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The Quest in Lao Tzu and William Wordsworth for Original Creative Power

Yue Xing

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THE QUEST IN LAO TZU AND WILLIAM WORDSWORTH FOR

ORIGINAL CREATIVE POWER
(TITLE)

BY

YUE XING

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
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ABSTRACT

My thesis focuses on a comparative study of Lao Tzu and Wordsworth concerning their quest for original creative power. Lao Tzu advocates Tao and reveals it as a way to eternity. Wordsworth calls for a return to nature and intends to create ever-lasting poetry. Despite their entirely different cultural backgrounds and a time span of more than two thousand years between them, both figures adopt a similar way of reversion whose key lies in the effort to move away from artificial human learning.

Submissiveness embodies the whole application of Lao Tzu's philosophy in the human world. It forms a contrast to the mundane idea of strength and power. Through submissiveness, human beings can gain authentic power and strength while artificial human maneuver only helps to achieve superficial ornaments.

A dedication to "lowly" people and their "lowly" language reveals Wordsworth's grief over artificial poetic creation and shows his resort to the animating principle for poetic revival. Like Lao Tzu, the poet uses the infant figure as an ideal model for the reversion process and points out that "The Child is father of the Man."

Lao Tzu and Wordsworth approach different issues of their individual eras, but both of them regard artificial human learning as the origin for either social or cultural problems. Their reversion is a return to the right recognition of the relationship between being and non-being and urges a quest for original creative power and its application in the poetic process.
I would like to acknowledge Dr. Michael Loudon as my thesis director for his enthusiastic encouragement and dedicated academic guidance throughout the development of this project. His insight into the possibility for a comparison between Lao Tzu and Wordsworth initiated this study and contributed greatly to the generation of ideas. His warm supply of six translations of Tao Te Ching gave me a wide range of choices and made it possible for the completion of the thesis.

I also wish to express my gratitude to my two readers, Dr. Robert Barford and Dr. John Martone. Their responses helped me relate the ideas of this critical investigation to a broader historical background of Western literature.
CONENTS

abstract ................................................................. i
acknowledgement ..................................................... ii
contents ............................................................... iii

Preface ................................................................. 1
Overview ............................................................... 10
Abandoning Artificial Learning Means Taking No Action--A Measure Of
    Reversion .......................................................... 20
Understanding The Benefits Of Taking No Action Through The Symbols Of
    Water And The Infant To Reveal Reversion As The Way To Eternity..... 40
Man's "Shadowy Recollections" Encourage A Return To Creative Energy
    Through The Archetype Of The Old Man ......................... 66
Theoretical Conclusions Of The Four Stages Of Creation ............... 75

Notes ........................................................................ 79
Works Cited ................................................................ 83
Different cultures produce different, distinctive literary and philosophic masters. William Wordsworth is a great poet, nurtured in the specific cultural soil of his native England. His poetic lines and rhythms are brimming over with his love for his country and his people. Lao Tzu is a great philosopher in Chinese history. Although his recorded philosophic teachings are just a little more than 5,000 Chinese characters, few men have ever exerted such an influence on the people and their thinking for more than two thousand years in China. Wordsworth is a well-known literary master in the world because creative qualities in his poetry are so universal that they reach the heart of a reader from a totally different cultural background. Lao Tzu is famous for his thinking which had a local origin but possessed a universal creative power. Both Lao Tzu and Wordsworth are not so limited by their regional experiences that they become blind to what is common to human beings as a whole and to the entire natural world. It may seem to be far-fetched to compare these two figures, because they belong to totally different cultural backgrounds and there is a span of more than two thousand years between them. Wordsworth lives in a period when England is on the brink of intense capitalist
development, while Lao Tzu belongs to the era when Chinese feudalism is just coming into being. So far, there is no historical record to show that William Wordsworth is even faintly influenced by Taoist ideology.

Both literature and philosophy represent the creation and expression of culture. Cultural differences, however, can be either essential or superficial. In the case of William Wordsworth and Lao Tzu, their differences are superficial, because both Lao Tzu's Taoist ideology and William Wordsworth's call for a return to the creative ground of nature are essentially similar to each other. Sometimes one cannot distinguish between one excerpt from *Tao Te Ching* and an excerpt of Wordsworth's poetry, because they both employ about the same terms to express the same ideas. Such cultural similarities are so unique that one can reasonably put the two figures together and attempt an approach to Wordsworth's poetry from the Taoist perspective. Both Lao Tzu and Wordsworth are not only similar in their ideas about man and the universe, but also experience a similar process in the formation of such ideas. One can have a better understanding of both men with a little background about their eras and their reactions to those eras.

Wing-Tsit Chan is a scholar on Chinese philosophy. In his book *The Way Of Lao Tzu*, he provides deep insight into the origin of Taoism:
Unlike ancient Greek speculation on Nature or ancient Indian contemplation on the spirit, Chinese philosophies, whether Confucianism or Taoism, grew as a result of deplorable conditions of the time. Thus Taoism arose in opposition to existing practices and systems, on the one hand, and on the other, offered a new way of life that is as challenging as it is profound (4).

Taoism is first of all a reaction against the turmoil of feudal transition in society in which Lao Tzu lived. His reaction is constructive in the sense that Lao Tzu wants to rebuild a society according to his new philosophy. As the curator of the imperial library, Lao Tzu holds close ties with the top rulers of the East Chou Dynasty (770 B.C. - 256 B.C.) in China and has the opportunity to understand significant problems in his society. Lao Tzu's era witnesses the decline of the Chou house and the rising of independent states. Such independent states are engaged in a seemingly everlasting war against each other and people are suffering immensely. Traditional moral standards and ritual ceremonies provide no solution to such problems. Lao Tzu's personal reaction is to resign his imperial position; however, during his departure, when he comes to a pass, the commander of the pass begs him to stay and to write down his thoughts. In Lao Tzu's accommodation of the commander's request, the Tao Te Ching and the Taoist ideology are born.¹

William Wordsworth is a gifted poet, but his talent only
accounts partially for his success as a poet. His poetry enjoys such a world-wide reputation mainly because the poet creates in reaction against the Neoclassical tendencies of formalism and abstraction in poetic creation which had almost suffocated the sense of poetry as the expression of a living organism. Although William Wordsworth makes no direct attacks on the poetry of his time, one can find evidence of his dissatisfaction in the "Preface" to the *Lyrical Ballads*. He avoids personifications of abstract ideas and ornate poetic diction. His main objective is creating a poetry that is accessible to the people.

The principal object then which I proposed to myself in these poems was to make the incidents of common life interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature—chiefly as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement. Low and rustic life was generally chosen because in that situation the essential passions of the heart find a better sort in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that situation our elementary feelings exist in a state of greater simplicity and consequently may be more accurately contemplated and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings; and from the necessary character of
rural occupations are more easily comprehended; and are more durable; and lastly, because in that situation the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature (245).

This statement of his project embodies a subtle attack on the artificiality in poetry immediately prior to and dominant at the onset of Wordsworth's era. This passage indicates that Wordsworth believes most poems are indifferent and inattentive to the experiences of common life: human feelings are restrained, the language is too refined to reach people and men are alienated from the process of nature. On the one hand, such superficiality in poetry removes the poet from the high esteem enjoyed by only a few of his predecessors, because he cannot be original if he were to write only by mimetic elaboration of his predecessors. Artificial poets are not inspired by direct contact with the object under description. They only borrow terms and concepts from their predecessors (some of whom are original in creation) in order to decorate the object without infusing into it their own authentic emotions. Actually, they take borrowed emotions as their own and are thus alienated from the natural world. On the other hand, if the poet no longer keeps active attention and engagement with the surrounding world, he loses the ability to reach people. Therefore, in order to make what he composes a more authentic poetry than much of that which precedes his own, he has to emphasize other poetic attributes that
privilege an authentic, creative ground for his poetry. In order to restore poetry to its original, spiritual function of inspiration and contemplation, William Wordsworth attempts to reverse the artificial tendencies and to return poetry to its origins among the living as they come to terms with the living world.

Chapter 40 of *Tao Te Ching* clearly states the essence of *Tao* and the relationship between creator (道) and created (万物). In the mundane world, the masculine aspect is emphasized, because it is regarded as a power to push objects and events forward. Its function is embodied in strength (強). As strength becomes the focal point, much effort is devoted to the building of this strength. Because people are not clear about the relationship between creator and created and have lost sight of the origin for authentic strength, they can only attempt to increase that strength through human manipulations. Therefore, one is likely to witness more and more human artificiality in the attempt to impose a creative order. In Lao Tzu's time, society is in chaos and human relationships become fragile and difficult to maintain. In order to restore social order, there comes into being more laws, more complicated ceremonies and more moral standards. Despite such efforts, society goes on deteriorating. During the latter decades of the 18th century, poetry in England is in a similar dilemma. More and more effort is dedicated to the perfection of formalistic poetics and fixed rhythms so
that poems will look and read like poems (i.e., those of the
tradition). But something—the immediacy of creative power—is
definitely missing. What such poems lose is the animating
good
poems bear not only significant thematic and didactic
abstractions, but also sufficient emotional appeals. They
should be able to reach the inner faculties of every
individual being. Because such poets have lost sight of the
original animating power, they go all out to perfect their
ornate diction and their formal rhythms to recover that
animating power. Therefore, the harder they try, the further
away they move from the origin of creation.

Reversion is the action of Tao.

Weakness is the function of Tao.

All things in the world come from being.

And being comes from non-being. (Lao Tzu 173)

We see such "reversion" in both Lao Tzu and Wordsworth.
However, in Chan's translation, "weakness" (柔弱) becomes
the function of Tao, which is not a proper expression of Lao
Tzu's idea. Submissiveness is a much better word for the
idea. What Lao Tzu aims to achieve is to create a better
society. His goal is real strength obtained through apparent
weakness, that is, submissiveness. So far as their goals for
a better society are concerned, there is no basic difference
between Lao Tzu and other people. Lao Tzu is unique only in
his way to achieve the goal.
While Wordsworth aims at creating great poetry, other poets such as Pope and Dryden also strive to compose according to their own idea of greatness. However, their concepts of real creation are different. Although there is no clear record of their cognition of the relationship between being and non-being, Wordsworth and other poets cannot but either obey or violate this fundamental natural law of reversion to non-being. For these Neoclassical poets (those given to the pursuit of the artificial which is masked as creative), they try to build poetic greatness out of being, instead of from non-being. They polish poetic diction and codify rhythm, but diction and rhythm belong to the sphere of being: their poetic creation is indirect from the very beginning. Such second-hand creation can certainly improve poetic skills to a very high degree. Whether they can achieve greatness or not is in question. Wordsworth reverses this conception of poetic creation and tries to reach something universal to the essence in all beings. This something universal belongs to non-being, which is creative and unifies all beings. Wordsworth returns to nature not just for the sake of enjoyment. He finds authentic strength in the natural world that can express that essential creative power to human beings. His love of nature leads to his love of mankind, because human beings in their natural state are in harmony among themselves and with other natural beings. From the mundane perspective, Wordsworth's return to nature suggests submissiveness, because it is
retreat from human competition through artificiality. Whatever terms Wordsworth employs to describe this universality such as love and a living Soul, this something belongs to the sphere of non-being, because it can be felt in a certain mental state but remains invisible just like Tao. Therefore, what Wordsworth produces is being out of non-being instead of being built upon other beings.\(^2\) When we approach the problem of poetic creation from the perspective of being and non-being, it becomes obvious why Wordsworth is an authentic creative poet and why his poetry enjoys its world-wide reputation.

