

# SOCRATES' ANAMNESIS OF THE CHILD'S UNCONSCIOUS MEMORY TO NATURE AND ROUSSEAU'S HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN WORDSWORTH'S POEMS

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## **ABSTRACT:**

*Childhood experience toward nature is important in shaping one's development of understanding life therefore this research is conducted. The purposes of this research are to describe how the anamnesis arouse the speaker's mind to recollect his childhood memory in "The Intimations Ode" and "My Heart Leaps up when I Behold" and to describe the way the speaker sees the nature from his childhood memory to his adult in those two poems. The scope of the study is two of Wordsworth poems analyzed by using the theory of anamnesis stated by Socrates and the theory of human development stated by Rousseau. Anamnesis is a form of remembrance enabling man to perceive certain permanent, even eternal, truths once he remembers to remember them, and through their recollection raise them once again to conscious significance. Rousseau states the human's development in five stages of life; infancy, the age of nature, pre-adolescence, puberty, and adulthood. These two theories are applied because content of the two poems are about recollecting the speaker childhood experience (anamnesis) and about growing (human's development). The limitations of the study are the data are taken from two of Wordsworth poems and only the stanza(s) which have natural terms according to Wordsworth are analyzed. The methodology of the research is as follows: after doing the close reading, the poems are classified based on Wordsworth's natural terms, then paraphrasing, interpreting the poems based on the two theories by Socrates and Rousseau, and the last is concluding the result. The findings show that the speaker of the poem thrills and understands life by activating his imagery and recollecting the experience with nature, it means that the speaker does anamnesis to find the truth. The phases of life in "The Intimations Ode" are in lines with Rousseau's theory those are from the age of nature until adulthood; whereas in "My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold" the speaker's life of stages begins from the age of nature until he becomes old, the old age is not stated in Rousseau's theory. As the conclusion, anamnesis brings the speaker into three phases of thinking; the loss of vision (the difference feeling of seeing the same nature between the speaker's childhood and adulthood), the nature of the loss (the reason why the loss happens), and the acceptance. Five stages of life of the narrator are commenced from the age of nature, pre-adolescence, puberty, adulthood, and old age. The old age is a stage creating by Wordsworth for Rousseau does not mention the old stage. Rousseau only stated one's life development until the age of twenty five. The suggestion is that the further researchers to analyze other poems of Wordsworth and the other romantic poets' works as most of their poems are also about nature.*

**Key words:** nature, anamnesis, recollection, stages of life.

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## **I. Introduction**

The love of nature is one feature of the English poetry of the Romantic period (1789-1830). Watson says that Romantic period envisages our ideas about the nature of the individual, the society in which he lives, the natural world which surrounds him, and the role of art in society (1985: 1).

There were six great poets of the Romantic period. They were Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelly, and Keats.

Wordsworth is chosen than other Romantic poets because Wordsworth is best characterised by its strong affinity with nature. Great Romantic poets divided into two groups: first, William Wordsworth,

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Robert Southey, and Walter Scott; and second, about twenty years younger, Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and John Keats (Lombardi, 2010: <http://classiclit.about.com/library/bl-etexts/rfletcher/bl-rfletcher-history-10-great.htm>). Wordsworth is the most consistent poet who dedicates himself to nature than others. It is reflected in most of his works especially poetry. For the sake of his love of nature, he lived nearly all his life in the Lake District (Coles Notes, 1983: 30) as his inspirational place to create his poems.

William Wordsworth, as he wrote in the preface of "The Intimations Ode", said that "The Intimations Ode" is a poem about a prior state of existence of a child when he saw something in his childhood (Noyes (Ed.), 1956: 327).

Wordsworth proceeds that his belief is in line with Platonic philosophy in classic literature. Platonic Philosophy which concerns much with pre-existence is from the dialogues of Socrates about the immortality of the soul written by Plato. It is supported by Sherry as he writes that for Wordsworth, as for Socrates, anamnesis is a form of remembrance enabling man to perceive certain permanent,... (Sherry, 1980: 7). The process of recollecting one's unconscious memory happens in pre-existence is called anamnesis.

Recollection is the act which recovers, by raising it into consciousness, the significance of the child's unconscious remembrance of how it once perceived the presence of the divine. For Wordsworth, as for Socrates, anamnesis is a form of remembrance enabling man to perceive certain permanent, even eternal, truths once he remembers to remember them, and through their recollection raise them once

again to conscious significance (Sherry, 1980: 6-7).

