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THE MYSTICISM OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

A thesis presented to the department of English of the University of Saskatchewan by Stewart Mac Tavish for the Master of Arts degree, March 11th, 1936.
THE MYSTICISM OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

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Chapter 1.

MYSTICISM AND ITS EXPRESSION.

"Ever and anon a trumpet sounds
From the hid battlements of Eternity
Whose shaken mists a space unsettle, then
Round the half-glimpsed turrets slowly wash again."
Few words have been so abused by loose usage as "mysticism". In the mental furniture of many people otherwise well informed it serves as a convenient receptacle to which is relegated everything which seems mysterious or magical. Their idea of mysticism is like the idea of the Deity entertained by an old gentleman who described it as a "vague oblong blur".

In spite of its frequent misuse, this term denotes an experience which is by no means vague to many persons. There are five characteristics by which we can distinguish mystic consciousness.

(1) In the first place mystic consciousness is awareness of the transcendent. The mystic feels as present something which to ordinary consciousness is an illusive unattainable, a beyond. He feels that he has come upon something which in its fulness is never known to non-mystics. He has an exalted sense of having found that for which he has always sought. This is the reason that Evelyn Underhill and other writers refer to the mystic experience as the "transcendental consciousness".

Though these assertions may seem indefinite to those who have not shared the experience they describe, we must accept and seek to understand them, for they have been made in good faith by all writers who have left us accounts of their mystical adventures. These ever speak of their lives becoming aware of the larger life in which they are immersed, or of a "more real world of essential life". They have many names.
for this beyondness which they discover; it is variously

termed named the "Transcendental world, the All, the Absolute, the
Uncreated Light, which bathes the universe, the Divine Dark,
the Life Movement of the universe, or the Abyss of the God-
head." Violet I Kemp calls it "a reality which is known and
felt which the intelligence cannot comprehend." And each of
the mystics declare that these are but the best symbols
they can devise for a Reality which defies their powers of
expression. Each of them speaks of a beyond, at times dim,
at times most clear, which ever haunts their consciousness,
and of whose presence in their hours of exaltation they
become acutely aware. Every person is touched at times by
what some persons call the "homesickness of the soul," the lure
of something beyond, the call of the Deep unto our depths.

Ever and anon a trumpet sounds
From the hid battlements of eternity. 2.

Rufus Jones says, "If there are self-conscious beings who do
not transcend themselves, who are not haunted by eternity,
who live in what is already won, and have no dreams of the
unwon, they do not belong to my species. They range under a
different class order. I know only that my kind of men have

Hints of occasion infinite
To keep the soul alert with noble discontent
And onward yearnings of unstilled desire."

The mystic is one who becomes at times piquantly aware of
the presence, the nearness or the intimacy of this elusive
Somewhat which we ordinarily feel to be beyond. In some

1. "Mystic Utterance in Certain English Poets" Hibbert Journal
2. The Hound of Heaven, Francis Thompson.
trance, vision, or exalted moment he becomes conscious of a presence which Professor Whitehead has ably described in his definition of religion."Religion", he says, "is the vision of something which stands beyond, behind and within the passing flux of immediate things; something which is real and yet waiting to be realized; something which is a remote possibility, and yet the greatest of present facts; something which gives meaning to all that passes, and yet eludes apprehension; something whose possession is the final good, and yet is beyond all reach; something which is the ultimate ideal and the hopeless quest". This description of the beyondness which in the mystic's consciousness becomes the present might be illustrated by many passages from mystic literature. Let us confine ourselves to this verse from Whittier:

So sometimes comes to soul and sense
The feeling that is evidence
That near about us lies
The realm of spiritual mysteries.
The sphere of the supernal powers
Impinges on this world of ours.

(2) Again, the mystic in his most exalted hours becomes aware of a sense of unity, of a oneness which unites subject and object, fusing them into an undivided whole in which is dissolved for the time the usual distinctions and divisions of ordinary experience. The mystic feels that his particular life is being merged into an enfolding presence, into the unified environment which he calls the All. The sense of oneness of which he becomes conscious includes himself and unites him with his surroundings. A clergyman, the account of
whose experience James quotes from Starbuck's manuscript collection, says: "It is impossible fully to describe the experience. It was like the effect of some great orchestra when all the separate notes have melted into one swelling harmony." Tennyson describes what he calls a "waking trance" which came upon him quite often, usually after he had repeated his own name to himself several times. He says, "Out of the intensity of the consciousness of individuality the individual itself seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being. And this is not a confused state, but the clearest, of the clear, the surest of the sure, the weirdest of the weird, utterly beyond words, where death was almost laughably impossible, and the loss of personality (if so it were) seeming no extinction, but the only true life". Malwida von Meysenbug, a German idealist, is quoted by James in a passage in which she describes her mystic experience as a "return from the solitude of individuation into the consciousness of unity with all that is". "Heaven, earth, and sea," she says, "resounded in one vast world-encircling harmony." Or to quote from another experience recorded in Starbuck's manuscript collection: "The moments of which I speak did not hold the consciousness of a personality, but something in myself made me feel myself a part of something bigger than I that was controlling. I felt myself one with the grass, the trees, the birds, insects, everything in Nature. I exulted in the mere fact of existence, of being a part of it all—the drizzling rain, the shadows of the clouds, the tree trunks, and so on."

4. ibid. p. 394.
James not only quotes, but gives his own witness. "Looking back on my own experience, he says, "they all converge towards a kind of insight to which I cannot help ascribing some metaphysical significance. The keynote of it is invariably a reconciliation. It is as if the opposites of the world, whose contradictoriness and conflict make all our difficulties and troubles, were melted into unity." While he confesses that this is a dark saying when translated into logical language, he declares that he cannot wholly escape from its authority. "I feel as if it must mean something," he says, "something like the Hegelian philosophy means, if one could only lay hold of it more clearly." Rufus Jones too is inclined to give this mystical feeling of unity a metaphysical significance. "Objects," he says, "are certainly not 'presented' to subjects across unbridged chasms. Subject and object are intelligible only as aspects within one deeper unified consciousness. There is a fundamental spiritual reality within us that underpans, overarches, the differentiation of subject and object."

So prominent in mystic consciousness is this feeling of unity that Everyman's Encyclopedia defines mysticism on the basis of this one characteristic, describing it as "an attitude of mind founded upon an experienced or intuitive sense of unity, of oneness, of likeness of all things."

(3) The mystic experience is also marked by a consciousness of being energized by powers beyond the self. The mystic is

1. Varieties of Religious Experience, James, Pg. 388.
overtaken by a feeling that his individual self is being "invaded" by an environing power, consciousness, or presence. During his mystic experiences he has the sense of living a more intense and highly vitalized life. He becomes aware of a heightening of consciousness, of experience on a new level which enhances his personality. Rufus Jones tells us that the typical mystic is a radiant, dynamic person whose life is contagiously joyous with quiet power. Evelyn Underhill goes so far as to describe mystic adventures as "the only known methods by which we can come into conscious possession of all our powers." She emphatically denies that mystic experience is characteristically passive. While a certain passivity is necessary as a means of arriving at the mystic state, and while during it we are conscious of being receivers, this reception is a most active one on our part. She declares that excursions into mysticism, far from being forms of "higher laziness" are the "most arduous labours which humanity is called upon to perform." "It remains a paradox of the mystics," she says, "that the passivity at which they appear to aim is really a state of the most intense activity; more, that where it is wholly absent no great creative action can take place." Now this activity is not something which seems to the mystic to take place in himself independently of environment. It appears to him to be an active reception from sources which are external. This active appropriation of power from beyond is vividly described by J. Trevor in *Mysticism*—E. Underhill, pg. 60.

\[1.\] *Mysticism*—E. Underhill, pg. 60.  
\[2.\] The close connection between art and mysticism is seen in the origin of the term "Musea." Its use indicates the consciousness artists have of influences from beyond.  
\[3.\] *Mysticism*, pg. 60.  
\[4.\] *Mysticism*, pg. 60.
his biography. “I felt,” he says, “an inward state of peace and joy and assurance incredibly intense, accompanied by a sense of being bathed in a warm glow of light, as though the external condition had brought about the internal effect—a feeling of having passed beyond the body, though the scene around me stood out more clearly and as if nearer to me than before, by reason of the illumination in the midst of which I seemed to be placed.”

In these hours of heightened consciousness the world seems transformed, transfigured in a peculiar way which can be suggested to others who have had the experience, but which cannot fully be described. As Evelyn Underhill says, “It (the world) seems charged with a new vitality; with a splendour which does not belong to it but is poured through it, as light through a coloured window, grace through a sacrament; each blade of grass seems fierce with meaning, and becomes a well of wondrous light: a little emerald set in the City of God.”

Though the mystics are unanimous in describing their hallowed hours as times of peculiar sensitivity they differ widely when they come to qualify this sensitivity. With some, as we have seen from Mr. Trevor’s account of his experience, it brings a more acute awareness of surrounding scenes. This is characteristic of nature mysticism. The very opposite is true of religious mysticism. With this type mystic emotion seems to palliate rather than intensify the sensations of colour, sound, hardness, location, and the increased sensitivity.

is directed toward an inner intuition independent of these.

J.A. Symonds describes a mood which illustrates this second type:

"I cannot even now find words to render it intelligible. It consisted in a gradual but swiftly progressive obliteration of space, time, sensation, and the multitudinous factors of experience which seem to qualify what we are pleased to call our Self. In proportion as these conditions of ordinary consciousness were subtracted, the sense of an underlying or essential consciousness gained intensity. At last nothing remained but a pure, absolute, abstract, Self. The universe became without form and void of content. But the self persisted, formidable in its vivid keeness."

Or we might quote a more concise statement of a parallel experience which has been preserved for us by James.

"The ordinary sense of things around me faded. For the moment nothing but an ineffable joy and exaltation remained."

(4) Another mark of mysticism is the sense of present revelation, the feeling that there is being disclosed to us some truth or some aspect of truth which in its fulness is not given in non-mystical experience. The disclosure is such that we cannot completely put it into words. Although it defies our powers of expression, it comes with a peculiar sense of authority from which one cannot escape. To the person who experiences them, times of mystic experiences are not simply periods of intense emotion, but hours of insight, illumination, intuition, glimpses into the secrets of life hardly to be attained by ratiocination. Bertrand Russell, in his essay on Mysticism and Logic says, "The mystic insight begins with the sense of mystery unveiled, of a hidden

wisdom suddenly become certain beyond the possibility of a doubt. The sense of certainty and revelation comes earlier than any definite belief." The first of the characteristic doctrines of mystic philosophy which he discusses is "belief in insight as against discursive analytic knowledge, the belief in a way of wisdom, sudden, penetrating, coercive, which is contrasted with slow and fallible study of outward appearance by a science relying wholly upon the senses."

However we explain it, we have all at times felt surprised at some thought apparently quite new arising in the mind, thoughts which startle us with their freshness and the suddenness of their appearance. Often, for instance, we are struck by some new depth of meaning in a familiar phrase. This account of an experience which comes from Luther's writings will bring back similar ones to most minds. "When a fellow monk," he says, "one day repeated the words of the creed, 'I believe in the forgiveness of sins' I saw the scripture in an entirely new light; and suddenly I felt as if I were born anew." This sense of revelation becomes very intense in mystical experience. In describing one of his experiences, Dr. R. M. Bucke, a Canadian Psychiatrist, says, "There came upon me a sense of exaltation, of immense joyousness accompanied or immediately followed by an intellectual illumination impossible to describe." J. Trevor in his biography speaks of flashes of consciousness "that have compelled me to exclaim with surprise—God is here!—or condition 1. Varieties of Religious Experience.—James. Page 382.

2. ibid. page 389.
ions of exaltation and insight, less intense, only gradually passing away. I have severely questioned the worth of these moments. To no soul have I mentioned them, lest I should be building my life and work on mere phantasies of the brain. But I find that after every questioning and test, they stand out today as the most real experiences of my life, and experiences which have explained, and justified and unified all past experiences and all past growth."

This gift of insight is not unique with mystics, but is one which to some extent they share with artists, musicians, inventors, creative writers. The closer these men approach genius the more often and more intensely do they feel that they are not the source of creative effort, but merely its medium. Inspiration seems to them to be to a large extent beyond their voluntary control; they seem to come from powers below or beyond personal consciousness, and to arrive ready-formed. "Sometimes", writes the Jewish philosopher, Philo, "when I have come to my work empty I have become suddenly full, ideas being in an invisible manner showered upon me, and implanted in me from on high so that through the influence of Divine inspiration I have become greatly excited, and have known neither the place in which I was, nor those who were present, nor myself, nor what I was saying, nor what I was writing; for then I have been conscious of a richness of interpretation, an enjoyment of light, a most penetrating insight, a most manifest energy in all that was being done;
having such an effect upon my mind as the clearest ocular demonstration would have upon the eyes."

(b) The mystic experience is always marked by high emotion, emotion which is ever pleasant even though it may have within it an element of strangeness and terror. (See Mysticism, Evelyn Underhill, Page 26.) In defining her conception of a mystic Evelyn Underhill states, "He must feel a strong emotional attraction toward the supersensual Object. Possessed like other men of powers of feeling, thought, and will, it is essential that his love and his determination, even more than his thought, should be set upon Transcendental Reality." James translates from Swiss an account of a traveller who had a striking mystical experience while journeying on foot through the Alps. "The throb of the emotion," he says, "was so violent that I could barely tell the boys to pass on and not wait for me. I then sat down on a stone, unable to stand any longer, and my eyes overflowed with tears." He then goes on to describe a fervent prayer of gratitude to God and of humble submission to His will. "Then, slowly," he says, "the ecstasy left my heart, that is, I felt that God had withdrawn the communion which He had granted, and I was able to walk on, but very slowly, so strongly was I still possessed by the interior emotion. Besides, I had wept uninterruptedly for several minutes, my eyes were swollen, and I did not wish my companions to see me."

1. Mysticism, Evelyn Underhill. Pg. 58.
3. The Varieties of Religious Experience 481.
The most characteristic emotion of mysticism is that of love and reverence."Mysticism believes," writes Recejac, "that by the way of love and will, it reaches a point to which thought alone is unable to reach." "The mystic's outlook is indeed the lover's outlook," declares Evelyn Underhill. "It has the same element of wildness, the same quality of selfless and quixotic devotion, the same combination of rapture and humility. Mystic and lover, upon different planes, are alike responding to the call of the Spirit of Life. The language of human passion is tepid and insignificant beside the language in which the mystics tell the splendours of their love."¹

By these five marks we can recognize mystic consciousness—by the sense of the transcendent, of unity, of energization, of revelation, and of loving emotion. Its exponents have always declared that the experience in its completeness was ineffable. The mystic regards language, even the most metaphorical, poetic, and suggestive language, as an inefficient tool for imparting what he has received and describing how he has felt. It is at best a matter of hint and suggestion, not of explicit statement. Bergson defines mystic intuition as the power by which we identify ourselves with what is unique in an object"and hence inexpressible." When mystics speak of the "ineffable" it is of course to be understood in a relative sense. Thus Evelyn Underhill does not blush at writing a six-hundred page volume on an experience which is

¹Mysticism--Evelyn Underhill. Pg. 106. 107.
"ineffable". In it she says of the mystic, "Try as he will, his stammering and awestruck reports can hardly be understood but by those who are on the way." Yet she goes on to declare that his experience is such that he must share it.

"In his worship of perfect Beauty faith must be balanced by works. By means of veils and symbols he must interpret his free vision, his glimpses of the burning bush, to other men."

This, as I shall try to show in the subsequent chapters of this thesis, is what Wordsworth has accomplished in that portion of his poetry in which he is at his best. Yet, like other great mystics, he was aware of the supreme difficulty of the task, and felt unequal to it. In the words of another great prophet of his century "his reach exceeded his grasp."

He had a magnificent ideal for his work. "My theme", he declared, is "no other than the very heart of man". It is his hope that some work of his

"Proceeding from a source of untaught things, Creative and enduring, may become A power like nature's." (Prelude 17:311-313).

By the very social nature of life one who is endowed with insight becomes an imparter of the new light. He feels impelled to share what he has received. Only an unnatural inhibition prevents expression from following impression. Wordsworth felt the urge to impart. But like other mystic spirits he found it impossible to give adequate expression. In this he was at one with the Cumberland shepherds whom he describes.

"Their is the language of the heavens, the power
The thought, the image, and the silent joy:
Words are but the under-agents of their souls." (Prelude 13: 271-274)

Yet he seeks to fulfill his calling as one in the long
series of prophets and teachers of mankind by putting into
word and metaphor as best he may "the visionary gleam, the
glory and the dream" in order that we may through his poems
find the power that has enriched his life. Although he felt
that the mystical experience was in its fulness ineffable,
lay, as he says "far hidden from the reach of words", he knew
that it could in some measure be expressed. It could be ex-
pressed because others were, as Evelyn Underhill says, "upon
the way." Wordsworth tells us that he is encouraged in his
effort to impart his mystical experience because all men
have known their "godlike hours" and all "feel what an
empire we inherit as natural beings in the strength of
Nature." (Prelude 3:192) He feels it is his task to share
his insight with us.

"We men must perish, be it so!
Enough, if something from our hands have power
To live and act and serve the future hour." (River Duddon 34)

Wordsworth wished to teach what his most unmythical charact-
er, Peter Bell, in the end learned, that "man's heart is a holy
thing." He wants us to feel, as he did by the river Duddon,
"that we are greater than we know."