"Reversion is the action of Tao" does not mean that Tao reverses everything. Tao only reverses what violates its principle. In the mundane world, too many human aspirations and desires have suppressed Tao. Therefore, in practice, Tao seems to reverse the objects and events in the mundane world. Such reversion is creative in essence, because it comes to the root of authentic creation, which is non-being. The degree to which Wordsworth and Lao Tzu follow the same pattern of reversion is an interesting cultural phenomenon. This comparison of their reversion processes will help one approach William Wordsworth's poetry from the Taoist perspective, as there is no basic difference between Wordsworth and Lao Tzu in their respective efforts to locate and point out the unifying, creative power in the universe.
OVERVIEW

The general design of the thesis is to reveal a process in which man moves back to his natural state and embrace the creative energy. The entire process involves a return to what human beings should be, which is defined as reversion; the actual measures to be taken in the reversion, which is reflected in the efforts to remove artificial human learning; the existent symbols that show the benefits of the reversion; and the final ideal state to arrive at. In order to understand the significance of reversion, one must know what implications are embodied in the reversion and some important concepts associated with it.

According to the Taoist idea of the human world, man is born with closest ties to Tao. Tao is a creative energy that exists everywhere in the universe. Tao is invisible and belongs to the sphere of non-being. As Tao is the creator, it always exists in the created. Its existence in the created is called Te (virtue). Therefore, there is no basic difference between Tao and Te. Te is Tao as reflected in the created. This relationship lays the foundation for a human being to embrace Tao, because Tao is within himself as well as in every being around him. The relationship between Tao and Te constitutes the unity between One and many. When each being
embraces Tao, he becomes unified with other beings as One.

As Te is Tao's existence in the created, Tao gives birth to Te. The nature of Te is reflected in its containment of two forces—Ying and Yang. Ying is the feminine aspect of a being, and Yang is the masculine aspect of a being. The two forces work together to produce heaven, earth and man, and further produce the myriad things in the world. Ying and Yang exist in contrast to each other. One can approach them from the perspective of a human family. The unity of a family depends on the existence of a mother (Ying) and a father (Yang). The absence of a father or a mother turns the family into an anomaly. In a natural state, the forces of Ying and Yang are in balance and a being remains unified with Tao. But human beings favor the masculine as embodied in strength, power, decoration and control, which can be called artificial learning. Such emphasis on the masculine disturbs the balance between Ying and Yang, and produces many problems.

Once the balance is disturbed, Te (or Tao in individual beings) is submerged, because Te, Ying and Yang in balance, is no longer obvious. Human beings are thus alienated from the original unity with Tao, which is the origin for all misery and problems in the human world. The solution to such misery and problems lies in a return to the balance between Ying and Yang. The return contains a double meaning. On the one hand, the return means going back to the ideal harmony between humanity and its creator Tao. On the other hand, it means to
reverse, or go against, human emphasis on the masculine strength with the pursuit of artificial learning as its concentrated reflection. Therefore, reversion consists of an ideal goal to arrive at and specific measures to take.

As a species in its infancy, humanity is innocent and ignorant of artificiality. Human beings are in harmony with nature and among themselves. But human beings are different from other beings in the fact that man has a mind that thinks. Such mental capacity gives birth to desires that lead man astray. The human desire to possess, for example, is different from that of other living beings in that other beings only want the amount that satisfies their needs, whereas man demands much more than his personal need requires. In this way, social problems arise with one group of people exploiting other groups of people. Exploitation and excessive possession are artificial human learning, because they alienate humanity from the natural world and make them essentially different from other living beings. In order to eliminate social problems out of exploitation and excessive possession, humanity should return to its initial stage of innocence and ignorance by giving up exploitation and excessive possession. Reversion embodies two important aspects as illustrated in the above example. One aspect is the measure to take--giving up exploitation and excessive possession. The other aspect is the goal to achieve--the initial stage of human innocence and ignorance where man is
unified with Tao.

Giving up exploitation and excessive possession means taking no action. Taking no action (Wu Wei) exists in contrast to taking action (You Wei). Man favors taking action, because taking action emphasizes human strength to grasp, possess and defeat other human beings. Iraq took action to occupy Kuwait, because it wanted to control its oil and therefore control other countries. Iraq's action provoked further action from other countries. Taking action creates social problems and initiates hostility. If Iraq had not taken action against Kuwait, a war could have been avoided. The example illustrates the different results from taking action and taking no action. Taking no action is normally understood as being submissive, passive and weak. Such interpretation of the term aims at forming a contrast to the mundane preference for strength. Taking action, however, provokes war and hostility, while taking no action can avoid war and hostility. Submissiveness, passiveness and weakness are terms that explain taking no action from the mundane perspective. The Taoist uses such terms because ordinary people regard taking no action as submissive, passive and weak. However, the Taoist use of such terms aims at revealing taking no action as the origin for authentic strength, because taking no action keeps peace while taking action provokes hostility and war.

In order to persuade people that taking no action is
functionally beneficial, there should be examples to prove it. In the natural world, water is an ideal symbol that reflects the relationship between taking no action (being submissive) and its function. Water flows to lowly places which ordinary people do not like; water follows the shape of its container; water will flow if there is a channel or an opening, but it will stop when a powerful dam blocks its way. Water is submissive as it obeys the will of "others." Water, however, can submerge mountains and hills. Constant dripping water can produce holes in hard stones. A pool of calm water can faithfully reflect objects above. Water takes no action of its own, but its function is powerful.

An infant is an ideal symbol in the human world that reflects the relationship between taking no action (being submissive) and its function. An infant is submissive and has no will of his own. He is only urged by his natural instinct to suck milk when he is hungry, to cry when he feels uncomfortable and to sleep when he is tired. The state of infancy is beneficial from two perspectives. Physically, an infant looks weak because he cannot do anything by himself to satisfy his need. He is not able to cook or to buy food when he is hungry. Nor is he able to express his demand in language. An infant, however, cries for a long time without making his voice hoarse. His hands can hold firm although his bones and tendons are weak. An infant only appears to be weak, but he possesses authentic strength. Spiritually, an
infant is ignorant of human misery and horror. He does not know war, murder and disaster. Therefore, he is immune to spiritual injuries. In an earthquake, a buried adult without physical harm may die, because his feelings are dominated by misery and horror. An infant in a similar condition, however, may survive, because he knows no misery and horror. An infant is submissive, but functionally powerful.

The body of this thesis is divided into four sections, developing along the line of abandoning artificiality as the necessary measure for reversion, considering symbols that illustrate the benefits of taking no action, defining the authentic creativity to be regained, and speculating toward a theoretical conclusion of the process of creation. Section I, "Abandoning Artificial Learning Means Taking No Action-A Measure Of Reversion," briefly discusses the similarity between the Taoist reversion and the Neoplatonic reversion. The discussion reveals the philosophical background for a comparison between Lao Tzu and Wordsworth. From the Taoist perspective, man holds close ties with nature and embraces Tao in his initial stages as a living being. But he is gradually alienated from nature and Tao because of his increasing artificial learning, which produces social problems. Therefore, humanity must abandon artificial learning so as to return to the original harmony with nature and to embrace Tao. The whole process of alienation from and return to the
creative energy Tao forms a circle similar to the Neoplatonic world scheme. From the Neoplatonic perspective, man comes from the One which is identified as Unity and Good. As man is further alienated from the One, evil appears. Evil, however, will be eliminated when man returns to his original unity with the One. The idea of alienation and return existed in Western philosophy long before Wordsworth's era of Romanticism, and the poet's recognition of the world is obviously under its influence.

This section further discusses in great detail Lao Tzu and Wordsworth's attitude toward human learning. Both Lao Tzu and Wordsworth consider artificial learning as a major obstacle that alienates man from the original creative energy. In order to return to Tao (Lao Tzu's term of the original creative energy) or the living Soul (Wordsworth's term of the original creative energy), man must abandon artificial learning. Humanity should reduce its activity to the degree of taking no action which is identified as submissiveness or weakness in Lao Tzu's term, or as passiveness in Wordsworth's term. Being submissive or passive means giving up human desires and ornaments. Contrary to the mundane consideration, however, taking no action (being submissive, being passive) is regarded as positive, because the result of taking no action is that everything will be done. For Lao Tzu, if humanity abandons artificiality, society will be in good order and man will embrace Tao. For Wordsworth, if books are abandoned, the
"wise passiveness" will recover the poet's communication with nature and the living Soul, and the return to authentic creativity. Reversion can be understood both as a process to reverse the mundane consideration of taking action as strength and as a measure to complete humanity's reunion with Tao or the living Soul.

Section II, "Understanding The Benefits Of Taking No Action Through The Symbols Of Water And The Infant To Reveal Reversion As The Way To Eternity," begins with a discussion about man's aspiration for eternity and the failure to achieve it. Eternity is defined as the embodiment of the spirit of Tao or the living Soul. Man's failure to achieve eternity comes from the fact that he does not understand the beneficial function of being submissive and is therefore alienated from the creative energy.

Symbols are used to convince man that being submissive is beneficial. In the natural world, water is submissive. Water flows to lowly places and follows the shape of its container. But water can submerge mountains and hills. In the human world, an infant is submissive. An infant is urged by his natural instinct to suck milk, sleep and cry. He has weak bones and tendons, but his hands hold firm. He cries all day long without harming his voice. As he is ignorant of artificial learning, he immune to horror and human misery.

In this section, there is a discussion about the Western heritage of the child symbol as reflected in Vaughan and
While Lao Tzu pays attention to the physical aspect of an infant, Wordsworth reveals its spiritual immensity and its connection with the living Soul. Both Lao Tzu and Wordsworth use the infant symbol to show that the submissive and passive infant has authentic strength.

Discussion of abandoning artificial learning is closely associated with the discussion of water and infant symbols in this section, because the very reason that water and an infant have authentic strength is that they are ignorant of artificiality.

Section III, "Man's 'Shadowy Recollections' Encourage A Return To Creative Energy Through The Archetype Of The Old Man," discusses man's internal possibility for reconnection with the living Soul. Although childhood vision of heavenly glory has vanished, the shadowy recollections of the glory exist and will fill man with enough confidence to complete the process of reversion and embrace Tao or the living Soul.