"The Intimations Ode" also shows the dismal process of human growth (Coles Notes, 1963: 55). Moreover, Trilling in his essay argues that Wordsworth's *Ode* is not about the failure of the poet's poetic powers but, rather, about growing up (in Coles Notes, 1963: 52). Discussing growing up cannot be separated from childhood to adulthood. The ode associates "delight and liberty" the "simple creed" of the Revolution with the nonreflective condition of childhood. According to the Ode, adult wisdom, such as it is, begins in the memory of Edenic infancy, proceeds by inference (intimation) to the hypostasis of a more blessed, prenatal state, and concludes in the certainty that "natural life is the history of the acceptance of loss (Levinson, 1986: 97-98).

"My Heart Leaps up when I Behold" tells about the bond between the speaker and nature as the speaker cannot be separated from nature since he was a child until he dies. The rainbow that he looked when he was a child was something about nature that he wants to be within his whole life. This unconscious memory of nature in his child recollected in his life when he is a man is in line with Socrates' theory of anamnesis. In "My Heart Leaps up when I Behold" Wordsworth also stresses the importance of childhood as the state determining the development and nature of man (Oliver, 1980: 18).

Childhood and nature in the poem are closely related with Jean-Jacques Rousseau's theory of the development of man as Levinson states that in the context of 1807, apostrophes to a Child could not but conjure Rousseau, he who *made* the child father of the man (1986: 96). This is in line with Noyes who says that in *Emile*,

Rousseau presents a persuasive picture of the child of nature, living alertly with his first hand sensory impressions in surroundings of simple, country life, unchecked by the errors of artificial restraint and arriving by himself to the full untrammelled strength of manhood (1956: xxviii).

“The Intimations Ode” and “My Heart Leaps up when I Behold” have close similarities as the two of them tell about the importance of nature in recollecting the speaker's memory of his childhood and the significance of nature in shaping the speaker's mind through some stages of his life. The difference between them is the object; in “The Intimations Ode” the speaker sees many objects of nature but in “My Heart Leaps up when I Behold” the main object is only the rainbow.

This article discusses on how the anamneses arouse the speaker's unconscious memory in “Intimations of Immortality from Recollection of Early Childhood” and in “My Heart Leaps up when I Behold” and how the speaker sees the nature from his childhood memory until he becomes adult in those two poems.

## II. Theoretical Overview

### A. Concept of Wordsworth's Nature

As the subjects of this article are two of Wordsworth poems' then the definition of nature are also taken from his concept. Nature for Wordsworth is chiefly rural nature, the abiding presences of mountain, lake, and field under the influence of changing seasons... (Hartman in Abrams (ed.), 1975: 123).

### B. Anamnesis in the Meno

The explanation of *Meno* is based on *Great Dialogues of Plato* translated by W. H. D. Rouse. Written in the Socratic dialectic

style in 380 BC., *Meno* is one of Socrates' dialogues which is begun by the Meno's question to Socrates whether virtue can be taught. *Meno* is an attempt to determine the definition of virtue, or *arête*, meaning in this case virtue in general, rather than particular virtues (e.g. justice, temperance, etc.) the goal is a common definition that applies equally to all particular virtues. Socrates moves the discussion past the philosophical confusion, or *aporia*, created by Meno's paradox with the introduction of the theory of knowledge as recollection, anamnesis, and in the final lines movement towards Platonic idealism. The dialogue in the *Meno* is a discussion of the nature of virtue and particularly the question whether virtue can be taught (Rouse, 1956: 28).

*Meno*, however, wants evidence of Socrates' claim that learning is really a kind of recollection. Calling over one Meno's slaves, Socrates sets about illustrating this idea. The questioning that follow provides a concise model of the Socratic elenchus, in which continuous questioning leads Socrates' subject into a state of total uncertainty (*aporia*) about what they thought they knew.

Establishing that the slave speaks Greek, Socrates draws a square in the dirt in front of him and divides it into equal sections. Asking questions of the slave (and never teaching him anything directly) until the slave can find the answer himself.

Anamnesis in *Meno* is recollecting one's unconscious memory to his past life especially in answering a geometrical problem until he can answer the problem even though he has never been taught geometry before.