Because of the difficulty which he found in expressing
his experiences clearly Wordsworth devoted a great deal of

1. Peter Bell, Line 332 Part 3.
effort upon the perfecting of his diction—more than most poets. His early experiments in diction reveal this search for fuller powers of expression. Many passages might be quoted which show his consciousness of the difficulty of expressing clearly his mystical experiences, especially when they were ones which took place in the distant past, and were liable to be coloured by later developments of his mystical thought. (See Prelude 4:256-269)

For instance, while he attended the Hawkshead Grammar School a change came over his inner life. His mystic communion with nature grew so strong that although she had been as yet but a secondary source of joy, Nature became loved and sought for her own sake. But Wordsworth is unable to give us the day or the month when this important change took place:

"Who knows the individual hour in which
His habits were first sown, even as a seed!
Who shall point as with a wand and say
This portion of the river of my mind
Came from yon fountain?" (Prelude 2:202-205)

He often describes a mystical experience, and then breaks out into an emotional address to Nature, to her Spiritual Presence or Powers. In many such passages it is difficult to discover whether the poet is describing his experience as it took place, or whether the apostrophe reflects his thought of Nature and feelings toward her at the time of writing. He declares himself that in his account of his college days and "other kindred notices" he cannot separate the "naked recollection" and the "after-meditation". Yet in 1. Prelude 3:610-615).
spite of these difficulties, in spite of the fact that
"Points we have all of us within our souls
Where all stand single" (Prelude 3:185),
and in spite of the fact that the "visionary gleam" is
something that must be caught rather than taught, Wordsworth
did feel that in mystic communion he enjoyed an experience
which was possible for all men, and that to a large extent
he could impart it. He lost his insight and found it again.
Of its re-discovery he declared:

"I remember well
That in life's every-day appearances
I seemed about this time to gain clear sight
Of a new world---a world, too, that was fit
To be transmitted, and to other eyes
Made visible: as ruled by those fixed laws
Whence spiritual dignity originates." (Prelude 13:366-375)
Chapter 2.

A MYSTIC PROPHET TO A MATERIALISTIC AGE.

"Man is the meeting place of various stages of reality."

(Rudolph Fucken.)

The rounded world is fair to see,
Nine times folded in mystery;
Though baffled seers cannot impart
The secret of its labouring heart,
Throb thine with Nature's throbbing breast,
And all is clear from east to west.
Spirit that lurks each form within
Beckons to spirit of its kin;
Self-kindled every atom glows,
And hints the future which it owes.

(Emerson.)
Chapter 2. A Mystic Prophet to a Materialistic Age.

Professor Whitehead in *Science and the Modern World* points out to what a large extent the thought of the nineteenth century was dominated by the dogmatic assertions of materialism which the new science of the period had introduced. He tells how this tendency was overcome, not by the arguments of theologians or philosophers who all sought some easy compromise, but by the opposition of the poets. These poets did not defend their position by argument, but upon the basis of their own intuitive convictions asserted that the scientific account of the universe was inadequate. They accused science of its absorption in abstractions. They appealed to "naive experience"--not to childish experience, but to the concrete facts of life in all of their fullness and variety. They refuse to accept as the whole truth an abstraction from experience. He describes the period as one of a thought war between the materialistic outlook of science and the moral intuitions which are presupposed in the concrete affairs of life.

Whitehead is especially emphatic in his praise of Wordsworth:

"In the nineteenth century, some of the deeper thinkers among the theologians and philosophers were muddled thinkers. Their asent was claimed by incompatible doctrines; and the efforts at reconciliation produced inevitable confusion--"""

"Wordsworth in his whole being expresses a conscious reaction against the mentality of the eighteenth century. This mentality means nothing less than the acceptance of the scientific ideas at their full value. Wordsworth was not bothered by any intellectual antagonism. What moved him was moral repulsion. He felt that something had been left
out, and that what had been left out comprised everything that was most important—

"Wordsworth alleges against science its absorption in abstractions. His consistent theme is that the important facts of nature elude the scientific method. Berkeley, Wordsworth, Shelley, are representative of the intuitive refusal seriously to accept the materialism of science. The romantic reaction was a protest on behalf of value—

"I hold that the ultimate appeal is to naive experience, and that is why I lay such stress on the evidence of poetry." (1)

Whitehead here means by "intuition" the insight received in the experience which we have defined as mystical. Throughout this essay we shall use it in that sense. His testimony as to the importance in the history of thought of the contribution of Wordsworth is impressive because it comes from one whose main interests are not literary but scientific and philosophical, and from whom we might expect adverse criticism. It is noteworthy that he regards Wordsworth's mystical insight as the source of what is characteristic and most valuable in his thought. I agree with this opinion, and in its support would place beside his the authoritative words of Professor Bradley:

"He (Wordsworth) saw everything in the light of the "visionary power". He apprehended all things, natural or human, as an expression of something which, while manifested in them, immeasurably transcended them. And nothing can be more intensely Wordsworthian than poems and passages most marked by this visionary power and most directly issuing from this apprehension." (2)

One of the most striking features of Wordsworth's genius is the directness, unqualifiedness, the simplicity, the faithfulness, the utter confidence with which he sets down in his poetry his intuitive convictions. He was one 1. Science and the Modern World. Whitehead. Pages 112, 121, 125, 129, 130. 2. The Oxford Lectures on Poetry. Bradley. Pp. 126-127.
who escapes the sweeping denunciation of Emerson, "We but half express ourselves, and are ashamed of that divine idea which each of us represents." He spoke his innermost intuition without fear of being misunderstood, implicitly trusting that it would in due time meet its recognition. He spoke out to all the world what was true for his private heart with a settled conviction that those whose minds were prepared for his truth would receive it. As he himself declared, his calling is one which requires not only sensitiveness, but courage.

"High is our calling, friend!—creative art
Demands the service of a mind and heart
Heroically fashioned—-to infuse
Faith in the whispers of the lonely muse,
While the whole world seems adverse to desert."
(Miscellaneous sonnets; To B.R. Haydon.)

"Still to be strenuous for the bright reward,
And in the soul admit of no decay,
Brook no continuance of weakmindedness—-
Great is the glory, for the strife is hard!"
(The same.)

There is always something lonely about being the bearer of a mystic revelation. Pronounced mysticism is not a common thing, and society ever exerts its tremendous pull toward conformity; it is ever ready to look askance at the innovator in thought or action as at a pitiable oddity. So the bard who is true to his calling as a teacher of mankind must at times be a lonesome individual. As Emerson put it, "God will not have His work made manifest by cowards." Wordsworth was no coward, but one who spoke his "latent conviction" trusting that in time it would be the "universal sense".

Wordsworth shows a thoroughly scientific temper in the accuracy with which he reports his mystic experience, and he shows the strength of his intuition in this confidence, that, though most unconventional, it will be found to ring true to the experience of other men. Perhaps no passage will better illustrate this than the so frequently quoted lines from Tintern Abbey:

"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 the light of setting suns
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things."

This is an example of Wordsworth's faithful adherence to his own ideal of accurate diction in a subject in which it is unusually hard to apply. The difficulty of imparting his mystical experience led Wordsworth to concentrate upon his diction. In these familiar words we have the result of such concentration. In this one sentence he reports to us some very definite things about his experience and his interpretation of it. We could enumerate them. (1) The sense of a beyondness about nature. Its outward aspect doesn't exhaust it. Each natural object is the expression of a Spiritual Principle which, to use Professor Bradley's phrase, "Immeasurably transcends" the particular object. It is a Presence which is common to all natural objects. It is something "deeply interfused." (2) Its effect upon the mind is to give a sense
of joy, to elevate the thoughts, and to impart a feeling of reverence. It is "sublime". It is intensely active; it is an energy rolling through all things and constituting the vital power of the human mind.

This magnificent expression of the central conviction of his mystical insight was written during the summer of 1798, during the early part of Wordsworth's short period of mystical production. For although Wordsworth had a long career as a poet, the period during which his mystical poems were written is quite a short one, extending from 1798 to 1807. His period of mystical experience is much longer than that of his mystical writing. In the Prelude, which tells the story of the development of his mystical impulse, he traces it back to early babyhood. The years from the birth of memory until he was lured away from his native land by the excitement of the French Revolution saw a steady development of his mystical life, fostered by Nature, whom he learned to look upon as the garment of the Divine. In his vigorous out-of-door sports, along with the merely physical rapture, came impulses, "glimpses like the flashing of a shield", which, awakening and developing his spiritual life, became the basis of his moral character. He found in Nature a Spiritual Principle with which he could hold communion, and which supported his sense of what was right. Nature moulded his sentiments by mystical impulses which came, sometimes with the feeling of awe and of fear, sometimes with joyous appreciation of her beauty.
About the age of twelve Nature's mystical influence became so strong upon Wordsworth that he felt a desire for than those found in boisterous out-door sports, calmer joys. He began to appreciate the "self-sufficing power of solitude." (Prelude 2:78) During these school days, he cannot tell just when the change took place, Nature, who had yielded an added pleasure to all of his out-of-door games, through the deeper joys of mystical communion, became loved and sought for her own sake. (Prelude 2:200) Through the physical things of nature he found satisfaction for his spiritual life, though he did not as yet understand just what made him love Nature so much. "I was left seeking the visible world, not knowing why." (Prelude 2:274) He learned to love all that he saw in Nature, hence was able to receive mystic impulses from her. "To finer influxes the mind lay open, to a more exact and close communion." (Prelude 2:280).

In 1787, during Wordsworth's seventeenth year, his love of Nature became so strong that it displaced persons as the chief source of his enjoyments. He loved Nature because in her presence he felt mystical impulses which he had learned to prize above all other pleasures. They showed him that there was one life in all things, and that that life was joy.

In the fall of that year he went to Cambridge, where his mystical impulse found satisfaction during long walks out into the fields and in the college grove.

During his first college vacation, when he was eighteen years of age, came a crisis in his mystical life. Return-
returning home after a night of merry-making at a country dance, he was transported by the sight of a magnificent sunrise. His eyes were opened, and his mind illuminated by a spiritual Presence

"My heart was full: I made no vows, but vows were made for me; bond unknown to me was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly, a dedicated Spirit." (Prelude 4:322-326).

His mystical impulse was fed during the summer by the natural beauty of the North of England through which he wandered with his sister, Dorothy, and during the following summer by a pedestrian tour through the Alps with his friend Jones.

After he took his degree from the university in January, 1791, he lived for four months in London. Even here the Spirit of Nature was with him. His imagination was exalted by a sense of power and of passion, and he ever found this creative activity of the mind to be closely connected with his mystical powers. During the following summer he went on foot through the Welsh mountains with Jones, and climbing Snowdon to view the sunrise experienced a remarkable vision of Nature as the expression of the cosmic Mind.

In November, 1791, he made his way to France, attracted by the excitement of the French Revolution. Here he remained until December 1792. During his stay there he became passionately interested in social and economic reform, an interest which left no room in his thoughts for mystical communion. He became during his stay an enthusiastic republican. Hence when he returned to England his interests were entirely out of harmony with those of his fellow-
countrymen, and his sentiments became so soured that he was cast out of the pale of love, and hence out of the possibility of mystical communion with nature. This period of alienation was prolonged by a study of the {	extit{barren}} rationalism of Godwin's \textit{Political Justice}, which was published in 1793.

He recovered from it by the efforts of his sister during his stay at Racedown, which was his home from September 1795 to July 1797. Now came the period in which he wrote his great mystical poems. It continued until 1807, after which his mystical power quickly declined. Before this period we have flashes of mystic insight in his poems, later there are remarkable recrudescences of it, notably that in 1818 when he wrote \textit{Composed upon an Evening of Extraordinary Splendour}, but for our study the great years are 1796 to 1807.
Chapter 3.

MYSTIC TRAITS IN WORDSWORTH'S NATURE POEMS.

He beheld
A vision, and adored the thing he saw.

* * *

Life turned the meanest of her instruments,
Before his eyes, to price above all gold."
In his introduction to the Prelude, Wordsworth tells us that he had long thought of writing "a literary work that would live". He felt it fitting to write, as an introduction to it, and a preparation of his mind for its composition, an autobiographical poem describing his own mental and spiritual development. In this way the Prelude, or Growth of a Poet's Mind, came to be written. Wordsworth described it as a "record of the origin and progress" of his own powers, a review of his life to examine "how far Nature and Education had qualified him" for the literary undertaking which he had in mind.

As we read the Prelude after this introduction we are surprised to find how little he has to tell us of the contribution of formal education to the development of his mind for his poetic task, and how largely this development was a result of Nature's influence. Nature moulded his mind by influences which his unusual sensitiveness enabled him to appropriate. This is plain to every reader. But were these influences of such a nature that we are justified in applying the term "mystical" to them? It appears from their words already quoted that such authorities as Whitehead and Bradley would raise no objection. But we must test even their judgment by an examination of the poems themselves. Is their interpretation of Nature mystical when tried by the five criteria which we have noted? Is it marked by a sense of beyondness, of unity, of revelation, of being energized from
beyond, and of high pleasant emotion?

Regarding the first, the familiar quotation from Tintern Abbey has already shown how deeply Wordsworth's interpretation is imbued by a sense of some widely suffused and deeply infused spiritual Reality which makes Nature more than she seems to a casual observer. Her forms reveal a Mind which is never completely disclosed because it goes deeper than we can penetrate, and spreads wider than we can scan. This fact Bradley has sought to express by using the philosophical term "transcendent". We have attempted to render it by the word "beyondness", one which is not entirely satisfactory because it suggests a separateness between the Spiritual Reality and its expression which is not present in Wordsworth's thought. Little wonder that we grasp in vain for an adequate word! Wordsworth's own well-chosen phrases groan beneath the weight of meaning which they bear as he seeks to impart the fulness of the overflowing Presence which his vision reveals. For in his most characteristic moments under Nature's spell he became like the lover whom he describes in Vaudracour and Julia:

"His present mind
Was under fascination;---he beheld
A vision, and adored the thing he saw.
Arabian fiction never filled the world
With half the wonders that were wrought for him.
Earth breathed in one great presence of the spring;
Life turned the meanest of her instruments,
Before his eyes, to price above all gold."

When his mystic intuition of Nature was at its height she always became to him "one great presence". At such times her beauty became a thing sublime. His love of her then
became a religious worship. The light of sunset was then the garment of an indefinable Spiritual Principle.

For Wordsworth, this Principle would be for him to limit it, and to limit it would be to do less than justice to the intuition he had received of its overflowing presence. In his experience it refused to be limited. There was ever a plus about it, an baffling "X" which went beyond, an unknown quantity,---or, rather, an unknown quality. The sunset splendour both revealed it and concealed it. Its presence was there revealed. He "felt" it. He was subdued by the sense of its sublimity---it was a spirit, a motion. Nevertheless the sunset concealed it, for it was far more than the gorgeous colours. It was Something which went beyond this sensible indication of its presence. It was "far more deeply interwoven". The intuition of its presence was an experience so rich that its meaning could not be pressed into a word or symbol, or caught in a phrase. We often say in glib speech "to put it into a nutshell". This is precisely what Wordsworth found it impossible to do, either in thought or in expression. It was Something without definable limits. It went beyond.

But, as we have seen, the mystic experience is more than a sense of a sublime Deeper-Reality: it is a feeling of the higher unity which includes both Nature and the mystical observer. Without moving farther afield than our pregnantly meaningful quotation from Tintern Abbey, we can see how true this was of Wordsworth's contact with Nature.
His experience of Nature centered about an intuitive sense of a unity which joined him with the object of his thought. The Spiritual Reality of Nature was present to him, but it was also present to the sunset, to the round ocean, and to the blue sky. It was the bond of union between all of these various objects, and between them and himself. It was in them and in him; it was in the mind of man as well as in the glowing west.

And because the Spirit of Nature is thus interfused, because it is a principle of unity which comprehends all of her forms as well as our own minds, communion with them is made possible to us. Whether or not such communion becomes an actual fact of our experience will depend upon our willingness to allow ourselves to become fully and consciously members of Nature's all-inclusive organism. So completely did Wordsworth fulfill this condition that the resulting communion became the paramount fact of his life and genius, enabling him to describe his whole poetic work as a voice devoted to "intercourse with wood and field".

In the opening paragraphs of the Prelude, Wordsworth assumes that such a communion is possible. To us it seems an assumption; to him it was the result of at least twenty years of mystical experience. This opening section was written in 1798 when the poet was twenty-five years of age. His experience since memory began had led him to the deep conviction that there is such a close relationship...
between the mind and the Spiritual Principle of Nature that
the latter may definitely influence his consciousness
through its outward forms and aspects. The world without
and the world within were strangely akin; there was such a
close correspondence between them that Nature by her autumn
vitalizing and elevating
landscape could send thoughts into his mind, which would
inspire. Hence there was a "blessing" in the gentle breeze,
in the green fields and in the azure sky. He looks to them
all with hope that the long looked-for quickening of his
poetic powers will come at last. Former experience was an
assurance that the contagious spirit of the season would
burst in upon his mind with the desired inspiration. And
he found his former experience corroborated. The renewal
came.

Trances of thought and mountings of the mind
Come fast upon me; it is shaken off,
That burden of my own unnatural self,
The heavy weight of many a weary day
Not mine, and such as were not made for me". (Prelude 1:18–23)

This passage reveals how close Wordsworth conceived the
relationship to be between nature and his mind. As he feels
the outer breeze blowing upon his body he feels in his
mind a "correspondent" breeze, a new quickening of mental
energy. This might happen to persons who do not consider themselves mystics, but such persons would not be likely to describe these two breezes as "congenial powers". It is this intuition of unity between himself and the object of his thought which makes us sure that his experience was mystical.

Wordsworth would agree with the statement quoted by Evelyn Underhill from the pen of the French mystic Rassejac in which he declares that the pleasure we receive from the presence of beautiful objects is "based upon an ideal identity between the mind itself and things." "At a certain point", he says, "the harmony becomes so complete, and the finality so close that it gives us actual emotion." Under the influence of Dorothy's kindly guidance the harmony had attained that certain point on the autumn day of 1795 in which Wordsworth was moved to compose the poems which he later used as a prelude to the Prelude. The "actual emotion" was so possessing that it prompted him to immediately record it in the poem contrary to his usual habit of writing from the inspiration of "emotion recalled in tranquility."

