

Political Interpretations of Associationism in the Late Eighteenth Century

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Political Interpretations of Associationism in the Late Eighteenth Century

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Abstract: The association of ideas had a deep relevance to political thought. After its modern form was propounded by David Hartley in 1749, this psychological theory was assigned a strongly political character by his followers especially in the late eighteenth century, the years of political radicalism and civil revolutions. The purpose of this paper is to explicate the nature of the political appropriation of associationism of this period by examining the historical process from the theory's principal founder David Hartley to the poet William Wordsworth, who was an important advocate of the theory around the turn of the nineteenth century.

Within its rigorous theoretical framework, Hartley's associationism contains a seed of later political developments. A logical extension of the principle of association is the necessary improvement of human mind, which, in an ideal case, will lead the individual mind to total identification with God. In Hartley's system, this final stage is regarded as equivalent to redemption. A quarter of a century later, this inherent millenarianism in the association of ideas draws the attention of Joseph Priestley. While editing an abridged version of Hartley's principal work, Priestley rewrites Hartley's notion of necessary improvement of the individual human being into that of collective progress of the whole human species. Priestley furthermore redefines Hartley's idea of human redemption, which was only a very distant possibility, as a stage attainable by improving the system of government. With Priestley, Hartley's psychology is explicitly given a political character congruous with the political atmosphere of radicalism in the late eighteenth century.

The late-eighteenth-century politicizing of Hartley's theory, thus started by Priestley, was then succeeded by radical thinkers active in the wake of the French Revolution. Among them Samuel Taylor Coleridge was a devoted supporter of Hartley's association theory and also a believer in the psychologist's necessitarian doctrine. In this philosophical framework Coleridge articulates his enthusiasm about the Revolution, which reaches the height of an apocalyptic expectation of the coming of a new world. Coleridge's case is, therefore, a type of political adaptation of associationism in the revolutionary atmosphere of the 1790s. Like Coleridge, William Godwin interpreted the association of ideas in light of politics in the middle of the revolution controversy. Godwin, however, departed from straightforward panegyricizing of the Revolution and proposed gradual improvement of society. If Coleridge's apocalyptic enthusiasm shows the high point of the radical tendency of the political interpretation of associationism, Godwin's gradualist position marks the beginning of a turning away from this trend. In fact Godwin's reaction against the idea of a sudden, revolutionary change produced a fresh direction which was inherited towards the end of the 1790s by Erasmus Darwin and William Wordsworth.

Darwin's thinking did not directly concern the political, but his biological evolutionism added a new dimension to associationism's political significance. Again, adopting some of the fundamental assumptions of association psychology, Darwin hypothesizes an ascending scale of evolution, the ultimate goal of which is the paradisiacal state of universally prevailing organic happiness. Hence, Darwin's idea of organic evolution is conceptually comparable to the gradual reformism advanced by Godwin. Darwin's evolutionism combined with the association of ideas was then taken up by Wordsworth. Wordsworth was loyal to Hartley's psychological theory. He explains the process of poetic composition in terms of association and supports the Hartleyan notion of ameliorative effects of association upon the reader's sensibility. Probably following Darwin, Wordsworth theorizes a gradual enlightenment of people's minds through associative processes over generations. This ascending path, the poet envisages, some day might attain a regained paradise. By this literary version of evolution, Wordsworth rounds off the trajectory of the political adaptation of the association of ideas started by Priestley.

The political potential inherent in this psychological principle was materialized in a variety of documents in the late eighteenth century. Up until the mid 1790s this political reading of associationism was exclusively in the direction of radical revolutionism. But in the aftermath of the French Revolution, the political appropriation of this psychological theory found a milder version first in Godwin's gradual reformism, and then in Darwin's evolution theory. Finally Wordsworth reformulated this new position into a literary vision of human redemption through the amelioration of the human mind enabled by association. This is not only congruous with the post-Revolutionary stage of politics, but also constitutes a fine synthesis of psychology, politics, and literature.

I

Recognized by Dr. Samuel Johnson as “of great importance” and “of some excellent use” in his dictionary, the association of ideas was an influential psychological principle throughout the eighteenth century. Associationism has a long tradition in history; the earliest references to this principle go back as far as to Plato and Aristotle. In modern England associationism was first given a substantial treatment by Thomas Hobbes and John Locke in the seventeenth century. Then during the following hundred years, this theory attracted a great deal of attention from various thinkers. In fact, the association of ideas was elaborated by major figures of the time, notably by the Scottish philosopher David Hume, and was subsequently developed into a more comprehensive system of physiological psychology by the English physician David Hartley. In the eighteenth century, in particular, the significance of the association of ideas was extensive. It was not merely a dominant scientific principle for clinical investigation into the human mind, but was also a chief source of inspiration for creative writers and literary critics. It is not an overstatement that the association theory was the sole theoretical grounds available for the writers of those days who tried to think systematically on the human mind and its artistic creativity.

