INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND TRANSLATION STUDIES (IJELR)
A QUARTERLY, INDEXED, REFEREED AND PEER REVIEWED OPEN ACCESS INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
http://www.ijelr.in (Impact Factor: 5.9745) (ICI)

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 13. Issue 2. 2026 (April-June)

INTERNATIONAL STANDARD SERIAL NUMBER INDIA
2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

The Twain Shall Meet: Vision and Memory in *Aurobindo's Future Man and Wordsworth's Past Man*

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doi: 10.33329/ijelr.13.2.161

Article information
Article Received:06/05/2026
Article Accepted:08/06/2026
Published online:14/06/2026

Abstract

This paper undertakes a comparative reading of Sri Aurobindo's concept of the 'future Man', the Supramental being who evolves beyond mental humanity and William Wordsworth's concept of the 'past man', crystallised in the celebrated aphorism "The Child is father of the Man" from the poem "My Heart Leaps Up". While Aurobindo projects an evolutionary teleology oriented towards a divinized future, Wordsworth anchors human identity in the formative experiences of childhood, arguing that the adult personality is shaped, sustained, and morally authorized by the child it once was. Drawing on Romantic philosophy, integral yoga, evolutionary theory, depth psychology, and postcolonial critical perspectives, the paper argues that the two thinkers represent not opposing but complementary axes of human time: the retrospective and the prospective. Both locate the essence of man outside the present moment of rational adulthood, and both assign extraordinary value to states of consciousness-childlike wonder and supramental gnosis that transcend the ordinary cognitive faculty of reason. The paper concludes that the two visions together constitute a holistic theory of human becoming.

Keywords: Supermind, integral yoga, childhood, evolution, Romanticism, natural piety.

Introduction: Two Axes of Human Time

Every major philosophical tradition that has interrogated the nature of the human being is ultimately engaged with a question of time: where does the defining essence of man reside-in what he has been, what he is, or what he shall become? The Romantic poet William Wordsworth and the Indian yogi-philosopher Sri Aurobindo offer two of the most compelling and sustained answers to this question in modern literary and philosophical history. They diverge sharply on the temporal axis of their enquiry: Wordsworth looks backward to the childhood self as the ground of adult moral and emotional being, while Aurobindo looks forward to a Supramental species yet to emerge. Yet both thinkers share a profound scepticism towards the ordinary rational mind as the final or definitive form

of human consciousness, and both imagine modes of being that surpass what Aurobindo calls "the mental being" of man (SABCL, Vol.15, 74).

This paper performs a comparative reading of these two thinkers, examining Wordsworth's concept of the 'past man' most succinctly expressed in the aphorism "The Child is father of the Man" from the poem "My Heart Leaps Up" and elaborated across the Prelude and the Immortality Ode alongside Aurobindo's vision of the 'future Man' or Superman as articulated in *The Life Divine*, *The Human Cycle*, and *Savitri*. The comparison is not merely historical or biographical but philosophically productive: by placing these two visions in dialogue, the paper seeks to demonstrate that they describe not competing but complementary poles of a single arc of human becoming. Where Wordsworth insists that the roots of the self-lie in the pre-rational purity of childhood, Aurobindo insists that the flower of the self lies in the post-rational light of the Supermind. Together they enclose and clarify the territory of human consciousness.

The paper proceeds through six segments. The first segment analyses Wordsworth's concept of childhood and memory as the foundation of adult identity. The second section examines Aurobindo's evolutionary philosophy and the concept of the Supramental being. The third segment develops the comparative argument, identifying points of convergence and divergence. Section four engages relevant theoretical frameworks like Romantic philosophy, phenomenology, depth psychology, and postcolonial theory to sharpen the analysis. The final segment offers concluding reflections on what the comparison yields for an understanding of human consciousness.

Wordsworth and the Past Man: The Child as Father

The famous three lines that appear at the conclusion of Wordsworth's short poem "My Heart Leaps Up" and serve as the epigraph to the "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" represent one of the most quoted formulations in the English literary tradition: "The Child is father of the Man; And I could wish my days to be Bound each to each by natural piety."

