowledged as the more authentic statement of Wordsworth's position in 1805. With the view the recent treatments by Herford, Rader, Dunn, Fausset, and Beach agree. Joseph Beach remarks:

In attempting to reconstruct Wordsworth's views in the period covered by "The Prelude," it is obvious that we should prefer the testimony of the earlier version to that of the revision, made at a time when the poet, turned orthodox and conformist, was anxious not to offend the sensibilities of the faithful. (The Concept of Nature in Nineteenth-Century English Poetry, The MacMillan Company, New York, 1936, 116.)

In the same strain Melvin M. Rader writes:

Until recently the philosophy of the earlier Wordsworth was misrepresented by a late version of The Prelude. But now we have the early manuscripts which place their author in a true light. He consequently seems a bolder and less ambiguous thinker. His mystical excitement is more evident. His early animism and pantheism are revealed far more completely. (The Presiding Ideas in Wordsworth's Poetry, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1931, 121.)

Whether, from the point of view of a system of thought and religion the early position was a better, more defensible one, is a matter that may be overlooked, as likewise the issue that the later version was better poetry. The point to make is that the early version beyond reasonable doubt represents Wordsworth's mind in 1805. As such, it interprets all Wordsworth's

a likely chance for conclusive solution. The present author, however, has yet to see among the critics any systematic effort to use its resources to explain Wordsworth's thought on a truly philosophical basis.

It will be well here to make more specific the origins of the discussion relative to pantheism in Wordsworth. In general, this problem turns on the interpretation of Wordsworth's mysticism and the doctrine of divine immanence found in The Prelude. The critics' analysis of this poem and the much shorter piece, Tintern Abbey, leads them to admit a decided mystical or transcendental tendency is evident in Wordsworth's approach to nature and to God. The term mystical, to be sure, enjoys several meanings. In general, 'mystic' describes a faculty of the mind, immediate and intuitive, which enjoys as its object something higher and more mysterious than the everyday realities about us. As understood outside scholastic philosophy and applied to Wordsworth by the critics, mystical experience so-called has its basis in the mind's natural activity, the mind being supposed to have in certain circumstances and in certain extraordinary people an innate power to part the veil of ordinary experience and arrive at something beyond. In a loose sense, the mystical experience merely connotes some undefined but vivid apprehension of the mysterious or exalted. In the strict sense,

early poetry, and is the essential document for examining his early philosophy.

the real object of mystical experience is the Deity, arrived at interiorly in a sensible or intellectual way. Now, it is this strict sense of the term that critics use in alluding to the mysticism in Wordsworth's poetry, since in Wordsworth's account of transcendental experience he seems to propose an actual intuition of the divine in the life of nature and of the soul. He assumed to enjoy some kind of immediate knowledge of nature and of God beyond the ordinary range of human experience. In the words of Emile Legouis:

For Wordsworth reality possesses the power of melting away, of becoming spiritualized until the poet obtains at least a glimpse of the ideal world. . . the poet no longer merely believes in God; he sees Him. For him the universe becomes, as it were, the transparent veil of divinity. The sound of the world, is, in a manner, God's voice perceptible to the senses.⁷

Joseph Beach alludes to the same mystical tendency:

. . . in The Prelude and elsewhere the imagination is considered as something more than a mere aesthetic faculty, rather as a spiritual faculty that enables its possessor to "see into the life of things," to intuit essential truth. . . There was always a touch of the mystical about (Wordsworth's) concept of nature, as if it were something directly intuited.⁸

Now, natural mysticism always implies some kind of divine immanence as a means for attaining the intuitive experience of God,

⁷ Emile Legouis, The Early Life of William Wordsworth, 1770-1798, A Study of "The Prelude," trans. by J. W. Matthews, J. M. Dent and Co., London, 1897, 448-456.

⁸ Beach, 151, 199.

and no less in Wordsworth than in the mystical philosophy of the ancient Neo-Platonists or of contemporary thinkers. And most critics--probably all critics--discern a doctrine of divine immanence in Wordsworth's system. Thus, Wordsworth's notion of God implies the immanent or indwelling presence of God in nature and in the soul. An equivalent idea is found in Spinoza, "God is the indwelling and not the transient cause of all things."⁹ In Wordsworth's conception, God is somehow to be identified with nature and man, is intimately present to them, not as their extrinsic cause, but intrinsically as their spirit and life. Among the critics, Solomon F. Gingerich affirms:

Wordsworth is the most modern of moderns in his constant insistence on the principle of immanence: God is not an absentee Being in relation to his Universe--He is in nature and in man.¹⁰

Wordsworth's preference for an immanent Deity is likewise noted by Dean Inge:

The presence of the Divine in and behind Nature was. . .intimately felt by Wordsworth. . . When his inspiration was at its height, he really saw and felt what he afterwards remembered and tried to revive--the presence of the living soul of the world.¹¹

⁹ Ethic, pt. 1, prop. xviii.

¹⁰ Solomon F. Gingerich, Essays in the Romantic Poets, The Mac-Millan Company, New York, 1924, 121.

¹¹ William R. Inge, The Platonic Tradition in English Religious Thought, Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1926, 83.

Melvin Rader remarks that "Wordsworth. . . maintained a bias from first to last against an absentee God."¹² Emile Legouis proposes this immanent, even pantheistic view of Wordsworth's mystical experience:

When sensation has reached its utmost intensity, there remains in the whole universe but one life, one being, one reality, of which we cannot say whether it is an infinite development of ourselves, or an infinite in which we are absorbed.¹³

For scholastic philosophers, some kind of pantheism would seem to follow on the score either of Wordsworth's mysticism or of his notion of immanence, owing to the intimacy of God's presence which both notions posit. Of one form of immanence--the vital immanence of the Modernists--the Church has this to say:

. . . to Pantheism pure and simple that other doctrine of the divine immanence leads directly. For this is the question we ask: Does or does not this immanence leave God distinct from man? If it does, in what does it differ from the Catholic doctrine of external revelation? If it does not, it is Pantheism. Now the doctrine of immanence in the Modernist acceptation holds and professes that every phenomenon of conscience proceeds from man as man. The rigorous conclusion of this is the identity of man with God, which means Pantheism.¹⁴

¹² Rader, 128.

¹³ Legouis, 455.

¹⁴ Encyclical of Pius X, Pascendi Dominici gregis, 1907, as quoted in God and Reason, by William J. Brosnan, S.J., Fordham University Press, New York, 1924, 45.

Wordsworth's doctrine of divine immanence, being based on an anti-intellectual theory of mind, is an anticipation of the principles of Modernism, hence subject to the criticism above. It seems, moreover, to derive as well from the type of divine immanence proposed in various forms by the ancient Neo-Platonists and their eighteenth-century followers, and by Bruno, Boehme, and Spinoza--all pantheists. Hence, for those who admit the principles of scholastic philosophy Wordsworth's thought would tend to pantheism. The critics of Wordsworth, however, have in general little connection with the principles of scholastic thought, and their criticism inclines to be unorthodox from the scholastic point of view. An investigation of their findings reveals a complex division of opinion.

Nineteenth-century criticism was offered on a different basis than that proposed in recent years. It had available neither the first draft of The Prelude nor the accumulated biographical evidence supporting the thesis of an earlier, more radical Wordsworth. Its scales, therefore, were more heavily weighted in favor of a theistic interpretation by appeal to the Christian phraseology and spirit of The Prelude, as critics knew it, as well as by appeal to the well-known orthodoxy of Wordsworth's later years. This may account for the verdict of theism which the early studies of Shairp, Brooke, Strong, Dean Inge, and Sneath have rendered. Recent interpretations of Wordsworth by Patton, Batho, and Sherwood are in line with this older

nineteenth-century tradition in criticism. Here may be quoted some few examples of the early critical view. E. Hershey Sneath defends Wordsworth from the charge of pantheism, saying:

Instead of an all-engulfing Pantheism he teaches the transcendence of God, while, at the same time, predicating his immanence--preserving, however, the reality and individuality of God, things, and finite spirits, affirming their intimate relationship in a spiritual kingdom, and the gracious and beneficent ministry of the Spirit in things to the Spirit in Man. His is the Theist's faith in a spiritual universe, which our Poet affirms with his whole mind and heart, and with which his poetry of Nature throbs.¹⁵

Likewise Professor Shairp:

The supposition that Wordsworth ever maintained a Pantheistic philosophy, ever held a deliberate theory of the Divine Being as impersonal, is contradicted both by many an express declaration of his own and by what is known of his life. But it is none the less true that, though he never held the Pantheistic doctrine, the presence of nature, when he was in the heyday of imagination, stirred in him what is called the Pantheistic feeling in its highest and purest form.¹⁶

Mr. Brooke maintains that Wordsworth, viewing external nature as an active principle, gave this principle a personality, which was "the poetic interpretation of an actual Being, the form which the poet gives to the living Spirit of God in the

¹⁵ E. Hershey Sneath, Wordsworth: Poet of Nature and Poet of Man, Ginn and Company, Boston, 1912, 301.

¹⁶ J. C. Shairp, Studies in Poetry and Philosophy, Hurd and Houghton, New York, 1872, 84.

outward world, in order that he may possess a metaphysical thought as a subject for his work as an artist."¹⁷ He says:

It may be the fashion to call this pantheistic, but it is the true and necessary pantheism which affirms God in all, and all by Him, but which does not affirm that the All includes the whole of God. It is true a certain amount of what is called the personality of God seems to slip away from Wordsworth when he speaks of God being in Nature; but we must separate, in speaking of his theology, his idea of God in relation to man, which he conceived of as distinctly a personal relation, from his idea of God in relation to Nature, which he could not conceive of as an absolutely personal relation. . . . (Wordsworth) would probably have said that the personality of God in reference to Nature consisted in God's consciousness of Himself at every moment of time in every part, as well as in the whole of the universe. . . . But as this is a metaphysical and not a poetic thought, and as Wordsworth wanted a thought which he could use poetically, he transferred this idea of God, realising His personality in the whole of the universe, to an actual person whom he creates, to a Being whom he terms God.¹⁸

We see that each of these critics admits there is a pantheistic tone or spirit in Wordsworth's thought. His is an immanent Deity, but this immanence they propose to save from strict pantheism by emphasizing the transcendence of the immanent Divinity. Miss Sherwood remarks that "Wordsworth achieves 'the synthesis of transcendence and immanence' which, as

¹⁷ Stopford Brooke, Theology in the English Poets, E.P. Dutton, 1915, 79.

¹⁸ Ibid., 80-81.

Windelband says, is sought by Plotinus.¹⁹ She elsewhere says:

The consciousness in Tintern of the immanence of the divine, "a motion and a spirit" that "rolls through all things" is no denial of transcendence. . .but suggests a more quick and vital way of drawing near the power impelling all things. . . .Belief in the personality of this immanent and transcendent power was, from first to last, a fundamental part of Wordsworth's faith.²⁰

Ultimately, these critics propose a theism for Wordsworth in the attenuated modern sense, both for the later as well as early years:

It is asserted without any hesitation that the "orthodoxy" of his later years was a natural growth from the orthodoxy of his youth, and that neither depended on a rigid interpretation and acceptance of a small and limiting set of theological propositions.²¹

But whether this "theistic" immanence they propose is not the pantheistic immanence of Plotinus, Boehme, and Spinoza, is highly questionable.

However, there is also present-day opinion in favor of Wordsworth's early theism. With the evidence of the 1805 version of The Prelude before them, some contemporary critics still find the early Wordsworth theistic, at least, at the time he wrote the concluding books of this poem. We say 'at least,'

¹⁹ Margaret Sherwood, Undercurrents of Influence in English Romantic Poetry, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1934, 169.

²⁰ Ibid., 152-3. Italics here, as elsewhere throughout the thesis, my own.

²¹ Batho, 265.

for there is a growing body of opinion that Wordsworth was very nearly, if not actually, an out-and-out pantheist at the time of the writing of Tintern Abbey. Thus, de Selincourt, Rader, Dunn, and Beach believe that Wordsworth, when he composed Tintern Abbey, was a proponent of outright naturalism and that subsequently he suffered a change of heart in the direction of a qualified theism. The Prelude itself, they consider, was orientated to conform with Wordsworth's changed convictions. The evidence for the change is found in not a few assertions of the transcendent, personal, and provident nature of God in the latter poem. As for the state of Wordsworth's mind at the writing of Tintern Abbey Joseph Beach warns us:

. . . even the testimony of the original version (of The Prelude) must be accepted with caution. All but the first two books of The Prelude were composed in 1804 and 1805, subsequent to the period of his life of which the poem treats. His biographers are all agreed that his opinions had undergone very great changes in the interval, and in the judgment of his later biographers, he was inclined to color the record of earlier times with views which he entertained at the time of writing. So that we cannot be confident that his conception of nature in Tintern Abbey is identical with that in The Prelude--that the earlier poem should be read in the light of the explicitly theistic tone of many passages in the later one. There is no reason to suppose that Wordsworth, in his moments of extremest unorthodoxy, was positively unreligious, or still less atheistical. And yet it is not improbable that in Tintern Abbey the absence of direct reference to the deity is symptomatic of a leaning towards a qualified naturalism.²²

²² Beach, 116.

Rader believes "His early animism and pantheism are revealed far more completely" in the 1805 version of The Prelude. For this second group of critics, then, the problem of Wordsworth's early thought involves a distinction based on the premise that his ideas underwent a change or development even in the early period from naturalism to theism.

The present writer would break in here with a plea for clarification. Throughout the general body of criticism touching on Wordsworth's thought, the critics fail to make evident whether they are dealing with Wordsworth's personal convictions or with his objective system, when they pronounce that his thought is theistic or pantheistic. A distinction is possible here and, indeed, must be made, and paradoxically I believe that a large element of the contradiction that surrounds the problem disappears if we insist that Wordsworth's personal convictions and the trend of his system are themselves contradictory. The assumption of divine immanence which founds Wordsworth's mystical view of nature and the soul is strongly pantheistic. On the other hand, Wordsworth insists in The Prelude on the personal, transcendent, and provident nature of the Divinity; this is theism. In the final book of this poem he explicitly admits his former pantheism, hence his personal convictions were at that time theistic. Now the critics do not discriminate between Wordsworth's convictions and the contrary import of his system as they should. What de Selincourt, Rader, Dunn, and

Beach mean to say is that Wordsworth at the time of the writing of The Prelude was personally convinced of the truth of theism, not so formerly. On the other hand, Herford, Elton, Burton, and Read, who interpret Wordsworth's thought as pantheistic, are really concerned with his objective doctrine. Elton terms Wordsworth the "vatis sacer of Pantheism."²³ Herford refers to the pantheism present in Tintern Abbey and The Prelude.²⁴ Read calls "frankly pantheistic" the relationship between Wordsworth and nature described in the latter poem.²⁵ Do the two groups of critics contradict each other's position? By no means, for the interpretations of each side actually concern different aspects of the problem of interpreting Wordsworth's thought. Yet, for failure to distinguish the subjective and objective aspects of Wordsworth's thought, they have the impression themselves and, furthermore, give the impression that their positions are mutually opposed.

The problem of Wordsworth's early thought is, of course, complex, owing to both the variant data of the two versions of The Prelude and the probability that Wordsworth at one or more periods changed his mind. But it need not be made so complex

²³ Oliver Elton, A Survey of English Literature, The MacMillan Company, New York, 1912, II, 59.

²⁴ C. H. Herford, Wordsworth, E. P. Dutton and Company, New York, 1930, 228.

²⁵ Herbert Read, Wordsworth, Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith, New York, 1931, 56.

as Gingerich, for example, considers it to be. With regard to any ultimate judgment about Wordsworth's ultimate philosophy, Gingerich indeed throws up his hands, maintaining:

Wordsworth cannot be put into any one formula, and the truth about him has been beclouded by the efforts of critics to do so, to make him, for instance, a Pantheist (Elton), or an Associationist (Beatty), or a Philosophic Sensationalist (Garrod),--to cite but a few examples of recent critics. The growth of Wordsworth's mind, instead of being simple, as is usually supposed, is extraordinarily complex. . . Perhaps the best that can be done is to trace the main tendencies as manifested in his works chronologically.²⁶

The view, it would seem, is extreme. Wordsworth's thought can be interpreted in an ultimate sense. But we must keep in mind precisely what we are trying to investigate. This is a prerequisite to any interpretation of Wordsworth's philosophy. This, however, the various criticisms of Wordsworth have, in no case, done. Because his critics have approached Wordsworth's thought without care to clarify in their own minds the precise aspect of his thought they mean to treat--subjective or objective--they are at logger-heads over the ultimate interpretation of Wordsworth's philosophy, and the controversy, as of the present, seems overwhelmed with contradictions.

The view that Wordsworth had no great insight into, and grasp of, ultimate philosophical postulates, inasmuch as he failed to recognize the contradiction between his own mind and

²⁶ Gingerich, 138.

the objective trend of his teaching in The Prelude, should not be considered startling. Most of his critics, in fact, will admit that Wordsworth had no philosophy in the strict sense of the term. Joseph Beach says briefly, "Wordsworth was not a philosopher."²⁷ And the opinion of John Morley was that "it is best to be entirely sceptical as to the existence of system and ordered philosophy in Wordsworth."²⁸ A system of ideas, it is true, definitely underlay Wordsworth's thought, but this system Wordsworth did not arrive at by any philosophical method. The truth of his metaphysics was the object of Wordsworth's faith, not his reason; its evidence, his intuitions, rather than objective arguments. As de Selincourt says: "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."²⁹ Rather than speak of Wordsworth's philosophy, we should perhaps speak of his faith, for ultimately faith and intuition, not reason and premises, seem to have been the basis of the synthesis Wordsworth proposed.