In addition to its influence in the field of psychology, associationism had another highly important contemporary implication, i.e., its significant impact on the late-eighteenth-century political movements, particularly on those of a radically progressive persuasion. Associationism, especially that formulated by David Hartley in the mid century, is characterized by an optimistic belief in human progress. This progressivist position, backed by the contemporary atmosphere of radical republicanism exemplified in the American and French Revolutions, supplied theoretic-

cal grounds of political optimism to radical thinkers and activists in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Associationism’s influence over these different fields might seem strange, but “different” fields of thought as perceived today were not so different two centuries ago. In fact, in a versatile figure like Joseph Priestley such apparently diverse areas as politics, science, religion and literature were inseparably related. As Ian Wylie states in his study of Coleridge and natural philosophers, it will be wrong to bring the present-day cultural divide between science and arts into our reading of the past, especially of the eighteenth century when different disciplinary pursuits still shared a unity of purpose (9-10). With this interdisciplinary frame of mind as an assumption, I shall look at the political character of the association of ideas and subsequent political interpretations to which this scientific theory was subjected.

I shall start with David Hartley, the most influential of the theorists of associationism, by discussing a potentially political connotation inherent in his psychophysiological formulation. After Hartley the focus will be turned to Joseph Priestley, who started the trend of political interpretation of Hartley’s theory in a radical vein. The impact of the French Revolution upon this political appropriation of associationism is then investigated in two representative thinkers of the 1790s, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Godwin. Both, from different standpoints, held a politically radical attitude inspired by the Revolution, and both used the Hartleyan framework of the human mind in their political messages. After examining these explicit attitudes in the mid-1790s, a subtler turn away from the directly political among associationist thinkers is discussed with reference to the instances of Erasmus Darwin and William Wordsworth. These authors, still employing associationist theory, severally proposed a new, post-Revolutionary version of progressivism in the emerging concept of biological evolutionism. With this milder form of progressiv-

ism, politically compromising but to be vastly influential in later times, the late-eighteenth-century political interpretation of associationism completes a full cycle. There, we trace out surprisingly prolific developments of that cardinal psychological principle. Furthermore, in these developments we shall recognize essential characteristics of the eventful years of the late eighteenth century, which brought about fundamental transformation not only in politics and society, but also in science, literature and in theory of psychology.

II

Hartley is a true landmark in the history of associationist thought. The origin of the association of ideas, as I have stated, goes back to the times of ancient Greece; and immediately before Hartley, David Hume's discussion had made a substantial contribution to the modern development of this psychological theory. Yet, Hartley's impact was so great that to the contemporary eye even Hume was dwarfed by this English physician: "Compared with Dr. Hartley, I consider Mr. Hume as not even a child" (Priestley quoted in Kallich 115). Hartley becomes even more important when we consider the meaning of his psychological theory and the accompanying theological assumptions for radical politics of the late eighteenth century. Hartley's theory was a strong support for the optimistic tendency among eighteenth-century intellectuals, and at the same time, with his rigorously logical approach, he also gave British radicals scientific grounds for their expectation of renovation both in the individual human mind and society in general. Since this social side of Hartley's theory is deep-seated in his argument but not too clearly articulated, it is necessary to look at his associationist theory in depth to bring this implied political aspect fully to light.

As I have examined elsewhere, Hartley's ground

scheme is the theory of the association of ideas based on the hypothesis of physical vibration in the nervous system (Koguchi, "Hartleyan Principles" 7-10). From his reading of Newton, Hartley in his principal work *Observations on Man, His Frame, His Duty, and His Expectations* of 1749 hypothesizes that the sensations, engendered by external stimuli, are conveyed through the nerves to the brain in the form of vibrations. Traces of these vibrations are retained in the brain as miniature vibrations, or "vibratiuncles," which are equivalent to ideas in psychological terms. The notion of mutual association among these ideas, derived from John Gay and John Locke, is then added to this physiological scheme:

Any Sensations A, B, C, etc. by being associated with one another a sufficient Number of Times, get such a Power over the corresponding Ideas a, b, c, etc. that any one of the Sensations A, when impressed alone, shall be able to excite in the Mind b, c, etc. the Ideas of the rest. (*Observations* 1. 65)

Simple as it may seem, this associationist framework contains all necessary elements for the subsequent development of the human mind. In Hartley's system, complicated mechanisms can be built up from simple elements, first by the interactive network of ideas, and then more importantly by the formation of complex ideas from simple, basic elements: "Simple Ideas will run into complex ones, by means of Association" (1. 73).