The paradox is deliberate and philosophically charged. By inverting the conventional generational hierarchy-by making the child the 'father' rather than the offspring of the adult, Wordsworth overturns the Enlightenment narrative of progress in which maturity, reason, and civic life represent the pinnacle of human development. For Wordsworth, childhood is not a deficient or incomplete form of adulthood; it is a richer, more primary form of being, saturated with wonder, unmediated perception, and what he calls "natural piety", a reverential attunement to the natural world that mature rationality tends to erode. The aphorism means that an adult's fundamental personality, values, and sense of wonder are shaped during childhood and it operates as a call to protect and keep alive the inner child, suggesting that we lose something essential to our humanity if we completely abandon the wonder of our youth.

The word "father" carries specific weight. To father something is to originate it, to give it life and authority. In Wordsworth's usage, the child does not merely precede the adult; the child constitutes the moral and emotional charter by which the adult must live. The child sets a standard of emotional purity, openness, and enthusiasm that the adult should strive to maintain. The adult who loses touch with this founding self-who cannot still feel his heart leap up at the sight of a rainbow-has suffered a spiritual diminishment, not a natural development.

This philosophy of childhood as origin is elaborated over the fourteen books of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth's autobiographical epic of the growth of the poet's mind. The poem's central theoretical concept is what Wordsworth calls "spots of time"-formative episodes of childhood and early youth that retain "a renovating virtue" and "a depth / Of vigour" that nourishes the mind throughout adult life (Prelude, XII.208–09). These spots of time are moments of heightened perception or emotion-stealing a boat on a moonlit lake, skating on a frozen river, hearing a church bell across the hills-which impress

themselves indelibly upon the imagination and function as wells of moral and creative energy to which the adult returns throughout life.

The psychological mechanism Wordsworth proposes anticipates what twentieth-century depth psychology would call the unconscious: the child's experiences do not disappear when they are no longer consciously remembered; they sink into the deeper strata of the self and continue to shape thought, feeling, and perception from below. In Wordsworth's phenomenology, the natural world mediates between the child and the spiritual or transcendent: nature is both the ground on which the child's experiences take place and the vehicle through which the eternal communicates itself to human consciousness. This is the force of "natural piety"-nature is not merely physical landscape but a sacred presence that the child receives with unclouded receptivity.

If *The Prelude* traces the gradual building of the poetic mind upon a foundation of childhood experience, the "Immortality Ode" meditates on what is lost in the transition from childhood to adulthood. Drawing on Platonic notions of pre-existence, Wordsworth proposes that the child comes "trailing clouds of glory" from a heavenly origin, and that as the child grows and becomes habituated to the world, "the prison-house" of custom and convention begins to close around the growing boy. The "celestial light" that tinges everything in early childhood "fades into the light of common day."

The ode is a poem of profound ambivalence. Wordsworth acknowledges the loss but finds consolation in the very capacity to mourn it, a capacity that itself depends on the memory of what has been lost. The adult cannot recover the child's unmediated vision, but the adult can draw upon the memory of that vision as a source of philosophical depth and mature understanding. The sorrow of loss is transformed into wisdom; the past is not merely past but is perpetually active in the present. This is the dialectical movement at the heart of Wordsworth's concept of the past man: the child that continues to father the man that is.

Comparing Wordsworth to other Romantic poets illuminates the distinctiveness of his position. Keats's "negative capability" praises the capacity to remain in uncertainty without irritably reaching after fact and reason, resonating with Wordsworth's praise of the child's open, non-analytic perception. Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience* anatomises the tension between the child's pure vision and the adult world's corrupting rationality, echoing Wordsworth's concern, though Blake's politics are more overtly radical. Coleridge, Wordsworth's collaborator, was equally interested in imagination as a faculty that transcends reason, but he theorized this through German Idealism rather than through childhood memory. Among the Romantics, Wordsworth is uniquely biographical in his method: the past man is always specifically his own past, and the recuperation of childhood vision is always a personal, almost therapeutic enterprise, not merely a philosophical proposition.