However, if Wordsworth can be charged with amateurism in philosophy, so may the great majority of his critics, unless we are to say that their failure to relate Wordsworth's mysticism

²⁷ Joseph W. Beach, "Expostulation and Reply," PMLA, XL (1925), 347.

²⁸ John Morley (ed.), The Complete Poetical Works of Wordsworth, Crowell, New York, 1888, Introd., 14.

²⁹ de Selincourt, Introd., xxxiv.

and immanence to pantheism stems from their sympathies with the relaxed theistic notions of contemporary philosophy. In the scholastic view Wordsworth's fundamental pantheism is clear-cut. For present-day critics Wordsworth's immanent Divinity seems in no contradiction with theistic conceptions. Perhaps this is because they have a different understanding of theism. Their theism poses a God, not necessarily transcendent and personal, but rather immanent in and organic with the world. For scholastic philosophers this conception of God is tantamount to pantheism. For modern philosophers and modern critics it may be theism of a kind, seeing that the vital and immanent conception of the Deity avoids the implications of sheer materialistic monism, which last alone they consider pantheism. For some, it seems enough to save the transcendency of God to assert, as does Stopford Brooke, that the view "which affirms God in all, and all by him. . . does not affirm that the All includes the whole of God."³⁰ In the scholastic view, however, "the unity of all"--God, the universe, man--which Wordsworth proposes is pantheism, however nicely the critics attempt to extenuate its meaning. The proposition which many critics will not admit--that immanence and transcendence are contradictories--founds the conclusions of the present thesis.

Leaving the opinions of the critics, the writer will

³⁰ Brooke, 79.

indicate here the intentions and method of the thesis. "It is intended in the thesis to make an independent study of The Prelude with the view of establishing the objective force of the religious philosophy which this poem sets forth. The thesis will consider the nature of Wordsworth's mysticism and the form of divine immanence he proposes with the object of determining whether Wordsworth's system does or does not imply Wordsworth's fundamental pantheism. The principles to be applied to the interpretation of Wordsworth's thought will be those of scholastic philosophy. Since Wordsworth's mysticism and immanence remain a constant in the philosophy proposed both in Tintern Abbey and The Prelude--all the critics admit this--any conclusions we derive about them will apply over the general period 1798-1805. However, the probability is that The Prelude marked a change in Wordsworth's mind in the direction of a personal conviction of theism, although his fundamental system remained, as before, pantheistic. The evidence for this change will be related in the chapter of the thesis which deals explicitly with the problem of pantheism in Wordsworth.

The reasons are perhaps evident why this writer chooses to make a positive approach, considering Wordsworth's thought directly, rather than a negative one via the critics. To begin with, while much of the matter of the critics is discerning and scholarly and some treatments (those of Rader and Beach, for

example) are excellent, the assumptions which the critics tend to entertain in questions of religion and philosophy make their opinions in general unreliable. Matters in point are their loose definition of theism, and their sympathies toward the highly questionable ideas of religion current today. Anyone running through the critical literature on Wordsworth's philosophy finds ideas accepted as axiomatic which scholastic philosophy and Catholic theology would deny or gravely distinguish. Regarded as self-evident, for example, by any number of critics is the validity of natural mysticism as a faculty for metaphysical and religious truths. The wholly experiential and subjective character of religion is hardly questioned. Similarly with other propositions: there is no supernatural order; religious experience is essentially an experience of the feelings; God is immanent in nature and in man; man partakes of the divine nature as a natural consequence of his psychological structure. When then the various critics profess to treat of religion and philosophy in Wordsworth's poetry, such assumptions as these must largely vitiate the value of the critics' opinions, at least for readers having a more orthodox scholastic or Catholic viewpoint.

A further reason for an independent approach appears in the fact that to this writer's knowledge scholastic thought has never been applied to the criticism of Wordsworth's principles.

In proposing to interpret Wordsworth's thought in the light of scholastic philosophy, there is hope of achieving an interpretation of Wordsworth that will satisfy by its clarity of definition and by the soundness of its principles of criticism. Moreover, the distinction of Wordsworth's subjective understanding versus the objective force of his principles should make for a precision of treatment and argument in the thesis which has hitherto been lacking in critical efforts.

With regard to the treatments of Herford, Elton, Burton, and Read, all of whom render a verdict of pantheism for Wordsworth's early thought, it should be remarked in each case that no formal arguments are given in support of the interpretation. Rather Elton and Read dismiss the question in a paragraph, and Herford is satisfied with a few allusions to Tintern Abbey. Miss Burton, for her part, demonstrates a viewpoint remarkable for its lack of basic information. I quote:

We now know that for Wordsworth, God, and Nature, the Supreme Power, the right Reason are one. . . His expansion of this pantheistic, this transcendental concept of mind and soul is not for him, and never has been, inimical to the Christian religion.³²

All considered, it has been determined to develop Wordsworth's thought from its fundamentals up, without other than incidental reference to the critics. Pursuant to this plan, the initial chapter in the body of the thesis will deal with

³² Burton, 47-8.

Wordsworth's theory of the mind. Such a chapter is perhaps necessary to develop the radical scope of Wordsworth's mysticism. It is mainly intended to deal with an objection in one instance that Wordsworth's mysticism is of the 'every-day,' harmless variety and perfectly consonant with the full Christian and even Catholic religious tradition.³³ After successive chapters on Wordsworth's mysticism, his doctrine of immanence, and his pantheism, a final chapter will summarize the matter and conclusions of the thesis.

The Prelude itself purports to give the history of the growth of Wordsworth's mind over the first twenty-seven years of his life. However, the thesis is not concerned with the development, as such, of Wordsworth's thought, but with the mature conclusions which, as he felt, crowned that development and which he affirmed in the final books of The Prelude. Allowing for his change of opinion, which change did not affect his system, these conclusions may be taken as informing Wordsworth's thought from 1797, the year of his recovery from the moral crisis mentioned in the poem, up to the year 1805. Hence, the period of Wordsworth's thought covered by the thesis. It is true, many of the ideas contained in The Prelude remained with

³³ Cf. James V. McCummiskey, Was Wordsworth a Pantheist? (thesis), St. Louis University, 1938, 69. Mr. McCummiskey remarks: ". . . the conclusion we are forced to draw from our consideration of the poetry is that Wordsworth was never a pantheist or a mystic, i.e., a naturalistic mystic. The only mysticism he ever experienced was. . . Everyday Mysticism."

Wordsworth throughout life. However, the years from 1798-1805 constitute the time of their greatest inspiration for Wordsworth; after 1805 these ideas are, so it seems, affirmed with less intensity or in modified form.

CHAPTER II

WORDSWORTH'S THEORY OF THE MIND

Matthew Arnold in Essays in Criticism attempted to dismiss Wordsworth's philosophy and, hence, his most philosophic works, The Prelude and The Excursion, on the ground that the thought underlying them was fundamentally unsound. In this connection, Arnold said of Wordsworth:

The Wordsworthians are apt to praise him for the wrong things and to lay far too much stress upon what they call his philosophy. His poetry is the reality, his philosophy, as far at least as it may put on the form and habit of a scientific system of thought, and the more it puts them on--is the illusion.¹

Arnold here was aiming primarily at Leslie Stephen, who had maintained that "Wordsworth's poetry is precious because his philosophy is sound," that "his ethical system is. . . distinctive and capable of exposition," and that "his poetry is informed by ideas which fall spontaneously into a scientific system of thought."²

The issue joined between Arnold and Stephen has seen

¹ Matthew Arnold, Essays in Criticism, A. L. Burt Company, New York, 1888, 356.

² Leslie Stephen, Hours in a Library, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1899, II, 270-307.

considerable discussion among critics of recent date, with the honors, at least in weight of numbers, in favor of Stephen. This would be most gratifying to Wordsworth, were he living, for Wordsworth in his own words wished "either to be considered as a teacher or as nothing," and in his philosophy he reposed his greatest hope that his poetry might live.³ He would have been nothing short of horrified at Arnold's suggestion that his best work lay in his short pieces, that he was chiefly a lyric poet, and that his poetry could be appreciated without reference to his philosophical convictions. To ignore Wordsworth's ruling ideas is, indeed, to reduce him to the stature of a trivial nature poet, to mistake his purpose, and to miss the profound implications he aimed at in all, even the most seemingly simple poetry that he wrote.⁴ This is not to imply, as many critics do, that Wordsworth's philosophy is sound. Rather, it is to insist with Bernbaum that Wordsworth's poetry cannot be rightly understood unless his full intentions and his philosophy are grasped.

Certainly Wordsworth was a poet rather than a systematic philosopher, i.e., he thought in concrete pictures rather than in abstract concepts; nevertheless he was in fact and in intention, as Coleridge declared, a philosophical poet--the greatest philosophical poet in our language--and in his maturity

³ William Knight (ed.), Memorials of Coleorton, Edinburgh, 1887, II, 31, quoted in M. M. Rader's Presiding Ideas. . . See Prelude, I, 228-234.

⁴ In his correspondence Wordsworth asserted: "There is scarcely any one of my poems which does not aim to direct

a particular system of ideas underlay his poetical works, which cannot be fully valued without a knowledge of that system.⁵

At least in his early years, the dominant ambition of Wordsworth's life was to write a great philosophical.

Then, last wish
My last and favourite aspiration! then
I yearn towards some philosophical Song
Of Truth that cherishes our daily life;
With meditations passionate from deep
Recesses in man's heart.⁶

The idea for such a poem by Wordsworth was conceived in 1798, first by Coleridge. The plan was, as Coleridge relates, that "Wordsworth should assume the station of a man in mental repose, one whose principles were made up, and so prepared to deliver upon authority a system of philosophy."⁷ This system of philosophy, so Wordsworth intended, was to be embodied in "a philosophic Poem, containing views on Man, Nature, and Society, and to be entitled the 'Recluse.'" It was to be, as Wordsworth wrote, so comprehensive that "I know not anything that will not come within the scope of my plan." Having, however, after

the attention to some moral sentiment, or to some general principle, or law of thought, or of our intellectual constitution." Ibid., II, 12.

⁵ Ernest Bernbaum, Guide Through the Romantic Movement, Thomas Nelson and Sons, New York, 1938, I, 131-2.

⁶ Prelude, I, 228-234.

⁷ Samuel T. Coleridge, Table Talk and Omniana, Oxford University Press, London, 1917, 188.

initial enthusiasm some misgivings as to his capacity for philosophic poetry, Wordsworth first undertook to review his own mind and, as he says, "to examine how far Nature and Education had qualified him for such employment."⁸ The result was the poem entitled The Prelude, or the Growth of a Poet's Mind. In the event, the plan for the Recluse was not fulfilled, but The Prelude affords a clear look at Wordsworth's intentions. The Recluse was to be a philosophical synthesis of a comprehensive kind, its basis a sum total of philosophical convictions novel and profound in their ultimate implications. However he arrived at it and whatever its validity, Wordsworth's original faith, on which he meant to build the great philosophical poem and which he repeated again and again in The Prelude, proposes a startling account of the innate power of the human mind.⁹ His conviction is that this faculty is capable of attaining in transcendental fashion the most sublime truths. His firm trust was that he had enjoyed communion with the mysteries of nature (spelled with a capital N) and of the Deity indwelling in the world and in man. Hence, he would teach men his secret.

⁸ Cf. the Preface to The Excursion, 1814.

⁹ Herbert Read has called The Prelude "the greatest exaltation of the mind of man that has ever been conceived." Herbert Read, Wordsworth, Jonathan Capes, New York, 1930, 195.

. . . yet to me I feel
 That an internal brightness is vouchsafed
 That must not die, that must not pass away
 Possessions have I that are solely mine,
 Something within which yet is shared by none
 I would impart it, I would spread it wide.
 Love, knowledge, all my manifold delights,
 All buried with me without monument
 Or profit unto any but ourselves!
 It must not be, if I divinely taught,
 Be privileged to speak as I have felt
 Of what in man is human or divine.¹⁰

Thus Wordsworth wrote in the fragment of the Recluse. The same wish to describe his inner endowment for the profit of men is made in the concluding lines of The Prelude.

Prophets of Nature, we to them will speak
 A lasting inspiration, sanctified
 By reason and by truth; what we have loved,
 Others will love; and we may teach them how;
 Instruct them how the mind of man becomes
 A thousand times more beautiful than the earth
 In beauty exalted, as it is itself
 Of substance and of fabric more divine.¹¹

By way of introducing Wordsworth's system and the mysteries of mind he proposed to disclose relative to God, nature, and man, we have first to investigate Wordsworth's concept of mind, for in his theory of knowledge his ambitious synthesis has its foundation. The material lies at hand in all Wordsworth's early poetry, but especially in The Prelude.

¹⁰ Recluse, 674-702.

¹¹ Prelude, XIII, 442-452.

Imagination. . .in truth
 . . .another name for absolute strength
 And clearest insight, amplitude of mind
 And reason in her most exalted mood.¹⁶

The supreme value with which Wordsworth endows Imagination is apparent in other lines. This faculty,

Imagination. . .the power so-called
 Through sad incompetence of human speech
 That awful power. . .from the mind's abyss.¹⁷

is the "glorious faculty that higher minds bear with them as their own," "the prime and vital principle," "a higher power," "the main essential power" by which we attain to the inner meanings and relations of things. It is "a reason which indeed is Reason," "the very faculty of truth." Such references plainly indicate the exalted notion attached by Wordsworth to the operations of the Imagination.

We may inquire whether Wordsworth gives a more explicit account of the Imagination. What relation, for example, has Imagination with reason understood as the logical or discursive faculty? In terms of its objects, are its acts immediate and intuitive, or not?

To begin with, Wordsworth distinguishes Imagination, "the grand and simple reason," as he calls it, from discursive

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, XIII, 167-170.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* (1850 text), XI, 592-595.

reason

that humbler power
Which carries on its no inglorious work
By logic and minute analysis.¹⁸

At some loss to describe Imagination, Wordsworth chooses to call it reason, but, carefully distinguishing it from discursive reason, by which we argue from premises, he adds clarifying phrases that set Imagination apart from and above our logical faculty. Thus, Imagination is rather "reason in her most exalted mood," "the image of right reason. . . that lifts the Being into magnanimity," or "the grand and simple reason."¹⁹ At other times, Wordsworth simply terms Imagination a "power," a "mind," "a sovereign voice within the soul," or "a sympathy with power"--always with a connotation of the vast discernment and pregnant character of its acts. The logical faculty, on the other hand, is "a humbler power," and in one instance Wordsworth terms it "false imagination."

While grudgingly admitting the validity of reason, properly so-called, in certain limited spheres of knowledge, Wordsworth had always, in fact, a decided bias against it. For him, Imagination is the preeminent power of the mind, while reason, the inferior faculty, is at best a "secondary power," at worst undependable, false, and dangerous. Thus, he attacks

¹⁸ Ibid., XI, 124-126.

¹⁹ In The Excursion Wordsworth coins a word to distinguish the kinds of reason. There Imagination is excursive reason. IV, 1262

that false secondary power, by which
 In weakness, we create distinctions, then
 Deem that our puny boundaries are things
 Which we perceive, and not which we have made.²⁰

Reason, Wordsworth says, is an idol,

of all idols that which pleases most
 The growing mind. A trifler would he be
 Who on the obvious benefits should dwell
 That rise out of this process; but to speak
 Of all the narrow estimates of things
 Which hence originate were a worthy theme
 For philosophic Verse; suffice it here
 To hint that danger cannot but attend
 Upon a Function rather proud to be
 The enemy of falsehood, than the friend
 To truth, to sit in judgment than to feel.²¹

Complaining against the logicians and the associationist psychology of Hartley, he asks,

Who shall parcel out
 His intellect, by geometric rules,
 Split, like a province, into round and square?
 Who knows the individual hour in which
 His habits were first sown, even as a seed,
 Who that shall point, as with a wand, and say,
 'This portion of the river of my mind
 Came from yon fountain?'²²

To Coleridge, Wordsworth says,

Thou, my Friend! art one
 More deeply read in thy own thoughts; to thee
 Science appears but, what in truth she is,
 Not as our glory and our absolute boast,
 But as a succedaneum, and a prop
 To our infirmity.²³

²⁰ Prelude, II, 221-224.

²¹ Ibid., II, 127-137.

²² Ibid., II, 208-215.

²³ Ibid., II, 215-220.

Revolution, young Wordsworth, like so many others, saw in Reason the promise of a millenium of liberty, progress, and happiness for humanity. In Book X of The Prelude Wordsworth recalls his youthful mind and the dazzling hopes of the time:

O pleasant exercise of hope and joy!
 For great were the auxiliars which then stood
 Upon our side, we who were strong in love;
 Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
 But to be young was very heaven; O times
 In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
 Of custom, law, and statute book took at once
 The attraction of a country in Romance;
 When Reason seem'd the most to assert her rights
 When most intent on making of herself
 A prime Enchanter to assist the work,
 Which then was going forwards in her name.
 Not favour'd spots alone, but the whole earth
 The beauty wore of promise.²⁶

An active partisan, I thus convoked
 From every object pleasant circumstance
 To suit my ends; I moved among mankind
 With genial feeling still predominant.²⁷

But then, as Wordsworth relates, "events brought less encouragement." England declared war on his beloved France, throwing Wordsworth into a conflict of loyalties. Soon his republican dream came to an end; France, the erstwhile champion of liberty, set out to conquer her neighbors. Disillusioned and betrayed in his humanitarian and political hopes, the young idealist turned to abstract thought for salvation. He became a follower of Godwin, entranced by the possibilities for

²⁶ Prelude, X, 690-703.