In this section, the old man archetype is used to illustrate what creative power may be obtained when man embraces the spirit of Tao or the living Soul. The archetype is convincing, especially because it represents an old man. If an old man can complete the reversion process and regain authentic creative power, other people can also do it.

Section IV, "Theoretical Conclusions Of The Four Stages Of Creation," discusses the four stages of creation and pinpoints the fourth stage as the starting point for
artificiality. The first two stages are invisible. The third and fourth stages are visible. In the fourth stage, heaven and earth give birth to the ten thousand things and man nurtures them. As man nurtures the ten thousand things, human motivation and aspiration are involved; hence, the origin for artificiality.

This section is a condensed theoretical discussion of creator and created, and reveals the relationship between One (creator) and the ten thousand things (created).
ABANDONING ARTIFICIAL LEARNING MEANS TAKING NO ACTION--A MEASURE OF REVERSION

The main idea of Lao Tzu's comprehensive philosophy is to let humanity return to its natural state so that it can embrace Tao. Tao is a universal creative energy which humanity gradually loses because of its increasing rational knowledge and social activities. In order to return to Tao, man must nurture Te (virtue). The highest virtue is doing nothing, which can be understood as always being submissive. Tao is invisible and belongs to the sphere of non-being; however, this state of non-being is creative in essence and gives birth to the entire universe which falls within the sphere of being. Tao is the creator and it exists everywhere. As human activities gradually deprive humanity of its ability to recognize Tao, humanity should observe the basic principles in the natural world, because Tao exists in humanity as well as in nature. The natural world is in good order and in good state, because nature never does anything artificial. This adherence to and participation in natural processes is the highest principle for humanity to follow. In so doing, humanity will come to a new recognition of Tao, become cosmic, and restore its communication with the natural world. The whole process of being created by and a return to Tao aims at
the restoration of man's authentic creativity. It forms a circle which is not enclosed. Once man's authentic creativity is restored, new differentiations out of his regained creativity will embody the spirit of Tao and a further return is not necessary, because the new differentiations are a unified whole with Tao.

In the Neoplatonic world scheme, there is a similar circle of emanation and return. But it is an enclosed circle, as M.H. Abrams points out. In Neoplatonism:

... the course of all things is a circuit whose end is its beginning, of which the movement is from unity out to the increasingly many and back to unity, and in which this movement into and out of division is identified with the falling away from good to evil and the return to good (150).

Similar to the Taoist reversion, the Neoplatonic world scheme also involves a return. But different from the Taoist reversion which aims at letting man embrace the creative energy so that he regains his authentic creativity, the Neoplatonic circle only describes a constant emanation and return of good and evil.

The Romanticists modify the Neoplatonic world scheme and give man an opportunity to use his regained authentic creative power. Therefore, the completion of the first circle of emanation and return does not necessarily indicate the beginning of another circle identical in nature. Abrams
reveals the typical Romantic design as "progress by reversion" (183). He exposes the differences between the Romantic design and the circular pattern of the Neoplatonism:

In the central tradition of Neoplatonic thought the absolutely undifferentiated One had been the absolute good, perfection itself, the primum exemplar omnium, and the end to which all existence aspires. In this distinctive Romantic innovation, on the contrary, the norm of truth, goodness, and beauty is not the simple unity of the origin, but the complex unity of the terminus of the process of cumulative division and reintegration (184-85).

Both "progress by reversion" and "the process of cumulative division and reintegration" reveal the basic idea that human involvement should be modified through reversion to the spirit of the creative energy so that man will regain authentic creativity. Cumulative division does not necessarily mean that every branch of division should undergo reversion, because some branches of division come from man's authentic creativity. These branches of division embody the spirit of the creative energy (or the living Soul in Wordsworth's term) and are unified with the living Soul. Only those branches of division out of artificiality are alienated from the creative energy and should undergo reversion to be revitalized by the living Soul. The significance of the Romantic modification of the Neoplatonic philosophy is its emphasis on this world
rather than the other world. As Abrams points out:

..., the early systems of post-Kantian philosophy transferred the unity which is the beginning and goal of all progress, and the locus and criterion of ultimate value, from the Plotinian other-realm to this world of man and nature and human experience (183).

The emphasis on this world is characteristic both of the Taoist reversion and the Wordsworthian reversion. Te is Tao as reflected in each individual being. To embrace Tao means to revitalize Te in the individual being. For Wordsworth, to embrace the living Soul means to rekindle the animating principle within the self. When Te or the animating principle is recovered, man will be able to revitalize and communicate with other beings.

While composing his poems, Wordsworth intends to turn away from rationalism which he believes evokes conventional poetry with abstract personifications and rigid poetic diction. He grieves over too much human artificiality in poetry and wants to restore simplicity. His call for a return to nature's capacity to nurture wisdom reflects his intention to compose poetry based on the reciprocity between humanity and nature. Such reciprocity is possible with the existence of a universal power which belongs to the sphere of non-being. That universal power may be called the animating principle in Wordsworth's poetry. The poet mentions his meditation in the "Preface" to the Lyrical Ballads, which is essential to his
concept of reciprocity. This meditation that asserts "The primary laws of our nature..." may be perceived in "common life," because "...our elementary feelings exist in a state of greater simplicity..." than one finds in the artifacts of being (245). One should not, however, narrowly take meditation as the adoption of certain physical forms. Meditation is a mental state which can be reached when humanity moves away from artificiality and returns to simplicity. Through such a process, the poet becomes cosmic and starts his communication with nature. Wordsworth's poetry clearly indicates that his meditative state finally offers him an insight into the essence of nature and leads to his recovery of the animating power.

Both Lao Tzu and William Wordsworth react to their specific historical times and cultural concerns. Their reactions find similar reflections in their attitudes toward human knowledge. However, one should not regard their cultural criticism of rational knowledge as a complete negation of learning, as one might assume in a misreading of Lao Tzu:

- Abandon sageliness and discard wisdom;
- Then the people will benefit a hundredfold.
- Abandon humanity and discard righteousness;
- Then the people will return to filial piety and deep love.
- Abandon skill and discard profit;
Then there will be no thieves or robbers.
However, these three things are ornaments and are not adequate.
Therefore, let people hold on to these:
Manifest plainness,
Embrace simplicity,
Reduce selfishness,
Have few desires. (132)

He Shang Gong in China's Han Dynasty (206 B.C.—A.D. 220) is the earliest authority to interpret Lao Tzu's Tao Te Ching. He explains the first line as giving up the rules and creations by sages and returning to the state of doing nothing because knotting cords [for recording obligations and deeds] is much better than writing (55). He interprets the second line as agriculture being nurtured and people being unselfish (55). Wing-Tsit Chan is absolutely right when he chooses "ornaments" to express Lao Tzu's idea. Like all the other chapters, this chapter reflects a basic principle in Lao Tzu's Taoist ideology—to get rid of artificial interferences so as to return to the essence of being. Therefore, the idea of abandoning the artificial is always accompanied by the idea of achieving authenticity which is really important. In order to make clear his theory, Lao Tzu uses certain human practices to set up flexible standards like "Letting people again knot cords and use them" (238) in Chapter 80. But such metaphors are just illustrations of his basic principle. If one only
takes the literal meaning, one will lose Lao Tzu's basic idea as expressed in *Tao Te Ching*. The word *sage* is mentioned many times in *Tao Te Ching*, but here "sageliness" carries a very different meaning. In his comment on Chapter 19, Wing-Tsit Chan points out:

The sage as the ideal human being and the ideal ruler is mentioned thirty times in the book, yet here sageliness is condemned. There is no contradiction, for sageliness here means the conscious 'sageliness' of the Confucianists, and is therefore mentioned along with wisdom, humanity, and righteousness (132).

This specific "sageliness" refers to human artificiality and violates the spirit of *Tao*. What Lao Tzu wants to get rid of are the ornaments which arise out of superficial creativity. In this way, authentic human creativity will come into play and essential creative power will be nurtured.

In Chapter 20, Lao Tzu says "Abandon learning and there will be no sorrow" (134). He Shang Gong explains it as giving up the untrue, artificial learning that violates the spirit of *Tao* so that nothing will trouble a person (55). Here again, *learning* by no means refers to all kinds of human learning, because knotting cords falls right within the sphere of human learning. But comparatively speaking, the practice is much simpler than writing. Chapter 48 also discusses the relationship between artificial learning and authentic human learning:
The pursuit of learning is to increase day after day. The pursuit of Tao is to decrease day after day. It is to decrease and further decrease until one reaches the point of taking no action. No action is undertaken, and yet nothing is left undone. An empire is often brought to order by having no activity. If one likes to undertake activity, he is not qualified to govern the empire. (184)

According to He Shang Gong, "learning" refers to governmental regulations, ritual ceremonies, and music (63). As a result, such learning will increase human desires and the need for ornaments day by day. But when people pursue Tao, they have to decrease such human desires and ornaments day by day to the degree of taking no action. When one really abandons human desires and ornaments, he embraces Tao and can therefore do everything. Lao Tzu advises people to give up "learning" because such learning constitutes an obstacle in the orderly functions of a society. Contrary to the mundane recognition of the issue, Lao Tzu regards the relationship between taking no action and everything being done as positive. Human beings tend to complicate things. What Lao Tzu wants to do is to return such things to their original simple state. In this way, problems can be easily solved. Governmental regulations and ritual ceremonies are established in the desire for a
better society, but, instead of developing a better one, such regulations and ceremonies only create a society that is deteriorating day by day. Therefore, "taking no action" is a flexible standard and really means taking no action out of human desires. Nonaction, then, is a reversion process and actually means achieving authenticity from non-being, because to decrease human desires and ornaments itself is to take action. Lao Tzu's attitude toward human learning is always characteristic of its social functions. His call for its abandonment is by no means to ask people to do nothing. He aims at authentic creativity for people to accomplish the simplicity of Tao.

Wordsworth takes a similar attitude toward human learning. As scattered in his various poems, the poet expresses his strong disapproval of books. Just as Lao Tzu holds a different idea of the orderly functions of a society than that espoused by the Chou Dynasty, Wordsworth criticizes eighteenth-century rationalism as the best source for human knowledge and opposes superficial decorations as the proper manifestation of poetic creativity. Although Wordsworth admits that there are good books, his idea of books is still negative, because good books are too few. And such good books are written according to a unique standard of creativity—through communication with nature. While attempting to advise people against books as the right source for real knowledge, Wordsworth reveals the authentic origin for knowledge, which
is located in the natural world. Such knowledge comes out of communication with nature.

In his poems, there are two stages of such communication in order to obtain authentic knowledge and creativity. The first stage is the sensory stage, in which he is partially awakened as he experiences the affections. The second stage is the stage of realization, in which he recognizes a living Soul which has a creative and unifying power. Some of his poems emphasize the sensory stage while others explore both stages.