The resonance of Wordsworth's concept with modern psychological thought is striking and has been widely noted. The "inner child" concept in depth psychology developed through the work of Carl Jung, John Bradshaw, and others argues that the formative experiences of childhood continue to shape adult emotional life and that psychological health requires a conscious relationship with those early experiences. The notion of the inner child describes the child-like aspect of a person's psyche that is still influenced by and emotionally connected to their early experiences. Wordsworth's "natural piety", the wish that his days be bound to each other by a continuous thread reaching back to childhood is the poetic precursor of this therapeutic idea.

What distinguishes Wordsworth from the therapeutic tradition is that his concept is not primarily about healing wounds but about maintaining vitality. The inner child for Wordsworth is not a wounded child in need of recovery but a visionary child whose power of wonder must not be allowed to atrophy. The failure is not psychological dysfunction but spiritual impoverishment, the narrowing of consciousness that occurs when the rational, utilitarian adult self displaces the receptive, wondering child self.

Sri Aurobindo and the Future Man: The Superman as Supramental Being

Sri Aurobindo's concept of the 'future man' is grounded in an evolutionary philosophy that accepts and radically reframes the Darwinian narrative of terrestrial development. For Aurobindo, the evolutionary process that produced matter, then life, then mind is not a mechanical accident but an expression of the Divine's involution into matter and its gradual return to itself through successive emergences of consciousness. Nature has evolved from "Matter which has evolved into life the plants and animals and out of this life, Mind has developed and 'Man [is] Nature's mental being'" (SABCL, Vol.15, 74). But this is emphatically not the end of the process: "Sri Aurobindo felt that it is possible for man to advance yet further in the evolutionary race and reach Supramental being" (Iyengar 174).

The philosophical foundations of this vision draw on multiple traditions. As M. P. Pandit notes, the Tantric tradition proposes that in the beginning "there is only that Principle which we call Parashiva, the Absolute, the One" and that creation occurs when "the One becomes Two" through the Divine's will to manifest (Pandit 14). The Vedantic tradition converges on this: "the Supreme Reality is One; it is the Absolute" and when the Absolute moves towards manifestation it "reveals itself as a triune reality Existence, Consciousness and Bliss" (Pandit 14). For Aurobindo, who synthesizes these traditions, the evolutionary process is the return journey: the Divine that has become matter is progressively recovering its own consciousness, and man is the current leading edge of that recovery.

A crucial move in Aurobindo's argument is his revaluation of human imperfection. Man has "risen up out of animal Nature" and is "at his highest a demi-god," but "he is not perfect in his own nature and this Imperfection is not something deplorable. It is rather a privilege and a promise for it opens out to us an immense vista of self-development and self-exceeding" (SABCL, Vol.15, 220). The present limitations of man-his subjection to ignorance, suffering, mortality, and the conflicts of mind-are not final conditions but signs that the evolutionary process has further to go. Man is not a finished product but a transitional being.

This revaluation distinguishes Aurobindo sharply from pessimistic readings of the human condition. Where existentialist philosophy, for example, tends to emphasize the absurdity and anguish of a consciousness that exceeds the world it inhabits, Aurobindo reads that same excess as evidence of a transcendent destiny. The fact that man reaches beyond himself-that his aspirations consistently outstrip his achievements-is not a source of tragedy but a pointer towards the next stage of evolution. The very restlessness of human consciousness is its proof of futurity.

The central technical concept in Aurobindo's evolutionary philosophy is the Supermind, defined as "an eternal reality of the divine Being and the divine Nature" (SABCL, Vol.16, 43) that is already present in latent form within and beyond the human mental consciousness. The Supermind is not merely a superior intellect or a more efficient form of reasoning; it is a qualitatively different mode of consciousness, one that operates from "truth and light" rather than from the partial, conflicted movements of the mental faculty. It is a "truth-Consciousness" that "starts from truth and light and moves always in truth and light" (SABCL, Vol.16, 43).