### C. Anamnesis in the Phaedo

The explanation of *Phaedo* is based on

The *Dialogues of Plato: Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Symposium, Republic* written by Plato. Phaedo is the name of one of men who engages the last Socrates' dialogue before the latter being executed by drinking Hemlock poison. Phaedo describes the final days of Socrates and his proofs of the immortality of the soul. In connection with anamnesis in the *Meno* which Socrates proved by asking his slave a geometrical problem, the immortality of the soul in Phaedo proves that someone has a soul before he was born and that soul had been got knowledge. By the time he was born, it is possible that he forgets his knowledge but when he was reminded by someone or something, he can remember his previous knowledge by recollecting his memory. The soul is immortal since when the body dies, the soul is still alive.

#### D. Concept of Human Development of Rousseau

Rousseau divides development into five stages in his *Emile* (a book is devoted to each) those are: infancy, the age of nature, pre-adolescence, puberty, and adulthood. The stages below are those associated with males.

**Stage 1: Infancy (birth to 2 years).** The first stage is infancy, from birth to about two years (Book I). Infancy finishes with the weaning of the child. Rousseau says that 'We are born capable of learning, but knowing nothing, perceiving nothing. The mind, bound up within imperfect and half grown organs, is not even aware of its own existence. The movements and cries of the new-born child are purely reflex, without knowledge or will (Rousseau, 2004: 32).

**Stage 2: 'The age of Nature' (2 to 12 years).** The second stage, from two to ten or twelve, is 'the age of Nature'. During this

time, the child receives only a 'negative education': no moral instruction, no verbal learning. He sets out the most important rule of education: 'Do not save time, but lose it... The mind should be left undisturbed till its faculties have developed' (Boyd, 1956: 41). The purpose of education at this stage is to develop physical qualities and particularly senses, but not minds.

**Stage 3: Pre-adolescence (12-15 years).** Émile in Stage 3 is like the 'noble savage' Rousseau describes in *The Social Contract*. 'About twelve or thirteen the child's strength increases far more rapidly than his needs'. The urge for activity now takes a mental form; there is greater capacity for sustained attention (Boyd 1956: 69). The educator has to respond accordingly.

**Stage 4: Puberty (15-20 years).** Rousseau believes that by the time Émile is fifteen, his reason will be well developed, and he will then be able to deal with he sees as the dangerous emotions of adolescence, and with moral issues and religion. As before, he is still wanting to hold back societal pressures and influences so that the 'natural inclinations' of the person may emerge without undue corruption. There is to be a gradual entry into community life (Boyd 1956: 95). Most of Book IV deals with Émile's moral development.

**Stage 5: Adulthood (20-25 years).** In Book V, the adult Émile is introduced to his ideal partner, Sophie. He learns about love, and is ready to return to society, proof, Rousseau hopes, after such a lengthy preparation, against its corrupting influences. The final task of the tutor is to 'instruct the young couple in their marital rights and duties' (Boyd 1956: 130).

### III. The Implementation of Related Theories and Data Analysis

This part discusses how the research is conducted. This study is designed as document analysis method because the data of this study are in the form of documents and the analysis will be done descriptively. As a research method, document analysis is particularly applicable to qualitative case studies intensive studies producing rich descriptions of a single phenomenon, event, organisation, or program (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994 in Bowen, <http://www.rmitpublishing.com.au/qrij.htm>).

The source of data of Wordsworth's poems entitled "*Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*" or "The Intimations Ode" and "My Heart Leaps up when I Behold" are from *English Romantic Poetry and Prose* which is selected and edited by Russell Noyes.

In collecting the data, some steps are used. They are: reading the poem carefully, classifying the lines on the basis of the nature theory stated by Wordsworth, and identifying the selected classification concerning with the theory of anamnesis stated by Socrates and the theory of human's development stated by Rousseau.