"The Tables Turned" is a short poem that launches a direct attack on books. At the very beginning of the poem,Wordsworth points out the serious consequences books may bring about.

Up! up! my friend, and clear your looks,
Why all this toil and trouble?
Up! up! my friend, and quit you books,
Or surely you'll grow double. (Lyrical Ballads 105)

The reader's looks reveal that he is involuntarily involved in books. There is no essential difference between the reader and his friend in their idea about the toil and trouble that books create, but it is the friend who understands the imminent danger. If the reader does not quit his books, he will become "double," which indicates that he will become increasingly split between the diligence of reason and the joys of nature. Reason derived from nature should be a
unified whole with nature, but reason constrained by books is artificial human learning which should be abandoned. In other words, the reader will benefit from abandoning books, if they alienate one from natural processes. If one compares this stanza with Lao Tzu's "Abandon learning and there will be no sorrow," one discovers that both Lao Tzu and Wordsworth hold the idea that artificial human learning is inherently the alienation of one's natural self and should be abandoned.

Like Lao Tzu, Wordsworth is both destructive in undermining rationality as a supreme value and constructive in advocating a holistic conception of learning. Therefore, nature replaces books as the right source for knowledge:

> And hark! how blithe the throstle sings!  
> And he is no mean preacher;  
> Come forth into the light of things,  
> Let Nature be your teacher. (Lyrical Ballads 105)

Obviously, Wordsworth continues his attack on rationalism in this stanza. Instead of letting books define for the reader what constitute "the light of things," the reader should "let nature be his teacher." Nature refers to all other things in the world except man at this moment, because artificial human learning has alienated and, hence, isolated man from nature. Therefore, as part of nature, a little bird is a much better source of moral wisdom than books of moral lessons. The beneficial function of nature forms a contrast to the harmful function of books. Interestingly enough, the word sage is
mentioned by Wordsworth and stands opposite to nature. Like Lao Tzu's specific use of that "sageliness" in Chapter 19 of Tao Te Ching, "sages" refers to people who produce moral standards that belong to human artificiality but masquerade as wisdom. Therefore, their "sageliness" should be abandoned and be replaced by the natural moral principle:

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man;
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can. (Lyrical Ballads 106)

Human beings are different from all other living beings, because they have minds that self-consciously know that they think. These minds help to build a collective intelligence that seeks to collect more and more information. Human aspirations and desires, however, are subject to asserting increasing pressure on the mind to amass more and more information so that the mind moves further and further away from its original connection with nature. Gradually, human beings lose sight of this submerged communication. They believe that they have expanding intellects, but such intellects are built from human aspirations and desires and are thus artificial in their essence. Human intellects are not inspirations from the natural world or the living Soul and further alienate humanity from its creator. In this way, the human intellect serves only to increase artificiality, which keeps people from returning to their original abilities to
communicate with nature. Human beings are part of the natural world and should obey the natural law which is essentially beneficial, but our artificial human intellect violates the natural law and brings unnecessary trouble or even disaster to itself.

As human beings, people are born with the ability to communicate with nature. They are born into an environment, however, which is filled with artificial human intellect. Because the mind is flexible and open to various influences, the tendency always exists for it to become divided from the essential unity with nature. Most books are condensed representations of the artificial human intellect, because most books come into being out of precisely that established artificial human intelligence. Therefore, they are characteristic of artificiality from the moment that they are written. Human beings are in a dilemma. Somewhere submerged in the divided consciousness is the original ability to unify humanity with nature, but what the human being is conscious of as his intellect has nothing to do with the original ability to perceive unity with the whole of Nature. Therefore, Lao Tzu asks us to abandon sageliness and learning, and Wordsworth launches a severe attack on books.

Neither Lao Tzu nor Wordsworth attempts to clarify the relationship between human intellect and human artificiality, because the relationship is so obvious to them. They assume that at the very beginning of cultural development, human
beings keep close ties with nature. As people try to follow their own desires and aspirations, they gradually lose the connection and become increasingly artificial. In later generations, they are born into artificial environments and become conditioned in the concepts of learning that seeks to perpetuate artificiality as knowledge. Because their intellects are artificial, in the emphatic force of human aspiration and desire, from the onset of life, their creativity, based on prevailing cultural practices, can only increase human artificiality. This dependence on artificial knowledge as human intellect moves us further and further away from nature:

> Sweet is the lore which nature brings;
> Our meddling intellect
> Misshapes the beauteous forms of things;
> --We murder to dissect. (Wordsworth 106)

The learning out of nature is sweet and beneficial, but the intellect becomes an obstacle for the mind to absorb the essential creative power from the natural world. As an element distinct from nature, the intellect cannot but distort natural beings and dissect their form and content. Analysis, then, becomes the principle of alienation and isolation even as it seeks to comprehend nature. That is why Wordsworth calls it "our meddling intellect." People have already murdered themselves in the sense that they have cut themselves off from the process of nature. Now, one might extend such
"murders" to other natural beings.

The poem as a whole belongs to the sensory stage of communicating with nature; there is no indication of the sudden realization of the living Soul. What one witnesses here is a call for reversion. The poem not only touches upon the necessity for a return to nature, but also reveals the potential for a final recovery of deep, original communication with nature. The recovery process begins with sensory communication.

Enough of science and of art;
Close up these barren leaves;
Come forth, and bring with you a heart
That watches and receives. (Wordsworth 106)

Wordsworth pays particular attention here to the sensory communication. He uses the word "heart" because heart is the assumed center for all sensory capacities in addition to its function to process sensory information. To regard "a heart" as the center for all sensory and thinking capacities is a familiar consideration in Asian philosophy. It is interesting that Wordsworth uses "heart" instead of "mind" here, for Wordsworth seems to distinguish the artificial mind from the natural mind. Therefore, the word watches means much more than the ability for mere observation. It refers to other "hidden eyes" that are open to natural sensory experiences.

Wordsworth's attitude toward books is also reflected in his other poems. "Expostulation and Reply" is a poem in the
form of a dialogue. Here, the poet's criticism of rationalism is less direct than that in "The Tables Turned." In the latter poem, the speaker gives a straightforward statement of the harm books bring and the necessity to return to nature. However, in "Expostulation and Reply," the two speakers express their individual ideas about human learning. It seems as if the poet seeks a balance between the two speakers so that he can be excused from partiality. One feels, however, a strong irony when Matthew admonishes William against idling his time away. The irony becomes intensified when Matthew mentions "that light" out of books and fails to acknowledge that provided by mother earth:

"Where are your books? that light bequeath'd

"To beings else forlorn and blind!

"Up! Up! and drink the spirit breath'd

"From dead men to their kind.

"You look round on your mother earth,

"As if she for no purpose bore you:

"As if you were her first-born birth,

"And none had lived before you!" (Lyrical Ballads 104)

Matthew talks about being blind because he does not know what real blindness is, the isolation of artificiality. If books produce light, then the brighter the light, the blinder human beings will be. What Matthew refers to as light is the artificial light of rationalism. When such light is kindled
and becomes bright, it dims the ability to see light as indicative of humanity's original communication with nature. The artificial light, instead, comes only from "the dead men."

The sentence structure is very similar to that of "The Tables Turned" when Matthew says "Up! Up! and drink the spirit breath'd / From dead men to their kind." In "The Tables Turned," the speaker says, "Up! Up! my friend, and quit your books, / or surely you'll grow double." While Matthew shows concern for William, the speaker in "The Tables Turned" advises his friend against the terrible consequences of reading books. Both intend to right the wrong, but they do so from different attitudes toward and conceptions of human learning. However, the omission of "friend" and the use of "dead men" in "Expostulation and Reply" makes the advice cold and weak, without the animating power in "The Tables Turned." Matthew's ignorance of "mother earth" becomes ostensible when he considers earth only as the mother of physical forms for human beings. She is not the mother of human knowledge. Human knowledge should be sought elsewhere--from the dead men before him. Here lies the basic difference between Matthew and the speaker in "The Tables Turned." To the latter, the earth is the mother of both human forms and human knowledge. What is human is natural, because human beings are part of nature. In "Expostulation and Reply," Wordsworth adopts a covert way to criticize rationalism, but the criticism is no less powerful and to the point.
One idea is especially worth noting in "Expostulation and Reply." Wordsworth mentions "wise passiveness" in the second half of the poem. In his comment on "Expostulation and Reply," Hartman points out:

Such poetry does not depreciate but rather extends what Wordsworth calls elsewhere the "active principle." He broadens the locus of individual, feeling life beyond man. There are energies in man around him that act in their own mode or naturally: they cannot be subdued to the self. Man's body is not "his" alone.... Activity, feeling, individuality, are not exclusively human. Nature has "passions" of her own (154-55).

Wordsworth realizes that nature has her own "feelings," which feed any human heart open to her. This important concept of "wise passiveness" is fundamental to Wordsworth's recovery of human communication with nature and bears great similarity to the Taoist idea of taking no action:

I take no action and the people of themselves are transformed.
I love tranquility and the people of themselves become correct.
I engage in no activity and the people of themselves become prosperous.
I have no desires and the people of themselves become simple. (Lao Tzu 201)

One can understand these lines by interpreting "I" as the
human mind and "people" as the sensory organs under mental control. Such an interpretive strategy echoes Wordsworth's meditation in his "Preface" to the *Lyrical Ballads*, for it is a mental state which can be reached when humanity moves away from artificiality and returns to simplicity. Through such a process, the poet becomes cosmic and starts his communication with nature. The word *passiveness* is actually both a mental and a physical state viewed from the mundane perspective. To Matthew, the poet sitting there idly and dreaming time away, no doubt, appears to exhibit a passive attitude toward human life. He believes that one should make full use of his mental ability to search for rational knowledge. Wordsworth, however, uses the word *wise* in front of *passiveness* to indicate that such "passiveness" is only passive in appearance but active in essence; hence, Wordsworth advocates the use of an active passiveness. Therefore, when the mind takes no action, the sensory organs perceive information from the natural world. The "passive mind," better thought of as the receptive mind, activates receptivity, which in turn motivates the mind to realize its holistic involvement in the original, creative power. In the rational search for human learning, the mind presumes a necessary distance imposed by analytic logic which shuts all natural information away from itself as an object of knowledge rather than as a common subject with itself, and, consequently, isolates itself from the natural world. Whatever information the natural world provides, it
cannot find a unified reception in the mind. When one takes action, one loses the opportunity for authentic knowledge; however, in a state of "wise passiveness," authentic learning based on the original creative power comes of itself. Such is the functional aspect of this "wise passiveness." And such is Wordsworth's indication of the basic difference between taking action and taking no action:

