CHAPTER ONE

CAPACIOUSNESS AS NATURAL PROCESS

Early in book 8, while describing shepherds at a fair beneath Helvellyn, Wordsworth depicts the attending figures first as moving about in an ambient magnitude, then as somehow larger than the very magnitudes that embrace them. "Immense," he says,

> Is the recess, the circumambient world
> Magnificent, by which they are embraced:
> They move about upon the soft green field:
> How little they, they and their doings, seem,
> Their herds and flocks about them, they themselves,
> And all which they can further or obstruct!
> Through utter weakness pitiably dear
> As tender infants are: and yet how great!
> For all things serve them: them the morning light
> Loves, as it glistens on the silent rocks;
> And them the silent rocks, which now from high
> Look down upon them; the reposing clouds,
> The lurking brooks from their invisible haunts;
> And old Helvellyn, conscious of the stir,
> And the blue sky that roofs their calm abode. (8.46–61)

The shift from a vision of human littleness in which the shepherds appear as "infants" to one of commanding human presence in which "all things serve them" destabilizes our sense of the boundaries

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between human and nonhuman, small and great, even inner and outer. Recording far more than a mere projection of human qualities upon the external world, the passage hypostatizes love and consciousness as qualities of nature itself, revealing the shepherds as both figures in an immense environment and as giant recipients of the very processes they appear to serve. The result is a vision of human presence grounded not in a dramatic perspective that shapes the individual against a nonhuman backdrop, that is, against an otherness that allows the contours of the human form to emerge from the beholding eye's orchestration of determinant contrasts, but in a shifting perceptual field that displaces consciousness into all things in such a way that cognitive and emotional qualities ordinarily belonging to humankind are seen to participate in an amorphous and embracive environmental unity of seeing and feeling. Nature, we are told, serves the shepherds. The morning light loves them, as do the observing rocks, clouds, brooks, and sky; old Helvellyn itself is "conscious of the stir." One cannot locate the seeing eye, the feeling heart in a particular being or object. The perceiving I that first looked upon the fair beneath Helvellyn has disappeared into larger processes of seeing and feeling. Like the perforated water jars of the Danaides, consciousness appears as a moving web of perceptions continuous with nature itself. Immensity, the announced subject of the lines, is both embracive of and contained within the shepherds it alternately dwarfs and exalts, and is itself subject to perceptual motion, to the "stir" of it all.

Significantly, the source of this motion remains forever hidden or dispersed in what Wordsworth later calls simply a "quiet process." The term appears in a passage that records a moment when the poet, "while yet a very child" (8.82), comes upon a shepherd and his dog emerging from the valley mists:

> It was a day of exhalations, spread
> Upon the mountains, mists and steam-like fogs
> Redounding everywhere, not vehement,
> But calm and mild, gentle and beautiful,
> With gleams of sunshine on the eyelet spots
> And loop-holes of the hills, wherever seen,
> Hidden by quiet process, and as soon
> Unfolded, to be huddled up again:
> Along a narrow valley and profound

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> I journeyed, when, aloft above my head,
> Emerging from the silvery vapours, lo!
> A shepherd and his dog! in open day:
> Girt round with mists they stood and looked about
> From that enclosure small, inhabitants
> Of an aerial island floating on,
> As seemed, with that abode in which they were,
> A little pendant area of grey rocks,
> By the soft wind breathed forward. (8.84–101)

Once again we are presented with the seeming paradox of immensity confined, of motion motionless. Though bound by an apparent island, the shepherd is yet free of all constraints, journeying motionless in a floating, forward-moving world. The "quiet process" that makes all this possible, that both reveals and hides, is centerless, sourceless, mysterious, infinitely productive of manifest particularities and ceaseless, seamless unities in which humankind and nature appear perfectly continuous with and productive of each other: if nature evokes humanity in the form of the shepherd, humanity evokes nature as invisible process through the majestic poignancy of its rural inhabitants. We are left with the visual perception of humankind as the very mists out of which its occasional forms emerge in all their immensurable glory and into which they are forever disappearing.

