



***Innatism in Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood* by William Wordsworth**

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ABSTRACT

An idea evolves and becomes dominant; being contradicted by another idea thereby taking its next developmental stage evolving into a newer form with its natural essence. This paper explores the platonic ideologies like innatism, pure reason, the pre-existence of soul, the innate idea of virtue and the recollection as the means of knowledge that was romanticized during the romantic period. The researcher exclusively concentrates on William Wordsworth addressing Plato's belief in the immortal soul that exists before and after death and replaces with his conviction that children have a divine wisdom that adults no longer possess. This paper specially sheds lights on the poem *Ode to intimations of immortality*, which contains similar concepts of the Greek philosopher Plato and Socrates.

Keywords

Innatism, nativism, theory of pre-existence of soul, reason and experience.

William Wordsworth was one of the dominant figures in English Romanticism. He is one of the central figures and gave the manifesto of the Romantic period. He is considered to be the poet of spiritual and epistemological speculation. He brought the paradigm shift in diction, subject matter of poetry, meter, rhyme scheme and the concepts established by neo-classists. The son of John and Ann Cookson Wordsworth, William Wordsworth was born on April 7, 1770 in Cockermouth, Cumberland, situated in the Lake District of England: a zone that would turn out to be intently connected with Wordsworth for more than two centuries after his death. He started composing poetry as a little youngster in Grammar school, and before moving on from school he went on a voyage through Europe, which extended his affection for nature and his compassion towards the common man: both significant subjects in his poetry. Wordsworth is best known for Lyrical Ballads, co-authored with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and The Prelude, a Romantic epic poem chronicling the "growth of a poet's mind." A focus on simple,

obscure people, use of every day language and an emphasis on nature as an antidote to the corrupting influences of society are three main features on Wordsworth's poems. He reacted against neoclassical poetry, popular in the eighteenth century, which emphasized heroic figures, heroic themes and heroic couplets. His reactions opened up a new horizon in thinking and insinuated the mind with the ideas of imagination negating the ideas of reason.

It is widely acknowledged that the Greek philosopher Plato laid the foundation of western philosophy. He is a mathematician and philosopher. As A.N Whitehead states that the western philosophy is a series of footnotes to Plato. As a support to this claim Plato gave initial formulation to the most basic questions and problems of Western thought. Plato was born in 428 B.C in Athens to a family of long aristocratic lineage a fact which must eventually have shaped his philosophy at many levels. The controversial thinking and teaching of Socrates who questioned the established customs of then Athens have inspired him. Plato's thought was mainly influenced by a number of pre –Socratic thinkers who rejected the physical world known through our senses as mere appearance. Plato adapted dialectic method from Socrates that means to converse. Plato contributed and the innovator of the written dialogue and dialectic forms in philosophy.

Plato is regarded as the founder of western political philosophy. His theory of forms is one of the main contributions to the world of philosophy which is also known as pure reason. Plato has found the solution to the ambiguity of platonic realism or platonic idealism with the concept of pure reason. Platonism and its theory of forms denies the reality of the material world, considering the existing world as the copy of real world. The theory of forms is first introduced in the phaedo dialogue, also known as *on the soul*.

The concept of theory claims that there are at least two worlds: the apparent world of concrete objects, grasped by the senses, which constantly changes and an unchanging and unseen world of forms or abstract objects grasped by pure reason. This argument also leaves one with the notion that there are three worlds, with the apparent world consisting of both the world of material objects and mental images with the third realm consisting of the forms.

Plato proclaims and believed in the immortality of the soul also insisted life after death. Plato also greatly acknowledged the preexistence of soul, which wandered over the real world observing and gaining the knowledge of the real world. He insists that soul is immortal whereas the body, matter is mortal. The contact of the soul with the matter makes the soul to lose its purity and leaves it in a forgetting state. Socrates argues that knowledge is not empirical but it is from divine insight. This is an indication of rationalism.

A detail analysis of William Wordsworth leaves one with the notion that he has mainly concentrated on childhood and recollection of thought. The ideas of preexistence of soul are vividly seen in the lines

of Wordsworth from the poem *Ode to Intimations of Immortality*. The first four lines explain the forgetting stage of a human which makes him to recognize or understand not in a clear state. This is a pure idea which has the influence of the theory of the pre existence of soul.

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

Wordsworth explains the concept of pre-existing soul through the lost elements of nature. Wordsworth mainly uses the concept of recollection. It centers mainly on the core theme of innatism advocated by Plato and his teacher Socrates. According to Plato knowledge is not empirical. It is a gift of divine. Reason is a tool to gain knowledge. He denies the idea of empty state of mind in which experience writes it. Thus Plato contradicts with Aristotle who stated that mind is an empty slate and knowledge comes out of experience and through senses.

The lines of Wordsworth touch upon the epistemology of Plato.

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star, Hath had
elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:

The word 'birth' indicates the blending of spirit and matter that is the unification of soul and body. The soul, which resided in the ideal world, enriched it with the knowledge but the contact with the matter leads it to remain in a forgetful state. This is the theory of Plato and platonic epistemology.

The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting and cometh from afar

Wordsworth also concentrates on the recollection. Socrates promotes the idea that knowledge is a matter of recollection of the state before one is born, and not of observation or study.

Not in entire forgetfulness, And not in utter
nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come From God, who
is our home:

The soul is in the forgetful state and it gains the knowledge of ideal world by thinking and recollecting.

Wordsworth sets reminiscence as the concept of many of his poems. The ethics of Plato promulgates the

notion that knowledge is virtue. In the protogorasdialogue it is argued that virtue is innate and cannot be learned. Knowledge is innatetherefore virtue is innate. Thus the knowledge of senses, the knowledge of the copiedworld does not keep one pure state.

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own;
 Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,
 And, even with something of a Mother's mind,
 And no unworthy aim,
 The homely Nurse doth all she can
 To make her Foster-child, her Inmate Man,
 Forget the glories he hath known,
 And that imperial palace whence he came.

Wordsworth points out the innocent nature of oneself. A person is near to God through innocence and the worldly knowledge gained by experience separates and moves far away from the Supreme Being. It also makes him to forget the glories in which he had dwelled.

Conclusion

As A.N Whitehead states that the western philosophy is a series of foot notes to Plato. An idea evolves and contradicts and finally strives for attainment of development. The influence of Greek philosophy could be traced in writings of eighteenth century. The theory of innatism, pure reason, the pre existence of soul, the innate idea of virtue and the recollection as the means of knowledge have been well established in the writings of William Wordsworth.

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