The transformation Aurobindo envisions involves both an ascent and a descent: "The ascent is necessarily an effort, a working of Nature. The descent or self-revelation of the Spirit is an act of the Supreme reality from above" (SABCL, Vol.16, 43–44). The individual practitioner, through the disciplines of what Aurobindo calls Integral Yoga, prepares the instrument of body, life, and mind to receive the descending Supermind; but the actual transformation is not achieved by personal effort alone, it requires the co-operation of the Divine. The Superman is thus not a product of human will alone but of the convergence of human aspiration and divine grace.

The transformation, moreover, is not merely spiritual in the conventional sense of a departure from the material world. Aurobindo insists on the divinization of the body as an integral part of the

process: "A divine life in a material world implies necessarily a union of the two ends of existence, the spiritual summit and the material base" (SABCL, Vol.16, 5). The soul "with the basis of its life established in Matter ascends to the heights of the Spirit, but does not cast away its base" (SABCL, Vol.16, 5). This insistence on the transformation of matter, not its transcendence, is one of the most distinctive features of Aurobindo's philosophy and sets it apart from world-renouncing forms of Indian spirituality.

Aurobindo's vision of the Future Man is not merely individual but collective and civilizational. He traces the evolution of society through what he calls the symbolic, typal, conventional, individualistic, and subjective stages, arguing that humanity is currently at the threshold of a spiritual age. "The coming of a spiritual age must be preceded by the appearance of an increasing number of individuals who will recognize only a spiritual evolution as the destiny and the great need of the human being" (SABCL). Once enough individuals have undergone the Supramental transformation, the influence will radiate outward: "a manifestation of the Supermind and its truth-Consciousness must happen in this world sooner or later" (SABCL, Vol.16, 43).

The social vision is not, however, elitist in a dominating sense. The hierarchy of spiritual development that Aurobindo envisages is one of service: the more evolved individuals serve as "the elder brother of the race," guiding "the younger" toward their own potential rather than exploiting or subjugating them (SABCL). The Superman leads by example and attraction, not by coercion. This is consistent with Aurobindo's political thought, which was deeply shaped by his years as a leader in the Indian independence movement before his withdrawal to Pondicherry.

West and East: The Twain Shall meet

Perhaps the most striking structural parallel between Wordsworth and Aurobindo is their shared scepticism towards ordinary rational intellect as the highest or most authoritative form of human consciousness. For Wordsworth, the child's pre-analytic perception is morally and spiritually superior to the adult's ratiocination; for Aurobindo, the Supermind is categorically beyond the mental faculty's reach. Both thinkers resist what Aurobindo calls the view that "reason can govern" as "the sovereign authority" (SABCL, Vol.15, 104). Aurobindo writes: "Reason, being an imperfect light, can lead man only up to an intelligent sense. The soul is beyond the reaches of reason" (SABCL, Vol.15, 104). Wordsworth would agree: the child who feels his heart leap up at a rainbow is accessing something that the adult naturalist cataloguing refraction phenomena has closed himself off from.

Both thinkers are, in different ways, heirs to the Kantian critique of pure reason, though they draw opposite historical conclusions from it. Kant demonstrated the limits of reason's cognitive reach; Wordsworth responded by grounding value in pre-rational feeling and memory; Aurobindo responded by postulating a post-rational Supermind. The two responses are structurally isomorphic: both locate the ground of human value outside the rational faculty, though one looks backward to its pre-rational origin and the other looks forward to its post-rational development.

A significant divergence between the two thinkers concerns the relationship between continuity and transformation. Wordsworth's concept of the past man depends on continuity: the adult must maintain an unbroken thread of connection to the childhood self. The philosopher Charles Taylor, in his influential account of the sources of the modern self, identifies this as distinctively Romantic, the self as a narrative that achieves coherence through the faithful remembrance of its own origins (Taylor 374). For Wordsworth, any rupture in this narrative, any failure of "natural piety", is a spiritual crisis. The self's health is measured by the quality of its relationship to its own past.