Thus far, O Friend! did I, not used to make
A present joy the matter of a song,
Pour forth that day my soul in measured strains
That could not be forgotten, and are here recorded.

(Prelude 1: 46-50)

(3) From this same passage we can see that Wordsworth's experience of Nature was also one of being energized by powers from beyond the self. The result of this emotional sense of unity was a quickening of the poet's imaginative

energy by which he found strength within himself to do creative mental work.

"To the open fields I told
A prophecy: Poetic numbers came
Spontaneously to clothe in priestly robe
A renovated spirit singled out,
Such hope was mine, for holy services." (Prelude 1:50-55).

The spontaneity with which poetic numbers came was a result of Nature’s initiative. Inspiration which demanded expression came in a "quickening virtue" from Nature’s self. From her had come the "renovated spirit" which lifted him above his old self and made him stronger than he knew. It meant to him not merely a new warmth of emotion, but a new glow of thought and strength of hope. The "long-continued frost" which had held him for over three years was broken by this new influx of life which was the earnest of many such renewals during the years that were to follow this restoration. Before, his life had been a wearisome, unnatural thing, a burden to himself, because he had divorced himself from the resources of Nature. But now, actively receptive to her, he finds among his qualifications for undertaking a great theme that fundamental requisite, the vital soul. His was the living spirit which no longer strangled itself by segregating its life from the whole of Nature, but now was responsive to the inflooding influences which come from the greater world beyond to which it was akin. No longer was he self-marooned.

Because of Nature’s initiative Wordsworth felt that it was man’s place to fare forth in life with "a heart that watches and receives". If he is wise enough to do so
vital impulses would come from wood and field and stream.
The powers of Nature would "of themselves" make their
impression upon his mind. We have already seen that Words-
worth regarded the Spirit of Nature as an active Power,
which energized the human mind as well as natural objects.
How could he think otherwise when he found from experience
that she enhanced his whole personality? Her power was
one which invaded the poet's life; it swept in upon him and
overcame him with thoughts which were of her own high
quality. He was sure that they were her thoughts and not his
because they "disturbed" him, as he says in Tintern Abbey.
This disturbing quality made him sure that they came from
a source outside of his own person. He could not but think
of them as a part of Nature's various wealth, which she
delights to bestow. Hence his belief that Nature was a
trustworthy helper who never disappoints or betrays.

(4) To mention the disturbing effect of Nature's impartations, it is to be reminded that his experience of her
also fulfilled our fourth test for mysticism. They came with
a sense of commanding authority, with a feeling of revelation. While the thoughts that came from Nature were joyous,
they were not frivolous, for they brought with them a sense
of the sublime, a feeling of awe. They imparted truth to
which mere logic could not attain.

"One impulse from the vernal wood,
Can teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can." (The Tables Turned.)
They bore the sense of revelation because they were so flashes of originality and insight quite utterly different from the labouring attainments of reason. They did not require arduous attention. They were instantaneous and immediate; they were intuitions—

"High instincts before which our mortal Nature Did tremble like a guilty Thing surprised." (1)

They imparted eternal truths which commanded him in spite of former indifference to those struggles against them. They were instincts which have power to impart an eternal significance to our human lives,

--have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of eternal Silence; truths that wake,
To perish never:
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,
Nor man nor boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy! (2)

They are grandly simple, they are the basis for the assurance by which a man can say the words which Wordsworth translated from the Italian of Michael Angelo, "My soul felt her destiny divine."

(3) This assurance is convincing because of its emotional content. No one with the slightest acquaintance with the poetry of Wordsworth will need to be reminded of the deeply emotional content of his experience of Nature. The period in which he was unable to commune with Nature was one in which he mistrusted his emotions because they had apparently led him astray in his burst of revolutionary enthusiasm. This mistrust was kept up through the influence of Godwin, and was only overcome by the gentle guidance of his sister's unspoiled mind. Dorothy enabled him to feel

1 and 2—Ode, Intimations of Immortality.
3.—Miscellaneous Sonnets No. 26.
one more the sense of union with Nature, then there came back to him his old emotional quickening and exaltation. There came to him "a sense sublime" to go back to our first quotation. Many are the passages in the Prelude and other poems which describe the emotional content of Wordsworth's mystical impulses, enlarging upon the simple statement that—

"From Nature doth emotion come,
And moods of calmness equally are Nature's gift". (Prelude 13: trace these passages in some)

We shall be noticing them in detail when we study Wordsworth's account of his mystical development, and the results of union with Nature as he describes them. He always found that as his union with the Spirit of Nature grew more complete the emotional height as well as the cognitive value of the experience was increased. We have already referred to this in speaking of his recovery from the "long continued frost" and the resulting surge of emotion which resulted in the introductory poem to the Prelude.

Thus we find that the mysticism of Wordsworth was inextricably connected with his love of Nature. His mystic intuitions came through Nature. Even as a boy, he tells us, he walked with her "in the spirit of religious love." Each of our five tests of mystical experience are fulfilled by Wordsworth's descriptions of the effects of Nature upon his mind. His relation to Nature was therefore a mystical relation. His view of what the relationship between man and nature should be are based upon his own mystical experience of nature. Hence in our study we must note his interpretation
of nature during different parts of his life, for his changing thoughts concerning Nature's relation to man reflect changes in his mystical experience.
"O heavens! 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 wide field where they were sown".

(Prelude. Book 3:176-180.)

"Why in age
Do we revert so fondly to the walks
Of childhood—-but that the Soul discerns
The dear memorial footsteps unimpaired
Of her own native vigour; thence can hear
Reverberations; and a choral song,
Commingling with the incense that ascends,
Undaunted, towards the imperishable heavens,
From her own lonely altar?" (The Excursion 9:38-47.).

Oh! mystery of man, from what a depth
Proceed thy honours. I am lost, but see
In simple childhood something of the base
On which thy greatness stands. (Prelude Book 12:272-276)
When did Nature first lay her hand upon Wordsworth and make him a worshipper in her shrine? When did his mysticism begin? Wordsworth cannot say. He traces it as far back as the dawn of memory, and from all that he can conjecture and observe in children he thinks that before then nature's influence upon him must have been greater instead of less. In babyhood we are "haunted forever by the eternal mind." Wordsworth's experience led him to believe that a mystical relationship with Nature was the natural one. He found that only foolish preoccupation and perverse distraction could alienate his life from Nature's Power. Hence he naturally assumed that it had been moulding his life from its first dawn. In the Prelude he attributes to the Derwent a very definite formative influence upon his mind while he was still a babe in arms and this "fairest of all rivers" mingled its murmurs with his nurse's songs.

Now in 1798, a man of twenty-eight years, beginning his biographical poem he is suprised that, after being gifted with such favourable surroundings in his infant days, he should feel impotent now in the face of his task. From earliest days his life had been built up by Nature's subtle influence, had been nourished by the Presence. Why then this dearth of inspiration for creative effort?

"For this didst thou,
O Derwent! winding among grassy holms
When I was looking on, a babe in arms,
Make ceaseless music which composed my thoughts
To more than infant stillness, giving me
Among the fretful dwellings of mankind
A foretaste, a dim earnest, of the calm
That Nature breathes among the hills and groves. (Prelude 175-183)

In view of Wordsworth's habitual accuracy this must be taken quite literally at its face value. He sets this down quite as explicitly as his later experiences, and together they form a uniform chain of developing insight. With even greater explicitness and detail he describes Nature's influence upon a child of three in Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower. (See page 40)

Wordsworth gives us a concrete example of Nature's influence upon him when he was five years of age. He then found the river a playmate whom he dearly loved. He would spend whole days in its waters and upon its banks. The source of his delight in bathing was not the mere physical sensations which all boys experience. His mystic insight was even at that time at work impressing this contact with Nature deeply upon his mind. Witness the lines which immediately follow his account of the bathing experience.

"Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up Fostered alike by beauty and by fear." (Prelude 1:295-297.)

Already the emotion which Nature imparted was twofold. On the one hand Nature had an exhilarating, stimulating effect; on the other hand she subdued and composed him. She both draws and repels him. She attracts with her beauty as with a magic spell; she repels him with her overwhelming majesty. This dual reaction to the Object of mystic devotion is one with which every student of mystical literature is familiar. Even the reader of religious literature knows of it. Each of
the great religions of the world, which show us mysticism externalized and institutionalized, has taught its devotees both to fear and to love God, to approach Him with awe and yet with familiarity. They have described Him as "nearer than breathing, closer than hands and feet, and yet as the one other than man, the one above and beyond, Holy, Separate, "Whom eye hath not seen, nor ear heard". He is within our experience, yet He is beyond, far exceeding its narrow limitations. He is immanent, yet transcendent. He "fosters alike by beauty and by fear."

How closely this verdict of the religious consciousness reflects the intuition of pronounced mystics can be gathered by examining a paragraph from Evelyn Underhill in which she describes, not the left wing passive mysticism of the East or the right wing active mysticism of the West, but the central tradition which reflects the fully developed mystic consciousness of men everywhere. She says,—

"Over and over again,—as Being and Becoming, as Eternity and Time, as Transcendence and Immanence, Reality and Appearance, the One and the Many,—these two dominant ideas, demands, imperious instincts of man's self will reappear; the warp and woof of his completed universe. On the one hand is his ineradicable intuition of a remote, unchanging Somewhat calling him; on the other hand is his longing for and as clear intuition of an intimate, adorable Somewhat, companioning him. Man's true Real, his only adequate God, must be great enough to embrace this sublime paradox, to take up these apparent negations into a higher synthesis." (1)

Evelyn Underhill insists at great length in her discussion of the relation of Mysticism to Vitalistic Philosophy that the Object of the mature mystic consciousness is intuited.
both as the creative Life Force of Heraclitus and Bergson and as the Changeless Eternal Absolute of Greek and German idealistic philosophy. It is both immanent and transcendent. So in his concrete experience the mystic finds a solution for the ancient dilemma of metaphysical thought.

Corresponding to these two ways in which the mystic views the Object of his experience, he reacts toward it in both a passive and an active way, as we have seen Wordsworth did. The Eastern mystics have inclined toward the contemplative and passive type; the Western ones have been more active; but the greatest of mystics have been both. "Their secret is unity in diversity, stillness in strife." Jesus had his mountain top seasons of silent communion, but they were such as to give greater power to his activity among the thronging crowds that awaited him in the valleys and plains below. So the greatest of mystics have in communion gathered vitality for creative dynamic living. Their lives have not been lob-sided because they have been "fostered alike by beauty and by fear." It is noteworthy that so early in his boyhood Wordsworth's experience of Nature about his home so closely paralleled the findings of mystic experience throughout all human history.

This balance of Nature, her balancing effect upon the mind by both inspiring and calming, which Wordsworth experienced when so young, continued to be the central fact of his mystic life as long as his sensibilities enabled him...
to appropriate Nature's influences. This constant dual influence of Nature upon him is one of the most prominent features of his spiritual development. In his careful descriptions of his contacts with Nature he notes each of these complementary phases. We shall see this as our study continues. Because it is so central in his mystic growth we have taken space here to show its close relation with the general mystical tradition.

As the years passed he built up his philosophy of life about this central fact of his experience. In To The Clouds he tells us that man is created "for joy and rest." He thinks of Nature as having perfect balance: he speaks of her "various wealth". It is varied because she bestows it upon her devotees in no one-sided way. Her soothing influences are balanced by her stimulating ones: she both excites to activity and lures to rest. Wordsworth's most comprehensive statement of this dual influence is found at the beginning of book thirteen of the Prelude. From this passage we learn that he came to consider Nature's counterpoise not only the central fact of her influence, but the secret of genius in himself and others.

"From Nature doth emotion come, and moods Of calmness equally are Nature's gift; This is her glory: these two attributes Are sister borns that constitute her strength. Hence Genius, born to thrive by interchange Of peace and excitation, finds in her His best and truest friend; from her receives That energy by which he seeks the truth, From her that happy stillness of the mind That fits him to receive it when unsought. (Prelude 13: 1-10.)

His most beautiful lyric expression of it comes in the Lucy poems "Three years she grew in sun and shower,

Then Nature said, "A lovelier flower
on earth was never sown;
This child I to myself will take;
She shall be mine, and I shall make
A lady of my own.

Myself will to my darling be
Both law and impulse; and with me
The Gift, in rock and plain,
In earth and heaven, in glade and bower
Shall feel an overseeing power
To kindle and restrain.

She shall be sportive as the fawn
That wild with glee across the lawn
Or up the mountain springs;
And her's shall be the breathing balm
And hers the silence and the calm
Of mute insensate things.

(The italics are mine.) Even as an old man, when his mystic insight has faded, Wordsworth remembers that Nature can rebuke as well as please, can be terrible as well as gracious. (See Evening Voluntaries No. 2, written in 1833.)

Mystics have ever held that beauty, goodness, and truth are but different aspects of the one Reality which they seek and find. Evelyn Underhill takes it as an indication of Hegel's strong mystical tendency that he was able to describe Beauty as "the Spiritual making itself known sensuously". Plato, whose lofty mysticism is praised by Bertrand Russell ever sees in goodness the highest beauty, and makes it identical with the truly real. "In the good, the beautiful and the true", says Rudolph Bucken, "we see Reality revealing its personal character." Because the Object of mystic consciousness is the Good as well as the Beautiful and the True the harmony required for mystic communion involves a moral adjustment. Hence in discussing the technique
of mysticism Evelyn Underhill declares, "The self must be purged of all that stands between it and goodness" and expands this point until it grows into a forty-page chapter on "The Purification of the Self."

When still a lad of ten years Wordsworth experienced the inhibition of communion with Nature which comes from moral alienation. He tells the story with characteristic frankness and literalness and at the same time with a vividness which indicates what a deep impression the event made at the time upon his mind, and the significance it held for him in later life. One summer evening he discovered a little boat tied to a willow by the lake shore. He loosed it, and pushed off from the shore to steal a ride. It was a beautiful evening; every movement was reflected in the still waters; the mountains sent back echoes for every sound; the moon lit up the glittering circles of ripples. But Wordsworth could not fully enjoy this beauty, for his conscience was not at ease. This was "an act of stealth and troubled pleasure," Here where Nature reigned supreme he seemed to be introducing something quite alien. Her kingdom was one of complete harmony; his act was one of social discord. Her world was one of transparent self-disclosure; his act was clandestine. Glad impulses from Nature had guided his play, Nature had led him to the boat, but now he seemed to be rebelling against the leadership of Nature. While his mind was running thus and the boat moved on, what appeared impossible suddenly transpired before his eyes.
"As I rose upon the stroke, my boat
Went heaving through the water like a swan;
When, from behind that craggy steep till then
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,
As if by voluntary power instinct
Uproared its head. I struck and struck again
And, growing still in stature the grim shape
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
And measured motion like a living thing,
Strode after me. With trembling ears I turned,
And through the silent water stole my way
Back to the covert of the willow tree."— (Prelude 1:374-387)

Wordsworth left the boat at its mooring-place and walked
homeward through the meadows in a serious mood. For days he
could not escape from the terror of this encounter with the
forces of Nature. He seemed to be alienated from all of her
beauty and pleasure.

"O'er my thoughts
There hung a darkness, call it solitude
Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes
Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields." (Prelude 1:395-400)

This experience had a peculiar significance for Wordsworth's future life. It deeply impressed upon his mind the
thought of Powers which were beyond his life, and yet which
impinged upon it. It stirred in him thoughts of an objective
Spiritual world.

"After I had seen
That spectacle, for many days, my brain
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense

Years afterwards this experience stood out as one of the
most arresting and memorable events of his mystical career.

He could never explain it, but he was too scientific a writer
to omit it from his spiritual autobiography on that account.
It was too crucial an event to be passed over. Others might regard it as a mere hallucination of the mind, but he could never do so. To him it was as real and objective as any event in his life, and he could not but bear witness to it as such. However mysterious it was, to whatever unknown forms of being it should be ascribed, it was there to be explained in some way. Common maxim has it that "seeing is believing". Wordsworth saw. And as a realist he put down explicitly what he saw, even while recognizing that it arose out of the unknown, out of the mystery at Nature's heart.

But whatever mysterious form of Being was at the heart of Nature, of it this much could be asserted — it was moral. By this experience and others soon to follow Wordsworth was being taught by mystic intuitions that the forces of degrading the whole universe conspire against what is immense and dishonourable on the part of men. By them he was learning that Nature seeks, in her silent, patient, yet awful way, so to mould men's lives that they will use their freedom in a way worthy of her perfection. Nature he found to be a supporter of conscience, holding within herself a principle of retribution by which offenders against the moral law were plagued by day with huge and ominous specters and by night with troubled dreams.

Another group of experiences enforced the lesson that Nature was a disciplinary and corrective force. When he was out alone at nights bird-hunting he would violate his scruples by robbing other boys' snares. Then fear would quick-
ly lay a punitive hand upon him. He seemed to be pursued among the lonely hills by low breathings and silent steps. Wordsworth was already learning by these experiences that central fact of mystic consciousness which we noted in the last chapter as marking his nature poetry. Mystic intimations were convincing him that the forces behind Nature which give to her the outer contour which we see are not unrelated to the forces within our own lives which shape our outward act and aspect. This truth which in his boyhood he began to learn is most beautifully expressed in a lyric from which we have already quoted, *Three Years She Grew*. An abstract teacher would say, "Nature, when allowed to do so, moulds persons to moral and aesthetic perfection." But Wordsworth, the poet, says,—

The floating clouds their state shall lend
To her; for her the willow bend;
Nor shall she fail to see
Even in the motions of the storm
Grace that shall mould the maiden's form
By silent sympathy.

The stars of midnight shall be dear
To her; and she shall lean her ear
In many a secret place
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
And beauty born of murmuring sound
Shall pass into her face.

And vital feelings of delight
Shall rear her form to stately height,
Her virgin bosom swell;
Such thoughts to Lucy I will give
While she and I together live
Here in this happy dell."