Document analysis involves skimming (superficial examination), reading (thorough examination), and interpretation. This iterative process combines elements of content analysis and thematic analysis. Content analysis is the process of organising information into categories related to the central questions of the research (Bowen, 2009. <http://www.rmitpublishing.com.au/qrij.htm>). In analyzing the data, the following procedures are taken: Classifying the data where the data are classified based on the nature's definition stated by Wordsworth as

has been explained in the previous chapter. Nature for Wordsworth is chiefly rural nature, the abiding presences of mountain, lake, and field under the influence of changing seasons... (Hartman in Abrams (ed.), 1975: 123). Therefore, the data will be classified in terms of rural nature found in each line of the poem. After classifying the data, it will be known whether all stanzas have nature's definition based on Wordsworth or not. Only the stanzas which have intended data will be used. The next step is labeling. The classified data will be labeled to differentiate between one classification with others. For example: 1. "E" for the terms concerning with earth, which is divided into: 'M' for the terms concerning with mountain, 'W' for the terms concerning with lake or waters, 'T' for the terms concerning with trees, etc. 2. "S" for the terms concerning with sky, which is divided into: "Sr" for the terms concerning with stars, "Sn" for the terms concerning with sun, "Mn" for the terms concerning with moon, etc. and "S" for the terms concerning with seasons.

If some terms are the same, then it will be analyzed whether the other terms and content in one stanza are also the same with the other or not. If there are two or more stanzas have the same nature terms and content, then only one of them will be analyzed, but if it is only some similar terms and the context are different, then they are not considered the same data. The third is paraphrasing each stanza of the poem. The next step is interpreting each stanza based on the theory being applied. The interpretation is based on the theory of anamnesis stated by Plato. Therefore, the interpretation will be emphasized on how those anamneses arouse the speaker's unconscious memory in relation with nature

in “The Intimations Ode”. The next is describing the result of the analysis and the last is concluding the result.

## **I. Discussion**

### **A. The Anamneses in “Intimations of Immortality from Recollection of Early Childhood”**

The speaker of this poem is aware that nature in the present is not as beautiful as it was when he sees meadow, grove, and stream, the rainbow, the lovely rose, the delightful moon, waters on a starry night, a tree, a field and a pansy. The speaker tries to memorize his childhood experience on nature as he feels there is something wrong with him.

He seeks the truth through a long contemplation until the nature around him, such as a tree, a field and a pansy, reminds him that the answer of his question can only be found through recollecting his past experiences with nature. The speaker then recollects his memory.

Nature has great effect on arousing the speaker's unconscious memory of his childhood when he grows up. At first when he saw nature like meadow and sea, he felt that it was different with his childhood feeling but then the other nature such as tree, field and pansy reminds him of how to find the truth by recollecting his past experiences toward nature. Nature in his adulthood has activated the speaker's unconscious memory to compare with nature in his childhood. The act of remembering his childhood's memory to feel the difference between the past and the present is called anamnesis.

To find the truth a man must think back to his childhood because the childhood memory is a perpetual benediction which is the source of delight and liberty and the

simple creed of childhood. Thinking back to the past in order to find the truth and to reach high instinct is aimed to prevent a man from a further destruction as he is more deeply involved in the worldly life is called anamnesis. The recollection of thinking the past is done by activating his senses on nature.

The act of recollecting the speaker's childhood experiences toward nature, which is also called anamnesis, has helped him to find the truth and to cope with his condition at present as he realizes that the lost will never be reached back, but he knows how to live with. He can live happily by releasing the pleasures of worldly life.

### **B. The Anamnesis in “My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold”**

“My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold” has a single nature subject that is a rainbow in the sky. The speaker always thrills as he looks at the rainbow in the sky. He remembers that he also felt the same when he was child. Therefore the speaker tries to recollect his memory of the effect on seeing a rainbow in the sky as it always gives him the same impact on his heart. The feeling of thrill remains unchanged whenever he sees a rainbow in the sky; either in his childhood, his present time when he is a man, or in the future when he will be old. Hence the rainbow evokes him to recollect his childhood memory that he feels the same as it was.

### **C. The the Nature from the Speaker's Childhood Memory until He Becomes Adult in “Intimations of Immortality from Recollection of Early Childhood”**

The speaker recollects his past time memory as he sees meadow, grove, earth, the rainbow, the lovely rose, the moon, and

waters on a starry night. He realizes that they do not seem as beautiful as they were. He remembers seeing them in the past. This shows that the speaker had been able to remember what he saw at that time because when he speaks at present he can mention what kind of nature he saw. The ability to receive images according to Rousseau belongs to a two to twelve year child in the second phase of his life cycle; but based on Wordsworth's concept the ability to sense surrounding begins from the infancy.