For Aurobindo, by contrast, the Future Man represents a discontinuity or mutation in the nature of consciousness, not a recovery of something already possessed. The Supramental being is not the ordinary man restored or purified but a new species of consciousness. As he writes in Savitri, "Nature

shall live to manifest secret God, / The spirit shall take up the human play, / The earthly life become the life divine" (SABCL, Vol.29, 710–11). The future is not a return to a prior state of grace but an emergence into a genuinely new mode of being. Where Wordsworth is fundamentally conservative-he wishes to conserve the child's vision against the erosions of adulthood-Aurobindo is fundamentally radical, envisaging a transformation that leaves the present form of man behind.

And yet this contrast is not as sharp as it first appears. Both thinkers recognize that the origin and the destination of human consciousness share a common character: a mode of being that transcends the limitations of the ordinary adult rational mind. Wordsworth's child and Aurobindo's Supramental being are alike in their immediate, luminous relationship to reality. The child's wonder and the Superman's gnosis are both forms of consciousness that do not labour through the mediation of discursive reason but receive truth directly. In this sense the two thinkers describe the two ends of a single curve.

Both thinkers assign a central role to the natural world, though in notably different ways. For Wordsworth, nature is the classroom of the child's spiritual education and the medium through which the transcendent speaks to human consciousness. The landscape of the Lake District with its mountains, lakes, and winds is not merely scenic backdrop but a "fostering nurse" (Prelude, I.305) that actively shapes the imagination of the growing child. Nature in Wordsworth is given, already charged with spiritual meaning; the child's task is to remain open to it.

For Aurobindo, matter, including the natural world, is the medium into which the Divine has descended and within which it is to be transformed. Nature is not a finished spiritual text but a work in progress, a partially conscious expression of the Divine that is destined to become more fully conscious. The difference is significant: Wordsworth's nature is essentially static, the permanent ground of human value; Aurobindo's matter is dynamic, evolving towards its own divinization. However, both share a rejection of the Cartesian dualism that sets spirit and matter in irreducible opposition. For Wordsworth, the natural world is already spiritual; for Aurobindo, matter and spirit are ultimately one, and their apparent duality is a stage in a larger evolution towards unity.

Psychologically, the two concepts operate through different but related faculties. Wordsworth's past man is constituted by memory specifically by the emotionally charged memories of childhood experience that Wordsworth calls "spots of time." The recuperation of the self is an act of remembrance. Aurobindo's future man is constituted by aspiration, the soul's yearning for a higher consciousness that it has not yet attained. The recuperation is an act of evolution.

Yet there is a deep structural parallel: both memory and aspiration are movements that reach outside the present moment of rational consciousness, one backward and one forward, and both are premised on the idea that the present moment of ordinary adult rationality is insufficient to human potential. Wordsworth's therapeutic move is anamnesis, the recovery of what has been forgotten. Aurobindo's spiritual move is what he calls "self-exceeding" the transcendence of what is presently given (SABCL, Vol.15, 220). Both diagnose the same illness in the ordinary adult self-a truncation of consciousness, a failure to realize its own depth or height-and both prescribe a movement outside the ordinary self as the cure.

The phenomenological texture of the higher consciousness that each thinker valorizes deserves examination. Wordsworth's child experiences the world with wonder, an immediate, delighted, reverent perception that does not analyze its objects but receives them whole. This wonder is not intellectual curiosity but a mode of being in which the boundaries between self and world are permeable; the child is in some sense continuous with the natural world it perceives. This is what Wordsworth means by "natural piety", not religious observance but an organic, reverent participation in the life of nature.

Aurobindo's Supramental consciousness is described in very different terms as light, truth, gnosis but it shares with Wordsworth's childhood wonder a character of immediacy and wholeness. The Supermind, unlike the mental faculty, does not proceed by inference, analysis, or discursive reasoning; it perceives truth directly, as a whole. It is, like the child's wonder, a form of knowing that is simultaneously a form of being. As Aurobindo writes of the mind's uplifting under the touch of the Supermind, "Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind" will become accessible (SABCL, Vol.16, 54) a hierarchy of increasingly direct and luminous apprehensions of reality. The child's wonder and the Superman's gnosis may be understood as respectively the dawn and the noon of the same quality of consciousness.