It is the indeterminateness of the process, however, its mysteriousness, that forms the ground of Wordsworth's sense of human majesty, even when that majesty appears eclipsed, as in London, amid "all those loathsome sights / Of wretchedness and vice" (8.65–66). Recalling the shepherds of his youth, "stalking through the fog" (8.401), their giant forms "glorified / By the deep radiance of the setting sun" (8.404–5), the poet concludes:

> Thus was man
> Ennobled outwardly before mine eyes,
> And thus my heart at first was introduced
> To an unconscious love and reverence
> Of human nature; hence the human form
> To me was like an index of delight,
> Of grace and honour, power and worthiness. (8.410–16)

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Though Wordsworth traces his abiding sense of human greatness to nature—"With deep devotion, Nature, did I feel, / In that great City, what I owed to thee, / High thoughts of God and Man . . ." (8.62–64)—the nature he exalts and to which he later says he belongs is uniquely devoid of form and definitive presence. Thus, near the end of book 8, while describing the power he found in all things, he writes that

> nothing had a circumscribed
> And narrow influence; but all objects, being
> Themselves capacious, also found in me
> Capaciousness and amplitude of mind;
> Such is the strength and glory of our youth!
> The human nature unto which I felt
> That I belonged, and which I loved and reverenced,
> Was not a punctual presence, but a spirit
> Living in time and space and far diffused. (8.756–64)

The "quiet process" Wordsworth remarked earlier in book 8 as productive of all things and beings in the endless ebb and flow of departure and arrival, of disappearance and emergence, is itself displaced by spiritual power conceived not as an indwelling force of nature but as emptiness, capaciousness. Unlike the "presence," the "something far more deeply interfused," of "Tintern Abbey," the source of Wordsworth's natural reverence in book 8 of *The Prelude* entails a process of dispersal, of diffusion, that identifies the human, the spiritual, and the natural as a vital continuum of interactive forces without center and abiding form.

Even when the poet employs a dualistic terminology to describe his sensations, we do not gather the sense of a vital distinction between external and internal, natural and human. In the concluding lines to the above passage, Wordsworth writes:

> In this my joy, in this my dignity
> Consisted; the external universe,
> By striking upon what is found within,
> Had given me this conception, with the help
> Of books and what they picture and record. (8.765–69)

All sense of a separate creative presence in nature or in books, Copyrighted Material together with any sense of a separate coadunative, mediating self, of

a mode of being removed in any way from the endlessly shifting motions of the universe, disappears into the ambient, sourceless perception of characterless immensity as a network of transient, eternally emergent identities. Wordsworth's vision of the relationship between humankind and nature, his sense of human nobility, his perception of the world itself as a "tract more exquisitely fair / Than is that paradise of ten thousand trees, / Or Gehol's famous gardens," as he writes elsewhere in book 8 (121–23), is based on the sheer immensity of the particular and on the corresponding absence of circumscription and abiding identity in himself.

Zen thought helps us to understand that the immensity Wordsworth here applauds is not vacuity. In terms remarkably close to those of Wordsworth, Herbert Guenther explains that the Buddhist concept of nothingness "names an openness that cannot be limited by an unvarying and exhaustively specifiable mode of being. It imparts to each and every complex individual an openness and profundity . . . misleadingly translated as emptiness or the Void. . . . "[1] Understood as a mode of dynamic openness, the Void, or the emptiness of things, according to Nolan Pliny Jacobson, "refers to the rich qualitative flow that is infinitely productive of all the forms of this world."[2] The "qualitative flow" to which Jacobson refers is for Buddhists the creative aspect of change. Reality, according to Jacobson, "is constituted by momentary *nows*, events interrelated and forever coming to be, none of which ever remains as it is." We cannot, therefore, think of nothingness as absence. "Nothingness is not nothing," Jacobson continues; "it is events in process." So far as we understand that the emptiness of things is the continually emergent creative process that forms the ground of all things, we can understand, to rely yet again on Jacobson, that "It is the emptiness-of-my-self-existence that the world is full of."[3] Masao Abe uses similar terms in describing the relationship between the individual's perception of natural process and his realization of his own emptiness. "Becoming, process, and flux are beginningless and endless in every possible sense, whether these notions are understood in terms of immanence or transcendence, substance or activity," writes Abe. "They are thoroughly realized existentially from within. They are grasped through the realization of Emptiness which opens up endlessly."[4] Just as Wordsworth, in his highest and most creative moments of visionary insight, understands that there is a direct correlation between his sense of the capaciousness of all things and his

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own capaciousness, so the Buddhist understands emptiness as a mode of revelational conjunctivity in which, as Michael Adam says, "Emptiness does not create the many things, it reveals them by showing itself as them. It is not the sum of things, but is each thing wholly and only and always for the little while that each thing is—one russet leaf is autumn, a green leaf is spring. All things are One and that is No-thing."[5]