²⁷ Ibid., X, 737-740.

happiness in the unsentimental rule of reason.

This was the time when all things tending fast
To depravation, the Philosophy
That promised to abstract the hopes of man
Out of his feelings, to be fix'd thenceforth
Forever in a purer element
Found ready welcome. . .

the dream

Was flattering to the young ingenuous mind
Pleas'd with extremes, and not the least with that
Which makes the human Reason's naked self
The object of its fervour. What delight!
How glorious! in self-knowledge and self-rule,
To look through all the frailties of the world,
And, with a resolute mastery shaking off
The accidents of nature, time, and place,
That make up the weak being of the past,
Build social freedom on its only basis,
The freedom of the individual mind.²⁸

With the zeal of youthful enthusiasm, Wordsworth pursued the way of abstract reason. But soon perplexity confronted him and then despair.

Time may come

When some dramatic Story may afford
Shapes livelier to convey. . .
What then I learn'd, or think I learn'd, of truth
And the errors into which I was betray'd
By present objects, and by reasonings false
From the beginning, inasmuch as drawn
Out of a heart which had been turn'd aside
From Nature by external accidents,
And which was thus confounded more and more
Misguiding and misguided.

Thus I fared,

Dragging all passions, notions, shapes of faith,
Like culprits to the bar, suspiciously
Calling the mind to establish in plain day
Her titles and her honours, now believing,
Now disbelieving, endlessly perplexed,

²⁸ Ibid., X, 806-826.

With impulse, motive, right and wrong, the ground
 Of moral obligation, what the rule
 And what the sanction, till, demanding proof,
 And seeking it in everything, I lost
 All feeling of conviction, and, in fine,
 Sick, wearied out with contrarieties,
 Yielded up moral questions in despair.²⁹

Wordsworth shortly recovered his moral equilibrium in a return to nature in the imaginative spirit of his youth. His great adventure in the field of analytical reason, however, had ended so fruitlessly, had brought him to a pitch so dire, that he never again trusted reason as a valid faculty of truth. This steadfast bias of Wordsworth's against any kind of discursive reason is an important point to make. His settled conviction, both from experience and from temperament, was that reason was unqualified to solve the great problems of the soul and of the universe, was powerless to deal with metaphysical questions. For reason "mis-shapes the beauteous form of things--we murder to dissect."³⁰ It views all objects "in dis-connection dead and spiritless."³¹ It substitutes "a universe of death for that which moves with light and life, informed, actual, divine, and true."³² Yes, above all, reason failed to take account of that fact which Wordsworth considered of paramount importance: the life and vital soul of the universe.

²⁹ Ibid., X, 879-901. Italics are Wordsworth's.

³⁰ The Tables Turned (1798), 26-28.

³¹ The Excursion, IV, 961-962.

³² Prelude (1850), XIV, 160-162.

In his rejection of reason as a faculty of truth in the more profound aspects of reality, Wordsworth necessarily fell back upon the intuitive character of mind. Hence, the characteristic transcendentalism of his thought. Granting man's knowledge of the spiritual and the divine, this knowledge has its origin, not in the witness of reason or external experience, but from within the mind. Thus, the Imagination in its higher acts is essentially transcendental. It is from within that man contacts truth, and by immediate and intuitive experience.

Now is this intuitive faculty of Imagination exclusively intellectual in its process, or are the feelings as well incorporated into its higher activities? Wordsworth leaves us in no doubt on this point. Not only the intelligence but the feelings too are in direct contact with the world of life and spirit. Both share in the intuitive character of Imagination, both lead in the most revealing and intimate manner to the knowledge of highest truth.

That Wordsworth viewed the Imagination as a complex of mind and feeling is apparent in any number of passages. If anything, he gives priority to the feelings in the more intimate experience of truth. Thus he speaks of

passion, which itself
Is highest reason in a soul sublime.³³

³³ Ibid., V, 39-40.

He blesses him

whose soul hath risen
Up to the height of feeling intellect.³⁴

He tells us,

My trust was firmer in the feelings.³⁵

He describes his youth and the "visitings of imaginative power" which came upon him, disclosing that he was

ever with the heart
Employ'd, and the majestic intellect.³⁶

I felt and nothing else; I did not judge,
I never thought of judging, with the gift
Of all this glory fill'd and satisfi'd.³⁷

Indeed, his 'mystical' experiences seem never to imply conceptual knowledge, as described by Wordsworth in The Prelude.

Rather he relates them exclusively in the language of feeling. It is the negative function of reason "to sit in judgment"; of the Imagination "to feel."

In view of this relation of the feelings to the activity of the Imagination, Melvin Rader defines the latter as "synthetic reason, integrating thought and feeling."³⁸ Margaret Sherwood describes Imagination as "imaginative will," choosing a term employed by Wordsworth in The Excursion.³⁹

³⁴ Ibid., XIII, 204-205.

³⁵ Ibid., XII, 60-61.

³⁶ Ibid., XI, 144-145.

³⁷ Ibid., XI, 238-240.

³⁸ Rader, 138.

³⁹ Excursion, IV, 1128.

Wordsworth considers the feelings or the senses significant of reality, knowledge partakes, in his eyes, of a non-intellectual as well as intellectual element, and, generally speaking, when he speaks of the activity of the "mind" or "soul" or of the "Imagination," he ascribes this non-intellectual content to them in parity with the intellectual element. If then Wordsworth follows Kant and Jacobi in rejecting the claims of discursive reason, he also anticipates Schliermacher and the moderns in making non-intellectual or sense experience a valid element of knowledge.

About the place and emphasis of feeling in Wordsworth's thought, more will be said when we come to consider Imagination in relation to his mysticism. We have now, however, to develop the relation which Wordsworth considers to exist between mind or Imagination and the external world of nature.

The Imagination, according to Wordsworth, has a passive and an active role. In its passive or receptive aspect, it lays itself open "in wise passiveness" to the facts of the external world and the influence of nature. The active role of the Imagination comes into being when the mind, informed by nature and "the language of the sense," awakens to its own creative power and with "research unbiass'd, unbewilder'd, and unaw'd" reads from nature's book "intuitive truths, the deepest

and the best," in

that blessed mood
 In which the burthen of the mystery,
 In which the heavy and the weary weight
 Of all this unintelligible world,
 Is lightened:--that serene and blessed mood,
 In which the affections gently lead us on,--
 Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
 And even the motion of our human blood
 Almost suspended, 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 life of things.⁴⁰

A fundamental notion with Wordsworth was the active part which nature takes in the education of the mind. It was his firmest conviction that nature and the soul are in vital relation. The imaginative faculty, indeed, he calls "an element of Nature's inner self." Nature has a spirit and life of her own, even, as he said, a "moral life." Here is a benign and protective care over men, hers the power to mold and teach the soul. It is consequently the special duty of the soul to place itself under the tutelage of nature, to be docile to her inspirations, so that the soul may come to know its own grandeur and, at one with nature, "drink the visionary power" she would impart.

Therefore am I still
 A lover of the meadows and the woods,
 And mountains; and of all that we behold
 from this green earth; of all the mighty world

⁴⁰ Tintern Abbey, 37-49.

Of eye, and ear,--both what they half create,
 And what perceive; well pleased to recognize
 In nature and the language of the sense,
 The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
 The guide, the guardian of my heart and soul,
 Of all my moral being.⁴¹

Thus in Tintern Abbey Wordsworth affirms his own dependence upon nature, repeating the sentiment in The Prelude:

Ye Mountains and Ye Lakes,
 And sounding Cataracts! Ye Mists and Winds
 That dwell among the hills where I was born.
 If, in my youth, I have been pure in heart,
 If, mingling with the world, I am content
 With my own modest pleasures, and have liv'd,
 With God and Nature communing. . .
 The gift is yours. . . .

O Nature! Thou hast fed
 My lofty speculations; and in thee,
 For this uneasy heart of ours I find
 A never-failing principle of joy,
 And purest passion.⁴²

To chosen souls, to those who encourage the contemplative and loving spirit, nature will, then, reveal her most intimate secrets and give a sense "proceeding from the depth of untaught things," by which one "is enabled to perceive something unseen before"--under that domination which nature

oftentimes
 Exerts upon the outward face of things,
 So moulds them, and endues, abstracts, combines,
 Or by abrupt and unhabitual influence
 Doth make one object so impress itself

⁴¹ Ibid., 102-111.

⁴² Prelude, II, 437-466.

Upon all others, and pervade them so
That even the grossest minds must see and hear
And cannot chuse but feel.⁴³

The power which nature thus thrusts forth upon the senses, so
Wordsworth affirms,

is the express
Resemblance, in the fulness of its strength
Made visible, a genuine Counterpart
And Brother of the glorious faculty
Which higher minds bear with them as their own.⁴⁴

Those who feel this power become "creative souls" and

They from their native selves can send abroad
Like transformations, for themselves create
A like existence, and, whene'er it is
Created for them, catch it by instinct;
Them the enduring and the transient both
Serve to exalt; they build up greatest things
From least suggestions, ever on the watch,
Willings to work and to be wrought upon,
They need not extraordinary calls
To rouse them, in a world of life they live,
By sensible impressions not enthrall'd,
But quicken'd, rous'd, and made thereby more apt
To hold communion with the invisible world.⁴⁵

Ultimately, Wordsworth appears to identify this Power
with that common Life which, as we shall develop later, he attri-
butes to nature and to man. This Life would appear to be the
root principle of the creative power of the Imagination and at
the same time the source of that almost moral and intellectual
activity of nature which Wordsworth always insists upon. At

⁴³ Ibid., XIII, 76-84.

⁴⁴ Ibid., XIII, 86-90.

⁴⁵ Ibid., XIII, 93-105.

the same time, this Life is apparently the term of the intuitive experience of the mind, revealing itself as immanent in nature and in man and thus becoming the object of the transcendental or mystical experience, or what Wordsworth describes as "communion with the invisible world."

Such communion Wordsworth held not only possible, but often achieved in his own experience. It may be given only to the chosen few--to "sensitive souls"--to have this transcendental experience. Still, these if they but placed the conditions under which Imagination and nature act, might find commerce with the invisible realities of the spirit "a simple produce of the common day." Such "god-like hours" are ours, "such majestic sway we have, as natural beings in the strength of Nature," that souls attuned to nature may rise to such a pitch of "feeling intellect" as

to have sight
Of a new world, a world, too. . .fit
To be transmitted and made visible
To other eyes, as having for its base
That whence our dignity originates.⁴⁷

Such minds are truly from the Deity,
For they are Powers; and hence the highest bliss
That can be known is theirs, the consciousness
Of whom they are habitually infused
Through every image, and through every thought,
And all impressions; hence religion, faith,
And endless occupation for the soul.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Ibid., XII, 370-374.

⁴⁸ Ibid., XIII, 106-112.

"Religion, faith, and endless occupation for the soul:" the ideas indicate that God is somehow the object of the transcendental experience. The probable grounds, as will be developed in a subsequent chapter, are that God is none other than the immanent and animating Life, or Soul, of man and nature.

Man, then, may have sight "of a new world" in virtue of the transcendental activity of the Imagination. Yet, a special asceticism, Wordsworth warns, is necessary if man is to know his power. He must turn inward, discover in the depths of the soul the visionary principle.

Here thou must be, O Man!
Strength to thyself; no helper hast thou here;
Here keepest thou thy individual state:
No other can divide with thee this work,
No secondary hand can intervene
To fashion this ability; 'tis thine,
The prime and vital principle is thine
In the recesses of thy nature, far
From any reach of outward fellowship,
Else is not thine at all.⁴⁹

But man must not only attend to the power within; he must likewise turn to nature. Nature is primary in the first stirrings of the Imagination. It is her active influx, her self-revelation, that call the nascent powers of the soul into being. Hence man must above all awaken to the "external World" and render himself sensitive to the teaching impulses that come therefrom. Granting this sensitivity and inter-action of mind

⁴⁹ Ibid., XIII, 188-192.

and nature, the transcendental or mystic process develops almost inevitably--what Wordsworth calls

the creation (by no lower name
Can it be called) which they with blended might
Accomplish.⁵⁰

The mystic process has, apparently, two stages. In the first, nature is active, the soul remaining quiescent, drinking in, so to speak, the revelations coming from without. As the soul's creative powers are being activated, the mind's perceptions develop and heighten until the second stage of experience is reached. In this stage the innate drive of the Imagination is predominant, and it is now that the soul attains the visionary experience. Concomitant with nature's self-revelation, the mind knows and feels with mystic immediacy, passing through to experience of a truly transcendental character, rising above the ordinary face of things "to dwell in highest heaven," breathing as Wordsworth says

in worlds
To which the heaven of heavens is but a veil.⁵¹

In the foregoing matter we have the notion that founds the transcendental conception Wordsworth held of the universe. His is no conservative view of the external world or of the mind. For him the universe "moves with light and life informed,

⁵⁰ Recluse, 822-824.

⁵¹ Ibid., 782-783.

actual, divine, and true." The world is in most active and vital relation with the soul of man. Its power has a nature similar to, is the express counterpart of, the human mind. Mirroring forth the vitality and joy of nature for man's instruction, the universe at the same time elicits from the mind the creative energies latent in its very constitution. By this creative energy man may know in intuitive fashion the sublime truths of nature and the soul. Man's dependence on the external world is no accident, but founded on the essential and vital relation which exists between nature and the activity of the mind. Nature's part is to teach and arouse the mind, man's to be attentive to nature and to catch the impulse offered his faculties. Working together in "an ennobling interchange," man and nature achieve the release of the transcendental faculty--an event for Wordsworth of the most profound and vital significance. Once aroused, the Imagination may attain to experience of the deepest and most comprehensive nature.

There are degrees of insight according as the Imagination acts with less or greater vigor. More evident truths are the pervasive life and spirit of joy in external nature. These lie, as it were, on the surface of reality, are immediately manifest to the sensitive spirit. All nature is animated and maintains a perpetual dialogue with the soul. All reality, too, is bound in a comprehensive unity, man with nature in "blended might"

and man through nature with the Divine.

I felt the sentiment of Being spread
 O'er all that moves, and all that seemeth still,
 O'er all, that, lost beyond the reach of thought
 And human knowledge, to the human eye
 Invisible, yet liveth to the heart,
 O'er all that leaps, and runs, and shouts, and sings,
 Or beats the gladsome air, o'er all that glides
 Beneath the wave, yea, in the wave itself
 And mighty depth of waters. Wonder not
 If such my transports were; for in all things now
 I saw one life, and felt that it was joy,
 One song they sang, and it was audible,
 Most audible then when the fleshly ear,
 O'ercome by grosser prelude of that strain,
 Forgot its functions, and slept undisturb'd.⁵²

But these external truths are but the prelude to other
 experience. Imagination has yet another sphere it may explore,

In verity, an independent world
 Created out of pure Intelligence.⁵³

For the invisible world of the spirit awaits the visitation of
 the mind's transcendental powers. In the depths of the soul
 are mysteries not inscrutable to the question mind. Indeed,
 the Deity is there, latent in man's deepest experience, part of
 the vital "unity of all." This unity, when apprehended in the
 full surge of the mind's creative energy, places man in the very
 presence of God.

When strongly breathed upon
 By this sensation, whencesoe'er it comes
 Of union or communion doth the soul
 Rejoice as in her highest joy: for there,

⁵² Prelude, II, 420-434.

⁵³ Ibid., VI, 186-187.

There chiefly, hath she feeling whence she is,
And, passing through all Nature rests with God.⁵⁴

The above material introduces the question of the nature of Wordsworth's experience of God or the Divine--a question to be treated in the following chapter under the specific aspect of his mysticism. In concluding the present chapter we may note that the ideas presented thus far have been intended as preparatory to the treatment of Wordsworth's mysticism, and that they will be of considerable value in determining its nature and ultimate validity. The investigation of Wordsworth's concept of the Imagination, thus, discloses the essentially intuitive and immediate character of this faculty; that it is a natural faculty--"such majestic sway we have as natural beings in the strength of Nature"; that its higher activity is essentially transcendental and, since rooted in feeling, characteristically non-intellectual; that its objects somehow include the immediate experience of the Divine. This affirmation of the immediate or intuitive experience of the Deity verifies Wordsworth's claim, in the first place, to strictly mystical experience. Further, his assertion of the essentially natural character of such experience places him at once among the proponents of what may be called natural mysticism, in contrast to true or supernatural mysticism, as experienced by the Saints and defended by the Catholic Church.

⁵⁴ Ibid., VIII, 830-835.

CHAPTER III

WORDSWORTH'S MYSTICISM

Before considering the precise nature of the mystical tendencies found in The Prelude, we need to define the various senses in which the term mysticism is received and to point out in what sense we shall apply it to Wordsworth's thought.

Broadly considered, mysticism implies a relation of the mind to mystery and, in general, describes any form of knowledge suggesting transcendental origins.¹ Hence, in this broad sense, any more sensitive experience of reality in its subtle and mysterious aspects, as of the beauty or power of external nature, might be termed 'mystic.' More strictly, however, mysticism implies a relation to God or the Divine and, specifically, has to do with God as the special object of intuitive experience. Intuitive experience in itself describes a form of immediate knowledge. As applied to God it is to be distinguished from the ordinary or analogical knowledge of God derived from reason.