This thought of the vital union of Nature with man in his moral and personal life Wordsworth later (1805) developed
in the _Ode To Duty_. Here we see that the Spirit which keeps the heavens fresh and strong and preserves the stars from wrong may also give man personal guidance, either by his following it through natural impulse or wilful submission. Hence at the early age of ten Wordsworth learned this central truth of his philosophy of life, that if we would know and share the Beauty of the world we must be willing to pay the price of harmony with its laws, which require a moral adjustment. "Only the pure in heart shall see God"—this was the handwriting which he found inscribed upon the walls of Nature's shrine.

Wordsworth found that all of his youthful experiences of Nature, though they were so various, and, at first sight seemed so meaningless or even harmful, contributed to the building up of his inner life and character. As he grew older he found that Nature with her "inscrutable workmanship" had reconciled what had seemed contradictory and undesirable elements of his experience, making them all contribute to his developing life. The most vexatious experiences had played a needful part in growth of a wisdom of life which it is Nature's task to foster. Through them he was able to attain a mature philosophy of life which could not be lightly overturned by external circumstances but made him proof against provoking disturbances.

"Dust we are, the immortal spirit grows
Like harmony in music; there is a dark
Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles
Discordant elements, makes them cling together
In one society. How strange that all
The terrors, pains, and early miseries,
Regrets, vexations, lassitudes interfused
Within one mind, should e'er have borne a part,
And that a needful part, in building up
The calm existence that is mine when I
Am worthy of myself! (Prelude 1:340-351).

This statement gives us an appreciation for the strength of Wordsworth's sense of unity, and reminds one of that final statement of St. Paul's mystical philosophy, "All things work together for good to those who love God." ¹ But neither Wordsworth nor St. Paul in the passages from which we have quoted make it clear how vexatious experiences work for our good and final peace. Paul suggests the reason when in another passage he cries, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" ² Unpleasant irritations stimulate the mind to seek the roots of enduring composure. Disturbances were necessary, for without them the poet would never have sought amid his human resources for a basis of happiness which would make him proof against agitations, or at least transform them into mere surface rufflings while all is calm in the depths below. This security which his troubles drove him to seek he found in communion with Nature. In her he found a dependable source of strength and restoration, one who never disappointed nor betrayed.

Even pain was used by Nature in the discipline by which she drove Wordsworth to herself and so purified the center of his thought and feeling that he was able to enter into her harmony. Having so entered, he came to recognize the sublimity of all under her sway, and to feel a

¹. Romans 8:28.
². Romans 7:24.
"grandeur even in the beatings of the heart." So even pain
and fear, contributing as they did to such a consummation,
were sacred things. They led Wordsworth as he conmed over
the far-away experiences of his childhood to break out in
Apostrophe to the Destiny that shapes our ends:

"Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought,
That givest to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion, not in vain
By day or starlight 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—purifying thus
The elements of feeling and of thought,
And sanctifying, by such discipline,
Both pain and fear, until we recognize
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart."
Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me
With stinted kindness." (Prelude 1:401-412).

That the pain of life is a useful agent for purifying
the mind and fitting it to become aware of the unity
of all is a mystic doctrine without a discussion of which
no work on mysticism would be complete. Evelyn Underhill
classes pain with beauty and religion, listing these three
as facts of experience which cannot be adequately explained
on the hypothesis of materialistic naturalism, and which
therefore point to mysticism as their solution. She describes
these as three paths by which along with "many another
secret way" the mystic mind travels toward the Absolute.
By these three paths "news comes to the self concerning
levels of reality which in their wholeness are inaccessible
to the senses, worlds wondrous and immortal." The mystic, she

2. Ibid. Page 24.
suffering the "gymnastic of eternity" and "the terrible initiative caress of God." Goethe found these mystic utterances true in his experience, and put them into beautiful form:

Who hath not ate his bread in sorrow,
Who hath not spent the darksome hours
Weeping and watching for the morrow,
He knows ye not, ye unseen powers."

Wordsworth’s communion with Nature continued during that summer of his tenth year. It was continually being filled with new and deeper content. "Not was such such fellowship vouchsafed with stinted kindness," he tells us.

"In November days,
When vapours rolling down the valley 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 homeward I went
In solitude, such intercourse was mine;
Mine was it in the fields both day and night,
And by the waters all the summer long." (Prelude 1:407-416).

By the time the skating season had come around the emotional content of this experience of communion had so grown that his experience of the bright cottage windows blazing through the evening gloom could be described as a "rapture." As one reads the vivid description of the skating party and realizes that this is a memory of some nineteen years standing he cannot but feel that this experience was a case of that peculiar heightening of consciousness which mystics claim comes to them in their hours of communion. It is not suf-

ficient to object that this effect was partly due to physical causes, for mystics practise physical preparations to sharpen their minds to receive intuitive truth.

There are many people who are "fond of nature". Wordsworth is careful to point out that his experience of Nature during these boyhood days went deeper than such sentimentalism. He did have experience at this level of consciousness. He refers to it as "vulgar joy" (1:581) and "giddy bliss" (1:583) which "like a tempest works along the blood and is forgotten." (1:585). But he also had experiences which were definitely mystical. Nature gave explicit messages to his mind—not vague amorphous impressions, but communications which could be recalled and discussed later.

"The earth
And common face of Nature spake to me
Rememberable things"—
(Prelude 1:587-590).

"Nor may I here omit
How other pleasures have been mine, and joys
Of subtler origin."
(Prelude 1:546-549)

These mystic joys are, to use Wordsworth's own careful words "hallowed and pure motions of the sense which seem in their simplicity to own an intellectual charm." (1:555)

Their is a more than merely physical charm. We can be sure that they are quite mystical, for he goes on to describe them as belonging to the primitive kinship between himself and nature, or, as the mystic writers say, between the self and its object. It is connatal "affinities" which suit

"Our new existence to existing things
And, in our dawn of being, constitute
The bond of union between life and joy." (Prelude 1:556-559).
It may be noticed that mystics often speak disparagingly of sense experience on the one hand and of the processes of ratiocination on the other. We have seen that this is not true of all mystics; it is a matter of mystical doctrine on which among the most pronounced mystics there is little unanimity. Since Wordsworth's use of the word "sense" is so unique even among mystics we must here pause to explain. A mystic is one who experiences a consciousness of communion with Spiritual Reality, a consciousness marked by the five characteristics noted. He may interpret this experience in many different ways, ways which are bound to vary with every change in the concepts and nomenclature of psychology. But the experience which they seem to explain remains, and the mystic is still a mystic in whatever terms he may choose to describe his experience.

That Wordsworth himself would give assent to this distinction between mystic experience and mystic doctrine we can see from the way in which he addresses his friend Coleridge regarding Psychology:

"No officious slave
Art thou of that false and secondary power
By which we multiply distinctions, then
Deem that our puny boundaries are things
That we perceive, and not that we have made." (Prelude 2:211-216)

Bertrand Russell has made the distinction very clear in his essay on Mysticism and Logic. He says,

"The definite beliefs at which the mystics arrive are the result of reflection upon the inarticulate experience gained in the moment of insight. Often, beliefs which have no real connection with this moment become subsequently attr-
acted into the central nucleus; thus in addition to the convictions which all mystics share, we find, in many of them, other convictions of a more local and temporary character, which no doubt become amalgamated with what was essentially mystical in virtue of their subjective certainty.

Yet this distinction, though helpful, does not go to the root of the matter. The mystic experience itself comes to different individuals in different forms. As Evelyn Underhill points out, it comes by the paths of religion, beauty, pain, and "by many another secret way." The mystic whose intuitions come by the religious pathway is inclined to disparage sense experience because his vision appears to arise from within the depths of his own mind independent of the body and its organs of perception. On the other hand, the mystic whose vision comes to him by the way of beauty is not inclined to discredit the senses, for he recognizes these as the media by which come to him things wondrous and eternal. His exalted moments come either when the senses bring new forms and expressions of beauty, or when memory revives those they have brought before. He says with Plato, "Of Beauty I repeat again, that we saw her there shining in company with the celestial forms; and coming to earth we find her here too shining in clearness through the clearest aperture of sense."  

Hence for the nature mystic sense and intuition are not opposed, for sense is an avenue by which intuition comes. Or, to put this differently, intuition is for him a sensuous experience on a deeper level than the usual casual sense—1. Mysticism—Evelyn Underhill. Page 24. 2. Phaedrus. 276 B (Jouett’s translation)
perception. "What eye hath not seen, nor ear heard" come to him by means of both eye and ear. His intuition is a sublimation of the sense experience; he puts them to higher use than does the non-mystic. He escapes from the "prison of the senses" making his old manacles the means of his emancipation.

Evelyn Underhill attributes this desire to escape from what she and Wordsworth both call the "prison of the senses" to two great cravings, the ambition to know and the impulse to love. Indeed the mystics have ever described the object of their experience in terms of deep affection, exhausting in their symbolism the metaphors of love, courtship, and marriage. Yet they have always claimed a unique cognitive value for their experiences. In Wordsworth's words the experience is both an "intellectual charm" and a "calm delight." Nature, the perfect teacher, in all of her nurturing preserves this balance, and also that equipoise between attraction and awe which we have noted (Page 36 ff).

This is reflected in Wordsworth's glowing tribute to her:

"Ye Presences of Nature in the sky
And on the earth! Ye Visions of the hills!
And Souls of lonely places! can I think
A vulgar hope was yours when ye employed
Such ministry, when ye through many a year
Haunting me thus among my boyish sports,
On caves and trees, upon the woods and hills,
Impressed upon all forms the characters
Of danger or desire; and thus did make
The surface of the universal earth
With triumph and delight, with hope and fear,
Work like a sea?"  (Prelude 463-475).

Wordsworth is careful to point out that his intel-
lectual communion with Nature during these boyhood days was not a constant experience. It was an occasional joy which came with characteristic mystic suddenness in "gleams like the flashings of a shield." At the age of ten he was not of course sufficiently introspective to make this communion with Nature an object of thought. He experienced influences, but did not seek to name them, or to speculate upon their meaning or implications. As he puts it, "I held unconscious intercourse with beauty." But if this experience was semi-inarticulate, it was not for that reason unimportant, for it became the basis for his philosophy of life and contribution as a poet. It was the root of a more conscious insight and more valued mystic joy in adult life. It not only laid a foundation for his thought, but for his whole personality, endowing him with both moral strength and mental acumen. So their legacy is ours even to-day. These irregular, fortuitous, fitful, gleams were therefore

"not vain
Nor profitless, if haply they impressed
Collateral objects and appearances,
Albeit lifeless then, and doomed to sleep
Until maturer seasons called them forth
To impregnate and elevate the mind." (Prelude 1:591-597).

They were reaffirmed by glimpses of the visionary splendour. They became more prized by him as in later life their half-forgotten influences were revived by some renewed association to add a fresh glory to familiar scenes. The appreciation of the value grew in his mind as he realized how truly they were nourishing his life. They became bright spots in his

1. Prelude 1:588.
life about which his affections centered. The time was yet to come when he made them the definite object of his search, and valued them for their own sake. Indeed he could not fully realize how much Nature meant to him until he was deprived of her for a while. His purer love of her was just in its beginning.

"The passion yet
Was in its birth, sustained as might befall
By nourishment that came unsought; for still
From week to week, from month to month, we lived
A round of tumult."  (Prelude 2:5-10.)

Even experiences which were far from mystical contributed to his spiritual growth. Though they were but "fits of vulgar joy" and "giddy bliss" he remembered the natural scenes in which they took place, and his relation to this memory scene became a mystical one. He communed with these majestic pictures of the mind. As he repeatedly reverted to them they became increasingly dear through the force of obscure memories and of dim but powerful associations.

"These same scenes, so bright,
So beautiful, so majestic in themselves,
Though yet the day were distant, did become
Habitually dear, and all their forms
And changeful colours, by invisible links
Were fastened to the affections.  (Prelude 1:604-610).
Chapter 5.

SCHOOL DAYS

"Oh! mystery of man, from what a depth
Proceed thy honours. I am lost, but see
In simple childhood something of the base
On which thy greatness stands." (Prelude 12:272-276)

"The child is father of the man."
Chapter 5. Schooldays.

The main source of our information about Wordsworth’s school days is book two of the Prelude in which he sketches during his development, from the years between the ages of ten and seventeen. In his eighth year, just after his mother’s death he had been placed in the home of Dame Tyson to attend the Hawkshead Grammar School. Here he enjoyed glad free days of boisterous merrymaking. Boyish revelry and loud uproar of games continued long after the labourers of the village had retired. Then the boys would trudge home under the stars "feverish with weary joints and beating minds." (2:18)

"We ran a boisterous course, the year sped round
With giddy motion." (Prelude 2:45:46)

But about the age of twelve he came to desire calmer joys and to feel more dependent upon Nature as the source of his pleasure. Games and holidays apart from Nature were then less satisfying and less sought. Excursions to the different islands in the Windermere—_islands where untouched Nature ruled, and where birds, or lilies, or the ruined shrine bid them come—_such holiday delights taught Wordsworth that a deep joy and strength could come from quiet communion with Nature in solitude.

"I was taught to feel, perhaps too much
The self-sufficing power of Solitude."

He came to have a "quiet independence of the heart." One of the ways in which he learned this was by boat races to one of the islands. When they arrived Nature would quickly over-
He came to have a "quiet independence of the heart."

He found access to a joy that could be shared by all and which came from a deeper source in our nature than that from which the joy of competitive victory comes. Among the ways in which he learned this way by boat races to one of the islands in which Nature's agencies were unusually active and effective. When they arrived Nature would quickly over-
rule whatever pride of victory or disappointment of defeat had been induced by the heat of the contest. The competition divided nature united. Rivalry and jealousy were dissolved by Nature for in her the members of the party found a satisfaction which each could enjoy. Her goods are not competitive goods, hence the mystic in seeking them can have a "quiet independence of the heart", for his success does not depend upon a rival's defeat. In finding a greater joy in Nature than in victory Wordsworth learned one of the great lessons of the mystic, the lesson that real happiness comes from the things which are accessible to all. Rufus Jones in New Studies in Mystical Religion says, "We must stop seeking things which are to belong to one and which cannot be shared by all! This, he explains, is what older negative mystics meant by self-annihilation. They meant the annihilation of that desire for competitive prizes which destroys human fellowship. Wordsworth found their secret of an independent, social source of joy.

Now, even while he and his pairs were having noisy adventures galloping about on the inn-keeper's best steeds he could at times feel a spiritual presence in Nature.

"Oh, ye rocks and streams
And that still spirit shed from evening air!
Even in this joyous time I sometimes felt
Your presence, when with slackened step we breathed
Along the sides of steep hills, or when
Lighted by gleams of moonlight from the sea
We beat with thundering hoofs the level sand." (Prelude 2: 131-136)

But the quieter scenes that surrounded them as they returned in their pinnacle after an afternoon at the stylish tavern New Studies in Mystical Religion--Jones. Page 79.
touched him more deeply. They would row the minstrel of the troop to his island home, and then move gently away while he sat alone on the great rock on the shore playing his flute. The quickening power of the music as it came to him over the still water heightened Wordsworth's mystic perception to a pitch which it had never before attained.

"Oh, then, the calm
And dead still water lay upon my mind
Even with a weight of pleasure, and the sky,
Never before so beautiful, sank down
Into my heart, and held me like a dream!
Thus were my sympathies enlarged, and thus
The daily common range of visible things
Grew dear to me."

(Prelude 2:168-176).

During these school days a change was coming over Wordsworth. We have seen how Nature first became his companion in noisy, boisterous sport. He found her a gay and boon companion. He had enjoyed her as a part of the skating party, the boating party, or the riding party. In the midst of these hilarious escapades she had "peopled his mind with forms sublime" and had won his love to them, even though it was not for them that he went out and mingled his life with that of nature. We have seen how in the midst of these physical enjoyments Nature had added "other pleasures of subtler origin." More and more his love of these "other pleasures" grew until they became no longer mere incidentals. Once but a supporter of his joys, Nature now by gradual degrees became his joy, moving from the fringe to the center of his affections.

"Those incidental charms that first attached
My heart to rural objects, day by day
Grew weaker, and I hasten on to tell
How Nature, intervenient till this time
And secondary, now at length was sought
For her own sake."

(Prelude 2:195-200)

This change took place between his tenth and his fifteenth year. His love of Nature then became an intense and personal emotion, like a man's love for his wife or child, or a patriot's love of his country.

When he has sketched the story of his mystical development up to this point Wordsworth feels that he has come to a milestone hence he pauses to indulge in a backward look. In a few short paragraphs he interprets his spiritual growth from when, an unconscious babe, he held intercourse by touch with his mother's heart, and drank in the feelings of his mother's eye. Even for a babe, he tells us, there exists a Presence which has power to exalt objects through the activity of the senses, and give to them a new radiance. For he is no stranger on this earth; a "filial bond of nature" connects him with the world. This bond is the emotion of love, which he drinks in from its purest earthly source — his mother's feeling eye. This love is not taught but is directly intuited by the receptive infant mind. Because the babe has intuited it the flower is beautiful to his eye, and he reaches out towards it before he has strength to gather it. Thus he unconsciously recognizes his unity with the world, and shows to all thoughtful observers that he is among natural objects "no outcast bewildered and depressed" but part of an organic whole. This unifying love to which
we so early fall heirs also shows itself in infant tenderness, moving the little child to pity.

In his observations of infancy Wordsworth finds a further confirmation of his belief in the Spiritual Presence of Nature because even a babe has the gift of creative imagination, the power which makes mystic intuition of the Presence possible. There must surely be such a Presence, for feeling gives to every babe this creative power which, working through the sense faculties, acts as an agent of the Presence. This power in the babe acts co-operatively with other active manifestations of the Universal Mind in nature and in persons. It is the poetic spirit in human life; it grows in some of us, but is repressed in others. This great human birthright, Wordsworth tells us, was sustained and developed by his early life. So his preparation for his work went on steadily from the days when, before he was conscious of them, Nature imparted unrecognized influences which shaped his future.