"Think you, mid all this mighty sum

"Of things for ever speaking,

"That nothing of itself will come,

"But we must still be seeking? (Lyrical Ballads 105)
UNDERSTANDING THE BENEFITS OF TAKING NO ACTION THROUGH THE
SYMBOLS OF WATER AND THE INFANT TO REVEAL REVERSION AS THE WAY
TO ETERNITY

In The Prelude, Chapter V is titled "Books." Wordsworth, however, reverses the mundane idea of books and concerns himself with nature. Like Lao Tzu, Wordsworth is mainly concerned with the immense topic of what is evanescent and what is eternal. For ordinary human beings imprisoned in artificiality, they either work through books or work out of books so that they may find or create ideas and achievements that will endure with their names, as if they had attained immortality through their names. This desire for participation in eternity is quite common albeit many may already see its impossibility from the beginning of their endeavors. In an environment constrained by human artificiality, moreover, they are always urged to pursue certain goals. Some people have grand ambitions and are dedicated to the pursuit of eternal truth through the rational approach. What they achieve can only be evanescent as compared to eternal nature:

Even in the steadiest mood of reason, when
All sorrow for thy transitory pains
Goes out, it grieves me for thy state, O Man,
Thou paramount Creature! and thy race, while ye
Shall sojourn on this planet; not for woes
Which thou endur'st; that weight, albeit huge,
I charm away; but for those palms achiev'd
Through length of time, by study and hard thought,
The honors of thy high endowments, there
My sadness finds its fuel. (Wordsworth 67)

In the first line, the word reason is somewhat ambiguous, because it seems to indicate a process exclusively rational. One may be misled into thinking that Wordsworth approaches the issue of human learning through rationalist views. If one puts the word reason against the background of the whole Prelude, one finds that "reason" only refers to the contemplation in general. It is a reasoning process associated with tangible nature and is therefore different from the rationalistic worship of the abstract, the logical and the pure as God. In order to achieve eternity, man goes all out to work for it. However, "these palms achiev'd" and "The honors of thy high endowments" cannot last long in the process of eternal nature. Human beings work for eternity and achieve evanescence. Their life and their energy are wasted. Here lies Wordsworth's real sadness. Such sorrow is especially keen to the poet because he knows that humanity can realize a unified eternity wherein humanity and nature participate in the same eternal creative power, but human beings do not follow it.
There are four major elements in the above-quoted lines—earth, man, study, and "palms achieved." There are two ways to interpret these elements. For ordinary human beings, man studies man before him, devotes analytic studies to earth and makes achievements. This man pays no attention to the natural world. For Wordsworth, man opens himself up to any learning the natural world may provide. In the former case, man assimilates and achieves artificial human learning which cannot last. In the latter case, man can achieve or recognize creative power that is universal and therefore everlasting. Insofar as the concept of eternity is concerned, one must approach it from the perspective of the reciprocal relationship between man and nature. Man is part of the natural world. As a species in the natural world, man comes into being long after the earth is formed. As other beings emerge and disappear, so man may disappear in the indefinite future. Therefore, whatever man creates cannot be eternal in its own right. Artificial human creation can only be limited to the "species" of man because such creation is independent of natural inspiration. The scope of its communication is kept just within the limits of those rationally trained and artificially distorted minds under rationalism. The palms thus achieved, instead of being universal, are specific to a limited number of men and fail to carry messages from eternal nature to rekindle that original light in other human beings. This limited range of nature's influence determines that
artificial human creation can only be evanescent. Artificial intellect is a tiny spot in time and space. Authentic human creation differs in that it is inspired by Tao, or that living Soul, in Wordsworth's terms, which is itself eternal. Such creation can be interpreted as a reflection of that living Soul or Tao in certain physical forms. Eternity and universality co-exist with such creation that springs from non-being. Both Tao and the living Soul belong to the sphere of non-being which is the creator of all being. Therefore, any creation inspired by this non-being must embody its spirit and become everlasting. Human beings are created by this non-being and should be everlasting. Physical forms may disappear, but that spirit exists forever since it participates in a unified whole with the living Soul or Tao. Therefore, from the perspective of Tao or that living Soul, artificial human learning cannot be eternal, because it does not embody the everlasting spirit of the original creative power inherent in non-being.

For Lao Tzu, artificial human learning produces social problems. For Wordsworth, it has almost suffocated poetry. Therefore, they attempt to reverse the human pursuit of such learning. Initially, their reversion helps to restore communication with the creative power of nature. Moreover, in the process, they reveal a way to eternity, which is the significance of their reversion. Through distinctions between artificial and authentic human learning, one grasps the
functional aspect of "Reversion is the action of Tao." Then, how is the idea of "Weakness [submissiveness] is the function of Tao" reflected in Wordsworth's poetry? Although Wordsworth may never have learned of Taoism in his life-time, certain figures in his poems are perfect reflections of this principle of submissiveness. The word function actually means the application of "weakness" by people in a conscious or subconscious way. One should not be led to think that Tao functions in a weak way. "Weakness" is only an approach to authentic strength and natural eternity.

In Tao Te Ching, water is a perfect symbol of weakness and is therefore mentioned in several different chapters. Water takes no action of its own, but is functionally powerful. As man is closely associated with water, he can be more easily convinced of the benefits of taking no action (being submissive). Man may soon start his reversion process if he comes to recognize the relationship between taking no action and its benefits as reflected in the symbol of water. Chapter 78 describes its symbolic attributes as follows:

There is nothing softer and weaker than water
And yet there is nothing better for attacking
    hard and strong things.
For this reason there is no substitute for it.
All the world knows that the weak overcomes the strong
    and the soft overcomes the hard.
But none can practice it.
Therefore the sage says:

He who suffers disgrace for his country
Is called the lord of the land.
He who takes upon himself the country's misfortunes
Becomes the king of the empire.

Straight words seem to be their opposite. (236)

Obviously, the relationship between weakness and its positive function is what Lao Tzu intends to expose. He has a keen sense of the necessity to emphasize the relationship, because people know it but do not practice it. In the mundane world, strength is the only approach to success. People despise weakness even though they sometimes know it works well. He Shang Gong points out that a round container makes water round and a square container makes it square. It can be stopped with a dam, and it will flow when one produces an opening in the dam. Water, however, can also surround mountains and submerge hills. It can rust iron and wear away bronze. People know that the soft and weak last long, while the strong and hard can be harmed and broken. They refuse to be soft and weak and prefer strength and power (71). One may ask why people avoid things that are beneficial to them, but one must recall that their environment of artificial learning emphasizes strength and despises weakness. Lao Tzu shows to the world the principle of weakness as reflected in the qualities of water. When applied to human society, the
principle will help to create real lords and kings of the land. This sense of leadership is another example of Lao Tzu's deep concern for the harmonious order of human society.

Tao is the highest principle and is ever-lasting. Lao Tzu pays so much attention to water, because he thinks water is an almost ideal reflection of Tao. Chapter 8 is entirely devoted to the description of water:

The best (man) is like water.

Water is good; it benefits all things and does not compete with them.

It dwells in lowly places that all disdain.

This is why it is so near to Tao. (113)

Many translators interpret the second half of Chapter 8 by using "the best man" as subject and turn it into a eulogy of the man of highest virtue. However, He Shang Gong interprets it by attributing such qualities to water. Water loves earth, and flows into deep and empty places. All beings depend on water for life and can find reliable reflections of themselves on its surface. Water washes things clean and smooth and can become round or square. It evaporates in the summer and freezes in the winter. Therefore, it changes with the change of seasons (52). Actually, the second half of Chapter 8 is in Chinese a clear eulogy of both the best man and water, but the translator must choose one or the other in translation. He is right to bring out the moral teaching in translation. The following is the English version of the second half:
(The best man) is in his dwelling loves the earth.
In his heart, he loves what is profound.
In his associations, he loves humanity.
In his words, he loves faithfulness.
In government, he loves order.
In handling affairs, he loves competence.
In his activities, he loves timeliness.
It is because he does not compete that he is
without reproach. (113)

While right to bring out the moral teaching of Tao, the
translation has lost some emphasis on the essential quality of
water as well as masking the attributes of the best man. What
is reflected in the translation seems to violate the principle
of "weakness is the function of Tao." Instead of being
submissive, water seems to be active with emphasis on its own
preferences and strength. It gives us the impression that
"strength is the function of Tao." In ancient Chinese, the
word "earth" also means "lowly" and when Lao Tzu uses it, it
has both meanings. All these lines are closely associated
with the idea of being lowly and submissive. It is not that
water loves what is profound, but lowly places can be deep and
profound. It is not that water loves faithfulness, but, as it
stays in lowly places, it mirrors faithfully what is above.
It is not that water loves order, but it washes things smooth
and clean when it flows to lowly places. It is not that water
loves competence, but it follows whatever shape of its
container. It is not that water loves timeliness, but it changes with the change of seasons. Such interpretation harmonizes the relationship between being submissive and its function as reflected in water. Submissiveness must be seen as the strength of both water and Tao. Otherwise, the reader may think that Lao Tzu is not consistent in his elaboration of Tao.

The idea of taking no action and being submissive is also reflected in Lao Tzu's observation of heaven and earth. Chapter 7 reveals Tao's deep meaning in the human society.

Heaven is eternal and earth everlasting.
They can be eternal and everlasting because they do not exist for themselves,
And for this reason can exist forever.
Therefore the sage places himself in the background
but finds himself in the foreground.
He puts himself away and yet always remains.
Is it not because he has no personal interest?
This is the reason why his personal interests are fulfilled. (112)

There is no clearer statement of the social function and personal success promised by the principle of being submissive. In his comment on Chapter 7, Wing-Tsit Chan says:

This Taoist doctrine of self-denial expresses the same spirit as do the Christian doctrine of self-
sacrifice and the Buddhist doctrine of non-ego. Although Buddhism puts its idea in the metaphysical term "non-ego" and Taoism in the ethical term "having no personal interest," their import is the same. In Taoism, however, unlike Buddhism, personal interests are to be fulfilled after all. He who loses his life will find it (112).

Lao Tzu does not refuse profundity, humanity, faithfulness, order and competence. What he opposes are human manipulations to pursue these attributes, because they will lose such inherent ethical qualities by manipulation in the pursuit. Such people may obtain what they think they have struggled for, but Lao Tzu is clear about what they get and warns them against their artificial efforts. So far as its social function is concerned, one comes to understand why Lao Tzu says "Abandon learning and there will be no sorrow." Abandon the mundane ideas of strength as a way to obtain social order and authentic ethical qualities will come into being by themselves. There will be no sorrow, because one will get that to which human beings aspire. What one achieves is as easy as the water's flow, yet uncontaminated by artificial learning.

