

Infinite Innocence

Remember the Genie in Aladdin? At the end of the movie, as he's let free from his imprisoning lamp he shouts with glee and becomes as large as the sky then disappears into the night. Our soul is like the expansive Genie and the imprisoning lamp is like our body. Our soul is this abstract, magnificently immense thing and the only thing that can come close to accurately reflecting it is nature. Our soul is the true, or larger part of ourselves and our soul is a part of nature. We are a part of nature. After all, "We are made of star-stuff," (Sagan). The five foundation elements can be seen in all life on Earth. Wordsworth didn't need science to acknowledge this though. He felt it and iterated it in his poetry. Much of Wordsworth's poems raise awareness around the importance of staying in touch with the true, or larger, soul self which is a part of nature itself. This true, larger part of ourselves cannot be found from anything external, but from exploration within.

A child does not have the same quantity of life experiences as an adult, yet a child can demonstrate a pure and authentic connection to abstract processes of life, such as death, because they live from their hearts, rather than their heads. An example of this can be seen in Wordsworth's lyrical ballad, "We Are Seven." "A simple child, dear brother Jim,/ What should it know of death?/" (Wordsworth) As adults, we can be quick to assume that a child does not comprehend death the same way an adult would. The ballad continues to tell the story of a time when the speaker meets a young girl who treats her late siblings as part of her life.

My stockings there I often knit,
My kerchief there I hem,
And there upon the ground I sit,

I sit and sing to them.
And often after sunset, sir,
When it is light and fair,
I take my little porringer
And eat my supper there./

This child's view on death is bumping up against the speaker's view on death. We can perceive that Wordsworth's view on death is that once someone dies, they are no longer counted. Yet, her view on death can be perceived that once someone dies, something about them still remains. And that remaining something is enough to share ourselves with and continue to include them in life's activities. "Their graves are green, they may be seen," (Wordsworth) This implies that there is life at their graves. Yes, her siblings are buried there, yet there is still life. Nature prevails and grass grows green upon their graves. To the little girl, this greenery means there is life and that her siblings are still there in some way. "And there upon the ground I sit,/ I sit and sing to them./" Her siblings are no longer alive, physically, but they live on through her making space for them in her life and their legacy is reflected through nature, through the greenery around their graves. This seems to perplex the speaker, he cannot wrap his mind around why she remains to include them when counting up her siblings. To the speaker, her dead siblings do not count. To the little girl, they certainly do still count and the greenery is a sign that their essence lives on. Children are not yet jaded by life and all its demands and traumas. Their personalities are more pure, more original than that of an adult because they have not yet shaped their entire personality by the influences of society. This contrast of the child and adult is reflected upon in Wordsworth's, "The World Is Too Much With Us."

Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;

We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!

For this, for everything, we are out of tune; /

He highlights how we have disconnected ourselves from nature and replaced that connection with valuing material objects and work. However, our true power lies not in the amount of money we make or the things we own but in the depth of our inner connection to the larger processes of life. Children can help us get back in touch with our true selves, just as the girl in “We Are Seven” was providing the speaker with a different perspective on death. Additionally, our own inner child can guide us back to ourselves as well.

Every individual adult has experienced being a child. An individual’s childhood experience lives within them and is referred to as, the inner child. The degree to which one is in touch with their own inner child varies from person to person. Additionally, some people may not be aware of the presence of their inner child or perhaps they dismiss it or suppress it. Stephen Diamond Ph.D. talks about the inner child in a [Psychology Today](#) article, “We were all once children, and still have that child dwelling within us. But most adults are quite unaware of this. And this lack of conscious relatedness to our own inner child is precisely where so many behavioral, emotional and relationship difficulties stem from.” Being in touch with one’s own inner child can provide great wisdom, “The Child is father of the Man; /” is a line from Wordsworth’s poem, “My Heart Leaps Up,” implying that our inner child can teach our adult selves how to be more childlike.

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!/

He wants us to take in the phenomenons of nature with similar wonder and reverence as a child would. Wordsworth's inner child comes out through appreciating nature. He recognizes that when he sees a rainbow, he experiences a similar sense of awe as he did as a child. This pure, original part of himself is so sacred to him, that he would rather cease to live than not have the presence of his childlike wonder. However, as we live our life, we begin to collect layers of life experiences. These experiences pile up on top of our inner child. Our inner child is our true, or larger selves.

But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy,/

This excerpt from Wordsworth's poem, "Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," implies that when we are born, our true self is present and we are not fully human yet, but rather a being from the heavens. "Shades of the prison-house begin to close/" iterates that this pure part of ourselves gets covered up as we experience life, we forget the true nature of ourselves. The way to get back in touch with this pure part of ourselves is through

nature, because nature is the only thing that can reflect the immensity of our true selves, our soul self. Nature is the path to us being able to tap into our true, larger selves.

Spending time in nature can bring us back to ourselves. The self beyond the identity we have defined ourselves to be, based on our job, values, country and given name. He points this out in his poem, "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud,"

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils./

There's nothing like getting out of our worldly worries by looking up at the night sky or wandering through a meadow of flowers. These memories of connecting to nature can be an antidote to life's stresses. Nature's teachings are all around us, every day and all we have to do is go outside and surrender to it with one breath.

Wordsworth was concerned at the direction in which human society was going and identified the importance of staying in touch with our true self. He was concerned we would completely lose ourselves in the rat race. Through his poetry, he provided us with ways to stay true to ourselves within this ever changing world. His formula is to set aside our adult selves and surrender to nature's wisdom. Nature speaks through the children, she shows herself in the sky, the grass, waters and you can hear her in their children's laughter and feel her when you marvel at her glory and she is calling us back home, to return to our true, larger selves within.

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