Not immediately obvious yet firmly implied in this theory is necessitarianism in development and behaviour. If the human mind is an accumulation of simple and complex ideas, and if human behaviour is ultimately ascribable to sensations coming from the outside, the mind does not have freedom of action in a strict sense because the psychological make-up and each step of action are determined by incoming sensations and by the principle of association. Human consciousness, in other words, is a kind of automaton, the character and behaviour of which are deter-

mined by the contiguous links between ideas stored in the mind. Indeed, Hartley quite explicitly admits that there is no freedom of action for the human mind:

... each Action results from the previous Circumstances of Body and Mind, in the same manner, and with the same Certainty, as other Effects do from their mechanical Causes; so that a Person cannot do indifferently either of the Actions *A*, and its contrary *a*, while the previous Circumstances are the same; but is under an absolute Necessity of doing one of them, and that only.

(1. 500, original emphases)

From this reasoning Hartley quite explicitly concludes about the impossibility of free will that “Man has no such Power” (1. 501)

Necessitarianism, however, does not mean an unwelcome stricture on human conduct and development in Hartley’s framework. Hartley thinks that the strictly determined condition of the human mind is a part of the providential scheme that eventually leads to redemption. Indeed Hartley claims that associative processes, being under a providential “System of Benevolence” (2. 245), constantly guide the human mind to higher stages. The human mind in his developmental scheme proceeds from the initial stage of sensations to the spiritual, or in his word, “intellectual” stages:

The sensible Pleasures and Pains must be transferred by Association more and more every Day, upon things that afford neither sensible Pleasure nor sensible Pain in themselves, and so beget the intellectual Pleasures and Pains. (1. 82)

Following the phase of sensations, Hartley specifically postulates a six-stage developmental process of “intellectual affections”: “Imagination, Ambition, Self-interest, Sympathy, Theopathy, and the Moral Sense” (1. 368). A person advanced to the highest level of human achievement, the level of “Moral Sense,” is necessarily led to “the Love and Approbation of Virtue, and to the Fear, Hatred, and Abhorrence of Vice” (1. 497). Since the moral nature of this person comes very close to the absolute benevolence of God, he will be carried “perpetually to the

pure Love of God, as our highest and ultimate Perfection, our End, Centre, and only Resting Place” (1. 497).

Thus, the final form of development in Hartley’s system is the human mind completely absorbed in the idea of God:

... the Idea of God . . . must, at last, take place of, and absorb all other Ideas, and He himself become, according to the Language of the Scriptures, *All in All*.

(1. 114, original emphasis)

With the human being returning to God’s realm again by this divine recognition, the achievement of “Moral Sense” is nothing other than a redemption through necessitarian processes of psychological development. The ultimate stage of Hartley’s necessitarianism is, in other words, a millenarian attainment of the divine by human consciousness.

This redemptive propensity in Hartley’s thinking is grounded on his theory of pleasure. His optimistic view of human progress draws upon the belief that the created world will finally be filled with pure pleasure through association. By simple arithmetic he assumes that if the total amount of sensible pleasures is larger than that of pains, pleasures will eventually annihilate pains. That is, by the working of association, pains are cancelled out by the same amount of pleasures, and there will only remain pure pleasures provided that there are more pleasures in the world than the total number of pains. Based on the categorical observation that “our sensible Pleasures are far more numerous than our sensible Pains,” Hartley argues that “the Remainder . . . will be pure Pleasure” (1. 83). This ultimate phase of pure pleasure, which in the second part of *Observations* Hartley calls “an Overbalance of Happiness” (2. 15), is tantamount to a regained paradise. In fact Hartley explicitly asserts that there is redemptive power inherent in the association of ideas: “Association . . . has a Tendency to reduce the State of those who have eaten of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, back again to a paradisiacal

one" (1. 83).

It must be remembered, however, that mankind's millenarian attainment remains a very distant theoretical possibility in Hartley's thinking rather than something practically possible. In addition, his idea of human progress, from sensual to spiritual, is principally that of individual growth; and the ultimate human attainment is epistemological, or to identify the human mental horizon with the eternal vision of God (Leslie 627, 632). In a practical sense, therefore, Hartley's theory is not directly relevant to activist politics. Furthermore, he himself defines his vision of the perfect state of mankind as otherworldly. In the second volume of his book, the idea that mankind can attain a paradisiacal state in this world is explicitly rejected; in Hartley's system all that humans can expect for their redemption is only found in the New Jerusalem:

. . . we ought not, cannot expect any great or lasting Happiness in this Life.