Wordsworth has given us one striking example of the way in which experiences with Nature developed his imagination, the basis alike for his mystic insight and his poetic power. It was when he was out on a perilous bird-nest hunt. As he hung by tufts of grass and half-inch ledges on the bare face of the crag, supported, so it seemed, only by the strong wind blowing upon his body, his mind seemed to become intoxicated by the sheer peril of the situation, and he experienced strange stirrings of the imagination.
With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind
Blow through my ear! the sky seemed not a sky
Of earth—and with what motion moved the clouds!
(Prelude 1:337-340)

By even such strange experiences as this Nature fostered
the growth in Wordsworth of that power by which he was
later to interpret her, that power which, as agent of the
one great Mind, is "creator and receiver both." 1

It is instructive to compare this conception of
the poetic spirit in man being the creative power of his
mind working co-operatively with the external manifesta-
tions of the Cosmic Mind with a remark made by Evelyn Under-
hill on the relation of mysticism to art. "The intuition
of the Real lying at the root of the visible world and
sustaining its life," she declares, "is present in a modif-
ied form in all the arts; perhaps it were better to say, must
be present if these arts are to justify themselves as
heightened forms of experience. It is this that gives them
that peculiar vitality, that strange power of communicating
poignant emotion, half torment and half joy, which baffles
their more rational interpreters." 2

The next stage that we must note in Wordsworth's
spiritual growth is a transitional one between the inarticu-
late mysticism of his childhood and the explicit and consc-
ious mysticism of his manhood. During it he found himself
loving the visible world without knowing just why he did so.
Its old extrinsic allurements had, as we have seen, lost their
hold upon him, but still his affections clung to common

1. Prelude 2:288
things. It was not yet clear to his mind what inner strength he was receiving from Nature. Yet these puzzling days led to closer communion.

"All that I beheld
Was dear, and hence to finer influxes
The mind lay open, to more exact contact
And close communion." (Prelude 2:276-280)

The joy and love of this closer communion gave a deeper meaning to all of life. Happenings which would otherwise have been deemed insignificant and quickly forgotten took on a new and permanent significance. As a result a "register of permanent relations" grew up in the poet's mind which lent to common life a higher value, and to every-day experience a richer content. He found a greater joy in simple things. This made it an inspiration to walk out alone under the silent stars. And now he felt the power of the earth's mysterious sounds to breathe an elevated mood. When a night storm was approaching he would slip out of the house to some great rock and stand there

"listening to the notes that are
The ghostly language of the ancient earth,
Or make their dim abode in distant winds.
Thence did I drink the visionary power:
And deem not profitless those fleeting moods
Of shadowy exultation." (Prelude 2:303-309)

He did not consider these fleeting moments of mystic insight wasted, for even though he forgot their particular stimulant he would always remember how he felt and cherish this memory as an ideal of possible sublimity. And such an ideal would stimulate spiritual growth.

The intuition of the deep significance of common
things came not alone in gloomy and tumultuous scenes, but also in ones that were bright and peaceful. The power of intuiting the essential unity and harmony of things, which all minds have in some degree, was now strengthened in Wordsworth with such a mysterious increment that he could not think of it as being but a normal development of his own powers. He felt lifted by some strength not his own. He declares:

"That universal power
And fitness in the latent qualities
And essences of things, by which the mind
Is moved with feelings of delight
To me came strengthened with a superadded soul
A virtue not its own."  
(Prelude 2:320-326)

More and more Wordsworth derived his joy from the satisfaction of this mystic impulse. It was nourished in his early morning walks. Often he would take the five-mile walk around the lake before school time. Sometimes he would get up before the smoke had risen from one of the cottages of the slumbering valley or the spring thrush had begun its morning song that he might catch the first glimpse of daylight. In the intense solitude and quiet of such a time Nature's Spirit seemed unusually contagious. His mind would be subdued and elevated into what he describes as a "holy calm". The peace of Nature would steal into his consciousness. A kind of mystic trance would come over him in which his concentration upon what he saw became so intense that he became quite unconscious of the circumstances of its prehension.

"Such a holy calm
Would overspread my soul, that bodily eyes
Would be forgotten, and what I saw
Appeared like something in myself, a dream,
A prospect of the mind." (Prelude 2:343-348)

Wordsworth declares that space does not allow him to
tell of all the uncounted occasions at Hawkshead when at all seasons

"Evening and morning, sleep and waking, thought
From sources inexhaustible, poured forth
To feed the spirit of religious love
In which I walked with Nature." (Prelude 2:354-358)

but he does wish us to remember that the "regular action" of the unheeding world did not subdue his "first creative sensibility". He retained this imaginative creativity of mind because, in the words of Evelyn Underhill, he "had surrendered himself to the life movement of the universe, and hence lived an intenser life than other men can ever know." In this intenser life the mind was at once more sensitive and more creative. Imagination at times became a rebellious power which refused to accept at face value the coin presented by the senses, though usually it was strictly subservient to their presentation of the senses. Yet to this it gave its own peculiar touch of glory.

"An auxiliary light
Came from my mind, which on the setting sun
Bestowed new splendour, the melodious birds,
The fluttering breezes, fountains that run on
Murmuring so sweetly in themselves, obeyed
A like dominion, and the midnight storm
Grew darker in the presence of my eye." (Prelude 2:363-370)

This does not mean that imagination superimposed an illusive

glory; rather his imaginative power but brought to light a glory already there. Indeed it enabled him to see more than others, but the additional quality wasn't an ignis fatua, but part of the real world. Those who failed to see it failed to creative imagination see the whole truth. For, as we have already noted, it is the quality of genius which, according to Wordsworth's friend, Coleridge, "like the moisture or the polish on a pebble, neither distorts nor false-colours its objects; but on the contrary brings out many a vein and many a tint, which escape the eye of common observation, thus raising to the rank of gems that which had been often kicked away by the hurrying foot of the traveller on the dusty high-road of custom." This value-revealing power which brings to light the most helpful part of the real, making possible mysticism, spirituality, poetry, and genius, grew on in Wordsworth in spite of the demand for conformity from a hurrying, worrying world which is "too much with us".

Whether from the habit of observing "affinities in objects where no brotherhood exists" or from "excess in the great social principle of life coercing all things into sympathy"--in other words, because of the growth of his sense of unity--by his seventeenth year Wordsworth had learned to look to Nature rather than to his fellows as his source of joy. Everything was now for him bound into a unity by the "overflowing soul" of Nature to which as a source joy he felt deeply grateful. The "sentiment of Being" spread and moved over all. All was in this Universal Soul; it was in

1. Biographia Literaria--Coleridge
2. Miscellaneous Sonnets No. 33.
3. Prelude Bk. 2: 381.
This idea exalted the mind and imbued thought with emotion. It brought joy that couldn't be put into cold rigid words.

"Thus while the days flew by, and the years passed on, From Nature and her overflowing soul, I had received so much, that all my thoughts Were steeped in feeling; I was only then Contented, when with bliss ineffable 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 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 waves, yea in the wave itself, And mighty depth of waters." (Prelude 2:395-409)

Though he somewhat weakened the expression in the final revision, in the first version of the Prelude Wordsworth tells us that we should not wonder at him finding such high transports in Nature, for "in all things now I saw one life, and felt that it was joy." However he yet preserved for us in the published edition the report that heaven his joy was the result of communion with "earth and sky and every form of creature." This joyous intercourse has been the source of whatever purity of heart, contentment of mind, freedom from little enmities, and hopeful confidence in human nature the poet has enjoyed.

How deeply and definitely mystical Wordsworth's experience had now become we can see by his use of such a word as "ineffable" to describe it. We have seen how true this is to the general mystical tradition. James would not describe an experience as mystical unless the person who
had it felt that it was beyond description. Wordsworth has
now reached that stage at which he feels that words can
but clumsily suggest what he has known. He now can under-
stand what lies behind St. Bernard's cry, "My secret to my-
self." He too has come to know that there is something in
life which lies too deep for words, which were evolved for
utilitarian ends.
Chapter 6.

COLLEGE DAYS.

"And from my pillow, looking forth by light of moon or favouring stars, I could behold the antechapel where the statue stood of Newton with his prism and silent face, the marble index of a mind for ever voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone. (Prelude 3:57-63.)

"An idler among academic bowers, such was my new condition." (Prelude 8:503-504.)

"Enough of science and of art; close up the barren leaves; come forth, and bring with you a heart that watches and receives." The Tables Turned.
Chapter 6. College Days.

In October 1787, during his eighteenth year, Wordsworth went to St. John's College, Cambridge. Here Nature continued to refresh and comfort him when he was disturbed by unpleasant human contacts. He would steal away from his companions to be with Nature, and he ever found in her a dependable resource, a "never-failing principle of joy and purest passion." Nature was as responsive to his spiritual need here at Cambridge as she had been amid the lovely sights and sounds of Esthwaite water, and he learned that by mystically availing himself of her ministrations he had a solace that was independent of place or circumstance.

"I looked for universal things; pursued
The common countenance of earth and sky;
Earth, nowhere embellished by some trace
Of that first Paradise whence man was driven
And sky, whose beauty and bounty are expressed
By the proud name she bears—the name of heaven."

(Prelude 3:105-111)

Wordsworth now grew more introspective, and consequently his mysticism took on a more definitely religious colouring. It moved in the direction of the religious type. He says,

"The mind
Drooped not; but there into herself returning,
With prompt rebound seemed fresh as heretofore.
At least I more distinctly recognized
Her native instincts."

(Prelude 3:95-99)

"I pursued
The common countenance of earth and sky:
Or turning the mind in upon itself
Poured, watched, expected, listened, spread my thoughts."

(Prelude 3:105-114)
"Unknown, unthought of, yet I was most rich
I had a world about me---'twas my own;
I made it, for it only lived to me,
And to the God who sees into the heart." (Prelude 3:140-144)

Wordsworth now began to think about the meaning of experiences which until now he had taken for granted. He now faced the task of giving his mystic experiences a place in his philosophy of life. As he meditated upon his experiences he built up this thought-world of which he speaks. As he moved about in it he 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." (First version, 1805-6)

This reading of the first version, like so many other passages, was later revised, and in the revision took on a more orthodox and churchy ring. It then read:

"Incumbencies more awful, visitings
Of the Upholder of the tranquil soul,
That tolerates the indignities of Time,
And from the center of Eternity
All finite motions overruling, lives
In glory immutable." (Prelude 3:116-122)

Both of these versions express a deeply mystical thought in their depreciation of time and change. Extreme mystic doctrine, in denying the reality of parts and divisions, must also deny the existence of time and change. While not all mystics would subscribe to this extreme statement of their viewpoint, all share the thought that there is something Eternal existing through all the busy comings and goings which usurp so much of our attention. They feel that this
Eternal is somehow a more important fact in the universe than the changes which are so obvious, for these changes find their meaning in it. It is this intuition of the Eternal in the transient which endows slight circumstances with great significance in the mystic's eyes. "All that I beheld respired with inward meaning" Wordsworth declares of his experience at this time. "Even the loose stones that cover the highway" now seemed to him to have a moral significance as expressions of the Eternal Mind.

Though Wordsworth kept these mystic inclinations and thoughts very much to himself they became so central in his life that his habits revealed them. Some of his fellow students took these mystic peculiarities as signs of mental unbalance. Hence Wordsworth shared an accusation which has been repeatedly levelled against mystics individually and as a class, one against which their apologists ever stand upon the defensive. Wordsworth answers the charge by declaring that his experience was not fortuitous, but part of an ordered and orderly universe where we can count on past sequences as being the key to future ones. The poet had an eye

"Which spake perpetual logic to my soul,  
And by an unrelenting agency  
Did bind my feelings even as in a chain." (Prelude 3:163-166)

Far from being signs of a neurotic condition Wordsworth calls the experiences in question "the glory of his youth", as does every mystic. He sees in it the secret of his genius and creative power. And though the drama of the soul lies far hidden from the reach of words, and though it is
often of such an individual character that we all "stand single" he does not despair of being understood, for

"there's not a man
That lives who hath not known his godlike hours,
And feels not what an empire we inherit
As natural beings in the strength of Nature." (Prelude 3:253-256)

A mind so full of the forms of Nature and so deeply impressed by their majesty and spiritual meaning was not likely to be captivated by the usual competition for academic distinction so uppermost in the thoughts of the "loyal students faithful to their books." Wordsworth did not enter the prize-winning contests, but joined heartily in the social life of the college. Looking back upon it he felt

superficial this gay life was. It left the depths of his
sonality untouched. Yet he had his hours of quiet thought, and grew more contemplative. Contemplation is advised by all writers upon mysticism as an approach to the mystic experience. Wordsworth says that in spite of his social nature "independent musings pleased me so that spells seemed on me when I was alone."

Until his university days Wordsworth had little contact with the world of men and affairs. He is grateful to Cambridge for introducing him to this world gradually. If the university had not brought this world into his experience with a "just gradation" it might have come to his visionary mind with too great a shock. Until now he had been a child of Nature living remotely from social life

"Like a lone shepherd on a promontory
Who lacking occupation looks far forth
Into the boundless sea, and rather makes
Than finds what he beholds." (Prelude 3: 516-520)

This "privileged world within a world" made the transition easier.

The most notable advances in Wordsworth's mystic sensibility during his college years took place in the summer vacation periods. The first of these was spent at Hawkshead, where so many happy days of childhood had been passed. Beautiful familiar scenes, rich in old associations, dearer through absence, opened before his exultant gaze with a great freshness of beauty. Little experiences now seemed big with meaning—the kindhearted dame asleep over her Bible his own lowly cot from which he had so often listened to 1. Prelude 3: 209, 231.
the storm without, or watched the moonlight flooding through the leaves of the tall ash by his window. He renewed his walks about the lake, his old delight in them reviving "like a returning Spring". At sunset a calm, contemplative mood would steal over him. He remembers one evening that was cold and raw. But he loved it all the more for that, as a loved face is sweeter when wet with tears. His heart was full. His old strength of soul came back to him with new power. Something seemed to awake in him which made him aware of the Presence.

"Gently did my soul put off her veil, and, self-transmuted, stood Naked as in the presence of her God. While I walked a comfort seemed to touch A heart that had not been disconsolate, Strength came where weakness was not known to be, At least not felt; and restoration came Like an intruder knocking at the door Of unacknowledged weariness." (Prelude 4:149-158)

This vision turned Wordsworth's mind inward, and he became absorbed in a meditation in which he passed moral judgments upon himself. Not only present surroundings but all of the past was forgotten while he was inspired by high hopes for the future. The experience had Nature's characteristic balance:

"I had inward hopes and swellings of the spirit, was rapt and soothed, Conversed with promises, had glimmering views How life pervades the undecaying mind." (Prelude 4:162-163)

The vision gave him an exalted sense of the mysterious worth and power of man's spirit, of

"How the immortal soul with God-like power Informs, creates, and thaws the deepest sleep That time can lay upon her." (Prelude 4:166-169)
Wordsworth now saw all things in a new light, with new eyes. It gave him fresh delight, a keener sensitiveness to the situations about him in all their concrete fulness: "With another eye I saw the quiet woodman in the woods, The shepherd roam the hills." (Prelude 4:213-216)

These simple homely men and their peaceful occupations were all changed "like a garden in the heat of spring after an eight-days' absence." He now took great pleasure in the unspoiled lives of these rustic folk. He now knew the worth of their way of life, for he could contrast it with the artificial living which he had seen at Cambridge. These men had grown up with Nature and never got far away from her. Each in their degree, consciously or unconsciously, these men were worshippers of Nature, as was he. The treasures of Nature were not his private possession, but something that he shared with them. He felt distinctly

"A human-heartedness about my love
For objects hitherto the absolute wealth
Of my private being and no more;
Which I had loved even as a blessed spirit
Or Angel, if he were to dwell on earth,
Might love in individual happiness.
But now there opened on me other thoughts
Of change, congratulation, or regret,
A pensive feeling!" (Prelude 4:230-239)

In this feeling the vague dread of Nature which had affected Wordsworth's early years passed away, and his attitude towards her became more tender and intimate. His former "awe and tremulous dread" was changed to delight and enthusiastic hope.

In the light pleasures of social life at college Wordsworth had to some extent drifted away from his devot-
ion to Nature. He was aware that this was a poor exchange, and tells us of one memorable occasion during this first vacation when the Spirit of Nature deeply touched his conscience with this truth. He was returning home early in the morning after a night spent at a country dance. As he followed the pathway through the fields toward home the colours of dawn began to glow in the eastern sky. They developed into one of the most beautiful sunrises which he had ever seen. It was one he never forgot. Magnificent colours lit up the mountains, the ocean, and the meadows between. At length the sun came above the horizon; it glittered on the dew and gathered up the morning mist. Then the birds began to sing, and labourers came out to the fields.

Wordsworth says:

"To the brim
My heart was full; I made no vows, but vows
Were made for me; bond unknown to me
Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
A dedicated Spirit. On I walked
In thankful blessedness, which yet survives." (Prelude 4:326)

In another poem Wordsworth tells of a similar vow made by a fellow-poet. In Thoughts Suggested the Day Following he reminds us of Burns who was

"Too frail to keep the lofty vow
That must have followed when his brow
Was wreathed—"The Vision" tells us how—
With holly spray,
He faltered, drifted to and fro,
And passed away."

As we have seen Wordsworth also faltered and drifted from his avowed task as Nature's interpreter. Yet this consecration did not lose its value for him. Recovery from the
loss of insight was possible because the poet had known "too forcibly, too early in life, visitings of imaginative power" for alienation to be permanent. The power of this and other such experiences survived in memory and became the basis for his recovery. They cast a gladdening radiance, a spirit of pleasure and youth's golden gleam, over objects long since loved as he strove to recapture the visionary powers. This gleam was the earnest of victory.