Theoretical Frameworks: Reading Across Traditions

The philosophical tradition most directly relevant to Wordsworth is British Romanticism and its German Idealist background. The Romantics responded to the Enlightenment's privileging of analytical reason by rehabilitating imagination, feeling, and organic unity as cognitive and moral faculties. Wordsworth's specific contribution was to root this rehabilitation in personal biography, in the particular, irreplaceable experiences of a particular childhood. His epistemology is empiricist in its materials but transcendent in its implications: the raw materials of experience are sensory impressions, but what is built from them is a spiritual apprehension of reality that exceeds sensation.

Aurobindo's relationship to Western philosophy is more complex. He was educated at Cambridge and was deeply familiar with European philosophy and literature, but his mature thought is primarily shaped by the Indian philosophical traditions-Vedanta, Tantra, and the Gita-which he synthesizes and restates in terms accessible to a modern audience. His evolutionary philosophy bears some resemblance to Hegel's dialectical idealism-the Absolute externalizing itself in nature and recovering itself in Spirit-but Aurobindo insists on the transformation of matter rather than its sublation, a difference that has significant practical consequences. He is also influenced by Bergson's concept of creative evolution, the idea that evolution is driven by an élan vital that exceeds mechanical causation.

The concept of the inner child, the psychological residue of childhood experience that continues to shape adult life was developed most fully in the depth psychological tradition. Jung's concept of the archetypal child (the "divine child") as a symbol of wholeness, new possibility, and the creative potential of the unconscious resonates strongly with Wordsworth's vision of the child as the moral and spiritual authority of adult life. For Jung, the child archetype represents not merely the personal past but a transpersonal principle of renewal and transformation; it is the symbol of the self's capacity for development. This gives Wordsworth's aphorism a depth that goes beyond personal biography: "The Child is father of the Man" is not only a statement about Wordsworth's personal history but about the structure of human consciousness as such.

Contemporary therapeutic models that deploy the inner child concept engage with exactly the tension that Wordsworth identifies: the adult's loss of contact with the child's openness and wonder is understood as a form of psychic diminishment, and the therapeutic project is its recovery. This work involves reconnecting with the child's joy, creativity, and unfiltered perception, a formulation that Wordsworth would recognize immediately. The bridge between Wordsworth's Romanticism and contemporary psychology is not merely analogical; both draw on the same experiential truth about the structure of human temporal existence.

A comparative reading of Wordsworth and Aurobindo cannot ignore the postcolonial dimension. Wordsworth was a canonical figure of British literary culture at the height of British imperial power; Aurobindo was an Indian intellectual who began his career as a revolutionary nationalist fighting British colonialism before withdrawing to the spiritual life. That these two thinkers, formed in such different historical circumstances, should converge on a shared scepticism of ordinary rational intellect and a shared valorization of modes of consciousness that transcend it is itself historically significant.

Romain Rolland's celebrated description of Aurobindo as "the last of the great Rishis" (Rolland) implicitly positions him within an Indian spiritual lineage that predates and outlasts Western modernity. Aurobindo himself, while deeply conversant with Western philosophy, insisted on the distinctive contribution of the East: "The influence of the East will be rather in the direction of subjectivism and practical spirituality" (SABCL). His concept of the Future Man is in part a response to what he saw as the spiritual exhaustion of Western modernity and its reduction of consciousness to reason and reason to instrumental rationality. In this sense, his concept of the Superman is not only an evolutionary projection but a cultural critique.

Wordsworth's vision, by contrast, is formed within and against modernity's own internal contradictions. His critique of Enlightenment rationalism is a critique from within the Western tradition itself. But the structural parallel holds: both thinkers identify the same failure in the dominant intellectual culture of their time-the impoverishment of consciousness through the exclusive valorization of analytical reason-and both respond by pointing to a mode of consciousness that exceeds it.