The openness and corresponding creativity Buddhists celebrate as the ground of all things, including the individual self, resonate closely with the capaciousness of Wordsworth's visionary reality. The absence of "punctual presence," as he calls it, results from the perceived diffusion of spirit among things that are themselves forever changing, forever emerging in the "quiet process" that constitutes the onward flow of the world. The things themselves, including the beings who view them, are vast emptinesses, dispositions of capaciousness, only in the sense that they are containments without boundaries, continuities without abiding form. The Zen master Dōgen explains this notion of continuity in metaphorical terms similar in effect to the shepherd images Wordsworth employs:

> When a fish swims in water, there is no end of the water no matter how far it swims. When a bird flies in the sky, fly though it may, there is no end to the sky. However, no fish or bird has ever left water or sky since the beginning. . . . But if a bird leaves the sky, it will immediately die, and if a fish leaves the water, it will immediately die. You must understand that the water is life and the air is life. The bird is life and the fish is life. Life is the fish and life is the bird.[6]

Dōgen's metaphors help us understand that the bird and the fish are absolute in themselves, life-forms perfectly continuous with the water and the air in which they live. Water cannot be viewed as something other than the fish. Air cannot be viewed as something other than the bird. Commenting on Dōgen's text, Francis H. Cook writes: "The metaphor of the fish in water and the bird in the air makes the point that every event, every condition, everything, is the absolute reality in which the individual, itself the same reality, is eternally emersed."[7] Each of us, like the giant shepherds of Wordsworth's youth, is an emergent aspect of a continually moving

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absolute that comprises our being at all times. "We are never apart from this reality, just as the bird is never apart from the air," says Cook. "If it leaves the air, it dies, but in fact, it never does, nor are we ever, in life or death, apart from the ultimate reality."[8]

The effective displacement of separate presence as a quality of individual being or as a metaphysical principle thus reifies spirit not as in any way substantive, even in the Spinozistic sense of pantheistic force or argument, but as continuous with the very process by which all things are rendered dimensionless. Like Buddhist thought, Wordsworth's poetry in book 8 of *The Prelude* moves us away from the relational ethic in which things, beings, and ideas achieve identity through a system of signifying differences toward a realm of continually emergent, mutually productive unities in which all things, all forms, implode on each other or fold inward, as it were, in an eternally shifting matrix of creativity without source, center, and intention.

Given the shifting profile of this creative matrix, it is not surprising, then, that Wordsworth, in his concluding remarks on his continuing sense of the "unity of man," reveals, near the end of book 8, a note of diffidence regarding both the source and the countenance of his sensations as he looks back on them from the perspective of his residency in London. Recording how "every thing that was indeed divine / Retained its purity inviolate" despite the gloom of London, indeed "seemed brighter far / For this deep shade in counterview" (8.813–16), the poet writes:

> Add also, that among the multitudes
> Of that great city, oftentimes was seen
> Affectingly set forth, more than elsewhere
> Is possible, the unity of man,
> One spirit over ignorance and vice
> Predominant, in good and evil hearts
> One sense for moral judgements, as one eye
> For the sun's light. When strongly breathed upon
> By this sensation, whencesoe'er it comes,
> Of union or communion, doth the soul
> Rejoice as in her highest joy: for there,
> There chiefly, hath she feeling whence she is,
> And passing through all Nature rests with God.
> (8.824–36)

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The entire passage functions as a moving network of implosive synecdochic constructs that both illuminate and complicate the poet's sense of human unity. The bold simile, for example, that compares the "One spirit" of line 828 to the "one eye / For the sun's light" of lines 830-31 contrasts sharply with the cognitive uncertainty of lines 831–33, which record his submission to a mysterious "sensation . . . Of union or communion." Undoubtedly, Wordsworth experiences the sensation of human unity, a gracious moment of spiritual wholeness in which he encounters "One spirit over ignorance and vice," but he does not know whence the sensation comes or if its defining characteristic is one of union or communion. Union implies one whole or complete body; communion implies a shared bonding or relationship, a communing, of separate items. Even the syntax of Wordsworth's stated uncertainty is implosive and destabilizing, with the question of the sensation's source falling within the subsuming question of the sensation's profile as either union or communion. But if the uncertainty of the last six lines undercuts the confident drive toward the capping simile of the first eight in which the "One sense for moral judgements" is compared to the "one eye / For the sun's light" (830–31), it serves as well to amplify the passive construction of line 825, which, ironically perhaps, sets the passage in motion. The one spirit "was seen." But by whom?