There are two opposing ways to understand and fulfill what Chan translates as "personal interests." Social order is, in the first instance, obedience to the ruler. In order to obtain it, the interests of others have to be encroached
upon so as to satisfy the ruler. Even if a certain, stable order is obtained, it cannot last. If the ruler, however, obeys the interests of the people and is submissive, the order thus developed will last long because it participates in the authentic order that is grounded in the creative power of non-being. In the former case, "personal interest" is another term for selfishness and therefore cuts off the relationship between the ruler and the people. In the latter case, personal interest enjoys universality and is actually in the interest of all people. While personal interests are to be fulfilled after all in Taoism, such personal interests are fundamentally different from the egoistic mundane understanding of personal interests. From the Taoist perspective, Tao is universal because it is personal. Therefore, the Taoist approach holds that personal interests must be universal. The universe is a unified whole with human beings being only participants in the eternal process of nature.

Insofar as the human world is concerned, the relationship between weakness and strength is fully reflected in a human baby. Lao Tzu gives a detailed description of its state.

He who possesses virtue in abundance
May be compared to an infant.
Poisonous insects will not sting him.
Fierce beasts will not seize him.
Birds of prey will not strike him.
His bones are weak, his sinews tender, but his grasp is firm.

He does not yet know the union of male and female,
But his organ is aroused,
This means that his essence is at its height.
He may cry all day without becoming hoarse,
This means that his (natural) harmony is perfect.
To know harmony means to be in accord with the eternal.
To be in accord with the eternal means to be enlightened.
To force the growth of life means ill omen.
For the mind to employ the vital force without restraint means violence.
After things reach their prime, they begin to grow old,
Which means being contrary to Tao.
Whatever is contrary to Tao will soon perish. (197)

Here, the infant state is idealized. Lao Tzu pays special attention to an infant because an infant is not yet conditioned by artificial human learning and is therefore nearest to Tao. An infant is weak in the eyes of an ordinary human being. Functionally speaking, however, an infant is much better able to adapt—like water—to natural change than an adult. As an infant is nearest to Tao, therefore, an adult who embraces Tao will return to an infant state and become more functional in his capacity to adapt to natural changes.
and to participate in eternal creative power. What Lao Tzu really wants to reveal is that weakness is authentic strength and mundane, artificial strength is weakness.

Although Wordsworth does not attempt to elaborate the relationship between strength and weakness from a philosophic perspective, his prose and his poetry reveal his understanding of the relationship. What he concerns himself with most is the relationship between eternity as manifest in the creative power of poetry and the evanescence of artificially produced poetry. He approaches the relationship between strength and weakness from a similar perspective to that of Lao Tzu. As a poet, Wordsworth's primary concern is language. His "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads* contains his idea of authentic language and artificial language.

The language too of these men is adopted because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived; and because, from their rank in society and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse, being less under the action of social vanity they convey their feelings and notions in simple and un-elaborated expressions. Accordingly such a language arriving out of repeated experience and regular feelings is a more permanent and a far more philosophical language than that which is frequently substituted for it by poets, who think that they are
conferring honor upon themselves and their art in proportion as they separate themselves from the sympathies of men, and indulge in arbitrary and capricious habits of expression in order to furnish food for fickle tastes and fickle appetites of their own creation (245-46).

There is a clear line of order from authentic language to artificial language. Men who hold closest ties with nature derive their language from the best natural objects. This source of natural objects is the origin for the best human language. Here lies the reason for Wordsworth to use the language of these rustic and natural men. The language out of such men is powerful not only because their language reflects the eternal power of nature, but also because their low rank in society and the "narrow circle of their intercourse" have reduced the danger for them to be conditioned by social vanity which is more or less an aspect of artificial human learning. Their "simple and un-elaborated expressions" are much more effective because simplicity enjoys universality. Therefore, their language is "a far more permanent and a far more philosophical language than that which is frequently substituted for it by poets." As compared to their language, the language of the poets tends to be complicated so that they can distinguish themselves from those who are not poets. They want to confer "honor upon themselves and their art," but the aspiration for individual distinction cuts themselves off from
the majority of human beings and loses the simplicity of eternal universality that they really need in order to be distinguished: "Abandon learning and there will be no sorrow." Wordsworth's implied advice is just the same as that of Lao Tzu. Abandon artificial learning which is reflected in ornamental, "poetic" language, and the poets will have no sorrow. They will achieve, then, real grandeur, that manifestation of eternal creative power, which their artificial attempts to reach distinction cannot achieve.

So far as the symbols of study are concerned, both Lao Tzu and Wordsworth are so similar to each other that it is often difficult to distinguish one from the other. The symbol of a child is one such meditation in which Wordsworth and Lao Tzu enjoy great similarity. In Wordsworth's poems, there are many symbolic descriptions of the child. Like Lao Tzu, Wordsworth tries to reveal the functional aspect of a baby who is normally regarded as weak and powerless. Like Lao Tzu, Wordsworth also reveals the very reason for an infant's authentic strength.

Just as the Romantic pattern of reversion evolves out of the Neoplatonic world scheme, Wordsworth's infant symbol also has its cultural heritage. Infancy as an ideal state for human connection with God is fully reflected in the poems by Vaughan and Traherne. In Vaughan's poem "The Retreate," there is a circle of alienation from and return to God. The last line of poem condenses the circle into two words "came return"
Kenneth Friedenreich points out:

..., Vaughan yearns for a return to an earlier, purer time. The gleanings and fragments of a secret world suggest to Vaughan that there was a time when the interaction between man and God was not interrupted or difficult (134).

There is indeed such a time when humanity is not alienated from its creator. Vaughan locates such a time in infancy:

Happy those early days! when I
Shin'd in my Angell-infancy. (34)

Not only does Vaughan cherish those early days of infancy, but he also intends to return to it. Some people like to go forward because they are heavily conditioned by artificiality. But Vaughan prefers reversion. The basic consideration for a return to infancy comes from his memory of "Some shadows of eternity":

When on some gilded Cloud, or flowre
My gazing soul would dwell an houre,
And in those weaker glories spy
Some shadows of eternity. (34)

There exists a great similarity between Vaughan's "The Retreate" and some of Wordsworth's poems such as "Ode: Intimations of Immortality." Both poets idealize the state of infancy and urge a reversion process based upon shadowy recollections of heavenly glory.

In "Ode: Intimations of Immortality From Recollections Of
Early Childhood," Wordsworth carries on a profound discussion on the basic difference between childhood and adulthood, and attempts to elaborate why "The Child is father of the Man," which is also an important theme in Tao Te Ching; for Wordsworth,

   Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
   The Soul that rises with us, our life star,
   Hath had elsewhere its setting,
   And cometh from afar:
   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! (258)

While Lao Tzu defines Tao as the original creative power, Wordsworth here considers God as the original creative power. When one approaches the issue of creativity, however, from the prospective of being and non-being, one finds no basic difference between Lao Tzu and Wordsworth: both concepts of God and Tao are non-being which gives birth to being. Therefore, according to Wordsworth, an infant has just left heaven, the original creative power, and come into the human world. He has his closest ties with the original creative power. Thus, "Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting," because the inner eyes that can witness the glory of God are closed by growing mundane considerations. One begins to
forget the authentic magnificence of heaven, but the
forgetting is a process wherein infancy is only the starting
point. So, in infancy, one can still view, feel and sense the
presence of those "trailing clouds of glory." Infancy is a
period when the change from non-being to being takes place and
is therefore a period when the influence of non-being is most
obvious. That innocent joy of eternal nature is why infancy
becomes a model for adults in their reversion--through the
authentic practice of poetry or the Tao--to the original
creative power.

The relationship between strength and weakness becomes
obvious when Wordsworth contrasts the "weak" outward
appearance and the powerful inner capability of an infant. In
the eyes of Wordsworth, an infant is the most powerful human
being. Unlike Lao Tzu who reveals the visible functions of a
baby to indicate his internal immensity, Wordsworth reveals
the internal immensity to lift the "weak" veil from the
infant's outward forms. No difference exists between the two
ways to expose the power that an infant possesses, because
both attempt to reverse the mundane idea of an infant. Hence,
Wordsworth departs quietly from the appearance of weakness:

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie
Thy Soul's immensity;
Thou best philosopher, who yet dost keep
Thy heritage, thou Eye among the blind,
That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,
Haunted for ever by the eternal mind,—
Mighty Prophet! Seer blest! (Ode 258)

When one compares this quotation with the sixth stanza of "The Tables Turned," one finds that Wordsworth equates the infant to a being in the natural world. Therefore, while Wordsworth reveals that God as non-being is the original creative power, he does not try to emphasize that man is a being who is supreme over all other beings. If Wordsworth regards man as a being over other beings, the attitude will impose a barrier between man and other beings for smooth communication, because the sense of superiority is part of artificial learning. Here lies the basis for his authentic communication with the natural world:

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of Man;
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can. (106)

Since a vernal wood may teach moral lessons, it seems as if everybody can learn such lessons. But the natural world only provides an ideal environment for the communication between man and other beings. Such communication has the ideal model of an infant as the prerequisite for most effective communication. That is why, in "Ode: Intimations Of Immortality From Recollections Of Early Childhood," Wordsworth calls an infant the "best philosopher," "Mighty Prophet," and "Seer Blest" (258). He is indeed "blest"
because he has just left the realm of authentic glory and still retains the "heritage" of original creative power.

The word Eye, in "Ode: Intimations Of Immortality," does not necessarily refer to the physical eyes of the infant, and the word blind does not mean that the eyes of ordinary people are blind. The real meaning is that the infant sees the essential qualities of life while other people have lost this ability. They may have searched for essence throughout their lives, but they are conditioned to embrace artificial learning as essential when it is actually superficial. Chapter 12 of Tao Te Ching addresses the issue in similar fashion:

The five colors cause one's eyes to be blind.
The five tones cause one's ears to be deaf.
The five flavors cause one's palate to be spoiled.
Racing and hunting cause one's mind to be mad.
Goods that are hard to get injure one's activities.
For this reason the sage is concerned with the belly and not the eyes.
Therefore he rejects the one but accepts the other.

(Lao Tzu 121)

In his comment on this chapter, Wing-Tsit Chan says:
If this chapter is taken literally, it would mean the rejection of all sensations, withdrawing into oneself with one's eyes closed. But nothing of the sort is intended here. All commentators agree that the belly refers to the central or fundamental things of life
and the eyes refer to the superficial things of life. Not a single commentator has suggested that this chapter teaches renunciation. What is demanded here is not an escape from the external world but the rejection of superficialities in favor of what is basic and central (121).

The "blind eyes" in Wordsworth's poem are the "eyes" in Lao Tzu's Tao Te Ching, Chapter 12, which are open only to the superficial five colors. The capitalized E of "Eye" in Wordsworth's poem is the belly in Lao Tzu's work, because such an Eye sees the essential origin of man's creativity and his communication with other beings in the world. Only an infant, however, has such an Eye in addition to his physical eyes.