¹ By transcendental knowledge is meant that type of knowledge deriving not from experience but from some other source, as from the constitution of the mind or from a supra-personal agency communicating its message to the soul. Examples are the infused knowledge of the mystics properly so-called, the categories of Kant, Emerson's 'Oversoul.' I mention the latter, of course, merely to indicate the acceptation of the term rather than to suggest their validity.

The mystic experience suggests a measure of immediate vision, that is, God is directly present to the soul, and the soul enjoys, though obscurely, an immediate union with the Divinity through contemplation and love.² Our ordinary knowledge of God arrived at by the aid of reason assumes, on the other hand, that we know God only in his effects.³ Thus we conclude to His existence as the sufficient reason for the existence of the world and its conservation in being, and to His nature from His existence as First Cause and Necessary Being. The latter form of knowledge is relatively imperfect, since it is mediate and negative. The mystically intuitive experience of God, on the other hand, implies a much more perfect knowledge, since it postulates a form of direct, though obscure, vision of God. Thus, the mystical state supposes a very intimate approach to the Divine and an immediacy of knowledge beyond the common experience of men.

It is indubitable that certain saints of the Church have enjoyed the genuine mystical experience: St. Paul, St. Francis, St. Ignatius of Loyola, and St. Margaret Mary, to name a few. In some form it has likewise been claimed by different transcendental philosophies, as, for example, by Plato and Plotinus,

² Cf. G. M. Sauvage, "Mysticism," The Catholic Encyclopedia, X, 663-665.

³ There is, of course, a further form of knowledge of God, that, namely, which we enjoy through the supernatural gift of faith and revelation.

and more recently by Boehme, Fichte, Novalis, and Schelling.⁴ Moreover, the mystical tendency has come to play a large part in the present-day philosophy and theory of religious experience. Thus contemporary religious thought as reflected in liberal Protestantism and non-scholastic philosophy, impatiently disdaining the traditional approach through reason and faith, tends to assert that God is somehow the object of immediate experience.⁵ For the faculty of this experience it proposes a form of religious sentiment or intuition essentially non-intellectual in nature and, in general, reducible to some form of "felt contact" with the Divine. At the same time, modern religious experience finds in the postulated immanent presence of God in the vital processes of the world and in the soul, the ultimate basis of its mystic intuition. It is the latter form of experience that is to be associated with Wordsworth's mysticism, and, since in principle it disagrees significantly from the mysticism of the Catholic Church, it will be helpful here to describe briefly the points of difference.

Both as admitted by Catholic ascetical theology and as asserted by the transcendental philosophies, the mystical experience has a distinctly transcendental character, that is, it is essentially a non-conceptual experience. This follows

⁴ Cf. Sauvage, 665.

⁵ Cf. Fulton J. Sheen, God and Intelligence in Modern Philosophy, Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1930, 31.

from the fact of God's transcendence--absolute or relative--over man and nature. Consequently, God, if known immediately, is known either by infused knowledge or, as modern religious theory maintains, by a form of sentiment.⁶ In either case, the mystical experience is largely ineffable and incommunicable--as witness the faltering efforts of the saints to convey their experience and the vague descriptions offered by the pseudo-mystics. Given this agreement as to the transcendental character of the mystical state, the two theories are otherwise in radical disagreement. Thus, while Catholic mysticism asserts the supernatural character of the experience, modern thought insists on its wholly natural character; again, the former appeals to a special gift of grace so-called to explain the experience, while the latter affirms the positive ability of the natural powers of the mind to attain to the intuition of God; finally, the Catholic theory insists upon the absolute transcendence of God, while the modern theory postulates the immanent presence of the Deity in nature and in man. In this last respect modern religious experience approaches a pantheistic view of the relation of God, the world, and man. From

⁶ The modern experience of God is otherwise described as attained by "religious consciousness" (W. James), or by "instinct" (S. Alexander), or "intuition" (H. Bergson), the "faith-state" (Sir Henry Jones), or by "hypothesis" (H. Vaihinger). Cf. Sheen, 24-30. Each describes a non-logical process and asserts an immediate experience of the Divine.

such differences the present writer, in line with Catholic theology, distinguishes Catholic mysticism as supernatural or genuine mysticism and modern mysticism as natural or pseudo-mysticism. Consequently, in identifying Wordsworth's mysticism with that of modern religious experience and "transcendentalist" philosophy, the present treatment considers Wordsworth a natural mystic or a pseudo-mystic, and in this light interprets the religious experience described in The Prelude.

At this point we must consider an objection against the description of Wordsworth as a pseudo-mystic. Most critics, to be sure, accept the outline of Wordsworth's transcendental tendencies which the present writer gave in the last chapter and agree in substance with his conclusions relative to Wordsworth's mysticism. However, one critic, James V. McCummiskey, has endeavored to interpret Wordsworth's mystical tendencies as being essentially in keeping with the Christian and even Catholic viewpoint, concluding that "Wordsworth was never a pantheist or a mystic, i.e., a naturalistic mystic. The only mysticism he ever experienced was. . .Every-day Mysticism."⁷ The "Every-day Mysticism" which Mr. McCummiskey alludes to corresponds to the broad or analogous use of mysticism described above. Wordsworth then, according to Mr. McCummiskey, is touched in the presence of nature, exhilarated by the beauty of

⁷ McCummiskey, 69.

the external world, rendered devout in the contemplation of God's works. But this was nothing more than what any man might experience in a sensitive mood of communion with nature, and need not imply a naturalistic mysticism. Wordsworth, the contention is, did not view God as immanent in nature, nor did he claim any immediate contact with or intuition of God. Rather, throughout the whole of his poetry Wordsworth kept a saving distinction between God and His works. True, he rose from the contemplation of God's works to their Creator, but by a reflective act, and he never proposed other than an analogical knowledge of the Deity. Thus, as Mr. McCummiskey interprets it, Wordsworth's view of nature is sane and Christian, and his mysticism quite compatible with orthodox theology.

To the present writer, such a discount of Wordsworth's mysticism--at least as regards the 1805 version of The Prelude--appears quite untenable, first, because it disregards the radical assumptions in Wordsworth's theory of mind and secondly, it presumes in Wordsworth a consistent religious faith in line with the orthodox Anglicanism of Wordsworth's Rydal Mount days. Against the latter view the evidence relative to the years 1792-1800 and even up to 1805 supports the proposition that Wordsworth's religious beliefs then had little or no connection with orthodox Christianity; rather, at this time Wordsworth had cast loose from Christianity and his ideas were quite divorced

from the implications of orthodoxy, deriving from liberal philosophy and subjective experience rather than from the dogmatic notions of his youth.

Thus, Wordsworth more or less made a complete break with the past when, at the age of twenty-one, he espoused the revolutionary cause in France. The ideas he then accepted were in the radical strain of the republicans and of Rousseau, their prime philosopher. Doubtless this new radicalism affected his religious beliefs as much as his politics. Then in his conversion to Godwinism, Wordsworth became, as Legouis remarks, "one of Godwin's most fervent disciples."⁸ But Godwin's first principle was the denial of all political and religious institutions in favor of enlightened reason and a freedom of the individual untrammelled by traditional rules of morality. Consequently, in following Godwin Wordsworth very likely progressed to some sort of atheistic conviction, the impersonal deism of Rousseau presumably changing to Godwin's imperturbable atheism or, at least, to a positive doubt in Christianity's credentials. In London, too, Wordsworth moved in the outer circle of men like Burnett, Fawcett, Lloyd, Thewal, and Poole --all of liberal and atheistic convictions, or very close to atheism.⁹

⁸ Legouis, 264.

⁹ Ibid., 372.

Moreover, in Wordsworth's recovery after the Godwinian period there appears no evidence of the influence of Christian ideas nor any indication of his return to traditional Christianity. Rather, his healing came by a return to nature in the imaginative spirit of his youth and by the discovery, with Coleridge's help, of a transcendental philosophy which seemed to support his nature-faith in truest fashion. This philosophy was strictly mystical and, at first, probably was explicitly pantheistic. In its spirit, one may presume, were composed Tintern Abbey and with some modification the first draft of The Prelude.

Other points likewise shed light on Wordsworth's early religious convictions. One is Coleridge's remark in 1796 that Wordsworth was "at least, a semi-atheist." Another is the fact that Wordsworth attended no church until 1806. "For want of religion he never set foot in church."¹⁰ As de Selincourt says, it may be that Wordsworth would not then have regarded himself as an opponent of Christianity. Still, his was probably a negative attitude.

Certainly at this time Wordsworth's faith was in no way tinged with dogmatic Christianity. . . Christianity had no special message for him. . . His philosophy, as far as he was a philosopher, was his religion. He

¹⁰ Ibid., 372.

never examined its logical implications, and any analysis that seemed to disturb its integrity he would have set down to "that false secondary power by which we multiply distinctions," appealing against it to the tribunal of his own deepest experience.¹¹

Consequently, there seems little basis for making the orthodoxy of the elder Wordsworth interpretative of the younger Wordsworth's mind, and by thus reading in foreign ideas watering down the scope and content of the mystical tendencies in the early Prelude. The author of the first version of The Prelude, it seems safe to say, was at most the proponent of natural religion, and it is only natural religion that appears in this poem.

In turning then to The Prelude the intention is to examine the religious experience there described and to verify in it Wordsworth's assertion of mystical or immediate experience of the Divine. At the outset, however, some distinction should be made with regard to the objects of Wordsworth's transcendental intuition, since the transcendental faculty as Wordsworth proposes it describes some experience not directly related to the Deity. An example would be his sense of the all-pervasive joy and vitality of nature. Moreover, Wordsworth conceives of the Imagination as undergoing growth during the years of youth and early manhood. Consequently, there are

¹¹ de Selincourt, xxxiv.

lower and higher stages of experience corresponding to the development of this faculty. In childhood the Imagination operates more or less unconsciously, imparting a "visionary gleam" to childhood perceptions. With the emergence of self-consciousness in boyhood, the mind awakes to the active environment of nature and to its "first creative sensibility." The time of youth brings fancy into play, reinforced at times by a deeper imaginative insight bordering on the mystical. But only in the stage of early manhood does Imagination achieve its full development. Here its activity is characterized by the experience of "intuitive truths, the deepest and the best," and it is perhaps only of this time that Wordsworth asserts the mystical experience of God.

During the first twenty-seven years of Wordsworth's life which The Prelude describes, the mystical tendency and revelation are most apparent in the days of youth and early manhood, fading, however, as the years passed. Consequently, in writing The Prelude Wordsworth is looking back at experience no longer in his capacity to enjoy. The early revelations were not without fanciful elements, as when the youthful Wordsworth ascribed a moral life

To every natural form, rock, fruit or flower,
Even the loose stones that cover the highway.¹²

¹² Prelude, III, 124-125.

such fancy Wordsworth believed he had corrected in his maturity. The substance of the revelations of his youth, however, Wordsworth considered incontrovertibly authentic, as shadowing forth the deeper meanings inherent in the life of nature and man. In The Prelude and other poems Wordsworth deemed his work to be the transcription of such fragments of this revelation as he had caught and, as he thought, understood. Half-regretfully the mature Wordsworth alludes to the transports of other days:

nature then

. . .
To me was all in all.--I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love.

. . .
That time is past
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures.¹³

Yet there was compensation:

Not for this
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts
Have followed: for such loss, I would believe
Abundant recompense.¹⁴

These gifts Wordsworth believed the fruit of a more intimate understanding of nature and the mind. The raptures of youth and early manhood were gone, but in their place were a wisdom and secure insight into the relations of things, attending

¹³ Tintern Abbey, 72-85.

¹⁴ Ibid., 85-88.

mature acquaintance with and interpretation of the reality that lay behind his early experience.

The mystical tendency in Wordsworth began and was consummated in intercourse with nature. In its beginnings, however, the transcendental experience visited him only, as it were, in passing. This was in the days of childhood and boyhood.

Wordsworth speaks of the first gentle visitations of nature, when

Nature by extrinsic passion first
Peopled my mind with beauteous forms or grand,
And made me love them.¹⁵

The impressions then received implanted in him a sense of the beauty and calm and joy of nature.

I have felt,
Not seldom, even in that tempestuous time,
Those hallow'd and pure motions of the sense
Which seem, in their simplicity, to own
An intellectual charm, that dalm delight
Which, if I err not, surely must belong
To those first born affinities that fit
Our new existence to existing things,
And in our dawn of being, constitute
The bond of union betwixt life and joy.¹⁶

Interpreting his early experience, Wordsworth discerns even in childhood the operation of transcendental factors and intimates a mystic communion existing between the unconscious mind and the Divine:

¹⁵ Prelude, I, 572-574.

¹⁶ Ibid., I, 576-585.

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought!
. . .not in vain
By day or star-light thus from my first dawn
Of Childhood didst Thou intertwine for me
The passions that build up our human Soul,
Not with the mean and vulgar works of Man,
But with high objects, with enduring things.
With life and nature.¹⁷

Sensitive to the moods of nature, the boy Wordsworth caught a variety of meanings in the face of the world he saw, as when, among his sports, he felt the spirit of nature impressing

upon all forms the characters
Of danger or desire, and thus did make
The surface of the universal earth
With triumph, and delight, and hope, and fear,
Work like a sea.¹⁸

And at times there were severer interventions of nature. Recounting the episode of a stolen boat, Wordsworth alludes to the fear that came over him as, alone and at night, he rowed his borrowed skiff under the stars. Shoving off in the boat, he had pulled some distance over the dark waters and was making with exuberant strokes toward a bluff barely discernible on the opposite shore,

When from behind that craggy Steep, till then
The bound of the horizon, a huge Cliff,
As if with voluntary power instinct,
Uprear'd its head. I struck, and struck again,
And, growing still in stature, the huge Cliff
Rose up between me and the stars, and still,

17 Ibid., I, 423-437.

18 ~~Ibid.~~, I, 497-501.

With measur'd motion, like a living thing,
 Strode after me. With trembling hands I turn'd,
 And through the silent water stole my way
 Back to the Cavern of the Willow tree.
 There, in her mooring-place, I left my Bark,
 And, through the meadow s homeward went, with grave
 And serious thoughts; and after I had seen
 That spectacle, for many days, my brain
Work'd with a dim and undetermin'd sense
Of unknown modes of being; in my thoughts
There was a darkness, call it solitude,
Or blank desertion, no familiar shapes
Of hourly objects, images of trees,
Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;
 But huge and mighty Forms that do not live
 Like living men mov'd slowly through the mind
 By day and were the trouble of my dreams.¹⁹

Indeed, a visionary gleam rested on Wordsworth's childhood and boyhood perceptions, hinting at nature's power in this early hour to touch the creative faculty.

even then I felt

Gleams like the flashing of a shield; the earth
 And common face of Nature spake to me
 Rememberable things. . .

Albeit lifeless then, and doom'd to sleep
Until maturer seasons call'd them forth
To impregnate and elevate the mind.²⁰

A Child, I held unconscious intercourse
 With the eternal Beauty.²¹

Thus, Wordsworth views his childhood experience as profoundly significant, regarding the mystic impulse as operative even at this early time and foreshadowing the conscious intuition later to develop.

¹⁹ Ibid., I, 405-420.

²⁰ Ibid., I, 613-624.

²¹ Ibid., I, 589-590.

Not stinted was Wordsworth's early fellowship with nature but constant in all seasons and especially in solitary places.

In November days,
When vapours, rolling down the valleys, made
A lonely scene more lonesome; among woods
At noon, and 'mid the calm of summer nights,
When, by the margin of the trembling Lake,
Beneath the gloomy hills I homeward went
In solitude, such intercourse was mine;
T'was mine among the fields both day and night,
And by the waters all the summer long.²²

In the transition from boyhood to adolescence a change came over Wordsworth. His communion with nature, more or less unconscious in childhood, now became conscious; he experienced a recognition of internal power coincident with his seeking nature for her own sake. The young Wordsworth awoke for the first time to the visionary and creative powers of the mind.

I hasten on to tell
How Nature, intervenient till this time
And secondary, now at length was sought
For her own sake.²³

A plastic power
Abode with me, a forming hand. . .

An auxiliar light
Came from my mind which on the setting sun
Bestow'd new splendor, the melodious birds,
The gentle breezes, fountains that ran on,
Murmuring so sweetly in themselves, obey'd
A like dominion.²⁴

²² Ibid., I, 443-451.

²³ Ibid., II, 205-208.

²⁴ Ibid., II, 381-389.

. . .that universal power
And fitness in the latent qualities

to me

Came strengthen'd with a superadded soul,
A virtue not its own.²⁵

This was the time of Wordsworth's first revelations. Not the deepest and the best were they, yet significant of truths beyond the ken of "common minds." He tells now that "the seasons. . .left a register of permanent relations":

Hence life, and change, and beauty, solitude
More active, even, than 'best society',
Society made sweet as solitude
By silent inobtrusive sympathies,
And gentle agitations of the mind
From manifold distinctions, difference
Perceived in things, where to the common eye,
No difference is.²⁶

Walking alone "in storm and tempest, or in star-light nights," he felt an elevation of spirit in the sounds about him, and he argues:

Thence did I drink the visionary power.
I deem not profitless these fleeting moods
Of shadowy exultation: not for this,
That they are kindred to our purer mind
And intellectual life; but that the soul,
Remembering how she felt, but what she felt
Remembering not, retains an obscure sense
Of possible sublimity, to which,
With growing faculties she doth aspire,
With faculties still growing, feeling still
That whatsoever point they gain, they still
Have something to pursue.²⁷

²⁵ Ibid., II, 343-348.