The question, of course, is impertinent so far as it motivates a quest for generative locus and self. But it is immensely appropriate so far as its insolubility adumbrates a mode of spiritual unknowing that identifies the passive, implicate seer of line 825 with the moving soul of lines 833–36. Wordsworth's sense of the absence of boundary and specificity among things is caught up with, indeed is produced by, his very inability to locate the sensation of human unity in a particular source, including himself, and to describe its workings as an act either of union or of communion. But instead of causing a moment of frustration, the poet's confusion becomes an occasion of joy in the compensatory recognition of the ineffable unity of the soul with God or the absolute. Another instance of motion in motionlessness, the soul, remaining undefined, passes "through all Nature" to rest with God, the point from which, one gathers, she never departed. The soul is seen to "Rejoice as in her highest joy" at precisely the point where the individual human intellect she employs fails to determine her source, her features, and the boundaries of her unity

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with God. Wordsworth's vision of reality accrues through a dynamic progression of moral, psychological, and spiritual displacements that eliminate discrimination and preference in response to a perceived network of mutual identities. The "One spirit over ignorance and vice / Predominant" works, not in a hierarchical setting that distinguishes it from its contents, as if it were innately or inherently superior to ignorance and vice, but much in the manner of the sunlight to which it is compared, illuminating "in good and evil hearts / One sense for moral judgements."

In their appeal to a nondiscriminatory moral judgment that affects good and evil hearts alike, Wordsworth's lines bear a striking resemblance to the opening passages of the *Shinjin-Mei* (Chinese, *Hsin-hsin-ming*) of Seng-t'san, the Third Patriarch of Zen (Chinese, Chan). Composed sometime in the sixth century, and translated as "On Believing in Mind," the poem identifies the mind with the cosmic Tao or the Way of things:

> The Perfect Way knows no difficulties
> Except that it refuses to make preferences;
> Only when freed from hate and love,
> It reveals itself fully and without disguise;
> A tenth of an inch's difference,
> And heaven and earth are set apart. . . .

Explaining that "To set up what you like against what you dislike—/ This is the disease of the mind," Seng-t'san, in lines that compare remarkably with Wordsworth's earlier references to capaciousness of mind, asserts that

> [The Way is] perfect like unto vast space,
> With nothing wanting, nothing superfluous:
> It is indeed due to making choice
> That its suchness is lost sight of.[9]

Suchness (Sanskrit, *tathatā*) refers to the absolute, the true nature of all things. It is the condition of all things beyond all concepts and distinctions, beyond the realm of self-nature: "*Tathatā* as the thus-being of things and their nonduality is perceived through the realization of the identity of subject and object in the awakening . . . of

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supreme enlightenment."[10] Apprehension of the nonconditionality of all things can only occur in a state beyond discrimination and choice.

For the Buddhist, however, freedom from preference is not the absence of discretion; it is, rather, a condition of nonattachment to choice as it relates to the ego. Commenting on these lines from the *Hsin-hsin-ming*, Dennis Genpo Merzel writes: "Out of delusion and confusion arises self-clinging, our need to maintain the illusion of a separate self, or ego, which manifests in our forming preferences, in our picking and choosing."[11] The ability to have likes and dislikes and to experience emotions such as hate and love without clinging to them and to the preferences they effect is absolutely essential to the process of freeing oneself from the limitations of the ego in order to apprehend mind, which, as Merzel says later, "is vast and wide, boundless and limitless."[12] The Japanese Zen master Bunan relates this concept of mind to what he calls "essential human nature," whose emergence requires a detached response to matters of right and wrong:

> People think it is hard to perceive the essential human nature, but in reality it is neither difficult nor easy. Nothing at all can adhere to this essential nature. It is a matter of responding to right and wrong while remaining detached from right and wrong, living in the midst of passions yet being detached from passions, seeing without seeing, hearing without hearing, acting without acting, seeking without seeking.[13]

The mind that Bunan is here describing can be neither seen nor grasped because, as Merzel explains, it "does not have a shape, it does not have a form, it is not a thing, it is a no-thing."[14]

Wordsworth's appeal to a moral sense both inclusive of yet somehow beyond the good and evil of individuals relates closely to the dynamics of the Buddhist mind as a way or process both inclusive of yet beyond the very preferences it apprehends through individual consciousness. Recalling in moral terms the poet's earlier references to capaciousness, the "One spirit," like the sun, does not distinguish in a preferential dimension; it absorbs and illuminates while displacing the self from the center of perceptual engagements with reality.