The experience was one of those great moments of the soul which served Wordsworth all his days. He found that when his mind was depressed with false opinions, contentious thoughts, or with the round of ordinary intercourse and trivial occupations, he could turn to these great mystical experiences of the past and obtain from their memory a renewal of strength. By their "renovating virtue" his mind was "nourished and invisibly repaired." Turning to them was the source of his moral strength. He felt that such experiences are the "hiding places of man's power". He also felt that it was because of them that he was able to understand human freedom, for they were such occasions as give insight into how "The mind is lord and master---outward sense
The obedient servant of the will." (Prelude 12:222:223.)

In these ways the "blessed thankfulness" inspired by this occasion did continue for many years, and when lost was found again. Wordsworth deeply yearned for its lifelong continuance, how deeply we can somewhat, divinely as we read his exquisite lyric, "My heart leaps up".
"My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky;
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die:
The Child is father of the man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety."

Other visions were to follow and confirm, but henceforth,
"else sinning greatly" Wordsworth was a dedicated spirit.
There were other seasons of revelry that summer, idle and careless thoughts there were—his mind was now a strange checkerboard of serious and frivolous, sober and gay, deep and superficial,—but through it all there was no lack of times in which he felt the Presence both in men and in Nature "through pregnant vision."

The growth of Wordsworth's mystical dependence upon Nature during this summer is reflected in his eulogy of solitude in the chapter in which he tells of it. He began to feel what a blessed thing it was to be able to go off all to enjoy the company of Nature free from distractions. "How gracious, how benign, is Solitude!"

The sensitive mind can be cast into a spell even by the symbol of her presence—the hermit in the trackless wilderness, the lone worshipper in the vast cathedral, the solitary watchman on the windswept lighthouse, or the view of the public road, when deserted for the night, it takes on an aspect "more profound than pathless wastes".

1. Prelude. Book 4:357
2. Prelude Book 4:370
In his account Wordsworth quickly passes over his next two winters at college. However, he suggests that his detachment from academic ambitions and carefree disregard of routine intellectual work was not without its compensations, which were of a mystical nature.

"Yet who can tell--
Who knows what thus may have been gained, both then
And at a later season, or preserved;
What love of nature, what original strength
Of compensation, what intuitive truths
The deepest and the best." (Prelude 6:35-41)

"The poet's soul was with me at that time;
Sweet meditations, the still overflow
Of present happiness, while future years
Lacked not anticipations, tender dreams." (Prelude 6:42-46.)

The boisterous revels which had attracted him during his first year now lost their hold upon him; he led a quieter, more solitary life. Each free evening was spent under the tall elms of the stately college grove until he was forced inside by the porter's bell. There was a particular tree which he loved—a sinuous ash which in winter was covered with ivy almost to the top. Here he would stand on frosty winter evenings looking up through its branches. Here imagination peopled his mind with visions.

One school-study that did attract Wordsworth during these years was Geometry. In its abstractions he found a corroboration of his mystic insight. He often meditated upon the relation of the necessities of thought which governed the construction of these pure intellectual syntheses and the laws of nature. In this realm of pure thought, as in the realm of nature, everything was under the sway of one
permanently and universal sway. This suggested to Wordsworth's mind the sovereignty of the Cosmic Spirit whose presence he felt in nature. A great peace and comfort would settle upon him as in his silent meditations he pursued these weighty thoughts.

Instead of spending the last summer vacation in studying for the final examinations, as was usual, Wordsworth decided, in spite of the danger of displeasing his relatives, to spend the time in a pedestrian tour through the Alps with his friend Jones, a nature-lover like himself. On the third of August, 1790, these young travellers reached the venerable Convent of Chartreuse, the retreat of St. Bruno. Its inmates had been ejected by the revolutionists. Here Wordsworth heard the voice of Nature speaking from her Alpine height in protest against such desecration of the peace of this ancient institution which so long had

"Had bodied forth the ghostliness of things
In silence visible and perpetual calm." (Prelude 6:428, 429)

In subdued silence they paced about the deserted halls and rooms, many of which had never before been open except to those who had taken holy vows upon themselves. The voice of Nature seemed to be crying out to the spirit of revolution:

"Stay, stay your sacriligious hands!
Your impious work forbear, perish what may
Let this one temple last, be this one spot
Of earth devoted to eternity."

(Prelude 6:450-454)

This incident is significant, not merely as an example of how explicit were Nature's intimations to Wordsworth, but as showing how deeply, we cannot have a mystical mind without
"In sympathetic reverence we trod
The floors of those dim cloisters." (Prelude 6:475, 476.)

Wondering one day whether they were on the right trail as they sought to overtake their fellow-travellers who had gone before, the young companions asked a peasant concerning the road. He told them that they were wrong in climbing as they were, that for the rest of their journey they would be descending. Both of the friends were disappointed, for they did not think they had attained the watershed. They questioned the peasant again to make sure that they were not misunderstanding him, but he repeated his statement, and they were driven to conclude, "We have crossed the Alps." This realization gave birth to mighty stirrings of imaginative power in the mind of Wordsworth. We have observed that his mystic emotions and imaginative powers were usually aroused by some natural scene. It was not so in this case.

"That awful power arose from the mind's abyss
Like an unfathomed vapour that swells,
At once, some lonely traveller." (Prelude 6:693-696.)

In the vision which followed the usual external stimulus was displaced by the disappointment at being told that they had reached the limit of their ascent while they were anticipating still higher altitudes. Instead of sensation being intensified during it, as was usual in Wordsworth's moments of intuition, it was almost eclipsed. Sensation's power was usurped by the mind's concentration upon abstract truth. Wordsworth recognized the power of his "conscious soul" for as it put out the light of sense it revealed
the invisible world. He exulted in its creative strength, called "imagination" "through sad incompetence of human speech. Because of this creativity our personality and destiny is infinite, and we ever strive toward the unattained. In this struggle after a flying goal the soul seeks no visible trophy to seal its victories, for they are their own reward.

"Our destiny, our being's heart and home, Is with infinitude, and only there; With hope it is, hope that can never die, Effort and expectation and desire And something evermore about to be." (Prelude 6:598-603)

As they were descending Simpion pass Wordsworth again experienced his more usual type of intuition. How various was the majestic scenery! What tremendous contrasts! Yet broke in upon the young poet's mind the fact which impressed the young poet was the unity which underlay all this superficial variety. Every part seemed to him the expression of a single Mind. So sublime is the description that we cannot doubt the depth of the impression which this experience made upon Wordsworth's mind.

"The immeasurable height
Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
And in the narrow rent at every turn
Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,
The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,
Black drizzling crags that spake by the way-side
As if a voice were in them, the sick sight
And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
The unfettered clouds and region of the heavens,
Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light—
Were all like working 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."

(Prelude 6:523-640.)

"Among the most awful scenes of the Alps," Wordsworth once
wrote, "I had not a thought of man, nor a single created being, my whole soul was turned to Him who produced the terrible majesty before me."

In the Prelude also he assures us that he did not move through these scenes with any lighthearted and shallow exultation. He does not presume to deal out "hyperboles of these praise comparative." He found comparisons of natural scenes most repulsive. As though such beauty could be measured out by the yard! "My heart must, in such Temple, needs have offered up a different worship." Like the Quaker mystics, Wordsworth knew the value of silence as a mode of worship.

In the presence of such majestic scenery Wordsworth did not feel a sense of his own smallness, weakness, or insignificance. Rather, knowing the creativity of mind, he felt his own greatness.

"Not prostrate, or overborne, as if the mind Herself were nothing, a mere pensioner On outward forms—did we in presence stand Of that magnificent region." (Prelude 8:735-739.)

But Nature too was creative. Hence, however different they might seem, nature and mind were close akin, indeed parts of a larger whole. The objects of his experience were of such stuff as himself. They too were spiritual. Because of this he could not assume an indifferent attitude toward them; they moved him to "grandeur or tenderness."

"Whate'er I saw, or heard, or felt, was but a stream That flowed into a kindred stream; a gale Confederate with the current of the soul, To speed my voyage; every sound or sight, In its degree of power, administered
To grandeur or to tenderness,—to the one Directly, but to tender thoughts by means Less often instantaneous in effect.

These emotions, arising spontaneously out of insight into the meaning of Nature, were the "fit worship" which "must needs" be offered up.
"This did I feel, in London's vast domain,
The Spirit of Nature was upon me there
The soul of Beauty and enduring Life
Vouchsafed her inspiration." (Prelude 7:785-789.)

"The place
Was thronged with impregnations like the Wilds
In which my early feelings had been nursed." (Prelude 8:63; 688)

"Call ye these appearances---
Which I beheld of shepherds in my youth,
This sanctity of Nature given to man---
A shadow, a delusion, ye who pore
On the dead letter, miss the spirit of things!" (Prelude 8:292-297.)
Upon taking his Bacheelor's degree in January, 1791, Wordsworth left Cambridge for London. The four months that he spent there served to exalt his imagination, and so enhance his power of mystic vision. When, three years before, he had first entered the city he had felt the shock "in heart and soul" and it yet could move him. On that occasion as he entered the city by coach with great suddenness a "weight of ages" seemed to descend upon him, a strange stirring of imaginative power. This may seem a trifling incident—Wordsworth apologizes for recording it—but it was a permanent factor of his experience in the city, and with his usual faithfulness he reports it. As he now returned to the city this sense of vastness, of passion, and of power was still present. This city of his boyhood dreams with its thronging life yet had power to stir him to wonder and awe.

"Thou endless stream of men and moving things! Thy everyday appearance, as it strikes—With wonder heightened, or sublimed with awe—On strangers, of all ages: the quick dance Of colours, lights, and forms; the deafening din, The comers and goers face to face, Face after face—— (Prelude 7:151-158).

The multitudinous life of the streets attracted his curiosity—the raree show, the minstrel band, the ballad singer, the street orator. Yet amid the varied gaiety and glamour of the city's excitements the still small voice that came from Nature's quiet and from
the memory of her sanctuaries was not entirely absent from Wordsworth's consciousness. "Meditations holy and sublime" still found a place there in spite of the many voices calling. Often he was carried off into a profound reverie upon the mystery of life by the sight of the endless stream of unknown faces passing him. "The face of every one that passes me is a mystery" he would exclaim to himself, and his inner thoughts would then so completely possess his attention that what was going on about him became but a second-sight procession. What is this thing we call life? Whence have we come? Where do we go? In whatever way his thoughts proceeded, they found the way blocked by a great gulf of mystery. Once, carried farther from his surroundings than usual by this sort of reverie, he was abruptly wakened from it by the sight of a blind beggar propped against a wall, his chest displaying a card which explained who he was and from where he had come. This sight struck Wordsworth as being a typical symbol of the utmost that we can know of ourselves or of the universe. This simple sight had a stunning effect upon him; he gazed upon the blind face steadily, feeling that he had received a message "as from another world."

This experience shows how deeply Wordsworth was impressed by the narrow limits of rational knowledge—a thought present in all mystic minds. We should also note that this experience, like that at the watershed of the Alps, being accompanied by an attenuation of sensation, belongs to the religious rather than 1. Prelude 7:648.
than the nature type of mysticism. Wordsworth himself was conscious of experiencing the two types of vision. In commenting upon this one he says, "Structures like these the excited spirit mainly builds for herself." But he goes on to say that there are other visions which take possession of the mind "full-formed, with small internal help." Even these came to Wordsworth in the city. They came with——is

"The peace
That comes with night; the deep solemnity
Of nature's intermediate hours of rest,
When the great tide of human life stands still;
The business of the day to come, unborn,
Of that gone by, locked up, as in the grave;
The blended calmness of the heavens and earth,
Moonlight and stars, and empty streets." (Prelude 7:664-671.)

He makes clear that his distinction between these two types lies in the difference in the role played by sensation. In the former the vision is but "reared upon a base of outward things" which are increasingly disregarded until, as he says in Tintern Abbey,

"The breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motions of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul." (Tintern Abbey 43-47.)

Wordsworth confesses that this is not a mood to which city life is usually conducive. Its perpetual round of trivial objects tends to confuse the mind. There seems so little in the ceaseless flow of the city's life that one person can control. The resulting sense of futility is a contagion from which even the strongest and most high-thinking minds among city dwellers do not entirely escape. To their weary eye the goings on about them become an "unmanageable..."
sight" in which all is

"melted and reduced
To one identity, by differences
That have no law, no meaning, and no end." (Prelude 7:727-730.)

The man who best escapes this tendency is the man of mystic insight who has learned a true appreciation of the sublimity of all life, human and natural. To him the common things of life have a deep significance. He sees their importance because he "sees parts as parts, but with a feeling for the whole." He views each part as an expression of the cosmic mind, hence he "looks with steadiness" and "hath among least things an undersense of greatest." 1

This "feeling for the whole" may be fostered by various educational agencies. In Wordsworth's case it was achieved through

"Early intercourse with the works of God
Among all regions; chiefly where appear
Most obviously simplicity and power." (Prelude 7:742-745.)

He had felt their grandeur just as the Indian is exalted by the eternal streams, or the Arab by the desert vastness. They caught him up into their larger life; they seized his attention, broadened his thought, indelibly inscribed their vivid forms. They brought attention, comprehensiveness, and memory."

The sea was one expression of Nature which so stirred him. In its presence he felt awed with a sense of majesty and power. The laws by which it shaped the aspirations of the soul proved to be just as regular as those which formed

1. Prelude 7:735
2. Prelude 7:736
the ranks of clouds above its surface. The principles which
governed its inspiring power were dependable. There was
nothing fortuitous about it; the inspiration would come if
the conditions for its reception were fulfilled. Dr. James
L. Gordon writes a chapter in one of his books on "The Laws
of Inspiration." Wordsworth would have approved of such a
title.

Because of this discovery of Nature's dependability
Wordsworth's mystic life developed during his stay in
London, in spite of the city's lack of grand scenery and
whirl of trivial objects. He sums up his growth there thus:

"This did I feel, in London's vast domain, --
The Spirit of Nature was upon me there;
The soul of Beauty and enduring Life
Vouchsafed her inspiration, and diffused,
Through meagre lines and colours, and the press
Of self-destroying, transitory things,
Composure, and ennobling Harmony." (Prelude 7:765-772.)

But one important effect of London upon his mystic
development is here omitted to be discussed later. His stay
there brought human life more to his attention, and helped
to change his affections from Nature to men. From about fif-
teen years of age when he began to love Nature for her own
sake until he was twenty-two she was uppermost in his
regard. Then his love for her was eclipsed by his love for
man. This change is described in the eighth book of the
Prelude. The subject is introduced by an account of an im-
picturesque country fair at the foot of Helvellyn, with its
rustic exhibitors and spectators. This event took place dur-

1. All's Love Yet All's Law.—Dr. J. L. Gordon.
is first impressed with the smallness and weakness of men as compared to the city, and his first reaction to this spectacle is the massiveness and might of Nature's forms: one which he has described as typical of the city dwellers.

"They move about the soft green turf: How little they, they and their doings, seem, And all that they can further or obstruct! Through utter weakness pitifully dear, As tender infants are." (Prelude 8:56-61.)

But this is not his final judgment; they are weak, "yet how great, for all things serve them." All things had served the poet, for in his love of them had come mystical inspiration. Each of these simple folk must have been served likewise.

--"Them the morning light loves, as it glistens on the silent rocks; And them the silent rocks, which now from high look down upon them; the reposeing clouds; The wild brooks prattling from invisible haunts;"

(Prelude 8:63-67.)

These shepherds were Nature's children, living so close to nature that they seemed a part of the landscape. They were in a class with the trees and the flowers. They were Nature's fellow-labourers to whom she gave, even when it was unsought and unthought-of, "simplicity, and beauty, and inevitable grace." Hence it came about that they were the link between Wordsworth's love of Nature and his love of men. When his affections first turned from playmates, friends, and his own people to "love for the human creature's absolute self" this new human kindness

"Sprang out of foundations, there abounding most, Where sovereign Nature dictated the tasks And occupations which her beauty adorned," 1. Prelude 8:62.

2. Prelude 8:110.
The Shepherds were the men that pleased me first."
(Prelude 8:125-129.)

Their rugged characters reflected Nature's heart. They were men disciplined by companionless days among the solitude of hills which were often swept by fierce storms. They had grown up in simplicity and in human kindness, living a life "Intent on little but substantial needs
Yet rich in beauty, beauty that was felt." (Prelude 8:169-163)

The process by which Wordsworth came to reverence the shepherds began very early in his boyhood. Before he was conscious of what was taking place within him the "haunts of the green earth" and the interest of man which they embosom" together fastened themselves upon his heart, each affection aiding the other. He was impressed by the independent life of the shepherd.

A rambling school-boy, thus
I felt his presence in his own domain,
As of a lord or master, or a Power,
Or genius, under Nature, under God,
Presiding; and severest solitude
Had more commanding looks when he was there."
(Prelude 8:255-261.)

Very often, when he was almost lost in the thick fog, he had suddenly come across him, a seeming-giant in size, stalking through the mist. Or his figure would be flashed upon the sight at the crest of some hill at sundown when the glowing colours would cast their radiance over his tall profile and glorify it.

"A solitary object and sublime,
Above all height: like an aerial cross
Stationed alone upon a spiry rock
Of Chartreuse, for worship. Thus was man
Ennobled outwardly before my sight,
And thus my heart was early introduced
To an unconscious love and reverence
of human nature; hence the human form
To me became an index of delight,
of grace and honour, power and worthiness."

(Prelude 8:277-287.)

Wordsworth had felt the presence of God in nature by mystic
insight, now in the same mystic way he felt the presence of
God in these simple men who were a part of nature. The "sanc-
tity of nature" was extended to them. Later when he was
deeply disappointed in men this experience stood him in
good stead and he rejoiced that he had first looked
"At man through objects that were great or fair;"
First communed with him by their help,
and so had attained an

instinctive feeling of rever-
ence toward "earth's rightful lord."