²⁶ Ibid., II, 313-321.

²⁷ Ibid., II, 330-341.

Indeed the use of the visionary faculty became habitual with Wordsworth, so that he speaks of his

interminable building rear'd
By observation of affinities
In objects where no brotherhood exists
To common minds.²⁸

Now, in each of these passages Wordsworth's obvious effort is to suggest the beginnings of transcendental experience. He asserts a special visionary gift, and when he speaks of a "super-added soul" with a "virtue not its own," he certainly implies the activity of transcendental factors in the growth and aspiration of his faculties. We are prepared, consequently, to ascribe to transcendental sources the intuition of nature's unitary and all-pervasive Life which now took hold upon his mind.

My seventeenth year was come
And, whether from this habit, rooted now
So deeply in mind, or from excess
Of the great social principle of life,
Coercing all things into sympathy,
To unorganic nature I transferr'd
My own enjoyments, or, the power of truth
Coming in revelation, I convers'd
With things that really are, I, at this time
Saw blessings spread around me like a sea.²⁹

. . . in all things now
I saw one life, and felt that it was joy.³⁰

This passage we must keep in mind, for later experiences and

²⁸ Ibid., II, 402-405.

²⁹ Ibid., II, 405-414.

³⁰ Ibid., II, 429-430.

mature understanding lead Wordsworth to interpret his present obscure intuitions as an actual contact with the Deity immanent in the life of the world.

Wordsworth's seventeenth year brought a change of environment. His days at the grammar school of Hawkshead over, he left the mountain country of Westmoreland to matriculate at Cambridge University. The imaginative or visionary habit Wordsworth carried with him. Thus, the boy who had grown-up among the hills and lakes in intimate and intense companionship with nature, now came to live in the lowlands of East England. He exchanged the hardy simplicity of the country for the comparative luxury of college life. Yet the first effect of Cambridge was not to separate him from his former self, but to impel to new energy his ingrained habits of thought. At Cambridge Wordsworth's creative and transcendental tendencies persist and become stronger. He realizes all the more his inner endowments.

Why should I grieve? I was a chosen Son.
 For hither I had come with holy powers
 And faculties, whether to work or feel:
 To apprehend all passions and all moods
 Which time, and place, and season do impress
 Upon the visible universe, and work
 Like changes there by force of my own mind.
 I was a Freeman; in the purest sense
 Was free, and to majestic ends was strong.
I do not speak of learning, moral truth,

Or understanding; 'twas enough for me
To know that I was otherwise endow'd.³¹

Thus Wordsworth asserts his special transcendental gifts of mind or soul. More and more he is convinced of the profound character of the mind and he senses the richness of his inward resources. He stands expectantly, as on the brink of revelation. He ponders whither will the growing power of Imagination lead him, what mysteries will it unfold. Soon he formulates the answer.

Let me dare to speak
 A higher language, say that now I felt
 The strength and consolation which were mine.
 As if awaken'd, summon'd, rous'd, constrain'd,
 I look'd for universal things; perused
 The common countenance of earth and heaven;
 And, turning the mind in upon itself,
 Por'd, watch'd, expected, listen'd; spread my thoughts
 And spread them with a wider creeping; felt
Incumbencies more awful, visitings
Of the Upholder of the tranquil Soul,
Which underneath all passion lives secure
 A steadfast life. But peace! it is enough
 To notice that I was ascending now
 To such community with highest truth.³²

Coincident with his growing inwardness, then, in these first months at Cambridge, Wordsworth passed, so he felt, to the stage of actual mystical experience, for the "Upholder of the tranquil Soul" thus described as present to his inner faculties is none other than God.³³ More explicitly,

³¹ Ibid., III, 82-93.

³² Ibid., III, 106-120.

³³ An examination of the same context in the 1850 version verifies that Wordsworth here identifies the "Upholder of

presence of God in the world and in man, in virtue of which God is the animating principle of all reality.

A track pursuing not untrod before,
 From deep analogies by thought supplied,
 Or consciousness not to be subdued,
 To every natural form, rock, fruit, or flower,
 Even the loose stones that cover the high-way,
 I gave a moral life, I saw them feel,
 Or link'd them to some feeling: the great mass
Lay bedded in a quickening soul, and all
That I beheld respired with inward meaning.
Thus much for the one Presence, and the Life
Of the great whole.³⁶

As will be developed in the following chapter, the "one Presence" is that of the indwelling Divinity, and the "Life of the great whole" is to be identified with one divine Life or Soul immanent in and animating the world. Thus, for Wordsworth, God, the world, and man live with one life; have, as it were, one presence in virtue of the single vital principle that animates all. At the heart of reality is the mighty unity of all things, their common divinity.

The realization in its full import of this revelation compels from Wordsworth an awestruck tribute to the human mind:

O Heaven! how awful is the might of Souls,
 And what they do within themselves, while yet
 The yoke of earth is new to them, the world
 Nothing but a wild field where they were sown.
 This is, in truth, heroic argument,
 And genuine prowess; which I wish'd to touch
 With hand however weak.³⁷

³⁶ Ibid., III, 121-131.

³⁷ Ibid., III, 178-184.

There's not a man
That lives who hath not had his godlike hours,
And knows not what majestic sway we have
As natural beings in the strength of nature.³⁸

At this time, then, it cannot be questioned that Wordsworth explicitly asserted a strictly mystical experience, that he claimed to enjoy some kind of intuitive contact with the Divine. This experience is the basis of his abiding conviction throughout life of the immanence of God in the world and in man. The power to maintain immediate contact with the indwelling Deity would fade and vanish as years went by. Yet the faith in the divine principle animating the universe remained a constant even in the days of Wordsworth's so-called orthodoxy.

After these high revelations, so Wordsworth tells us, the first year at Cambridge saw a diminution of his visionary power. Always strongest in solitude, the imaginative habit had asserted itself at Cambridge while yet he was a lonely stranger in new surroundings. Soon the impact of friends and a busy college life took Wordsworth out of his austere habits of solitary contemplation. His sight "was dazzled by the novel show."

. . . thereafter came
Observance less devout. I had made a change
In climate; and my nature's outward coat
Changed also, slowly and insensibly.
To the deep quiet and majestic thoughts

³⁸ Ibid., III, 191-194.

Of loneliness succeeded empty noise
And superficial pastimes.³⁹

And so it happened that he passed

From the remembrance of better things
And slipp'd into the week-day works of youth.⁴⁰

Wordsworth's imaginative power, however, though largely dormant in college atmosphere, reasserted itself in time of summer vacations when restraints of college residence were removed. After the first session at Cambridge he returned to his native hills. There, resuming his lonely wanderings, he experienced the resurgence of the inner faculties and knew again in the presence of nature his old transports of feeling.

When first I made
Once more the circuit of our little Lake
If ever happiness hath lodg'd with man,
That day consummate happiness was mine,
Wide-spreading, steady, calm, contemplative.
The sun was set, or, setting, when I left
Our cottage door, and even soon brought on
A sober hour, not winning or serene,
For cold and raw the air was, and untun'd:
But, as a face we love is sweetest then
When sorrow damps it, or, whatever look
It chance to wear is sweetest if the heart
Have fulness in itself, even so with me
It fared that evening. Gently did my soul
Put off her veil, and, self-transmuted, stood
Naked as in the presence of her God.⁴¹

As always, that evening's experience was not so much of the intellect as of the heart.

³⁹ Ibid., III, 206-213.

⁴⁰ Ibid., III, 243-244.

⁴¹ Ibid., IV, 132-142.

Little did I remember, and even this
 Still pleas'd me more; but I had hopes and peace
And swellings of the spirit, was rapt and soothed,
Convers'd with promises, had glimmering views
How Life pervades the undecaying mind,
How the immortal Soul with God-like power
 Informs, creates, and thaws the deepest sleep
 That time can lay upon her.⁴²

Yet even now the light and "visionary splendour" came but fitfully. Taken up with distractions of vacation time, with "feast, and dance, and public revelry, and sports and games," the young Wordsworth drew away from his holy fellowship with nature. In consequence, a dimness and lack of sensitivity came over his spirit.

Hush'd meanwhile was the undersoul.⁴³

Something there was about me that perplex'd
 The authentic sight of reason, press'd too closely
 On that religious dignity of mind,
 That is the very faculty of truth.⁴⁴

This falling off from his former self lasted until Wordsworth's last year at Cambridge. In that year, as he says, "the bonds of indolent and vague society relaxing in their hold," the poet's soul returned to him.

The Poet's soul was with me at that time,
 Sweet meditations, the still overflow
 Of happiness and truth. A thousand hopes
 Were mine, a thousand tender dreams.⁴⁵

⁴² Ibid., IV, 150-158.

⁴³ Ibid., III, 540. Compare Emerson's 'over-soul' and the Transcendentalism of the New England school.

⁴⁴ Ibid., IV, 295-298.

⁴⁵ Ibid., VI, 55-58.

The "morning gladness" was with him, his inner knowledge

was oft in depth
And delicacy like another mind
Sequester'd from my outward taste in books.⁴⁶

This recovered spirit Wordsworth took with him the following summer when with Robert Jones, a close friend, he set out on a walking tour through France and the Alps.

Crossing France, the two pilgrims arrived in Switzerland. Here their way lay through the austere splendors of mountain country. Mont Blanc they saw and the "wondrous Vale of Chamouny"; before their widening eyes icy cataracts plunged in the narrow course of the valleys, and ripening wheat grew in peace on the precarious hillsides. It was a time of flower and brightness, of summer gladness. The grandeur of all he saw touched Wordsworth's soul to the quick. Yet underneath he suffered some disquiet.

Yet still in me, mingling with these delights
Was something of stern mood, an under-thirst
Of vigour, never utterly asleep.⁴⁷

His mood, apparently, was a harbinger of what was to transpire. In their journey Wordsworth and his friend turned south towards Italy. In a high and solitary mountain pass they lost their way, then were directed aright by a peasant who indicated their path thenceforward lay downward. The thought that they had

⁴⁶ Ibid., VI, 114-116.

⁴⁷ Ibid., VI, 488-490.

crossed the Alps struck a spring of inner consciousness in Wordsworth with such force that his spirit was rapt out of itself:

Imagination! lifting up itself
 Before the eye and progress of my Song
 Like an unfather'd vapour; here that Power,
In all the night of its endowments, came
Athwart me; I was lost as in a cloud,
Halted, without a struggle to break through.
 And now recovering, to my Soul I say
 I recognize thy glory; in such strength
 Of usurpation, in such visitings
 Of awful promise, when the light of sense
Goes out in flashes that have shewn to us
The invisible world, doth Greatness make abode,
There harbours whether we be young or old.
 Our destiny, our nature, and our home
 Is with infinitude, and only there!⁴⁸

Among all the transports he had, this would seem the experience most pregnant of meaning to Wordsworth. It suggests the ecstasy of the mystical state, the sublime interiority of ecstatis vision. His spirit is vaulted into the invisible world, and there he sees. . . ? We must conjecture that Wordsworth is convinced his soul here had in some real sense probed the ultimate mystery of reality, had been in the very presence of Divinity.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Ibid., VI, 525-539.

⁴⁹ The relation of this experience to God is substantiated in a long letter he wrote to his sister Dorothy in September, 1790: "I had not a thought of man, or a single created being: my whole soul was turned to Him who produced the terrible majesty before me." (Quoted by E. Batho, 254.) Compare the orthodox tone of the letter with the mysticism of the passage above.

The rest of the day as young Wordsworth trudged onward towards Italy, he fairly reeled under the impact of what he had experienced. All he saw took on the prospect of the vision. The heights, winds, and rocks, the torrents and the black crags towering at his side seemed to lose their individuality and whirled in his mind in a mystic impression of oneness.

The unfetter'd clouds, and region of the Heavens,
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.⁵⁰

Where before, Wordsworth glimpsed the "unity of all" and "the Life of the great whole" from an impression of external nature, now he seems to sense the truth interiorly, in a purely immanent experience of soul. What then is the glory of the soul that he alludes to? It would seem to be a truth felt now for the first time, namely, the pre-eminent activity of the divine Life in the soul.⁵¹ This divine Life is now revealed as the

⁵⁰ Ibid., VI, 566-572.

⁵¹ Cf. Rader's interpretation of the passage of the 1850 text which parallels the quotation on page 76. The later text reads:

Imagination--here the Power so called
Through sad incompetence of human speech,
That awful Power arose from the mind's abyss
Like an unfather'd vapour that enwraps,
At once, some lonely traveller. Etc. (VI, 592-596)

More or less corroborating the above interpretation, Rader says, "I believe we will not read this passage aright unless we interpret the 'mind's abyss' as the center of being, where we are in contact with God. This power, arising from

root principle of the imaginative act, the very base of the soul's dignity and grandeur--

That whence our dignity originates.⁵²

Thus Wordsworth's mystical tendencies, which began with the intuition of omni-present life and joy in external nature culminate now in a principle of interiority: God immanent in the soul; the soul living by, participating in, the divine Life.

In the latter course of The Prelude (1805) Wordsworth never withdrew from the radical truth here enuntiated. Faith in the verity of man's godhead and joy from the recollection of his one-time rapt experiences of the Divinity indwelling in nature and the soul are a constant in the further history of the development of his mind.

There are no higher mystical experiences to be related in a study of Wordsworth's subsequent mental growth. Indeed, mystical raptures as such seem to terminate for good at about this time. However, the later Wordsworth came to view the stage of his mind at this time as somewhat unsatisfactory. Possessing these transcendental truths, some completion was yet owing to the soul, for the divine knowledge was but insecurely held; the contemplative spirit came and went, subject to the

its 'blind cavern,' works in and through sensation, thus informing sense by the immortal mind." (Presiding Ideas, 158.)
⁵² Prelude, XII, 374.

distractions and infidelities of youth. Moreover, there were exaggerations, so Wordsworth later felt, in the picture of the world and of the soul which his mind then proposed to him. The mind at times mistook the arbitrary and superficial judgments of its eye for the profounder judgments of the heart or true creative faculty. An example of this errant tendency was its attributing a moral life to stones and flowers. Likewise, the mind erred in conceiving the Deity as impersonal and by denying in a sense its transcendency in favor of the pre-eminent life of nature and the soul. There was, consequently, a final stage of insight to be achieved, when all errors were moderated and the soul in perfect balance would contemplate the divine reality in exquisite oneness with truth.

Such a stage Wordsworth believed he attained in his maturity after the period of apostasy from "ancient faith," when strictly his mystic experience was a thing of the past. It was a stable state of mind characterized by the possession of "the grand and simple Reason," and the basis of the ultimate views on man, nature, and God which Wordsworth indicted in the concluding books of The Prelude.

In Books XI-XIII Wordsworth relates how he recovered the youthful imaginative and mystic spirit which "false thought and false philosophy" had brought for a time into total eclipse.

These books likewise record that lasting faith in nature and those final convictions which inform all Wordsworth's poetry between 1797 and 1805.

After his period of republican ardor and his pursuit of abstract thought, the mature Wordsworth, so we find, reasserts the nature-faith of his youth. Nature is still a passion, still has her power to consecrate. Further, Wordsworth reaffirms his conviction of the transcendental power of the mind that

feeds upon infinity,
That is exalted by an underpresence,
The sense of God, or whatsoever is dim
Or vast in its own being.⁵³

He terms the world "divine and true," hearkens to a higher love that "proceeds from the brooding soul, and is divine," and finds the progress of Imagination but leads again to the truth so intimately known before--

The feeling of life endless, the great thought
By which we live, Infinity and God.⁵⁴

Man, inwardly contemplated, still possesses the divine Life,

As of all visible natures crown; and first
In capability of feeling what
Was to be felt; in being rapt away
By the divine effect of power and love,
As, more than anything we know instinct
With Godhead.⁵⁵

⁵³ Ibid., XIII, 69-73.

⁵⁴ Ibid., XIII, 188-189.

⁵⁵ Ibid., VIII, 631-639.

The sublime and mystic unity of all things remains the object of his faith.

When strongly breath'd upon
By this sensation. . .
Of union or communion doth the soul
Rejoice as in her highest joy, for there,
There chiefly, hath she feeling whence she is
And, passing through all Nature rests with God.⁵⁶

True it is, the old transports are no more. In his maturity Wordsworth must be content to live by faith, sustained by memories of the past.

The days gone by
Come back upon me from the dawn almost
Of life: the hiding places of my power
Seem open: I approach, and then they close;
I see by glimpses now; when age comes on
May scarcely see at all, and I would give,
While yet we may, as far as words can give,
A substance and a life to what I feel.
I would enshrine the spirit of the past
For future reiteration.⁵⁷

Yet Wordsworth's faith in the mystic past is most firm. His is the absolute conviction that he had once immediate experience of the divine principle animating the world and the soul. "The passionate intuition of God present in the universe and in the mind of man remained to the end of his life the living centre of his creed."⁵⁸

In the history just related, we see the various notes

⁵⁶ Ibid., VIII, 830-835.

⁵⁷ Ibid., XI, 334-343.