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A comparable pattern of displacement prevents our efforts to locate Wordsworth's use of such terms as nature, soul, God, and spirit in fixed meanings. The nature through which Wordsworth depicts the soul as passing, for example, is not other than the beings who inhabit it, as we saw in the shepherd passages. Similarly, nature cannot be viewed as substantively separate from the spirit Wordsworth earlier remarked as diffused through time and space. The soul's journey toward a state of rest in God must be viewed, then, not as a movement toward something conceived as an achieved or achievable end, but as an unveiling of what always was or as an awakening to a felt presence that, like the Buddhist mind Merzel describes, lacks characterization and definition but that is nevertheless always here. Distinctions arise and vanish in such a way that all is revealed as God, soul, nature, spirit. The terms are interchangeable.[15] Love of nature thus leads to love of humankind not through a narrative progression from one state of being to another but through a poetic process that entails the falling away of layers of distinction between one thing and another. In this mode of capaciousness, to employ Wordsworth's vocabulary, all is revealed as at once God, soul, nature, spirit, and individual human being: capaciousness answers to capaciousness through the tacit recognition of the emptiness of all things, an emptiness perceived as the absence of an abiding identity or selfhood in things.

Love of nature, then, leads to love of humankind through the individual's recognition that love of nature *is* love of humankind: the resulting perception of human unity, like the conscious love attributed early in book 8 to mountains, rocks, and morning light, is of the nature of reality. It is not the province of humanity alone. "A poetry that represents man in isolation from nature," says Aldous Huxley, "represents him inadequately. And analogously a spirituality which seeks to know God only within human souls, and not at the same time in the non-human universe with which in fact we are indissolubly related, is a spirituality which cannot know the fullness of divine being."[16] The spiritual fullness Huxley exalts as an analogue of poetic vision grounded in the perceived indissolubility of humankind and nature surfaces for Wordsworth in response to early childhood experiences of consciousness and love as aggregates of all things. If the self in such a visionary mode is displaced from the center as a perceiving agent

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and is seen to disappear into larger cognitive and emotional processes, so also is the apparent selfness of all things seen to vanish into an eternally immanent creativity beyond the ability of the intellect to define it in relation to a particular cultural milieu. The moving soul of lines 831–36, in her journey through nature, has no choice but to rejoice in her unknowing. She has no place to go. All is present as emergent possibility. The spirit diffused through time and space renders time and space mere designations of that which, though ineffable, characterless, and formless, is forever now and here. As Masao Abe writes: "Thus, becoming is not simply becoming but Being in any moment; process is not merely process but always the beginning and the end at the same time; flux is not just flux but permanance [*sic*] at any point."[17] Wordsworth's joyous sense of human unity arises similarly as a fold or layer in a larger, ever-shifting web of imploding identities. His poetry in book 8 of *The Prelude* explores and celebrates the perceived integration of nature, soul, God, and humankind as a moving, capacious, seamless whole without center, source, and abiding form.

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Chapter Two

Capaciousness as Receptacle

If book 8 of *The Prelude* offers the theme of how love of nature leads to love of humankind through the gracious experience of capaciousness, book 7 reveals how the sense of universal emptiness enables the individual to escape the limits of conceptual thought and to retain a vital sense of spiritual freedom in circumstances that invite the opposite. For Wordsworth, the source of the problem is London itself, a place both remote from the natural influences of the beloved Lake District in which he was reared and threatening in the density of its swarming masses and trivial pursuits to overwhelm the calm majesty of the cosmic spirit he had encountered in his youth:

> Oh, blank confusion! and a type not false
> Of what the mighty City is itself
> To all except a straggler here and there,
> To the whole swarm of its inhabitants;
> An undistinguishable world to men,
> The slaves unrespited of low pursuits,
> Living amid the same perpetual flow
> Of trivial objects, melted and reduced
> To one identity, by differences
> That have no law, no meaning, and no end [.]
> (7.695–704)

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Significantly, Wordsworth does not reject "the perpetual flow / Of trivial objects." He accepts the flow and so provides himself with an opportunity to affirm later, without condoning the slavishness of quotidian urban pursuits, an intellectual, moral, and spiritual independence that will enable him to convert London from an image of vacuous horror to one of refulgent capaciousness. Beneath the multitude of "self-destroying, transitory things" (7.739), the poet experiences an underlying unity, "among least things / An under-sense of greatest" (7.710–11).