Like Wordsworth, Traherne also favors a return to infancy. His reversion seems to be closely associated with his interest in the function of an infant eye. In the poem "An Infant-Ey," Traherne says:

A simple Infant's Ey is such a Treasure

That when 'tis lost, w'enjoy no reall Pleasure. (77)

It is a treasure because such an "Ey" enables the infant to see what adults cannot see. Physically, the adult's eyes are not blind, but these eyes only see the surrounding physical world, while an infant can see heavenly glory. In "Walking," Traherne describes such adulthood blindness:

And are not Men than they more blind,

Who having Eys yet never find
The Bliss in which they mov:
Like Statues dead
They up and down are carried,
Yet not behold the Sky. (123)

In "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," Wordsworth compares an infant to "Eye among the blind" (258). Traherne's study of infancy indicates that Wordsworth's consideration of an infant as "Eye among the blind" bears an imprint of cultural heritage.

Wordsworth, however, does not reject man's physical eyes. What he opposes is the empirical constraint of such eyes. A relationship exists between the symbolic Eye and the physical eyes. The two should be unified, but, after man's entrance into the world as infant, the physical eyes come into play and, with increasing maturation of the child, are dazzled by the superficial glory of events and gleam of objects so that the fundamental "glory," eternal creative power, is gradually dimmed and the symbolic Eye becomes shut. That is why Wordsworth suggest that the function of physical eyes should be mediated by some other sensory organs so as to recover the symbolic Eye:

Gladly here,
Entering upon abstruser argument,
Would I endeavor to unfold the means
Which Nature studiously employs to thwart
This tyranny, summons all the senses each
To counteract the other and themselves,
And makes them all, and the objects with which all
Are conversant, subservient in their turn
To the great ends of Liberty and Power.

(Wordsworth 211)

"This tyranny" refers to the tyranny of the eyes, which
dominate the external, empirical information which help to
form and cultivate human aspirations and desires. The way of
Nature to reverse the process is to let all the senses work
against each other so as to reduce superficial influences.
The key to the reversion process lies in the success of the
workings of inner faculties. Only in the natural world can
man make full use of all his senses and revitalize his inner
faculties. This grounding of perception in the creative power
of nature serves to illustrate the symbolic Eye, which can be
renewed by distracting the physical eyes from the empirical
perception conditioned by desire and being attentive to the
creative manifestation of the natural world. Because human
eyes play the major role in empirically assessing information,
a need arises to let all the other senses play their own
individual roles in order to distract rigid perceptions and to
open natural perceptions. Such roles work together to
decrease the superficial glory and to revitalize the inner
faculties. All these constitute the "Eye" of an infant. The
only difference between an infant and an adult lies in the
fact that the infant has that waning ability while an adult
needs to recover it.

To give up human desires and aspirations is normally regarded as weakness, because one is regarded as being a coward for the absence of the will to compete. Human competition, however, involves artificiality which helps only to achieve short-lived "palms." It seems as if Wordsworth chooses a "weak" way to initiate poetic creation. He uses simple men and their simple language; he avoids all efforts toward artificial decoration; and, he espouses a disdainful attitude toward rational learning as represented by books. His study of the infant, however, reveals the fact that weakness is authentic strength. Wordsworth holds no indifferent attitude toward the human world of artificial learning, for he wants only to point out a way for those who are painfully involved, because of their self-defeating quest for superficial glory, in the endeavor for authentic glory:

Thou little child, yet glorious in the might
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
Thus blindly with the blessedness at strife?
Full soon thy soul shall have her earthly freight,
And custom lie upon thee with a weight,
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!
("Ode: Intimations of Immortality" 258-59)

These lines seem to be so cynical with respect to "the
inevitable yoke" that the best alternative for an infant is that he remains in infancy, an impossible choice. Actually, in *The Prelude*, Wordsworth makes a comparison between two babies and seems to say that Mary's early dead child is much more fortunate than the rosy baby that the poet sees:

He hath since

Appear'd to me oft times as if embalm'd
By Nature; through some special privilege,
Stopp'd at the growth he had; destined to live,
To be, to have been, come and go, a Child
And nothing more, no partner in the years
That bear us forever to distress and guilt,
Pain and abasement, beauty in such excess
Adorn'd him in that miserable place.
So have I thought of him a thousand times,
And seldom otherwise. But he perhaps,
Mary, may now have liv'd till he could look
With envy on thy nameless Babe that sleeps
Beside the mountain Chapel, undisturb'd! (116)

This mournful passage is really "the still sad music of humanity." Seemingly, only an early dead child could avoid all troubles and misery in the human world. If there were no human beings, there would not be human misery and interferences. The human world, however, exists, and Wordsworth does not oppose its existence. He only tries to improve it through his receptive meditations on the creative
power within nature. Although he expresses his genuine feelings and hopes in his poems, such feelings and hopes motivate him to explore the best way to keep simplicity and to nurture innocence. He finds such simplicity and innocence in an infant and establishes a model for adults. Therefore, the passage above can be regarded as only a stage in the development of the poet's thinking. When one returns to the infant state, one will be able to avoid the heavy burden of custom and shun artificial human learning. One will not wish to do what ordinary people do and may therefore be regarded as "weak" in human ability. Such superficial "weakness," however, gives him the best strength any human being can ever possess, because he has returned to the threshold where being and non-being mingle. He has recovered the origin for his creativity and has regained his ability to communicate. To keep away from customs means to keep away from artificial human learning. Weakness as reflected in the ignorance of such "learning" offers the opportunity for authentic strength. Such is the relationship between weakness and strength as revealed in the symbol of an infant.
MAN'S "SHADOWY RECOLLECTIONS" ENCOURAGE A RETURN TO CREATIVITY THROUGH THE ARCHETYPE OF THE OLD MAN.

Wordsworth's poem "The Rainbow" is very short, but it embodies the whole development of his thinking and reflects fully the relationship between weakness and strength. The poem becomes the basis for Wordsworth's attempt to explore the best way to forget human misery and to re-unite with the natural world.

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 natural piety. (257)

The child cannot be the literal, physical father of man, he is a model for man to follow and is therefore a symbolic father of man in the sense that man has to return to the simple and innocent state of a child so as to recover his creative ability. A rainbow stimulates his inner faculties when he is a child, and this natural phenomenon works the same way when
he is a young man. He would rather die than lose this connection with nature in old age. Human beings, however, gradually lose their connections with nature, thus they hold their closest ties with nature in infancy. The last three lines of "The Rainbow" are used at the very beginning of "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," which is a study of the co-existent waxing and waning of creative processes in man. The increase of artificial customs and learning implies the decrease of humanity's ability to be inspired by the authenticity of the original creative power. Wordsworth describes the waning of nature's creative power as follows:

Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon 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 way,
And fade into the light of common day. (258)

As human learning increases, man's connection with nature decreases until it is "the light of common day." The "prison-house" symbolizes various kinds of artificial human learning, which means inevitably an increase of human misery.
Therefore, Wordsworth advocates the natural creative process to decrease human learning in order to increase man's connection with nature. He raises a song of thanks and praise:

...for the obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings;

...for those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain light of all our day.
Are yet a master light of all our seeing; (259)

The decrease of conditioned artificiality involves questioning human learning and reducing its influence. In this way, the childhood "affections" emerge, and the "shadowy recollections" of adulthood fill man with enough confidence to return to the infant's joy in original creative power. These adult "questionings" and "recollections" play the major role for the way back to nature. Without the glowing light of infancy and the provocations of nature, the return to nature and simplicity may become another pursuit of artificial human learning. "The Child is father of Man" because the rebirth of man into the presence of original creative power is related to childhood innocence and simplicity. Abandon artificial learning and man will return to the infant state where he is
closest to Heaven.

An infant state is a natural state, and its connection with nature is not realized consciously by most adults. But those "shadowy recollections" can lead to a realization of the living Soul, that non-being which creates every being. Therefore, the central idea in Wordsworth's poetry is not a simple eulogy of the infant simplicity, but a praise of human effort to decrease artificial learning so as to reduce the alienation between man and the origin of creative power. The infant and childhood stages belong to the sensory stage of affections in which feelings are provoked but no realization is reached of that non-being. The adulthood recollections belong to the stage where potential awareness of the creative non-being can be realized. Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" is a poem which makes a combined study of both stages with an emphasis on adulthood recollections:

...........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. (Lyrical Ballads 114)

The reversion process to nature is marked first of all by the
decrease of human learning to such a degree that he becomes an aspect of the living Soul, part of that creative non-being as reflected in human beings. In such a state, the Eye comes into play and sees into "the life of things," which is universal and constant:

And 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 in the mind of man,
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. (116)

In a comment on the above lines, Hartman points out:

His [Wordsworth] sight gradually expands into communion. A sentence from "Tentern Abbey" may start with the first person yet end on "all things"; and that which has moved the poet sometimes, somewhere, as a personal feeling, becomes a principle animating the world (27).

Man and every other being in the natural world share the animating principle. Wordsworth finally recognizes the embodiment of eternity (animating principle) in every being.

There are some typical figures of old men in Wordsworth's
poems who reflect the stage of recollections and the realization of the living Soul. To an ordinary man, old age is normally associated with the approach of death. For Wordsworth, figure of the old man carries a totally different message and reveals the function of the living Soul. The poet recognizes that growing old is part of the natural process from the physical perspective, for upon the old man lies the heaviest weight of custom. Therefore, the recovery of the original creativity by the old man becomes even more convincing of man’s need to renew his connection with nature than his meditation on infancy. Wordsworth’s description of the archetypal old man seems effortless, but it reveals the mental stability and creative capability that can be restored even to an old man.

His poem "The Old Cumberland Beggar" is a concentrated effort to prove that the reversion process is not only possible, but also functionally efficient. The old beggar wears "a fix'd and serious look / of idle computation" (206). The three adjectives strongly suggest the state of meditation, which is prerequisite to reach the living Soul. "Fix'd" suggests rigidity and excessive mental concentration, "serious" shows too much concern, and "idle" indicates a floating state of mentality. The practice of meditation requires that the mental state of a meditator should be between knowing and not knowing. Then, the body and the mind adjust themselves to a best functional state. Meditation is
actually a decrease in the process of human learning whose interference makes meditation impossible. It is a state in which the mind takes no action and is between consciousness and unconsciousness. In such a state, the mind functions most efficiently in adjusting the body's physical rhythm to be in tune with natural rhythms. The three adjectives reveal such a meditative state of taking no action. The old man is therefore animated and animating because he has established a communicative correspondence with nature. The following passage is another indication of his meditative state:

On the ground
His eyes are turn'd, and, as he moves along,
They move along the ground; and evermore,
Instead of common and habitual sight
Of fields with rural works, of hill and dale,
And the blue sky, one little span of earth
Is all his pursuit. (207)

Eyes are often regarded as the window of the human soul and emotions, but the description of the beggar's eyes here suggests the Eye which is the living Soul reached through the harmonious cooperation of all senses, or rather through reducing the influence of the physical eyes. The eyes are almost shut because they focus on "one little span of earth." The Eye, however, becomes open; the meditative state of concentration leads the old man to the living Soul.