Phenomenological philosophy-particularly Heidegger's analysis of different modes of being-in-the-world provides a useful framework for understanding what Wordsworth and Aurobindo are each describing. Heidegger's distinction between calculative thinking and meditative thinking resonates with both thinkers' critiques of ordinary rationality: calculative thinking treats the world as a resource to be managed, while meditative thinking dwells in the presence of things and allows them to disclose themselves. Wordsworth's child and Aurobindo's Supramental being are both characterised by something like meditative presence-a mode of consciousness in which reality is received rather than constructed.

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of embodiment is equally relevant. His insistence that human consciousness is always embodied-that perception is not a mental act performed on sensory data but an entire bodily engagement with the world-resonates with Wordsworth's emphasis on sensory experience as the medium of spiritual apprehension and with Aurobindo's insistence on the divinization of the body as part of the Supramental transformation. Neither thinker proposes a disembodied spirituality; both insist that consciousness is always consciousness of and through a body in a world.

Conclusion: The Curve of Human Becoming

The comparative reading undertaken in this paper has sought to demonstrate that Sri Aurobindo's concept of the future man and William Wordsworth's concept of the past man, though formed in vastly different cultural, historical, and intellectual contexts, describe complementary dimensions of a single arc of human becoming. Wordsworth looks backward to the child that fathered the adult, insisting that the roots of moral and spiritual being lie in the pre-rational wonder of childhood experience, and that the adult's task is to maintain an unbroken thread of "natural piety" connecting present to past. Aurobindo looks forward to the Superman who will succeed the mental being, insisting that the evolution of consciousness is not complete and that the seeds of a higher life-the Supermind-are already latent within and beyond the human mind.

Both thinkers converge on a critique of ordinary rational adulthood as the definitive form of human consciousness. Both locate the ground of human value in modes of being that exceed the discursive, analytical faculty: the child's wonder and the Superman's gnosis are each forms of direct, luminous apprehension that the analytic mind can only approximate and can never replace. Both insist that the present moment of the ordinary adult self is insufficient-that human beings are beings of depth (Wordsworth) and height (Aurobindo), and that a life lived only on the surface of rational adulthood is a diminished life.

The difference in temporal orientation-backward versus forward-reflects a deeper difference in philosophical temperament and historical situation. Wordsworth, writing in the aftermath of the French Revolution's failure and amid the anxieties of industrialization, seeks a basis of value that is permanent and personal-rooted in the irreversible fact of his own childhood experience. Aurobindo, writing amid the upheavals of Indian nationalism and the First World War, seeks a basis of value that is evolutionary and collective-projected into a future that is latent but not yet realised. But the shared diagnosis-the impoverishment of consciousness through the privileging of reason-and the shared prescription-the recovery or development of a consciousness that exceeds reason-reveal a profound underlying agreement about the nature and destiny of man.

Read together, Wordsworth and Aurobindo suggest a model of human temporality in which the past and the future are both more alive, more constitutive of genuine human identity, than the present moment of rational wakefulness. The child that fathered us and the Superman we are destined to become are not merely biographical or speculative figures; they are the two poles of consciousness between which human life stretches its meaning. "All that has gone before is a preparation," Aurobindo writes, "all that is going on at present is a prelude to the coming of the New Man embodying a New Consciousness" (SABCL). Wordsworth, gazing at a rainbow and feeling his heart leap up as it leapt in childhood, would not disagree with the sentiment, though he would seek that new consciousness not in the evolutionary future but in the ever-living past: "The Child is father of the Man."

Aurobindo's evolutionary arc points the arrow of consciousness into a divinized future; Wordsworth's organic metaphor grounds the same consciousness in the nourishing root of childhood. Both are necessary. A consciousness without roots is untethered and sterile; a consciousness without aspiration is stagnant. The great value of reading these two thinkers together is that their conjunction reveals what each alone might obscure: that human becoming is not a line in one direction but a living tension between depth and height, between what we were and what we shall be, between the child and the Superman.

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