Wordsworth's ability to perceive a deep and abiding unity beneath the surface chaos of London is owing, he tells us (7.721–27), to the continuing influence of natural forms. The "mountain's outline . . . By influence habitual to the mind," the "forms / Perennial of the ancient hills," through both their innate "virtue" and "The changeful language of their countenances," have shaped the poet's mentality to such a "pure grandeur" that he envisions London, confounded in the closing lines of book 7 with his own "perfect openness of mind," as a "vast receptacle" embracing all things:

> This, if still,
> As hitherto, with freedom I may speak,
> And the same perfect openness of mind,
> Not violating any just restraint,
> As I would hope, of real modesty,—
> This did I feel, in that vast receptacle.
> The Spirit of Nature was upon me here;
> The soul of Beauty and enduring Life
> Was present as a habit, and diffused,
> Through meagre lines and colours, and the press
> Of self-destroying, transitory things,
> Composure, and ennobling Harmony. (7.729–40)

The closely juxtaposed images of mind as a "perfect openness" and London as a "vast receptacle" are too compelling to ignore. More than a mere symbol, London emerges here as a kind of objective correlative of the poet's mind. Perceiving both his own mind and London as vital immensities, the one a perfect openness, the other a vast receptacle, Wordsworth does not succumb to discrimination and

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moral condescension, nor does he grasp at compensatory ethical, philosophical, or religious systems as buoys on a shifting tide, but he retains in the midst of destructive triviality and transience a powerful sense of "Composure, and ennobling Harmony" grounded entirely in cognitive freedom.

The "perfect openness of mind" Wordsworth here celebrates as a condition both adumbrated by and extended through the perceived image of London as a vast receptacle corresponds directly to the Buddhist concept of mind as refulgent void. Hui Neng (638–713), the most famous Dhyana master of the Tang dynasty, and the Sixth Patriarch of Chan Buddhism, describes the mind thus:

> We say that the Essence of Mind is great because it embraces all things, since all things are within our nature. When we see the goodness or the badness of other people we are not attracted by it, nor repelled by it, nor attached to it; so that our attitude of mind is as void as space.[1]

The ninth-century Zen master Huang Po focuses more specifically on the theme of unity or of oneness in his depiction of mind, asserting that "All the Buddhas and all sentient beings are nothing but the One Mind, beside which nothing exists. This Mind, which is without beginning, is unborn and indestructible." Yet for Huang Po, as well, the mind is primarily void because it does not, indeed cannot, exist independent of the world. "It is that which you see before you," Huang Po continues; "begin to reason about it and you at once fall into error. It is like the boundless void which cannot be fathomed or measured."[2] In a later sermon, Huang Po enlarges on the theme of the mind's fundamental inaccessibility to thought: "The Mind is no mind of conceptual thought and it is completely detached from form. . . . If you can only rid yourselves of conceptual thought, you will have accomplished everything."[3]

Ridding oneself of conceptual thought, however, is not for the Buddhist a nihilistic act by which the mind is simply made into a blank. "Learned Audience, when you hear me talk about the Void, do not at once fall into the idea of vacuity," warns Hui Neng, "because when a man sits quietly and keeps his mind blank he will abide in a state of 'Voidness of Indifference.'"[4] In his commentary on

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Huang Po, John Blofeld explains: "If, conceiving of the phenomenal world as illusion, we try to shut it out, we make a false distinction between the 'real' and the 'unreal.'"[5] To understand, rather, that all distinctions are void, including the distinction between mind and other, is to realize, again in Blofeld's words, that "none of the attractive or unattractive attributes of things have [*sic*] any absolute existence."[6] This realization is for the Buddhist a state of absolute freedom in which one understands that knowledge of oneself is also knowledge of the nature of everything. The experience of a separate mind brooding upon reality simply disperses into what might best be termed a network of perceptions in which the boundaries between things, including those between perceiver and perceived, are seen never to have existed. "The single aim of the true Zen follower is so to train his mind that all thought-processes based on the dualism inseparable from 'ordinary' life are transcended, their place being taken by that Intuitive Knowledge which, for the first time, reveals to a man what he really is," writes Blofeld. "If All is One, then knowledge of a being's true self-nature—his original Self—is equally a knowledge of all-nature, the nature of everything in the universe."[7]