The old man archetype illustrates the relationship
between taking no action and its wonders. As reflected in *Tao Te Ching*, the idea of taking no action is always evaluated by its functions. The old beggar moves about without taking any action, but he revitalizes the communication between him and the surrounding world. Wordsworth views the old man from the consideration that he has undergone the reversion process and has recovered the animating energy. Respect for other human beings is realized in "The Old Cumberland Beggar" not because people are conscious of moral standards, but because their submerged living Soul is temporarily rekindled. The horseman-traveller distributes alms to the poor by casting the alms on the ground. Although the intention to help is good, the action itself is a mixture of compassion and superiority. Yet, because of the animating energy in the old man, the horseman traveller is somehow touched and his submerged living Soul comes temporarily into play. He shows great respect for the old man, not because the old man is advanced in age, but because the two souls are unconsciously connected. The Postboy is understandably in a great hurry and could be angry, if his way is obstructed; however, he shows great respect for the old man who obstructs the way. Even dogs do not bark at the old beggar.

Wordsworth concentrates on the figure of the old man because it best illustrates his reversion process. The old man has long passed the stage of affections and the stage of recollections and awakening. He is already awakened, and his
existence itself serves to animate the surrounding beings. In the sense of human learning, the old man seems to possess none. He has reached the presence of the living Soul to such a degree that he really becomes part of nature. Artificial learning has been abandoned, and he has no sorrow. He has regained the original creative power and moves about to animate other beings. Chapter 55 in Tao Te Ching regards growing old as being contrary to Tao (197) and thus seems contradictory to Wordsworth's idea of an old man. However, Lao Tzu also provides a way back to youth— to embrace Tao. Therefore, old age in physical form can be functionally overcome by embodying the spirit of Tao. For Lao Tzu, one will grow old and die if one does not embrace Tao. The reversion process begins with one's effort to return to infant simplicity and innocence. For Wordsworth, the archetypal old man has already completed the reversion process and can animate other beings. Lao Tzu and Wordsworth approach the issue of growing old from different perspectives. No basic difference exists between them.
THEORETICAL CONCLUSIONS OF THE FOUR STAGES OF CREATION

As a human being, one should not alienate oneself from the natural environment, for one is not able to avoid the natural law. As a human being, however, one does cut oneself off from his original connection with nature. One lives in a world which is natural but conditioned with human artificiality. One's birth is "a forgetting," because one has the ability to adapt oneself to the conditioned human world. In the process of adaptation, one gradually loses sight of the living Soul and becomes "blind." One should not, however, hold one's ability to adapt to blame, because it works in opposite directions. If one channels it in the right direction, one's ability to adapt can bring one back to where one should belong: in the presence of original creative power, on the threshold of non-being and being. One's ability to realize the self as an integral aspect of the natural world's creative power is the basis for both the Taoist and Wordsworthian reversion processes.

Chapter 42 of Tao Te Ching discusses the different stages of creation and embodies the relationship between being and non-being. The chapter begins:

Tao produced the One.

The One produced the two.
The two produced the three.

And the three produced the ten thousand things. (176)

According to He Shang Gong, the "One" is the son (Te, or virtue) of Tao and means taking no action. The "two" refers to ying (feminine aspects) and yang (masculine aspects). The "three" refers to heaven, earth and man. Heaven and earth give birth to the ten thousand things, and man helps to nurture them. The four stages of creation can be divided into two parts. The first two stages are invisible while the last two stages are visible stages of creation. With the fourth stage, human motivation and aspiration are involved. Here arise all the problems of humanity's incongruity with nature.

Human beings have minds that think and are therefore able to disrupt the natural nurturing process by imposing human artificiality. As these "ten thousand things" embody the spirit of Tao, human beings also have the opportunity to recover their original creativity through genuine communication with nature. From this perspective, Wordsworth is reasonable to call for a return to nature, because it is a return to the initial moment of the fourth stage of creation which is not yet contaminated by human artificiality. Under such a condition, the return to Tao or the living Soul becomes possible. In order to return to the fourth stage of creation, human beings must renounce artificiality.

The reversion process takes the passive way, but it is passive from the mundane perspective. The reversion back to
Tao, however, is a return to the original creativity. Therefore, the process renews creation's origin in non-being and actively engages the essence of nature. As one returns to Tao, he embraces eternity because Tao is eternal. The relationship between eternity and evanescence becomes obvious once one comes to understand the four stages of creation, expressed as a relationship between being and non-being. Non-being gives birth to being, and being embodies the spirit of non-being. There are ten thousand moons in rivers and lakes, but there is only one moon. There are ten thousand things in the world, but there is only one essence common in them all: the spirit of Tao or the living Soul. Once the spirit of Tao or the living Soul is recognized, the problem of eternity is solved, because the spirit is individual as well as universal, participating in the ten thousand things and the One. The ten thousand things embody the One, and the One unifies the ten thousand things. The spirit of Tao, or the living Soul, is the creative, universal and unifying power.

Artificial human learning constitutes an obstacle in one's recognition of Tao or the living Soul. It interferes with one's harmonious connection with nature. Lao Tzu's philosophic analysis of the four-stage creation process shows that he has a theoretical background for the reversion process. So far as Wordsworth is concerned, one does not see that he has a theoretical preparation for explicating the reversion process from the perspective of being and non-being.
Reflected in his poems, however, is the poet's perfect understanding of creator and created. Both Lao Tzu and Wordsworth approach the issue of authentic creation through reducing artificial human learning. Their different concerns and their similar approaches to such concerns show more convincingly, in the light of the enormous historical and cultural distance between them, that Tao or the living Soul is a universal, creative power. Abandon artificial human learning and one will be able to return to nature as a harmonious component. Abandon artificial human learning and one will embrace eternity. Abandon artificial human learning and one will have no sorrow.
Notes

1. According to Records of the Historian [a history work by Qian Sima, a great historian in China's Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220)], Lao Tzu (c. 580-c. 500 B.C.) was a curator of the imperial library for the Chou House. Confucius (551-479 B.C.) once consulted Lao Tzu about rules of propriety. Lao Tzu witnessed the decline of the Chou House and resigned his position as a curator. He went west to Han Gu Pass. The commander of the Pass invited him to write down his thoughts. Thus, he put down more than 5,000 characters to express the meaning of Tao and Te (Xu 3).

The Chinese accepted Qian Sima's record of Lao Tzu for centuries. But in the Song Dynasty (960-A.D.1297), some scholars began to question the record. Ever since then, the war over the issue of Lao Tzu and the book has continued (Chan 35-53).

2. Literally speaking, Chapter 2 and Chapter 40 of Tao Te Ching contradict each other. Chapter 40 says that "being comes from non-being" (173) while Chapter 2 says that "Being and non-being produce each other" (101). A close reading of Chapter 2, however, shows that this chapter focuses on the "in-contrast-to" relationship. Brightness exists in contrast to darkness, and being long exists in contrast to being short. Therefore, non-being gives birth to being, and being indicates the existence of non-being. Since everything comes finally
out of non-being, this non-being is no doubt the universal creative power.

3. There are many interpretations of *Tao Te Ching*, but only two early ones exert great influence on traditional Chinese thinking. They are the Chinese versions with earliest commentaries by He Shang Gong [ *Lao Tzu chu* (Commentary on the *Lao Tzu*) ] in China's Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220) and by Wang Pi (226-249 A.D.) [ *Lao Tzu chu* (Commentary on the *Lao Tzu*). In comparison, *Tao Te Ching* interpreted by He Shang Gong is better than that by Wang Pi. According to Xu Jing, He Shang Gong reveals the real meanings in *Tao Te Ching* in areas like the art of government, the source of creation and health recovery, while Wang Pi emphasizes the metaphysical in that he privileges the abstract, ambiguous and paradoxical connotations in his interpretation. Xu Jing further points out that the He Shang Gong version of *Tao Te Ching* uses Chinese characters more ancient in calligraphy and comes into form earlier than the Wang Pi version, which has missing words in many places (4).

Wing-Tsit Chan is a scholar on Chinese philosophy and his English version of *Tao Te Ching* reveals his deep understanding of Lao Tzu. He has studied much research by Chinese scholars in the area and has paid special attention to the two earliest interpretations by He Shang Gong and Wang Pi. His translation is faithful to the original Chinese version as compared to other English translations.
The first two lines in Chapter 19 are translated by Chan as "Abandon sageliness and discard wisdom; / Then the people will benefit a hundredfold" (132). His choice of the words "sageliness" and "wisdom" follows He Shang Gong's interpretation, expresses the original Chinese meaning, and displays the spirit consistent in Tao Te Ching—to move away from human artificiality and return to simplicity. In D.C. Lau's translation, the two lines become "Exterminate the sage, discard the wise, / And the people will benefit a hundredfold" (75). What Lao Tzu wants to discard is artificial human learning. But Lau's translation indicates that Lao Tzu wants to abandon or kill the wise and the sage and therefore heavily distorts the original meaning. In Arthur Waley's translation, he drops the original meaning of artificiality created by sages and turns the two lines into "Banish wisdom, discard knowledge, / And the people will be benefitted a hundredfold" (166). The same problem exists with C.H. Wu's translation and Michael Lafargue's translation. In V.H. Mair's translation, he turns the Chinese version into "Abolish sagehood and abandon cunning, / the people will benefit a hundredfold" (81). Mair keeps the original meaning of artificiality created by sages, but he uses "cunning" instead of "wisdom." Being cunning is a moral problem and constitutes only a part of artificial human learning. In this way, Mair gives an inaccurate expression of the original meaning.

Chan's translation is authoritative also in the fact that
he offers a detailed explanation whenever ambiguity in translation or another sound interpretation exists. In Chapter 50, the Chinese term "ten-three" is either turned into "three out of ten" or is considered as a term to refer to thirteen human body parts in the translated texts discussed above. But only Chan reveals in the notes the existence of another interpretation and points out that "Han Fei Tzu understood 'ten-three' not as three out of ten but thirteen and identified the four limbs and the nine external cavities as factors that sustain life, lead to death, or lead through activity to death" (188-89). He Shang Gong interprets "ten-three" in the same way as Han Fei Tzu understands it. To understand "ten-three" as "three out of ten" is originally Wang Pi's interpretation. Such interpretation gives a percentage of the people who live, die, and move from life to death through activity. This percentage obviously violates the principle in Tao Te Ching, for Lao Tzu says that "My doctrines are very easy to understand and very easy to practice, / But none in the world can understand or practice them" (Lao Tzu 224). Although Chan follows the "three out of ten" interpretation, he points out another important understanding of "ten-three"; hence, I use Chan's version of Tao Te Ching throughout the thesis.

He Shang Gong's commentary is in Chinese. Throughout the thesis, the English interpretation of his commentary is mine.
Works Cited