"Blessed be the God
Of Nature and of Man that this was so;
That men before my inexperienced eyes
Did first present themselves thus purified."

(Prelude 8:301-305.)

His mystical growth had been a growth in sympathy,
first sympathy with nature, then sympathy with man,

a "bursting forth
Of sympathy, inspiring and inspired
Where everywhere a vital pulse was felt,
And all the several frames of things, like stars,
Through every magnitude distinguishable,
Shone mutually indebted, or half lost
Each in the other's blaze, a galaxy
Of life and glory. In the midst stood Man
Outwardly, inwardly contemplated,
As of all creatures, crown."  (Prelude 8:478-487.)

So nature and man were seen as an interdependent whole, a
glorious community of life. And this "galaxy" was revealed
through sympathy, which, in its literal meaning, forms a key
1. Prelude 8:315-316.
2. Prelude 8:394.
to the development of the mystical impulse in Wordsworth.
He "felt together with" nature; Nature led him to take the
same attitude to man. He "felt" everywhere—in nature, in
man,--the vital pulse; it assured him of the unity which
included both. The conviction was of the kind which comes
with a great surge of intuitive confidence; it was irrefut-
able, because it didn't rest upon argument, but upon
feeling.
Wordsworth is at one with all mystical writers in claiming
for mysticism both an intellectual and a volitional
value while at the same time putting practical emphasis upon
its emotional content.

We have alluded to the part played by Wordsworth's
stay in London in this change by which man came to be the
crown of his "galaxy". In London Wordsworth's conception of
human nature greatly grew. As he stayed in the great metropolis
surrounded by its relics of the past struggles of
men his thought of human nature was universalized. He saw
how man had arisen out of Nature, and his present relations
to her. He came to identify himself with mankind.

"The human nature unto which I felt
That I belonged, and reverenced with love,
Was not a punctual presence, but a spirit
Diffused through time and space." (Prelude 8:606-610.
His sympathy with men was enlarged. He had a deep sense of
all that had been and suffered in the city, and of its
present hopes, fears, despairs. Formerly he had felt how much
he had in common with the shepherds; now he felt how much
he had in common with all men.

He had formerly held communion with the Spirit of
Nature, so he now held communion with the spirit of human nature.

"I conversed with majesty and power
Like independent natures. Hence the place
Was thronged with impressions like the Wilds
In which my early feelings had been nursed." (Prelude 8:630)

In London Wordsworth felt the unity of mankind, our common struggle against ignorance and vice, our common moral consciousness. Who of us have not? Yet with Wordsworth this was no theoretical concept but a passionate mystical intuition. Witness his own comment upon it:

"The soul when smitten thus
With a sublime idea, whence soe'er
Vouchsafed for union or communion, feeds
On pure bliss, and takes her rest with God." (Prelude 8:672)

This extension of Wordsworth's mystical feeling to man came with the joyousness of spiritual growth. But it led to a great spiritual crisis when he found by bitter experience that man is not a dependable source of inspiration. This came from his experience in France.
Chapter 8.

THE FALL.

"A patriot of the world, how could I glide
Into communion with her sylvan shades,
Erewhile my tuneful haunt?" (Prelude 10:246-248).

"What a change is here!
How different ritual for this after-worship!"
(Prelude 10:432-433.)
Chapter 8. The Fall.

Wordsworth passed over to France toward the end of November, 1791. The accounts of the revolution had stirred his imagination and curiosity. He had not as yet been deeply touched by the aspirations of the revolutionists. This came during his stay through his friendship with the noble Beaupuy. From him Wordsworth learned the doctrines of the revolution in their purest form, and caught a passionate enthusiasm for them. "My heart was all given to the people, and my love was theirs."

Wordsworth's mysticism played a large part in making him a Republican. In the last chapter we saw how it exalted man in his view. This conception of man's worth, arrived at in a different way, was the very center of the republican's creed. Oppression must be done away that man may realize his great possibilities. Beaupuy and Wordsworth discussed this challenging tenet which they held in common:

"Man and his noble nature, as it is
The gift which God has placed within his power
His blind desires and steady faculties
Capable of clear truth."

(Prélude 9:356-360.)

Although we can trace Wordsworth's Republicanism back to his mystical experiences his espousal of the revolutionist's cause meant an eclipse of insight. The excitements of the times and the fortune of his party entirely absorbed his attention while in France. Even after December, 1792, when he returned to England he could not find it in him to commune with Nature; he preferred London to the country,

for the air was full of politics.

"A patriot of the world, how could I glide
into communion with her sylvan shades,
Erewhile my tuneful haunt?" (Prelude 16:245-248)

He found adjustment to the course of events most
difficult when Britain declared war on France. For
a time he was completely soured. His youthful enthusiasm
suffered a blow which "struck deep into sensations near
the heart", throwing him out of harmony with himself
and others and making any approach to mystic communion
impossible.

In the summer of 1793 he went on a tour through
the south of England, spending a month on the Isle of
Wight. But any inspiration which might have come from
the peace and harmony of the island scenery was inhibited
by his own uneasy thoughts and dark forbodings. Stories
of atrocities in Paris brought deeper gloom to him; so
did the realization that France was now waging a war, not
of self-defence, but of conquest. His disappointment cut
deeply. He had gone so far in her support that personal
humiliation entered into his feeling of grief for the
lost cause. His emotions seemingly had led him astray.
They too were to blame in the affair with Annette Vallon.
Hence we can understand the appeal that lay in the specula-
tions of William Godwin, basing the hopes of mankind upon
the exaltation of "naked reason". In this ideal there
seemed to be a ray of hope.

Wordsworth sought to forget himself in a study
of social and moral problems, endeavouring to apply the Godwinian ideal to all human relationships. Recovery of insight was thus delayed until in his attempt to find a formal proof for everything he discovered that he could get an absolute proof for nothing. Nothing was quite above the possibility of doubt. Hence in despair he gave up the attempt to think through moral questions. Reason alone seemed inadequate to the task. Life was larger than logic. In this despair Wordsworth turned to the study of abstract science in which he could find some exercise for his mind into which human perversity could not enter to remind him of his bitterness.

His sister rescued him from his gloom. She drew him back to his own true self, to his poetic vocation, to his old sources of inspiration. She gave him hope. He saw in her what he had been before his loss of insight. Her sweet and simple nature made him realize how far he had drifted from his former harmony.

"She whispered still that brightness would return, She, in the midst of all, preserved me still A Poet"—

In winning him back to poetry she won him back to mysticism, for his poetic task was the mystic interpretation of nature. Through her "sudden admonition" and the influence of his friend Coleridge, Nature once more became a source of inspiration. He was led to repudiate the barren speculations of Godwin, recognizing once more that the emotions have a large place in the enrichment of life and in the
discernment of truth.

"Nature's self,
By all varieties of human love
Assisted, led me back through opening day
To those sweet counsels between head and heart
Whence grew that genuine knowledge, fraught with peace,
Which through the later sinkings of this cause
Hath still upheld me, and upholds me now." (Prelude 11:347-353)

During the closing months of 1795 and the first half of 1796 Wordsworth wrote The Borderers, which is the poem of his recovery. It is a psychological study upon the question, "Ought we trust the instincts of the heart"? The answer given shows Wordsworth's reaction against the doctrines of Godwin's Political Justice. The natural affections of Oswald had been congealed and his whole life embittered by the treachery of early companions. He sees in Rarmaduke, the hero, the image of what he was before he learned to mistrust the whole world—a young idealist of noble aspiration and generous impulse. The drama depicts the intrigue by which the older "disillusioned" man seeks to drag this generous youth down to his own level by betraying him into crime. In spite of the apparently incontrovertible evidence which Oswald contrives to have brought before him, Rarmaduke cannot bring himself to execute the act of "justice" upon the old blind man, Herbert. He cannot raise his hand to strike the blow—it seems tied, as with a cord.

"Behold a star twinkling above my head,
And, by the living God, I could not do it."

The intuitive feeling that the venerable old man with his open countenance and fervent prayers must be innocent is
supported by meagre external evidence, yet it has about it that strange overpowering conviction so characteristic of mystical experience. "His face turned toward me -- it put me to my prayers." Against this feeling Cawald pits his overwhelming array of external evidence, and his persuasive sophistry. Warmaduke wavers, and, in the end, compromises. We see his terrible punishment for refusing to follow the natural instincts of the heart. This same conclusion is enforced by the minor episode of the Peasant, Eldred, who might have averted the calamity of Herbert's death if he had but followed the leading of his natural impulses and sympathies. But he is inhibited by rational fears. If in attempting to rescue Herbert the old man should die in his arms his inveterate enemies would hail him before court as a murderer. Again it is "man's inhumanity to man" which has dried up the founts of natural affection.

In the twelfth and thirteenth books of the *Prelude* Wordsworth gives a full account of his loss and recovery of insight, and so describes the conditions necessary for mystic communion. His experiences have taught him that Nature can always be depended upon as a source of inspiration. Man may fail in this regard; he may even have a dispiriting effect. He always does have this effect when he fails to preserve intact the union which makes him a member of the one organic whole. The law of nature is the law of interdependence and mutuality. No part of
her organism is complete in itself. Man is not. But because of his moral autonomy he may violate nature's law, segregating himself through egoism or pride. He should learn the folly of this course from Nature, whose breezes have "subtle intercourse with breathing flowers." Then he would no longer introduce jarring discord into the otherwise perfect harmony and unity of nature. He would be restored to joy, which is nature's universal expression of her own well-being and integrity. He would be at one with himself, with his fellowmen, and with the universe. Mystic communion completes these harmonies, and the harbouring of any attitude incompatible with them prevents such communion. Hence it was that when the strife of politics cast him out of "the pale of love" they shut off his source of insight. Insight is morally conditioned.

Human virtues are contaminated by men who are out of harmony, and by their works. For the great principle of morality, like that of nature, is harmony and unity. That is good which unites, evil which divides. When the distractions and divisions of men have been too much with us we can find healing in communion with the spiritual Principle of nature, source of all unity. "In Nature still glorying, I found a counterpoise in her," says Wordsworth. She is not fortuitous, for at her heart there is a

--- "Power"

Which is the visible quality and shape
And image of right quality—that matures
Her processes by steadfast laws; gives birth
To no impatient or fallacious hopes,
No heat of passion or excessive zeal,
No vain conceits, Provokes to no quick turns
Of self-applauding intellect. (Prelude 13:31-29)
Because of her dependability and availability there is no excuse for our weakness.

"O soul of Nature:
How feeble have I been
When thou wert in thy strength:"


Another condition from mystic communion is that we should come to Nature in a teachable mood. Wordsworth tells of how he often precluded it by presumptuously setting himself up as judge of nature. He criticized scenes of nature according to the standards of the art schools, which drew his attention to mere externals such as colour and form while he was left unaware of "the moral power, the affections and the spirit of the place." So mystic sensibility was blunted by these "barren intermeddling subtleties." His sister Dorothy had escaped this error too, and she helped him overcome it. "She welcomed what was given, and craved no more." She did not judge between scene and scene in nature by the standards of art, but made nature the standard for art. She saw all of nature as the perfect garment of the Spiritual Principle. By her help Wordsworth was able to recover the attitude of his youth.

"Before I was called forth
From the retirement of my native hills,
I loved what'er I saw; nor lightly loved,
But most intensely; never dreamt of aught
More grand, more fair, more excellently framed
Than those few nooks to which my happy feet
Were limited. I had not at that time
Lived long enough, nor in the least survived
The first diviner influence of this world,
As it appears to unaccustomed eyes.
Worshipping them among the depths of things,
As piety ordained; could I submit

2. Prelude Book 12:155
To measured admiration, or to aught
That should preclude humility and love?
I felt, observed, and pondered; did not judge,
Yea, never thought of judging; with the gift
Of all this glory filled and satisfied." (Prelude 12:175-190.)

In later life Wordsworth came to recognize in explicit theory what had been the tacit assumption of his youth—that each scene and mood of nature has a beauty of its own, and may be a source of inspiration. It will become such a source unless we are too preoccupied to expose ourselves to it, or unless we harbour a mental prejudice against it. The bleak bare moor, the dark drizzley day are potentials for spiritual uplift as well as shrubbery, flowers, or sunsets. Wordsworth felt very keenly what he considered to be a Divine beauty by trite and impatient thoughts rebuke that he had precluded such uplift on a day "tempestuous, dark, and wild."

This view was an entirely new contribution to aesthetic theory and to the theory of mysticism. It was a most important one. Wordsworth recognized its importance by devoting a whole book of the Prelude to its exposition. Yet it is not widely accepted today. If it were generally understood and accepted in our Western provinces here it would mean untold spiritual enrichment for our people. It would help people to remove the prejudice against other types of beauty to remove their prejudice against that peculiar form in which the Spirit of Nature has incarnated itself on these Western prairies. Much of their beauty is unappreciated because it has been as yet insufficiently interpreted to people by writers, artists, or poets.

Prelude 12:290.
Wordsworth’s recovery of insight was complete by 1796. He now seemed to discover a new world which was worthy of being disclosed to others. It was under the sway of constant laws which made it quite dependable as a source of spiritual strength.

We must now turn back over two years in his life to an incident in which Wordsworth found a symbol for all that Nature, by giving and withholding her insight revelation, was teaching him.
Chapter 9.

THE VISION ON SNOWDON.

"I left Bethgelert's huts at couching-time, And westward took my way, to see the sun Rise from the top of Snowdon."
During the summer of 1793 Wordsworth responded to an invitation from his friend Jones to come to visit him and make a tour through his native Welsh mountains. During this tour Wordsworth had the memorable experience upon Mt. Snowdon which he describes in the fourteenth book of the Prelude. As Wordsworth with his friend and a guide climbed up the mountain-side in the dull wan light the moon came suddenly out from behind a cloud. It displayed a sea of shadowy dark peaks of the mountain ranges near. Far in the distance could be seen the Atlantic with its jagged coast line. All was silent save that from a rift near them arose a roar of innumerable streams.

"Heard over earth and sea, and, in that hour, 
For so it seemed, felt by the starry heavens." (Prelude 14: 61-62)

The sudden effulgence of glory as the moon came out flashed upon Wordsworth's mind as a symbol of the Cosmic Mind, a veritable apocalypse of Nature's inner self. To many minds, sometimes to his own, Nature seemed but a dull, dead, wan thing. She is then like Snowdon before the moon came out, a thing often of beauty, but of a beauty to which we are blind. But in moments of insight, as when the moon shone over the mountain peaks, Nature reveals a beauty to which we were blind before, and we stand in awe. In a swift flash of intuition she reveals her inwardsness.

The vision suggested the nature of the Eternal Mind. The Mind, like this majestic symbol of it, was awe-inspiring, mysterious, tremendous; diffused and
all-comprehensive like the enshrouding ocean of mist. The scene was one to lead the eye into the distance where beyond the dusky backs of the great hills, "far, far, beyond", the ocean stretched in tongues and bays and promontories. A scene of glorious distances invited the mind to travel on ever farther. It was a symbol of infinity.

"There I beheld the emblem of a mind
That feeds upon infinity, that broods
Over the dark abyss." (Prelude 14:70-73.)

The lavish beauty of which they had caught but a glimpse was an expression of the redundant power of the Mind. They, three "chance human wanderers" had happened along to behold this magnificence, but the Spirit of Nature is ever pouring forth such gifts, whether they are appreciated and received or not. The Mind can afford to be prodigal, for it is "sustained by recognitions of transcendent power" which it uses to create these ideal outward forms.

Nature loves to make one aspect of a scene dominant over the others. In the vision upon Snowdon the dominance had passed from the dim hillside to the bright illumination; from the peaks to the moon. It had then been held in turn by the mists, the ocean, the tumult of waters. This impressed upon Wordsworth one function of the Mind which through this fluctuation of dominance among its natural forms was seeking to impress first one thing and then another upon the minds of men. This mighty drama "awful and sublime" was a type of Nature's active revealing power. Through it she is able to make her impression felt even upon men who are most
insensitive.

This active power which Nature exercises is the exact parallel of man's power of creative imagination. He is not enthralled by mere sense impressions, but through creative imagination he can transcend these, making them the means by which he enters into Nature's inner sanctuary. Through imagination he can impart revelations which are akin to Nature's own; through it he can create for himself an existence like Nature's, actively appropriating it when it is created for him by Nature's "inevitable mastery." By it he holds "fit converse with the spiritual world" and with the past generations of men, transcending space-time limitations. The highest joy of which the human mind is capable is habitual recognition of its kinship with the Cosmic Mind. And this recognition supplies it with an endless task of moral accomplishment. Creative imagination is also the seat of human freedom (see page 77) and the birth-place of a high passion that may be trusted.

(see page 101 ff.)

It should be noted that this striking experience occurring during the "fall" upon Snowdon concerns us here because of the train of meditation which it called forth discloses Wordsworth's Spiritual Principle, but sees in the majestic scene a symbol of it. His thoughts about it and the wonder of creative imagination by which we apprehend it come not with the immediacy and emotion of present intuition, but in calm meditation.

1. Prelude 14: 77.

(See Prelude 19: 65)
Chapter 19.

THE POEMS OF SEVENTEEN NINETY-EIGHT.

"Think you, 'mid all this mighty sum
Of things for ever speaking,
That nothing of itself will come,
But we must still be seeking?" Expostulation and Reply.
In 1798 Wordsworth wrote a group of beautiful lyrics which are most important for a right understanding of his spiritual growth. They show how complete was his recovery by this time, and bring out most clearly his wholly consciousness that his recovery was not, through any effort of his own, but by Nature's initiative. The key to them is found in this reply of William when charged with lack of industry in gleaning knowledge from books:

"The eye—-it cannot choose but see:
We cannot bid the ear be still;
Our bodies feel, where'er they be,
Against or with our will.