From the Zen perspective, Wordsworth could not have rejected as entirely unattractive what he saw in London, though he knew much of it to be invidious, because he understood intuitively, as we can tell from the early passages of book 7, the limits of conceptual thought, including the moral categories it prescribes, and the grounds of his own identity with all he perceived. Hence, his humble, almost self-effacing reference to "freedom" and to "perfect openness of mind" rather than—shall we say, perhaps in a more conventional Western vein—to an innate or indwelling human generosity of spirit or to a specific religious or cultural tradition as the source of "real modesty." From the beginning of book 7, Wordsworth was practicing what students of Zen would quickly identify as an ethics of freedom grounded in processes of self-emptying or self-displacement. Early in the narrative, for example, Wordsworth tells of how, awakened from a long and unproductive period by "A choir of redbreasts" (7.24), he experiences an unpremeditated "delight / At this unthought of greeting" (7.31–32). This delight carries him far into the deep, refulgent silences of a mind-state that will be nearly eclipsed, as he tells us later in book 7, by a litany of urban distractions:

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> A delight,
> At this unthought of greeting, unawares
> Smote me, a sweetness of the coming time,
> And listening, I half whispered, "We will be
> Ye heartsome Choristers, ye and I will be
> Brethren, and in the hearing of bleak winds
> Will chant together." And, thereafter, walking
> By later twilight on the hills, I saw
> A glow-worm from beneath a dusky shade
> Or canopy of the yet unwithered fern,
> Clear-shining, like a hermit's taper seen
> Through a thick forest. Silence touched me here
> No less than sound had done before; the child
> Of Summer, lingering, shining by itself,
> The voiceless worm on the unfrequented hills,
> Seemed sent on the same errand with the choir
> Of Winter that had warbled at my door,
> And the whole year seemed tenderness and love. (31–48)

The syntax of these lines is worth dwelling on for a moment, because it points to the source of Wordsworth's intuitive powers and to his strength, his unique ability, to withstand the sensuous assaults of London distractions. "A delight," the poet says, "unawares / Smote me." Neither the delight nor the poet is situated; neither experiences self-existence, as it were. The verb "unawares / Smote me" can be read in two ways—as applying either to the delight itself or to Wordsworth. To be sure, the birds sing; the poet hears. But the delight is sourceless, located at once in the birds' singing and in the poet's receptivity. Wordsworth himself, however, remains mysteriously unaware of the experience as having direction, that is, as coming to him from the outside. The confusion is, I believe, deliberate, the result of a moment of self-displacement so powerful in its impact that the experience of delight must be viewed as disembodied, as well as unfocused, not only comprising the poet's entire being in the instant of hearing, but nullifying hermeneutic efforts to locate either the emotion itself or its aural impulse in a particular source, whether in the poet or in the birds.

To be smitten "unawares," however, to be confused about source, direction, and goal, is not to be displaced from the center of one's

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being or to be lost in a meaningless environment of chaotic impulses. It is rather to be so identified with the contents of perception as to have no clear consciousness of center as occupying a specific point in time and space. The syntactic profile of Wordsworth's recorded experience of delight recalls similar features of Japanese haiku, which, according to Robert Aitken, attempt to reveal at once "the empty infinity of the universe and of the self."[8] A uniquely appropriate example of the form is a work by the Zen poet Bashō (1644–94):

> In plum-flower scent
> Pop! the sun appears-—
> The mountain path.[9]

On the surface, the poem appears to record simply a moment of startling receptivity: Bashō, wandering along a mountain path, sees the sun. Upon closer examination, however, the poem emerges as a record of profound psychological and intellectual dislocation. Like Wordsworth, lost momentarily in the creative vacancy of an unproductive period during his residence in London, Bashō, lost in the pervading scent of plum blossoms, is, for all practical purposes, without conscious center. When the sun appears suddenly to Bashō, it is, like the instant in which Wordsworth hears the choir of redbreasts, an action from both within and without. Explaining the word *Pop* (Japanese, *notto*), Aitken writes: "*Notto* and 'pop' are the action itself—from the inside. Bashō's experience of nature was more than observation, more than commingling: the sun, as Bashō, went *notto*."[10]