⁵⁸ de Selincourt, xxxiv.

of natural mysticism verified. Wordsworth, first, has a mighty conception of the mind. This faculty when aroused has, he considers, an innate and "awful power" for truth. Its vitality springs ultimately from the possession, deep-flowing in the soul, of the divine Life. Hence Wordsworth's impassioned tribute:

Oh! mystery of Man, from what depths
Proceed thy honours!⁵⁹

In virtue of its transcendental power the soul may enter into "the invisible world" and commune "with highest truth." It sees with vision ineffable.

to my Soul I say
I recognize thy glory.⁶⁰

Inquiring into the matter of this "highest truth" of which Wordsworth claims the vision, we find it partly identified with the endowments of external nature. Her vitality, joy, beauty, and unity are constantly manifest to Wordsworth. Partly, however, the vision involves the immediate intuition of the divine Life immanent in the vital processes of the world and in the soul. The immanent nature of Wordsworth's Deity we shall consider in the next chapter. For the present we simply indicate the immediate or mystic character of Wordsworth's experience. This immediacy is implicit in the assumptions behind

⁵⁹ Prelude, XI, 329-330.

⁶⁰ Ibid., VI, 531-532.

Wordsworth's theory of mind. Thus, he bars the way to reason in searching the deeper aspects of reality. Imagination being the faculty of essential truth and intuitive in its operations, knowledge of God, arrived at by Imagination, is necessarily experiential and intuitive. Granted that the experience is consummated in an ecstasy of feeling, it is essentially mystical in its basis: the immanent Divinity is contacted, felt as present, and immediately known by the soul.

Wordsworth's experience of God, consequently, is mystical. Again, it is ecstatis, for it occurs "when the light of the sense goes out." Finally, the state of the soul is highly obscure. The divine knowledge lies "far hidden from the reach of words." Wordsworth's obscurity follows from the fact that his experience is mainly, if not exclusively, one of feeling. There is scarcely any intellectual formulation anywhere of the vision he had. He senses the one Life, gropes at "presences," undergoes "shadowy exultations," has "glimmerings of the spirit." But these, being organic experiences, are necessarily personal and incommunicable.

in the main

It lies far hidden from the reach of words.
 Points have we all of us within our souls,
 Where all stand single; this I feel, and make
 Breathings for incommunicable powers.⁶¹

⁶¹ Ibid., III, 184-188.

In the highest realm of experience thought recedes, and feeling or passion--"highest reason in a soul sublime"--becomes paramount. Yet feeling is a power for truth.

In Wordsworth, then, as in the philosophy of his day and since, we have a new way of knowing proposed to us.⁶² God is disengaged from a "felt contact," is known by sympathy or by the heart. Knowledge of the divine is ultimately a non-evidential experience; hence, is rather a faith than a knowing. The intellect follows in the lead of the affective state, the affections being primitive in religious experience and the cause of the intellectual state. Consequently, any intellectual formulation of the data of sense is entirely secondary and accidental in the development of our knowledge of God. God is not known, He is experienced. His existence is not argued to; it is simply asserted on the basis of an immediate and spontaneous contact with the divine Life indwelling in the world.

Thus, Wordsworth's mysticism, like that of recent philosophy and modern religious experience, ultimately appeals to the immanence of God in the world. The basic philosophy of The Prelude is, indeed, a close parallel of the transcendentalism found in so many nineteenth-century writers, particularly the New England group.

⁶² Cf. Sheen, op. cit., "The Modern Idea of God," 182-217.

manner of Emerson's 'over-soul,' Wordsworth identifies God with the soul of the world, he similarly postulates the immanence of God in the world. That Wordsworth does propose an immanent Deity, is, however, the subject of the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV

THE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE IMMANENCE IN THE PRELUDE

In the preceding chapter it has been suggested that the trend of Wordsworth's philosophy is toward a Deity immanent in the world and in the soul. Here it is proposed to deal with this aspect of Wordsworth's thought in some detail, both to verify the fact and to suggest the philosophical basis of divine immanence as Wordsworth proposes it. In putting forth an immanental view of the relation of God with the world Wordsworth joins a long tradition of thought reaching from the ancient philosophy of the Stoics and Plotinus to the modern systems of Spinoza and Hegel, and the thought of many of our contemporaries, for example, Croce and Bergson. Without inquiring more than cursorily into the various immanental systems, it may be suggested, prior to considering Wordsworth's doctrine itself, what points of contact he has with these systems.

The concept of divine immanence in itself denies the essential transcendence of God in favor of His indwelling presence in the universe and in the heart of man. The immanent presence of God has been variously conceived by philosophers. In general, God--absolute Spirit or Life--is made either to be

the form of the world (anima mundi) or, in a strictly monist conception, the whole of reality, producing all things (phenomena) either by an emanative process or by the immanent modification and evolution of the one Divine substance. For the Stoics, God is the immanent reason, the soul of the world, communicating everywhere activity and life.¹ For Plotinus, God is the One whence derive by successive emanations Intelligence, the World-Soul, and matter. For Bruno and Spinoza the Deity is nature (Deus sive Natura), and the phenomena of the world are manifestations of the one substance which works in nature and animates it. For Hegel the Deity is the Idea, and the world the product of the internal evolution of the Divine thought.² Finally, for Bergson, the one great reality is Energy or Spirit or Life, constantly in flux and continually creating and renewing the world through the dynamic forces of the elan vital. It should be evident that the notion of the divine immanence is in principle pantheistic, since the Divine substance (ideal or real) is believed either to be the world or to be univocally communicated to the world.

The ideas of Hegel and the notion of an evolving Deity advanced in the last century were, of course, after Wordsworth's

¹ Cf. C. A. Dubray, The Catholic Encyclopedia, "Naturalism," X, 713-715.

² Cf. E. A. Pace, The Catholic Encyclopedia, "Pantheism," XI, 447-450.

time.³ Wordsworth, however, had contacts with the earlier immanental systems through both his reading of the English Neo-Platonists and his friendship with that deliver in many philosophies, Coleridge. The catalogue of the Rydal Mount library as sold at auction after Wordsworth's death would seem to establish to an extent the sources of Wordsworth's thought. The volumes in the Platonic tradition include Paracelsus, Jacob Boehme, Edward Taylor's exposition of Boehme's theosophy, Richard Cudworth, Thomas Taylor's annotated editions of the Cratylus, Phaedo, Parmenides, and Timaeus, and related books.⁴

³ Wordsworth similarly antedates for the most part modern religious theories deriving from nineteenth-century Agnosticism and Positivism. These theories, condemned by Pius X in his encyclical on 'Modernism,' propose a doctrine of 'vital immanence' based, not on metaphysical conceptions of God or formulated philosophy, but purely on internal experience. From the psychological analysis of consciousness God is revealed as indwelling in man as a living presence and manifesting Himself in man's aspirations and needs. Beyond the fact of this felt presence and manifestation God remains, however, largely a subjective or symbolic value, since He is whatever the practical and pragmatic needs of man make Him. If more than a symbol, God is either the Unknowable, or He enjoys some vague denomination such as the 'larger self from which saving experiences come.' Cf. E. Thamiry, Cath. Encycl., "Immanence," XII, 682-687; also A. Vermeersch, Cath. Encycl., "Modernism," X, 415-421; also Sheen, 173-179.

⁴ Cf. Beach, Concept of Nature..., "Notes on Wordsworth's Reading," 569-577; also Rader, 199-200.

There is no way of knowing whether Wordsworth possessed the books in this list at the time of writing Tintern Abbey and The Prelude. However, the catalogue gives a general notion of the matter that interested Wordsworth over a long course of time. Wordsworth, consequently, may have had the authority of the Timaeus and the Platonists for his notion of a soul (or something) deeply inter-fused through the whole of nature, and his idea of a plastic nature, a spirit of nature, or soul of the world, as distinct from God, may have come from his reading of Cudworth. The doctrine, too, of Shaftsbury and Boehme of the divine soul diffused through the souls of men may have influenced Wordsworth. The fact that his thought reflects in precise details the conceptions of English Platonists like Cudworth, Henry More, Taylor, Vaughn, and Berkeley points at least to their indirect influence on the shaping of his system.⁵

But a great and direct influence on Wordsworth was Coleridge. Coleridge's influence came when the young Wordsworth had just recovered from the moral crisis following his adventures in the realm of abstract thought. Through Coleridge Wordsworth came in contact with the many currents of thought in the air at the time: English Neo-Platonism, the transcendentalism of Kant and the German school, the psychologism of Hume and Hartley, the naturism of Spinoza and Boehme. Coleridge was at

⁵ Cf. Beach, Concept of Nature..., "The Metaphysical Concept of Nature," 59-104.

one time or another enthusiastically interested in all these systems, and it may be presumed that, especially in the years 1795-1807, Wordsworth took over many ideas from Coleridge and, consciously or not, expressed them in his own thought.

Granting the influence of Coleridge on the formation of Wordsworth's mind, it is interesting to note what was Coleridge's conception of nature and the Deity. In The Aeolian Harp appears much the same notion of "the unity of all" reiterated in The Prelude and ascribed by Wordsworth himself to Coleridge in the line "To thee. . .the unity of all hath been revealed."⁶

O! the one life within us and abroad,
Which meets all motion and becomes its soul,
A light in sound, a sound-like power in light,
Rhythm in all thought, and joyance everywhere.⁷

Further along in the poem Coleridge attempts to state again his feeling of the unity of nature.

And what if all of animated nature
Be but organic harps diversely framed,
That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
At once the Soul of each, and God of all?⁸

This suggestion Coleridge immediately dropped as being too close to pantheism. Yet, at the same time Coleridge was a fervent admirer of Spinoza and, as Legouis points out, "spoke

⁶ Prelude, II, 225-226.

⁷ The Aeolian Harp, ll. 26-29.

⁸ Ibid., ll. 44-48.

enthusiastically of Spinoza's formulas concerning God-Nature."⁹

In The Destiny of Nations (1796) he alludes to the

All-conscious Presence of the Universe!
Nature's vast ever-acting Energy!¹⁰

Interpreting this idea is a passage from another poem,

Religious Musings (1794-1796), in which Coleridge calls God

"Him Nature's essence, mind, and energy."¹¹ This conception may not be Spinoza's Deus sive Natura in all details, but fundamentally it is a Spinozist identification of God and nature, since God is "Nature's essence," and nature is animated by the life and energy of the Deity. Seeing Coleridge's great influence on Wordsworth--we have Wordsworth's word that they were "Twins almost in genius and in mind"--these views in Coleridge are at least extrinsic evidence for the presence of Spinoza's naturism in Wordsworth.

In all probability Coleridge's sympathy for transcendentalism likewise affected Wordsworth's thought in the direction of divine immanence. Transcendentalism--the doctrine that some ideas do not derive from experience but from the constitution of the mind or from a supra-personal agency communicating its message to consciousness--has always been a springboard for the doctrine of an immanent Deity. Granting that

⁹ Legouis, 326.

¹⁰ Destiny of Nations, ll. 460-461.

¹¹ Religious Musings, l. 49.

God is present to the soul, some kind of innate knowledge seems necessary if the mind is to contact the indwelling God. Hence, the immanental systems appeal to transcendental experience, to the intuition of God, as a kind of coefficient to their doctrine. This tendency in the direction of transcendental experience, marked in Platonism and the mysticism of the Neo-Platonics, became well-nigh a dogma by the end of the eighteenth-century as a result of the Kantian criticism of the speculative intelligence and Hume's phenomenalism. With liberal Protestantism on the one hand denying revelation and the supernatural basis of religion, and philosophy on the other hand attacking the extra-mental reference of mind, or, at least, the validity of reason, religion lost all extrinsic foundation. As a result, philosophers of the time were inclined to fall back on purely immanent experience for the basis of the religious impulse. Coleridge, very much in touch with the philosophy of his day, seems to have shared this view and, we may infer, passed it on to Wordsworth.

In Religious Musings, for example, Coleridge represents himself as perceiving the present Deity, not by a discursive process, but by mystical and immediate apprehension. In March, 1801, he writes that "all truth is a species of revelation." In the Biographia Literaria he further states:

We learn all things indeed by occasion of experience; but the very facts so learnt force us inward on the antecedents, that must be pre-supposed in order to render experience itself possible.¹²

Applying this Kantian idea to the interpretation of religious experience, we have the assertion that knowledge of God is wholly immanent in origin. If the influence of Coleridge was as great as it seems to have been, there is some probability that Wordsworth held similarly for the transcendental nature of the experience of God. Certainly, Wordsworth's preference was for an immediate and intuitive contact with the Deity, and his emphasis on the primacy of feeling in the experience of the Divine points in the direction of immanence as held by Coleridge.

Apart from such probable influences, Wordsworth seems also to have been affected by the reaction setting in at his time to the deistic notion of God fathered by the exaggerated rationalism of the eighteenth-century--a reaction which, as Monsignor Sheen notes, has largely affected the trend of modern thought toward divine immanence. Revolting against the deist conception of God's exaggerated transcendence--"God made the world and then left it to its own devices"--modern philosophy has simply denied transcendence, as such, in favor of God as the immanent cause of the universe. In this it follows Spinoza's

¹² Biographia Literaria, J. M. Dent and Sons, London, I, 94.

dictum, "God is the immanent and not the transient cause of all things." In a letter written as late as 1814 we discern Wordsworth's sympathies for the latter view. In it he concedes that "he does not indeed consider the Supreme Being as bearing the same relation to the universe as a watch-maker bears to a watch," and he inveighs against "the perpetual talking about making by God," holding that "nothing is so injurious" to the cause of religion as such reference to God as transient cause of things.¹³ Now, if God is not the transient cause of the world, He is the immanent cause of it. One is left to infer that Wordsworth's God is akin to the pantheistic Nature-God of Spinoza, even though in this same letter Wordsworth explicitly denies such an interpretation of his thought.

With these probable sources and indicated tendencies of Wordsworth's thought in mind, we turn to The Prelude for Wordsworth's own doctrine of divine immanence. As a guide to our understanding of the notion of divine immanence, its main propositions are here summarized:

(1) God is absolute Spirit or Life.

(2) God is immanent in the world and in the soul; He does not transcend the world as the efficient cause of its being.

¹³ Cf. the "Letter to Mrs. Clarkson" in The Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson with the Wordsworth Circle, E. J. Morley (ed.), in two volumes, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1927, I, 79.

(3) God's indwelling presence is manifest in the vital processes of nature and in man's internal experience.

(4) God is immediately known in the natural order by affective intuition, without appeal to the extrinsic aids of reason and revelation.

Having previously dealt with proposition four, we are concerned in the following matter to investigate Wordsworth's thought in its bearing on the preceding propositions.

What relation does Wordsworth propose as existing between God and the world? The answer to this question is found in several passages in The Prelude, each urging the fundamental unity of the life of nature and of God. For example, in Book XIII occur the lines

. . . the great system of the world
Where Man is spher'd, and which God animates.¹⁴

The context is significant. In the lines immediately preceding, Wordsworth retracts the pantheism implicit in his former notions of God and man. As Wordsworth tells us, this retraction was owing to the influence of Coleridge.

Thy gentle spirit to my heart of hearts
Did also find its way; and thus the life
Of all things and the mighty unity
In all which we behold, and feel, and are,
Admitted more habitually a mild into
interposition. . . .

¹⁴ Prelude, XIII, 267-268.

. . . God and Man divided, as they ought,
Between them the great system of the world,
Where Man is sphered, and which God animates.¹⁵

The concluding lines disclose that Wordsworth seems to admit some distinction between God, nature, and man. Thus nature is intermediary between God and man. In the scheme of nature "Man is sphered"--as Wordsworth says in Book VIII, "as of all visible natures crown." God is somehow over man and nature, but with what distinction of being, if any, is not clear. On the one hand, Wordsworth explicitly asserts that nature or the world is animated by God: the life of the world is, in effect, the life of God. This is a doctrine of divine immanence. On the other hand, Wordsworth seems to propose a kind of transcendence predicated of the notion that God is the source of life and has life in a super-eminent degree:

. . . the one
Surpassing Life, which out of space and time,
Nor touched by welterings of passion, is
And hath the name of God.¹⁶

Hence, God in a sense is distinct from and transcendent to the world--not essentially distinct, however, since the world lives with the life of God. The principle of life is one and all life is divine.¹⁷

¹⁵ Ibid., XIII, 252-268.

¹⁶ Ibid., VI, 154-158.

¹⁷ Relate this with Coleridge's concentrated definition of Spinozism: "Every thing has a life of its own, and we are all one life."

The idea of the single life of God and nature Wordsworth repeats in other lines.

The life of Nature, by the God of love
Inspired. . .¹⁸

Great God!
Who sends't thyself into this breathing world,
Through Nature and through every kind of life,
And maks't man what he is, Creature divine.¹⁹

. . . Nature's self, which is the breath of God.²⁰

Wordsworth's selection of words to describe the presence of God in nature is significant. In one instance, he says that the life of nature is "inspired" by God; in another, he calls nature the "breath" of God. The terms suggest a more intimate relation of God and nature than one of efficient causality, or of maker and thing made; they indicate an actual communication of soul or spirit. If God communicates His own spirit; if, as Wordsworth says, He sends Himself into the world as the life that informs and animates it, then, indeed, the world shares in, lives by, the very life of God. The divine life is present in every living thing, and man himself is divine in virtue of the vital principle which God univocally communicates to him. Man, being the crown of living nature, participates in the divine

¹⁸ Prelude, XI, 99-100.

¹⁹ Ibid., X, 386-389.

²⁰ Ibid., V, 222.

life to an extraordinary degree,

As, more than anything we know instinct
With Godhead. . .21

Consequently, God does not transcend the world as its efficient cause; rather, He is in the world as the immanent cause of its life and activity. No real division of being or of nature, then, obtains between God and the world. There is one divine life which all things--God, nature, man--share. There is one order, the order of nature. God is substantial Spirit or Life; the life of God is the principle of the vitality and activity of the world--

. . .the one Presence and the Life
Of the great whole. . .22

A number of passages occur in which Wordsworth invokes or refers to the Soul of Nature.