No less I deem that there are Powers
Which of themselves our minds impress;
That we can feed this mind of ours
In a wise passiveness.

Think you, 'mid all this mighty sum
Of things for ever speaking,
That nothing of itself will come,
But we must still be seeking?" (Expostulation and Reply.)

In Tables Turned Wordsworth repeats the same thought of the mystic's exaltation as being a response to Nature's active powers; in the same way he here exalts the cognitive value of the nature mystic's experience, contrasting the teaching of Nature to that of the products of the "muddling intellect".

"Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife:
Come hear the woodland linnet,
How sweet his music! on my life,
There's more of wisdom in it.

One impulse from the vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can." (The Tables Turned.)
He points out the mistake of seeking to explore nature solely by the method of analysis and abstraction, contending for the mystic appreciation of experience in its wholeness which comes to a heart "that watches and receives."

To My Sister is a plea for this same receptive mood of "idleness" as it is here called. We are pensioners upon Nature's bounty.

And from the blessed power that rolls about, below, above, We'll frame the measure of our souls: They shall be tuned to love.

Love, the spirit of unity which overcomes difference, is the spirit of nature, and by it man attunes himself to the universe of which he is a part.

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

Nature's initiative is also proclaimed in Lines Written In Early Spring, the last of this group, but here the emphasis is rather upon the joyousness of Nature from which man has alienated himself through his denial of her spirit of love. Each motion of the playful birds seems to Wordsworth a thrill of pleasure; he believes that every flower enjoys the air it breathes. Man only has wilfully excommunicated himself from the universal spirit of joyous love, and has contaminated his fellowman.

In 1798 Wordsworth also wrote Tintern Abby, of which we have already examined a part. (See page 20.) In this poem he anticipates much that he later enlarged
upon in the Prelude concerning the development of his mystical consciousness. The theme of the poem is the same as that of the twelfth and thirteenth books of the Prelude, namely, the dependability of Nature as a source of inspiration, and her power to counteract irritations received from unwholesome human contacts. This is a poem of Wordsworth’s recovery in which he says directly what had been expressed in dramatic form in the Borderers:

"Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy: for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings." (Tintern Abby.)

We have seen what an important place memory played in the development of Wordsworth’s spiritual strength. (See Page 58.) In the twelfth book of the Prelude he tells us of how memories of former intuitions and feelings associated with definite places helped him as he visited these places to regain his former strength.

"So feeling comes in aid
Of feeling, and diversity of strength
Attends us, if but once we have been strong." (Prelude 12:27)

So in Tintern Abby. The opening sections of the poem deal with the great blessing that memory images of the banks of the Wye have been to the poet since last he visited them, five years before, previous to his “fall”. His enjoyment of these memory scenes has been upon different mental
mental tones which form a gradation ascending to the mystical. At times it has seemed merely physical, "felt in the blood." At times it has become predominantly emotional, "felt along the heart." At times it has become mentally and morally curative after fatiguing and dis-harmonizing concourse with men, "passing into my purer mind with tranquil restoration." From this it has passed into the fully mystical.

-- 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."

Just as these memory images have been enjoyed at different levels of consciousness, each new level presupposing the lower one out of which it has emerged, so all the forms of nature have been appreciated by Wordsworth at different levels as his spiritual life has grown. He reviews these briefly. First there were the "coarser pleasures of my boyish days with their glad animal movements," There was then the period of "thoughtless youth" when the love of Nature's forms became a haunting passion beyond expression,

"An appetite, a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye."

This was the period of inarticulate mysticism which Wordsworth experienced when he was ten years of age, when he
"held unconscious intercourse with beauty." (Prelude 1:562)

(See page 57.) (also page 72)

With this period Wordsworth contrasts his mature mystical experience. While it lacks something of the "dizzy raptures" and "aching joys" of boyhood ecstacies, it is not uninformed by thought. Rather it is made the basis for a balanced philosophy of life, a spiritual interpretation of the universe in which the "still sad music of humanity" mingles with Nature's sublime harmony. This new strain has had a stressful entry, but one in which Wordsworth's spirit has been matured, chastened, and subdued. Now in the maturity of his development, he describes his awareness of the Object of mystic consciousness in the noble, restrained diction of the familiar quotation:

"I have felt
A presence which disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man: (Tintern Abbey.)

As in the former years he finds in the appreciation of that Presence

"The anchor of my purest thought,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being." (Tintern Abbey)
Chapter 11. From 1799 till 1807.

(a) Mystical production.

If thou indeed derive thy light from Heaven,
Then, to the measure of that heaven-born light,
Shine Poet! in thy place, and be content:—

(b) Loss of insight.

'Tis a thing impossible to frame
Conceptions equal to the soul's desires;
And the most difficult of tasks to keep
Heights which the soul is competent to gain.

The hiding places of man's power
Open: I would approach them, but 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,
Substance and life to what I feel. (Prelude 12:279-285.)
The year 1799 brought forth several fine poems from Wordsworth’s pen descriptive of his mystical experiences. We have already discussed two of these, as they were later included in the Prelude, which was begun this year. One of these, sometimes called, "The Influence of Natural Objects" and beginning, "Wisdom and Spirit of the universe" is found in the first book of the larger work. (Prelude 1:401-463. See page 47 ff.) The other describes Simplon Pass and its effect upon the poet’s mind. (Prelude 6: 621-640. See page 84.)

In A Poet’s Epitaph Wordsworth ridicules the intellectual pride which makes mystic insight impossible. He invites to the grave only the peasant, who has wholly escaped its contamination, and hence has received "impulses of deeper birth" along with the "outward shows of earth and sky".

This year Three Years She Grow in Sun and Shower, already alluded to (see pages 38 and 44), was also written.

The most mystical short poem of 1800 is Hart-Leap. It is mystical because of Well, it being so by the feeling brought out in its second part, that the Divinity at the heart of Nature is offended by the cruel fate of the hunted stag.

The being, that is in the clouds and air, that is in the green leaves among the groves, maintains a deep and reverential care for the unoffending creatures whom he loves. (Hart Lept Well)

The years 1801 and 1802 were mainly occupied with the writing of The Excursion, a narrative and philosophical poem, originally planned as part of an extensive poetical

work, The Recluse, which was never completed.

The Excursion contains much mystic philosophy and some passages which reflect mystic experience at the time of writing. It repeats and elaborates mystical views which we have found in the Prelude. Wordsworth puts his own thought and experience into the mouths of the various participants in the reflective discussion which forms the body of the poem. The Solitary represents himself as he was when estranged from Nature and man. The Wanderer represents his mystical self. The Wanderer is depicted as of a contemplative type, one who dwelt an unheralded life amid sequestered ways, yet one not without distinction among the few who knew him because his mind was filled with "inward light". Some passages in which Wordsworth describes the spiritual development of the Wanderer closely parallel ones in the Prelude where he tells of his own growth. There is the same sense of a Presence felt in the solitude of nature as the stars come out and descending darkness makes the hills seem larger than before. There is the same clearly felt communion with Nature, the same sense of terror, the same prominence of intensely vivid memory images, which there is the same acute sensitiveness to the varying seasonal moods of nature. Like Wordsworth, even in Nature's waste and naked scenes the Wanderer traced an ebbing and a flowing mind, expression ever varying." Like Wordsworth his imagination, organ of insight, was nourished by the reading of romantic literature. Like him his spirit would in
silent ecstasy "drink ..." the spectacle of the sun rising
to bathe the world in its light and tint the clouded heavens
Like him he read upon such a scene the message of "utter-
able love."

In such high hour
Of visitation from the living God
No thanks he breathed, he proffered now request;
Rapt into still communion that transcends
The imperfect offices of prayer and praise." (Wanderer 1:212)

Sensation, soul, and form,
All melted into him; they swallowed up
His animal being; in them did he live
And by them did he live; they were his life.

His mystic intimations came to him with the same character-
istic intuitive certainty. "He did not believe, he saw." 3

He too was overpowered

By Nature; by the turbulence subdued
Of his own mind: by mystery and hope
And the first virgin passion of a soul
Communing with the glorious universe. (Excursion Ek.1:283-287)

He too felt the same equipose between fear and love in
Nature's appeal. He holds the same theory of infancy
being the time of completer communion with spiritual powers.
So we might go on.

Throughout the long section of the Excursion on
"Despondency Corrected" (Fourth book) the Wanderer plies
the Solitary with arguments of mystic philosophy, seeking
to win this "disillusioned" person back to harmony with
Nature, from whom he has been alienated by domestic sorrows
and political reverses. The arguments used are consider-
ations which have aided Wordsworth in his recovery. These
may be briefly listed: (1) The contagious impulse from

(1) Excursion 1:205  (2) Excursion 1:206  (3) Excursion 1:232)
Nature herself.

---"Be mute who will, who can
Yet will I praise thee with impassioned voice:
My lips, that may forget thee in the crowd,
Cannot forget thee here.

(Excursion 4:38-42)

(2) The memory of former visions.

"Still may it be allowed me to remember,
What visionary powers of eye and soul
In youth were mine."

(Excursion 4:110-113)

(3) Bodily exertion amid natural surroundings that will
expel mental apathy, more to be feared even than superstition.

(4) The sanity and strength of the simple life, where only
Nature's wants are felt, and her forms stimulate imagination.

(5) Preserving the attitude of love that we may enjoy
communion with Nature, "the glorious habit by which sense
is made subservient still to moral purposes, auxiliar to
divine."

(Excursion 4:1249)

In the opening paragraph of the ninth book of
the Excursion Wordsworth puts into the mouth of the
Wanderer a most precise statement of the transcendent and
unifying nature of the Spiritual Principle which intuition
reveals:

To every Form of being is assigned
An active Principle:— how' 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.
What' er exists has properties which spread
Beyond itself, communicating good,
A simple blessing, or with evil mixed;
Spirit which knows no insulated spot,
No chasm, no solitude; from link to link
It circulates, the Soul of all the worlds.

(Excursion 4:11-10)
It will be noticed how closely this description follows the one found in *Tintern Abbey*. Our reading of the *Excursion*, though interesting, adds little to our knowledge of Wordsworth's mysticism after we have studied *Tintern Abbey* and the *Prelude*.

In *To The Cuckoo*, written in 1802 Wordsworth expresses his reverent regard for the cuckoo, which was to him a symbol and suggestion of the spiritual nature of the universe. He blesses the bird, not for bringing a present vision, but for acting as a reminder to him of former visionary hours. This consciousness that the greatest of his mystical experiences lay in the past quickly grew upon him. That same year he wrote *My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold a Rainbow in the Sky*. This exquisite lyric gives expression to a hope that mystic exaltation such as he has known in youth might remain a constant factor throughout his life, binding his days together in a unity of spiritual experience. Yet it is hardly a hope—he says "I could wish"—he hardly dares hope because he already feels some of the power of his mystic communion slipping from him.

This is still more clearly seen in the first four verses of *Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood* which were written during the spring of this year (1802). These verses are direct and trustworthy evidence that Wordsworth was now quite conscious of a decline in the vividness and frequency of his visionary
experiences.

As we look back upon our childhood the scenes that memory presents to us are liable to be coloured by a rosy romantic hue. Memory's trick of ever selecting the pleasant paints our recollections with a glamour which the original experience did not share. This would be especially true of Wordsworth because he derived so much pleasure from dwelling upon vivid memory scenes. By the law of association the recall of these scenes would be attended by an increasing pleasure. This factor no doubt played a part in Wordsworth's mind as he compared his present experiences with the ones he conjured up in memory. Yet when we have allowed this consideration due weight, the fact remains that Wordsworth knew his mind better than we know it, and that he here offers us explicit and truly scientific testimony. His witness is: "There has passed away a glory from the earth: the things which I have seen I now can see no more." Both the tree and field speak to him of something that is gone. "Whither is fled the visionary gleam Where is it now, the glory and the dream?"

In the year 1805 the death of his brother John at sea brought a sudden and deep bereavement to Wordsworth. After the first overwhelming period of grief, he threw himself into his work in which he found relief. He now completed the Prelude at which he had been working since 1798. Yet this grief left its mark upon his spiritual life. Henceforth he was less radiantly cheerful, more subdued. He resolved to reconcile himself with fortitude to the fact
of his failing insight, and follow the ideal of duty more closely than before. This change is marked by the writing of three poems, Elegiac Stanzas Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle in a Storm, Ode to Duty, and The Happy Warrior. In the second of these he turns from sole dependence upon "the genial sense of youth" and "light of love." These instincts of the heart he has trusted "too blindly." He must now supplement them with the security of the moral law, about which the happy warrior has built his life.

The Elegiac Stanzas show us the poet growing more subdued. In them he tells us that if before his grief he had been painting the castle he would have sought to add "the gleam, the light that never was on sea or land." But not so now.

"So once it would have been—tis now no more; I have submitted to a new control; A Power is gone which nothing can restore; A deep distress has humanized my soul." (Elegiac Stanzas.)

He bids farewell to the isolated exuberant enjoyment of Nature which he had experienced in youth. No more will he know "the heart that lives alone, housed in a dream, at distance from the Kind": he welcomes "fortitude and patient cheer." Little remains now of youths visionary gleam, yet fortitude remains. Little ecstasy, only patient cheer. (Please note the last quotation on the title-page of this chapter. It was written in May, 1905.)

Not all at once did the light go out. In Brook Whose Society the Poet Seeks, written in 1806, Wordsworth again reverts to the fact that in such a natural object as a brook we may find a more dependable incarnation of the Spiritual Principle than in human nature:

It seems the Eternal Soul is clothed in thee In purer robes than those of flesh and blood."

That same year he made a moving protest against the distract-
ions by which we blunt our sensitiveness to Nature's intuitions in the sonnet The World is too Much With Us.

Yet neither of these pieces show clear evidence of present mystical experience. And by 1806 the experience of failing vision had become so taken for granted that Wordsworth had formed a theory about it. This theory is advanced in the second section of the Intimations of Immortality, written this year. It is quite unanticipated in the earlier section. Wordsworth has by this time discovered the suitability to his experience of Plato's theory of pre-existence and of the survival of faint memories of some former state. Visions fade as we grow older because we grow away from the spiritual world from which we have sprung.

"Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison house begin to close
Around the growing boy,
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy:
The Youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day." (Ode: Intimations-)

Not only had Wordsworth theorized upon his failing powers, but he now seeks consolation for their loss. He finds an incomplete compensation in the fact that the memories of what has been yet serve him.

"O joy! that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive!

Herejoices now in the memory of things which seemed very strange to him at the time,—doubts about the reality of the external world, experiences by which Nature moved him to perplexity or fear. Even such experiences as these have disclosed "truths that wake to perish never". Though they be mere recollections they Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
Are yet a master light of all our seeing." And with the memory of these precious experiences there have survived sympathy, faith, and the contemplative mind, gifts which have flowed from them. In his heart he still feels the might and moving power of Nature. Even yet "the meanest flower that blows can give thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears." Hence he resolves to in the gladness of the May rejoice, with all the heart-free children of Nature. He will do so by recalling

---truths that wake,
To perish never;
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,
Nor Man, nor Boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy."

After 1806 there is no record of any further mystical experiences until in 1818 a remarkable recrudescence occurred which resulted in the poem, "Composed on an Evening of Extraordinary Splendour." The poet is transported by the exquisite clearness, tranquility, and beamy radiance of the evening. The resulting vision has all the vividness and depth of feeling of his old visitations.
Thine is the tranquil hour, purpureal Eve!
But long as god-like wish, or hope divine,
Informs my spirit, never can I believe
That this magnificence is wholly thine:
---From worlds not quickened with the sun
A portion of this gift is won;
An intermingling of Heaven's pomp is spread
On ground which British shepherds tread!

Wordsworth asks himself why, after all these years
in which the visionary power has been a closed book to
him, this "glimpse of glory" is suddenly disclosed? He
cannot answer, but is deeply grateful for it, and registers
a vow strangely like the one made on that morning forever
memorable during the summer of 1788:

Dread Power! whom peace and calmness serve
No less than Nature's threatening voice,
If aught unworthy be my choice,
From Thee if I would swerve;
Oh, let thy grace remind me of the light
Full early lost, and fruitlessly deplored;
Which, at this moment, on my waking sight
Appeared to shine, by miracle restored;
My soul, though yet confined to earth,
Rejoices in a second birth:

This was the last great vision which Wordsworth
enjoyed. Lesser glimpses came, but none of them he
recognized as the "visionary gleam" of his youth, now
lost and "fruitlessly deplored."

It was but natural that he should
grieve the passing of the insight he had
prized so highly, but it did not fade
away before he had made an invaluable
contribution to the thought and beauty of
the world.
The place assigned to Wordsworth by Whitehead is that of one who made an effective protest on behalf of human values at a time in history when these were being which was disparaged by a triumphant world-view dominated by abstract and mechanical categories of thought. This estimate is true as far as it goes. Yet we must not assume that the significance of Wordsworth's work was confined to his own time: rather it is a heritage for each new generation. He is and will always be through his works a realistic witness to the spiritual aspect of man and of nature.

He has earned for himself a permanent place as one great spirit in that long succession of prophets who have interpreted to man the world about him and his own mysterious life, finding in each a Divine meaning and purpose. He has earned this place not alone because of his intrepid exploring in the realm of the spirit, but because he has recorded his findings in such simple, precise, and guarded terms.

Carlyle has declared that the mystery of the Infinite is one which "through all the ages, we shall only read here a line of, there another line of." Wordsworth has placed us all in his debt by providing another such line, not by the way of cold abstract speculation, but by the mystic way, the way of impassioned personal experience of life in its concreteness, with quiet reflection upon what the heart has felt and known in its moments of intuition.
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A. Works by Wordsworth.


B. Works about Wordsworth.


C. Works on Mysticism.

C. Works on Mysticism (continued)


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