For Wordsworth as well, all potential dualism between self and other, between singing birds and listening poet, between quality of being in the form of delight and recipient of being in the form of perceiving poet, that is, finally, between subject and object, implode in the instant of intuitive awakening to self-nature. The poet's subsequent address to the birds, informing them that he and they together will be "heartsome Choristers" and "Brethren" who "in the hearing of bleak winds / Will chant together," eliminates all thought of an essential distinction between individual and environment, human and nonhuman. Like the birds, Wordsworth becomes the voice of summer, not simply a harbinger of something to come or a mediator between one thing and another. As Bashō emerges as another form

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of the sun itself, another means by which the sun sees itself, as it were, so Wordsworth is summer come forth in winter warblings. In this mood, he later sees a glowworm, experiences a silence that is virtually, like the earlier singing of the birds, the content of his being, and envisions the "whole year" as "tenderness and love." In this state of deep silence, even distinctions of time disappear: the year ceases to exist as an aspect or measure of time, as if time were mensurably different from reality, and becomes literally an emotional quality. Wordsworth seems to understand implicitly what the Buddhist acknowledges explicitly as the ontological ground of existence—that being and time are one and the same, not separable aspects of an eternally extant other called reality. So Dōgen writes, in the "Uji" fascicle of the *Shobogenzo*, that "time itself is being, and all being is time."[11] Time does not exist apart from the mutable phenomena of the world. "Time in itself is being," as another translation of Dōgen's statement reads; "all beings are time."[12]

In making these claims, however, I do not wish to obscure Wordsworth's problems with the theme of spiritual emptiness. There were times, certainly, when he had his doubts about the insubstantiality of being and when, as he reports in a Fenwick note to the Immortality Ode, he felt constrained to grasp at something, "at a wall or tree to recall" himself from what he calls an "abyss of idealism." Unable in such moments "to think of external things as having external existence," Wordsworth says: "I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature" (*PW* 4:463n). Buddhist thought traces such grasping after a perceived substantiveness to an innate fear of the dharma—the cosmic law of emptiness or the "great norm," as it is sometimes called, of universal impermanence. "Men are afraid to forget their minds, fearing to fall through the Void with nothing to stay their fall," says Huang Po. "They do not know that the Void is not really void, but the realm of the real Dharma."[13] We sense something of this fear in Wordsworth's later revisions of *The Prelude*. The "heartsome Choristers" whom he hails as "Brethren" in 1805 and with whom he will chant "in the hearing of bleak winds" become, in the 1850 *Prelude*, "Associates" with whom he will sing "unscared by blustering winds" (7.30). Both versions of these lines convey an element of fear. But the 1805 *Prelude* presents the winds as part of the total psychic landscape of Wordsworth's experience. To sing "in the hearing of

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bleak winds" is to accept the very bleakness of life as a welcome part of its dynamics. It is to convert into music what cannot be discarded without discarding life itself. To sing "unscared by blustering winds," however, is to obtrude a stoic element that evokes the image of a resisting self, something that stands apart from the bleakness of the moment and opposes the forces of nature. The substitution of "Associates" for "Brethren" introduces a corporative tone that further undermines the original blending of human and nonhuman. What appears in 1805 as a shared enterprise, as a mutual singing in the hearing of bleak winds, becomes in 1850 an agreement or partnership designed to protect an endangered self.

Wordsworth's response to the perceived immateriality of life or to its fundamental continuity with his own being is further complicated by a deeply compelling realization of his vocation as a practicing poet, a realization that gave him specific identity in a changeful world but that also required a critical stance grounded in a necessary dualism. The original unity that Huang Po celebrates as a creative Void and that Wordsworth sees as an abyss of idealism frequently reveals itself in a blending or fusing of images that the poet, though perfectly happy to record as perhaps the most unique aspect of his experience, is sometimes unable or unwilling to accept when he assumes a critical stance toward the original holistic event. This critical stance is particularly visible in those moments when Wordsworth views the form of his efforts, the work itself, from the highly self-conscious, vocational perspective of a practicing poet. In book 4 of *The Prelude*, for example, Wordsworth, reviewing his efforts thus far, compares himself to "one who hangs down-bending from the side / Of a slow-moving boat" (247–48), and who

> Sees many beauteous sights–weeds, fishes, flowers,
> Grots, pebbles, roots of trees, and fancies more,
> Yet often is perplexed and cannot part
> The shadow from the substance, rocks and sky,
> Mountains and clouds, from that which is indeed
> The region, and the things which there abide
> In their true dwelling[.] (4.252–58)

Although he speaks of these blendings as "Impediments that make his task more sweet" (261), Wordsworth is nevertheless "perplexed"

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