From Nature and her overflowing soul
I had received so much that all my thoughts
Were steep'd in feeling.23

Oh! Soul of Nature, excellent and fair,
That didst rejoice with me, with whom I too
Rejoiced, through early earth. . .24

Oh! Soul of Nature! that dost overflow
With passion and with life, what feeble men
Walk on this earth!25

21 Ibid., VIII, 637-638.

22 Ibid., III, 130-131.

23 Ibid., II, 416-418.

24 Ibid., XI, 138-140.

25 Ibid., XI, 146-148.

Another quotation may be adduced from The Excursion as indicative of Wordsworth's mind:

To every Form of being is assigned

An active Principle:--howe'er removed
 From sense and observation, it subsists
 In all things, in all natures; in the stars
 Of azure heaven, the unenduring clouds,
 In flower and tree, in every pebbly stone
 That paves the brooks, the stationary rocks,
 The moving waters, and the invisible air.
 Whate'er exists hath properties that spread
 A simple blessing, or with evil mixed;
Spirit that knows no insulated spot,
No chasm, no solitude; from link to link
It circulates, the Soul of all the worlds.²⁶

As Joseph Beach observes, in lines such as these Wordsworth exhibits a tendency to hypostatize nature as a distinct principle in the romantic fashion of Goethe and Shelley.²⁷ But more than mere romantic fashion or poetic language underlies Wordsworth's conception of nature. For him the Soul of Nature is a metaphysical concept closely allied with his thought of the one life that lives in all things. Indeed, when Wordsworth speaks of the soul or spirit of nature, he is very close to identifying it, perhaps actually does identify it, with God. Thus at times in The Prelude he appears to merge the idea of God and the Soul of Nature into one notion akin to the anima mundi of Neo-Platonic school or to the Spinozist conception of Deus sive Natura as the activating principle of all things in the universe

²⁶ Excursion, IX, 1-15. Wordsworth italicizes "active."
²⁷ Beach, Concept of Nature..., 50.

--not merely of living things, but of all phenomena. Take, for example, these lines from Book I.

Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe!
Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought!
And giv'st to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion!²⁸

The reference to God in a somewhat Platonic spirit is unmistakable in the second line; at the same time God is named "Spirit of the Universe" and attributed to Him is the mediation of the primal force whereby material forms have breath and motion. The evident sense of the words is that God and the Soul or Spirit of the world are identical: God is the anima mundi. There is also the passage in Book IX where Wordsworth speaks of

. . .subservience from the first
To God and Nature's single sovereignty.²⁹

Unless the grammar is mis-interpreted, the "single sovereignty" here referred to implies the identity of God and nature. But elsewhere, it must be admitted, the Soul of Nature appears to have a principle of being distinct from God, as when Wordsworth speaks of

. . .the God
Of Nature and of Man.³⁰

Whether Wordsworth strictly identified God with nature or not,

²⁸ Prelude, I, 428-431.

²⁹ Ibid., IX, 236-237.

³⁰ Ibid., VIII, 435-436.

it is clear that he held God was immanent in nature. God and the world are not entirely distinct; in principle the life of both is one. God is substantial life; the world lives, is animated by the life--essentially divine--which God communicates to it.

Wordsworth's insistence on the one Life underlying the relation of God, nature, and man approximates a conception which, so Monsignor Sheen remarks, is becoming more and more recognized in contemporary philosophy.³¹ It is the conception that God is organic with the world. The description is Professor Pringle-Pattison's.³² Like Wordsworth, Pringle-Pattison appeals to the Universal Life in all things. For him the problem of the relation between man, nature, and God is solved by the use of biological categories. Instead of the "fatal separation of the subject knowing and the object known" that Kant and Hume imposed upon modern philosophy, Professor Pringle-Pattison appeals to the organic identity of subject and object. For him, "Man is organic to the world and the universe is organic to man."

Neither are God and Nature separated, for there is something organic between God and man and God and the world. To maintain that

³¹ Sheen, 55-57, 233-241.

³² A. Seth Pringle-Pattison, The Idea of God, quoted passim in Sheen's God and Intelligence.

God and man are two independent facts is to lose hold "upon the experienced fact which is the existence of one in the other and through the other. . . God is not purely immanent, nor is He purely transcendent. There is only one phrase which expresses what He really is, namely, 'organic with the universe.' He becomes an abstraction if separated from the universe of his manifestation, just as the finite subjects have no independent subsistence outside of the Universal Life, which mediates itself to them in a world of objects."³³

If one prescind from the problem of knowledge involved in the above statements, Wordsworth's relation of God, nature, and man is markedly similar to Pringle-Pattison's. Like the latter, Wordsworth immerses God in the vital processes of the world. He appeals to the "life of the great whole" to explain his apprehension of the "unity of all." At the same time, Wordsworth distinguishes God and nature and thus denies the pure immanence of the Divine. Hence, Wordsworth's God is neither purely immanent nor purely transcendent. The phrase, "organic with the world," would seem an apt description of the relation of his God with the world, since this relation is founded, like Pringle-Pattison's, on the attribution of one Universal Life to all things. Much as the soul vivifies the body and brings the body's activities into one organic unity, so in Wordsworth's conception the one divine Life communicated from God is the basis of the organic "unity of all" demonstrated in the life of nature and of man.

³³ Sheen, 55-57.

The foregoing matter has emphasized Wordsworth's conviction of the immanence of the Divine in nature and the external universe. This immanence likewise extends to man, since man participates in the divine principle indwelling in all things. Several passages already quoted remark Wordsworth's contention on this point. For example:

Then arose

Man, inwardly contemplated, and present
 To my own being, to a loftier height;
 As of all visible natures crown: and first
 In capability of feeling what
 Was to be felt; in being rapt away
 By the divine effect of power and love,
 As, more than anything we know instinct
With Godhead.³⁴

Great God!

Who send'st thyself into this breathing world
 Through Nature and through every kind of life,
 And mak'st man what he is, creature divine.³⁵

But one passage from the fifth book of The Prelude is especially explicit.

My mind hath look'd

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 diffus'd
A soul divine which we participate,
A deathless spirit.³⁶

These lines are most significant. Wordsworth says that we participate in a divine soul diffused through our bodily forms.

³⁴ Prelude, VIII, 630-638.

³⁵ Ibid., X, 386-389.

³⁶ Ibid., V, 11-17.

By soul Wordsworth of course intends the vital principle or animating life. Thus, in the first place, the assertion of our participation in the divine soul or life bespeaks God's immanence in man. But at the same time we must infer that this divine life is more extensive than ourselves. It is likewise communicated to the world. Consequently, man and nature are co-divine, for both are animated by the immanent life of the Deity. Both man and nature participate in the one divine soul that is God; God, it would seem, is the soul of the world.

Wordsworth's assertion of the divine immanence follows from simple faith in his intuition of God in nature. This mystic intuition he predicated on nature's overwhelming vitality, whose principle, he believed, is the life of the Deity communicated to the world. Wordsworth's is a world breathing with motion and life. Man, he insists, is

An inmate of this active universe.³⁷

Consistently, he beholds nature as dynamic, vital, and self-activating, and he even endows inorganic nature with soul. The mountains, winds, and sky are "Presences." All natural forms respire with "inward meaning," all lie "bedded in a quickening soul." In the recognition of the soul pervading all of nature, in his intimate sense of "the pulse of Being

³⁷ Ibid., II, 266. Italics are Wordsworth's.

everywhere," Wordsworth senses himself to be in the presence of the Divine.

At the time of the writing of Tintern Abbey, Wordsworth, it has been conjectured, identified this felt presence only with an impersonal motion or spirit animating the universe.

I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is in the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of thought
And rolls through all things.³⁸

In The Prelude, however, Wordsworth's intuition of a "something far more deeply interfused" through nature has direct reference to the Divine. Hence, he speaks of

The perfect image of a mighty Mind,
Of one that feeds upon infinity,
That is exalted by an underpresence,
The sense of God, or whatsoever is dim
Or vast in its own being.³⁹

The vague presence in Tintern Abbey which elicited the "joy of elevated thoughts" is transformed in The Prelude, and the "motion and a spirit" assumes the sharper lines of Wordsworth's intuition of

. . . the one Presence, and the Life
Of the great whole.⁴⁰

³⁸ Tintern Abbey, 93-102.

³⁹ Prelude, XIII, 69-73.

⁴⁰ Ibid., III, 130-131.

In the perception of this "living presence" in nature and within the soul, Wordsworth contacts God.

When strongly breath'd upon
By this sensation, whence'er it comes
Of union or communion doth the soul
Rejoice as in her highest joy: for there,
There chiefly, hath she feeling whence she is,
And, passing through all Nature rests with God.⁴¹

Ultimately, Wordsworth's affirmation of the immanence of God in the world and in man is based upon a transcendental or innate principle of knowledge. In the apprehension of truth,

the mind
Is lord and master, and. . . outward sense
Is but the obedient servant of her will.⁴²

. . . the mind is to herself
Witness and judge.⁴³

In the mind's transforming and creative powers resides the secret of interpreting nature's sublime mysteries. While allowing great weight to sensory factors in knowledge, Wordsworth makes the claim of the transcendental faculty of Imagination the justification of his experience of the Deity. It is from "the depths of untaught things" that his intuition of "the unity of all" arises; through his communion with "the invisible world" that his sense of "the one Presence, and the Life of the great whole," asserts itself,

The feeling of life endless, the great thought,
By which we live, Infinity and God.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Ibid., VIII, 830-835.

⁴² Ibid., XI, 271-273.

⁴³ Ibid., XII, 367-368.

⁴⁴ Ibid., XIII, 183-184.

Of such mystic experience of God in nature as Wordsworth proposes, E. I. Watkin has the following comment:

Taken as a sufficient apprehension of the nature of reality this intuition can be interpreted only by a pantheism which identifies God with the vehicle of His Presence. . . A man whose religion is confined to this immanental intuition will not worship a God beyond and other than the nature He has created and in which He is present, but will worship that nature as itself absolute, itself divine. Instead of rising from nature to the God who made it, whose Word is expressed in its forms, whose Spirit supports its energies, he confuses Creator and creatures and deifies nature.⁴⁵

With this suggestion of the ultimate import of Wordsworth's immanental experience, the treatment arrives properly at the question next to be considered--Wordsworth's pantheism.

⁴⁵ E. I. Watkin, A Philosophy of Form, Sheed and Ward, New York, 1935, 384-385.

CHAPTER V

THE PROBLEM OF PANTHEISM IN THE PRELUDE

In the present chapter the purpose is to interpret Wordsworth's doctrine of immanence in its relation to pantheism. Primarily, the chapter will concern itself with the doctrine objectively present in The Prelude. Secondly, an inquiry will be made whether Wordsworth was at any time a convinced pantheist. The latter question is relevant to the period before the completion of The Prelude.

In the study of The Prelude it is necessary to distinguish Wordsworth's objective system from his own interpretation of it, for these two aspects of his thought appear to be in contradiction. Objectively, the relation between God, nature, and man there proposed is, to the present writer's mind, pantheistic. Subjectively, Wordsworth's state of mind in the poem seems undoubtedly to have been theistic. The question is whether Wordsworth's doctrine of an immanent Deity admits a real measure of transcendency in God, such as to distinguish the being of God from that of the world. If in the consideration of Wordsworth's thought this distinction cannot be sustained, The Prelude must be judged to express a pantheistic view of reality, notwithstanding Wordsworth's judgment to the

contrary.

In preface to the following treatment some consideration of the tenets of pantheism is necessary. In general, the pantheistic position denies any real distinction between God and the universe. Reality is unitary, the being of God and the being common to all things being made identical. From the point of view of God, there is no essential transcendency over the world; as for individual things, they have no absolute independence of God. Summed up, pantheism asserts that the substance or essence of God and of all things is one and the same.

The various pantheistic systems depend upon varying interpretations of the one reality that is God and the world. The position of materialism that all is matter or a function of matter may be ignored since it has no application to Wordsworth's thought. With immanental pantheism, however, Wordsworth's doctrine has significant points of contact. In general, immanental pantheism follows an idealistic-spiritual interpretation of reality, conceiving the one substance to be mind or spirit. For the Stoics and Platonists, and for Bruno, Spinoza, and Bergson, who admit the real existence of the universe, the one reality is God, indwelling in and working in the world as the principle of its activity and life. For Hegel,

the idealist, and similarly for Fichte and Schelling, the Divine substance is an abstract, substance-less mental phenomenon, the subject of purely immanent experience, which experience flows from the immanent evolution of the Divine Life manifesting itself through our consciousness.

Fundamental in all immanental pantheism is the notion that God is Life. Whether He is called the World-Soul or Spirit or the Immanent Reason, or the Idea, these terms reduce themselves to the conception of God's essential vitality. Secondly, this life that is God is univocally predicated of the activity and vital processes of the world. Whether this world be ideal or real, God is in it, not as an external contriver, but as an immanent, all-pervading, and vital presence in such sort that the Divine life is the unique source of the life and animation of the world. Hence, God and the world enjoy, so to speak, an organic relation much as the soul and body, extension being an attribute of the Divine Substance (Spinoza); or, if the absolute immanence of the mind is invoked to the exclusion of extra-mental reality, God is the pure Idea and reality the manifestation of evolving Thought (Hegel); or He is vital Energy, and reality is the flux of the creative and ever-evolving Elan Vital (Bergson). This indwelling Life or Spirit, it is generally asserted, is the subject of man's intuitive experience, understanding intuition, not as intellectual or

conceptual, but simply as felt contact with the Divine presence.

From the matter of the preceding chapter it should be apparent that Wordsworth's thought has definite relation with the postulates of pantheism. His mysticism and idea of the world-soul show links with the transcendentalism of the English Neo-Platonists and Boehme's theosophy. His almost animistic conception of the vitality of all "forms" in nature and "the life of the great whole" approximates Coleridge's definition of Spinozism: "Everything has a life of its own, and we are all one life." The probability is strong that Wordsworth was actually, if perhaps indirectly or unconsciously, influenced by the semi-pantheistic ideas of the Platonists and the overt pantheism of Boehme and Spinoza. Still, in the absence of any information from Wordsworth or of conclusive evidence as to his early reading, it may be fruitless to argue the point. Admitting a considerable similarity in idea and the presumed influence of Coleridge in acquainting Wordsworth with different mystical and pantheistic philosophies, recourse must be made to Wordsworth's text itself for the final judgment of his thought.

This is especially true since Wordsworth's thought shows eclectic tendencies. In the last analysis, the criterion of the truth of his system reposed not in philosophical analysis, which he contemned as having its origins in "that false secondary power by which we multiply distinctions," but in the

appeal of this or that idea to his sympathies and temperament. Given this appeal, he made the idea his own, verifying its truth in the apprehension of its congruity with his inner experience. For Wordsworth this inner and transcendental experience is significant of objective reality, giving insight by the creative thrust of Imagination into the real though "invisible world" of the Spirit; for one trained in scholastic discipline his inner experience and his Imagination are rather subjective feeling, their foundation the wistful yearnings of a human heart in blind search for its Maker and final End. Feeling and inner certitude being Wordsworth's guides, he may have taken over certain pantheistic ideas oblivious of their logical implications. Or, more likely, having earlier overtly embraced pantheism and in the course of writing The Prelude undergoing a change of mind, Wordsworth was constrained by the trend of his system on the one hand and his changed convictions on the other. It would appear that Wordsworth ended up by asserting both system and theism in The Prelude, with a measure of doubt in his mind as to their ultimate compatibility. This doubt appears in at least one place, the conclusion of Book III. There Wordsworth, after referring to his consciousness of the "sentiment of Being spread o'er all that moves and all that seemeth still," confesses that

. . . in all things now
I saw one life, and felt that it was joy.

One song they sang, and it was audible,
 Most audible then when the fleshly ear,
 O'ercome by grosser prelude of that strain,
 Forgot its functions, and slept undisturb'd.¹

But a note of anxiety is discernible in the lines immediately following:

If this be error, and another faith
 Find easier access to the pious mind,
 Yet were I grossly destitute of all
 Those human sentiments which make this earth
 So dear, if I should fail, with grateful voice
 To speak of you, Ye Mountains and Ye Lakes, etc.²

Before entering upon the study of Wordsworth's doctrine of immanence in its reference to pantheism, it will be well first to inquire into the question of Wordsworth's previous pantheism. If Wordsworth's pantheism in the period before the completion of The Prelude can be proved or rendered very likely, its bearing on our consideration of pantheistic tendencies in The Prelude itself is obvious.

In the variorum edition of The Prelude Mr. de Selincourt published for the first time a fragment of poetry included in a manuscript notebook containing an early version of Peter Bell and fragments of other poems. Judging from internal evidence, Mr. de Selincourt believes that these lines were written between the summer of 1798 and spring, 1800:

¹ Prelude, II, 429-434.

² Ibid., II, 435-439.