We ought, therefore, whenever false flattering Hopes, with relation to our future Condition in this Life, rise up to View in our Imaginations, and tempt us, instantly to reject them; and, in the Language of the Scriptures . . . we only dwell in Tabernacles, have no continuing City, but expect one to come, the New Jerusalem.

(2. 362, original emphases)

Accordingly, any form of political attempt to attain a millenarian state is futile; or in his own words it is "romantic" to "project the Scheme of a perfect Government in this imperfect State" (2. 369).

Yet, for all Hartley's principal intention, some elements still lurk in *Observations* that can prompt sociopolitical application of his theory. As recognized by Patton and Mann in their edition of S. T. Coleridge's early lectures, there are suggestions in Hartley's book that private or domestic affections are the origin of social feelings, of the love of one's country, of mankind, and ultimately of the love of God (lxx). The laws of association of ideas employed in Hartley's system render this progressive expansion of private

to public feelings a necessary fact of human nature and of the growth of the individual (Patton and Mann lxx). Suggestions to this effect are scattered in Hartley's argument on higher kinds of human affections: sympathy, theopathy and the moral sense (*Observations* 1. 471-99). As my subsequent discussion will establish, this side of Hartley's associationism had the effect of encouraging bolder interpretations of his optimism cautiously exhibited in remarks like the following:

We may perhaps say, that some Glimmerings of the Day begin already to shine in the Hearts of all those, who study and delight in the Word and Works of God.
(2. 379-80)

Thus, although Hartley himself denied its practical possibility, it is nonetheless true that his theory contained the seed for later political interpretations. Hartley's intention was obviously to draw up a scheme of individual development of the human mind and to claim his version of Christian salvation which he envisaged in such a distant future that redemption could not be relevant for mankind living here and now. Yet the underlying force of his optimistic view seems to have been too powerful to be perfectly contained in the scope of his own intention. Given the radical trend of politics and political thought in the late eighteenth century, it almost appears to be a necessity that associationism of *Observations* be politicized subsequently. The next step is to reinterpret Hartley's idea of individual development into that of collective progress, and, at the same time, to replace his otherworldly attitude towards human salvation with the idea of an earthly millennium to be realized in the course of history. This was to be done by Joseph Priestley twenty-six years after the publication of Hartley's *Observations*.

III

Priestley occupies a prominent position in the late-eighteenth-century trend of politicizing associationism. His contribution was twofold. Firstly he helped to popularize Hartley's theory by publishing a one-volume abridged edition of *Observations* titled *Hartley's Theory of the Human Mind* in 1775. And even more importantly, in preparing this edition Priestley substantially changed the nature of Hartley's theory; his editorial work, in short, gave Hartley's theory a more immediate relevance to history, the realm of human affairs. After Priestley the association of ideas was regarded as the psychological mechanism that guaranteed collective progress of the human race towards an earthly millennium. With his redefinition of Hartley's formulation Priestley effectively started the current of political interpretation of associationism.

Priestley was a political radical active chiefly in the latter half of the eighteenth century. A competent writer, he published a number of political tracts; among them *An Essay on the First Principles of Government* of 1772 and *Letters to Burke: A Political Dialogue on the General Principles of Government*, a vindication of the French Revolution in opposition to Edmund Burke's accusation against Republican France. Priestley was a Unitarian minister and a well-known scientist of the day. Among his scientific achievements was the celebrated discovery of oxygen in 1774. This impressive versatility of Priestley was not merely an accidental coincidence of various talents in one person. Dissenters those days were excluded from university education; therefore instead of going to established university colleges, they studied at their own Teaching Academies where, unlike universities, modern scientific research was encouraged (Wylie 49). Their progressive thinking in politics, which often went as far as to the domain of radi-

calism, was inextricably linked with their scientific world-view nurtured in this alternative educational system. In the context of the pervasive optimism and revolutionary climate of the late eighteenth century, their scientific rationalism gave them theoretical grounds for the priority of civil liberty over the established form of government. This progressive viewpoint, integrating the political, religious, and scientific, was behind Priestley's editorial principle for *Hartley's Theory of the Human Mind*.