After being sad of seeing the nature, the speaker tries to entertain himself. He changes his mood in a short time by rejoicing the nature. However, it does not last long as he then feels the ecstasy after seeing the nature. The temporary excessive happiness which is felt by the speaker and then he changes his happiness into a grief in a sudden shows his unstable thinking. His emotion then is still unstable; but he has tried to cheer his life up again. This indicates that he should be in his third stage, which is a stage of pre-adolescence between 12 and 15 years because he has been full of strength to show and change his mind. His strength increases more rapidly than his needs and he begins to use his mind even though it is still very limited.

Soul is immortal therefore it is very important to keep the good soul. But what makes the soul distort is the 'prison-house' as it can wash the light of one's soul out. The light in one's childhood will fade when he is growing older. The speaker has been developing his mind further than he was in the previous. He is also aware the danger of the world toward the child's light on his life. These are the characteristics of Rousseau's fourth stage of life when a man is in his puberty, aged between fifteen and twenty years old. In this stage, a man's reason will

be well developed, and he will then be able to deal with what he sees as the dangerous emotions of adolescence, and with moral issues and religion. The speaker reason is well developed as he finally realizes that the soul is the important thing in one's life. To keep the soul virtue one should avoiding the world's pleasures as they can plague human to forget their nature.

The speaker realizes that he cannot bring back the hours and take back his lost. But he does not surrender because he will find the remaining strength so that he will not be sad anymore. He also praises the human heart, its tenderness, joys, and fears. He learns that every single thing in the world is worth. He should be in his fifth stage of life according to Rousseau. The fifth phase is a time of adulthood between twenty to twenty-five years when a man is ready to return to society after such a lengthy preparation against its corrupting influences. The speaker has had long effort and contemplation to find the glory of life. After such a long preparation, he then is ready to cope with his life and start living peacefully.

#### **D. The Nature from the Speaker's Childhood Memory until He Becomes Adult in "My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold"**

The speaker thrills in seeing the rainbow in the sky in his three stages of life; in the beginning of his life, at present when he is a man, and in the future when he becomes old. 'In the beginning of life' is when he belongs to the second stage that is at the age of nature between two to twelve when he was able to function his memory of seeing something, that is a rainbow in the sky. According to Rousseau, if a child is able to memorize the images he receives at

the second stage that is at the age of nature. 'At present when he is a man' means that he is at his fourth stage of life aged between fifteen to twenty years as Rousseau states that "Emile is now a man..." (2004:367) when Emile is in his puberty. The speaker wants to feel the same in seeing the rainbow until he becomes old. Rousseau does not explain the old stage; therefore it is purely the creativity of Wordsworth.

Even though Wordsworth is one of Rousseau's followers, Wordsworth has his own creativity in defining the stages of human's life. In "The Intimations Ode" Wordsworth follows Rousseau's theory of human's development but in "My Heart Leaps up when I Behold" Wordsworth defining his own concept of the Old stage.

## II. Conclusion

In "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" and "My Heart Leaps up when I Behold" nature has great effects on recollecting the speaker unconscious memory of his childhood. In "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" anamnesis brings the speaker into some phases of his thinking: (1) the loss of vision (stanzas I-IV), (2) the nature of the loss vision and an attempt to explain its causes (stanzas V-VIII), and (3) the reconciliation, the recompense, and the acceptance (stanzas IX-XI).

The way the speaker responds to nature in "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" shows his stage of life, those are: (1) he is at his second stage of life (stanzas I-II), (2) he is at his third stage of life (stanzas III-IV), he is at his fourth stage of life (stanzas V-VIII), and he is at his fifth stage of life (stanzas IX-XI).

In "My Heart Leaps up when I Behold" the speaker feels amazed at seeing the rainbow in the sky from his second stage of life, it is continuing until his fourth stage of life and it will be continued until he is old. Being old is not stated on any stage of Rousseau's theory of human's development; the old is a stage created by Wordsworth himself. Although Wordsworth is one of Rousseau's follower but they have different point of view in defining the human's development. Wordsworth's creativity of old stage proves their differences.

Besides Wordsworth's own creativity in defining the stages of human's development which is different from Rousseau, they also have the same common in seeing the nature. Wordsworth two poems above and Rousseau's Emile show that living alertly with one's first-hand's sensory impressions in his surrounding (nature) is very important to shape his personality and development.

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