I seemed to learn ()³
 That what we see of forms and images
 Which float along our minds, and what we feel
 Of active or recognizable thought,
 Prospectiveness, or intellect, or will,
 Not only is not worthy to be deemed
 Our being, to be prized as what we are,
 But is the very littleness of life.
 Such consciousness I deem but accidents,
 Relapses from the one interior life
 That lives in all things, sacred from the touch
 Of that false secondary power by which
 In weakness we create distinctions, then
 Believe that all our puny boundaries are things
 Which we perceive and not which we have made;
 --In which all beings live with god, themselves
 Are god, existing in the mighty whole,
 As indistinguishable as the cloudless East
 At noon is from the cloudless west, when all
 The hemisphere is one cerulean blue.⁴

Commenting on the passage, Melvin Rader says:

This fragment proves that Wordsworth was very deeply affected by a mystical conception of reality. Forms and images represent the very littleness of life; and intellectual processes are mere relapses from the unitary life in which all things share. All our puny boundaries are man-made; the true reality is the ineffable unity. The "one interior life lives in all things"; therefore, sensations, with their report of the external world, are mere "accidents" in comparison with the inward sense that we are god. Thus Wordsworth presents a sweeping denial of the senses and the reason, and an assertion of a completely mystical philosophy.⁵

The radical pantheism of the lines beginning "In which all beings live with god. . ." is conclusive. On the other hand,

³ The remainder of the line is illegible in the present state of the manuscript.

⁴ Cf. Rader, 141, or the Variorum Edition, 512-513. The Prelude, II, 216-219, reproduces the four lines beginning "Of that false secondary power, etc." without change.

⁵ Rader, 141.

it might be objected that Wordsworth did not include the fragment in The Prelude, presumably because the thought was a momentary aberration and not strictly representative of his mind. This objection has its proper weight. Still, the fact that Wordsworth even wrote the lines suggests his strong disposition towards an ultimately pantheistic view of reality. Moreover, there is the passage in Book II where Wordsworth explicitly retracts his former pantheism. In that part of Book II where four of the lines of the fragment are reproduced, Wordsworth substitutes for the suspect lines the following tribute to Coleridge:

To thee, unblinded by these outward shows,
The unity of all hath been revealed.⁶

It would appear that Wordsworth agreed with Coleridge in affirming the unity so positively asserted in the fragment. The tempered and much more non-committal statement of The Prelude in place of the lines in the fragment which follow the denunciation of "the false secondary power" was probably owing to the influence of Coleridge. This is borne out by the passage reproduced in our last chapter where Wordsworth sums up his indebtedness to his friend:

Coleridge. . .

Shall I be mute ere thou be spoken of?
Thy gentle Spirit to my heart of hearts

⁶ Prelude, II, 225-226.

Did also find its way; and thus the life
 Of all things and the mighty unity
 In all which we behold, and feel, and are,
 Admitted more habitually a mild
 Interposition, and closelier gathering thoughts
 Of man and his concerns, such as become
 A human Creature, be he who he may!
 And so the deep enthusiastic joy,
 The rapture of the Hallelujah sent
 From all that breathes and is, was chasten'd, stemm'd
 And balanced by a Reason which indeed
 Is reason; duty and pathetic truth;
 And God and man divided, as they ought,
 Between them the great system of the world
 Where Man is spher'd, and which God animates.⁷

Obviously this passage describes a transition from pantheism to immanent theism. Wordsworth here qualifies "the life of all things and the mighty unity in all" to admit a humbler notion of "man and his concerns." "God and man" are "divided as they ought" and:

Between them the great system of the world
 Where Man is spher'd, and which God animates.

Thus, the evidence is presumptive that Wordsworth had an early period of mystical and radically pantheistic conviction, and that Coleridge finally converted him to a modification of this philosophy.

Wordsworth's early pantheism, as disclosed in the fragment taken from the manuscript notebook and possibly in the lines of Tintern Abbey quoted in the last chapter, has an obvious weight in considering the thought of The Prelude. It

⁷ Ibid., XIII, 247-268.

must be admitted that Wordsworth changed his belief. Did he also change his basic philosophy from pantheism to theism? Or is pantheism still present in The Prelude, not only in tendency, but in fact? It seems highly dubious that Wordsworth's change of mind affected his fundamental philosophy more than superficially. The Prelude still affirms the "life of all things" and the "unity of all"--ideas which had their inception in his former full-blown pantheism, whose obvious force, taken them any way one will, is still pantheistic. Moreover, the term "immanent theism" which has been used to describe the religious philosophy of The Prelude involves a contradiction in terms. If meant to imply an organic relation between God, man, and the world, it denies God's essential transcendency. Or if identified--on improbable grounds--with the vital immanence of modern religion, it is highly pantheistic in trend and in fact.⁸ For the modern immanent Deity is symbolic, and so the Divine Personality becomes uncertain. Or He is not distinct from man, and consequently the position is openly pantheistic. Or He is unknowable; hence, why should not this "Unknowable" be the soul of the world? Or He is a phenomenon of conscience proceeding from man as man. "The rigorous conclusion of this is the identity of man with God, which means Pantheism."⁹ However, then,

⁸ Cf. A. Vermeersch, Cath. Encycl., "Modernism," XI, 447-450.

⁹ Cf. the Encyclical of Pius X, Pascendi Dominici gregis, cited in the first chapter.

divine immanence is predicated of Wordsworth's thought, whether as implying an organic relation with the world or as the object of purely immanent experience, the description logically is pantheistic. The only legitimate force that may be attached to the term "immanent theist" is that it describes Wordsworth's subjective conviction that God is somehow distinct from and transcendent to the world, supposing, however, the contrary trend of his thought.

Wordsworth's effort to express his new-found theism is apparent in a number of passages in The Prelude. The following suggest, for example, God's transcendancy:

An image not unworthy of the one
Surpassing Life, which out of space and time
Nor touched by welterings of passion, is
And hath the name of God.¹⁰

. . .the soul

. . .passing through all Nature rests with God.¹¹

Thus, God's life is pre-eminent and above that of nature. God exists "out of space and time," immutable and unchanging. Other lines represent God as personal, ruling, provident, the object of man's praise, gratitude, and service:

Man. . .

. . .by reason and by will
Acknowledging dependency sublime.¹²

¹⁰ Prelude, VI, 154-157.

¹¹ Ibid., VIII, 832-835.

¹² Ibid., VIII, 631-639.

. . .in the deepest passion, I bow'd low
To God, who thus corrected my desires.¹³

When God, the Giver of all joy, is thank'd
Religiously, in silent blessedness.¹⁴

But blessed be the God
Of Nature and of Man that this was so.¹⁵

. . .this I speak
In gratitude to God, who feeds our hearts
For his own service, knoweth, loveth us
When we are unregarded by the world.¹⁶

Therefore to serve was high beatitude.¹⁷

Still other passages refer to God in the light of efficient
cause:

To the end and written spirit of God's works,
Whether held forth in Nature or in Man.¹⁸

Man and his noble nature, as it is
The gift of God and lies in his own power.¹⁹

Attention comes
And comprehensiveness and memory
From early converse with the works of God.²⁰

It is apparent that Wordsworth implements his theistic
belief with a good number of ideas suggesting the transcendence,
personality, providence, and efficient rather than immanent
causality of God. Taken by themselves, these notions would

¹³ Ibid., XI, 374-375.

¹⁴ Ibid., VI, 614-615.

¹⁵ Ibid., VIII, 435-436.

¹⁶ Ibid., XII, 274-277.

¹⁷ Ibid., X, 398.

¹⁸ Ibid., IV, 358-359.

¹⁹ Ibid., IX, 361-362.

²⁰ Ibid., VII, 716-719.

remove Wordsworth from the suspicion of pantheistic tendencies. On the other hand, there remain the passages openly susceptible of pantheism:

A soul divine which we participate,
A deathless spirit.²¹

...God and Nature's single sovereignty.²²

Great God!
Who sends't thyself into this breathing world
Through Nature and through every kind of life,
And mak'st man what he is, Creature divine.²³

Thus much for the one Presence, and the Life
Of the great whole.²⁴

In such lines we touch the fundamental concepts and the metaphysical basis of Wordsworth's thought. Their only admissible interpretation is the fundamental unity of God, nature, and man, as verified in the "soul divine" which man and nature participate, the "single sovereignty" of God and nature, the immanent presence of God in "Nature and every kind of life," and the one "Life of the great whole." To identify the life of God and the world in this way is pantheism. It may be that Wordsworth's doctrine escapes the most rigorous sense of pantheism, since he admits the dual existence of matter and spirit and distinguishes God's immanent life from the extended principle in which the divine soul indwells. Yet ultimately Wordsworth puts God and nature in organic relation; both spirit and

²¹ *Ibid.*, V, 16-17.

²² *Ibid.*, IX, 237.

²³ *Ibid.*, X, 386-389.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, III, 130-131.

body are included in the all-embracing and vital unity which is God.

Still other passages suggest some measure of idealism, approaching pantheism in tone or suggestion:

his mind

Even as an agent of the one great mind
Creates, creator and receiver both.²⁵

Of Genius, Power,

Creation, and Divinity itself
I have been speaking, for my theme has been
What pass'd within me.²⁶

. . . a sense

Of treachery and desertion in the place
The holiest that I knew of, my own soul.²⁷

The feeling of life endless, the great thought
By which we live, Infinity and God.²⁸

That these and similar passages lend themselves to a pantheistic interpretation is suggested, as de Selincourt notes, by their careful revision in the 1850 text of The Prelude.²⁹ Thus

A soul divine which we participate
A deathless spirit,

becomes

As might appear to the eye of fleeting time
A deathless spirit,

²⁵ Ibid., II, 271-273.

²⁶ Ibid., III, 171-174.

²⁷ Ibid., X, 379-381.

²⁸ Ibid., XIII, 183-184.

²⁹ de Selincourt, Introd., xxxvi-xxxvii.

and

God and Nature's single sovereignty

becomes

Presences of God's mysterious power
Made manifest in Nature's sovereignty.

To that passage in the early Prelude where Wordsworth tells
how, with God and Nature communing, he

Saw one life and felt that it was joy

he adds the qualification

Communing in this sort through earth and heaven
With every form of creature, as it looked
Towards the Uncreated with a countenance
Of adoration, with an eye of love.

Similarly,

The feeling of life endless, the great thought
By which we live, Infinity and God

becomes in the later text

Faith in life endless, the sustaining thought
Of human being, Eternity and God.

In view of Wordsworth's divergent trends toward theism
and immanence, it is apparent that the thought of the early
Prelude is contradictory. Certain passages clearly exhibit
Wordsworth's effort to think of God as personal and transcen-
dent in His relation with the world. Other passages, however,
just as clearly propose the fundamental unity of the divine life
with that of man and external nature. Inasmuch as Wordsworth
retracts his radical conviction of the immanence of God in the

world, his system remains, in fact, pantheistic.

In making this judgment of Wordsworth's thought, the writer withdraws from that loose theistic conception entertained by many of Wordsworth's critics which affirms at the same time both the immanent character of God and His transcendence. Such a conception is in harmony with modern thought. The current ideal of religion is to make God partly immanent and partly transcendent. This ideal brings God near to man by emphasizing His indwelling presence; at the same time it saves itself from the taint of pantheism by asserting God's limited transcendence. But such an ideal deals in contradictions. Either God absolute transcends the world, or He does not. Either the being of God is absolutely distinct from the world, or in some real sense it is identical with the world. By affirming the latter alternative the modern ideal of religion necessarily lands in some form of pantheism.

To embrace the alternative of God's absolute transcendence in the manner of traditional scholastic philosophy is not, however, as modern thinkers consider, to make Him aloof from the world's needs. For, as Monsignor Sheen observes:

Can God be said to be "aloof from the universe" when from all eternity He loved the Eternal Archetypal ideas according to which it would be fashioned? Can God be said to be "aloof from the universe" when He is the very cause of its being? Can He be said to be "aloof

from human desires" who conserves beings in existence in order that they may reach the fullness of their perfection? Can He be truly said to be "too far removed from the universe" when, without His sustaining power for even a single moment, the universe would lapse back into the nothingness from which it came? Is He a "separated and disinterested God" who is in all things by His presence, His essence and His power?³⁰

If God is in the universe as the Power that brought it into being, as the Power that conserves it, and as the Goodness which prompted it and towards which it moves; if God is the Final End for which man and things exist, with Whom indeed the created spirit is destined through Grace to be united forever, then the charge that God is aloof from the world of His creation appears to be without foundation.

The traditional notion of God, far from the deism which modern philosophy decries, maintains the intimate presence of God in the world, but, unlike modern thought, it does this at no cost of principle, without inviting pantheism.

Many critics of Wordsworth, imbued with religious notions of the day, have discovered in the poet of The Prelude a unique prophet of modern religion. His mysticism, His Deity immanent in nature and in man, his natural religion, offer to them, just as they did to John Stuart Mill and the Victorians

³⁰ Sheen, 256.

of the last century, the ideal religion of man. Dispensing with faith and proposing no creed other than the simple affirmation of God in nature and the heart of man, Wordsworth's worship of the indwelling God offers that spontaneous and immediate approach to the Divine which the modern spirit, in distrust of dogma and all forms of religious authority, is looking for. It is a worship, however, that is illusory. Having its origin in feeling and purely subjective impulse, Wordsworth's religion ultimately has no objective basis. Supposing the organic identity of God, nature, and man, and thus denying the Divine Personality and transcendency, Wordsworth's conception destroys the very notion of God which alone founds the dignity and necessity of our worship of God.

CHAPTER VI

WORDSWORTH'S RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY: A SUMMARY

In developing the various aspects of Wordsworth's thought considered in the body of this thesis, the intention has been to bring to the surface the basic assumptions underlying Wordsworth's early philosophy, to relate his theories and principles to scholastic philosophy, and to suggest in the light of scholastic thought to what extent Wordsworth's religious philosophy departs from orthodoxy. The chief text has been the 1805 version of The Prelude, and the main problem to determine whether the relation of God, the world, and man which this poem proposes is pantheistic. To the latter end, the thesis has examined Wordsworth's theory of mind, his mysticism, and his doctrine of immanence in order to establish the principles and sources of his early philosophy. In the light of these principles and sources the thesis concluded, first, that Wordsworth proposes a purely natural philosophy of religion and, secondly, that he was strongly influenced by the different strains of transcendental and naturalistic thought current in his day. On the latter grounds the thesis has urged, in general, the unorthodox trend of Wordsworth's thought from the point of view of traditional theism and, ultimately, has

argued the pantheism of Wordsworth's doctrine of divine immanence.

The conclusions presented in the three chapters relative to Wordsworth's theory of mind, his mysticism, and his doctrine of immanence are, in general, pretty much a reflection of the findings of Wordsworth's critics. Most critics are inclined to admit the purely natural basis of Wordsworth's early theology, disagreeing, however, as to whether this theology implies naturalism or--an equivalent term--pantheism. The thesis, therefore, is on common ground with the critics in asserting Wordsworth's approach to God through natural experience, as mediated by the transcendental faculty of Imagination, rather than through faith and Christian revelation. Again, along with the critics the thesis concludes that Wordsworth's asserted experience of God is essentially mystical, that is, immediate and intuitive, and natural, that is, dependent upon an obscure sense intuition of the Divine immanent in nature and in the soul. As not a few of his critics remark, Wordsworth's advocacy of natural mysticism argues, consequently, the influence of the different transcendental and naturalistic philosophies in the air at his time, for example, English Platonism, Boehme's theosophy, Spinoza's naturism, and, to some extent, Kantian transcendentalism. By implication, it seems fairly certain that Wordsworth's philosophy has root connections with

the pantheism of some of these philosophies.

Given the fact of Wordsworth's intuition of the Divine indwelling in the world and in man, the critics have disagreed concerning the nature of Wordsworth's concept of the divine immanence. In the majority they render a negative verdict on the question of pantheism in The Prelude, the reasons being (1) the apparent trend to orthodoxy of the 1850 Prelude--until recently the only version known; (2) a reluctance in older critics--most of them divines--to admit pantheism in Wordsworth; (3) the liberal sympathies of most critics for a relaxed form of theism admitting natural mysticism and the immanent presence of God in the world; (4) the presence in the 1805 Prelude of notions of a transcendent and personal Deity, and Wordsworth's belief, admittedly changed in The Prelude, in favor of a transcendent Deity. Accordingly, the majority of the critics characterize Wordsworth's religious position as immanent theism. On the other hand, some few critics with an eye on Wordsworth's philosophy and its antecedents rather than on his formulated theistic belief, have found his doctrine pantheistic.

For its part, the thesis has endeavored to solve the question of Wordsworth's pantheism and the disagreement among critics, first, by limiting the problem to the 1805 Prelude and, secondly, by insisting on the objective pantheism of The Prelude.

In limiting study to the text of the 1805 Prelude the present subscribes to the theory so-called of the two Wordsworths and, accordingly, would dismiss older criticism based on the unreliable 1850 Prelude. With discussion limited to the more representative text of the 1805 Prelude and its more radical philosophy, we have made the point that Wordsworth's thought must be recognized as contradictory. The contradiction exists in the explicit pantheism of Wordsworth's doctrine of divine immanence on the one hand as opposed to his more or less explicit convictions in favor of theism on the other. The thesis, consequently, has explained the contradictory verdicts of critics over the question of Wordsworth's pantheism as largely owing to failure to distinguish the subjective and objective aspects of Wordsworth's thought.

In arguing the pantheism of Wordsworth's doctrine of divine immanence, the writer has had in mind Wordsworth's own philosophical principles, the probable derivation of his thought from the pantheistic philosophies of Boehme, Spinoza, and the English Platonists, Wordsworth's onetime formulated pantheism, and, finally, the various explicit texts of The Prelude. In the light of Wordsworth's statements in Book XIII it seems clear that he there retracted the pantheistic views which he held up to some time before the completion of The Prelude and recorded presumably in Tintern Abbey. To the

present writer, however, it is equally clear that this change of view hardly affected the basic philosophy of The Prelude and that the "unity of all" which Wordsworth continued to affirm ultimately implies a pantheistic identification of God, the world, and man.

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