Hartley's original work was divided into two parts: the first part devoted to exposition of the physio-psychological mechanism of the human mind, and the second, theological part reviewing the psychological argument of the first from the point of view of the author's Christian belief. For Priestley this theological part was a major obstacle to introducing Hartley's book to the wider public. He thought that *Observations* would have been more generally read if it had not been "clogged with a whole system of moral and religious knowledge; which, however excellent, is, in a great measure, foreign to it" (Priestley, *Hartley's Theory* iii). To make Hartley's theory more popular Priestley boldly cut out most of the original theological arguments and chose texts mostly from the first part of the original for his one-volume edition. For the sake of intelligibility to the general reader, Priestley even omitted the passages concerning the theory of vibration, although he personally agreed to the validity of this physiological hypothesis.

On the face of it this editorial policy appears to attenuate the religious aspect of Hartley's associationism and to lessen the importance of its millenarian implication. Yet the actual consequence was completely the opposite; *Hartley's Theory of the Human Mind* is more strongly millenarian than the original two-volume treatise. This paradoxical development is largely due to Priestley's rearrangement of Hartley's texts and to the addition he made to the original argument. Apparently Priestley had a problem with the conclud-

ing part of his abridgment, which would have terminated abruptly at the end of the first part of the original. To avoid this formal imperfection, he inserted three chapters on necessity and free will taken from the second part of Hartley's original book, and rounded off the argument of these chapters by adding a concluding chapter penned by himself. In those three adopted chapters Hartley puts forward the idea of providential necessity conducting the human mind to the perfect recognition of the divine, in which the mind becomes one with God:

... could man really annihilate himself, and refer all to God, perfect love would cast out fear, he would immediately become partaker of the divine nature, and, being one with God, would see him to be pure benevolence and love, and all that he has made to be good.

(Priestley, *Hartley's Theory* 356)

In the original text of *Observations*, this mystical self-annihilation is placed among loosely linked arguments on necessity in the second theological part, and not given nearly as much prominence as the notion of the mechanical association of ideas. But in the new context of Priestley's abridgment that mystical concept is raised to the logical and highly desired consequence of human psychological growth (Hatch 549).

These three adopted chapters are then followed by "On the practical Application of the Doctrine of Necessity," chapter written by Priestley as a conclusion to the whole discussion of *Hartley's Theory*. In this suffixed chapter Priestley proposes the view that Hartleyan psychological growth through association eventually leads to salvation of the collective body of mankind to be realized in this world. As we have established, Hartley believed that the perfect state was not to be achieved by most human beings, but was possible only in an otherworldly distant future. Priestley, in contrast, asserts to the effect that the necessitarian mechanism of association, if fully understood, can improve human nature to the level of self annihilation into the presence of God: "the frequent recollec-

tion, that all our actions proceed from God . . . must greatly accelerate our progress to humility and self-annihilation" (Priestley, *Hartley's Theory* 366). In the same breath he explicitly predicts that the human race can collectively achieve a millenarian stage not in the world beyond but in the course of history: "when men are far advanced in this state, they may enjoy quiet and comfort . . . for they approach to the paradisiacal state" (366-67). This vision of earthly redemption is typical of Priestley's position and not a view available from Hartley's otherworldly formulation. In *An Essay on the First Principles of Government* Priestley declares that he is convinced that human improvement continues perpetually: "Let us not doubt, but that every generation in posterity will be as much superior to us in political, and in all kinds of knowledge, and that they will be able to improve upon the best civil and religious institutions that we can prescribe for them" (125). Hartley's original theory does not immediately concerns amelioration or subversion of the political status quo, since he was sceptical about the possibility of an earthly millennium. Priestley's version of associationism, in contrast, is much more directly political. In *Hartley's Theory* the association of ideas acquired a powerful political message which was to influence political radicalism in the late eighteenth century.

It is significant that the authorship of that last chapter was still ascribed to Hartley. Most readers thought of *Hartley's Theory* as a simple abridgment of Hartley's *Observations* and believed that the concluding chapter, inserted by Priestley without any reference to his authorship, was a natural development of the previous discussions on the human mind. In a sense, Priestley indoctrinated contemporary readers with his vision of earthly redemption through the authority of that originator of modern associationism. This was the time when the political climate of Europe was tending to revolutionary radicalism. *Hartley's Theory* was published in 1775, only a year before the United States

declared its independence, and was reprinted in 1790, a year after the commencement of the French Revolution with the attack on the Bastille. This atmosphere of political unrest no doubt formed the context of Priestley's revision of associationism. In turn, his progressive political stance in *Hartley's Theory* contributed to motivating contemporary intellectuals towards radical republicanism. In the next section I shall explore the interrelation of associationism and contemporary political thought by examining two representative figures among British pro-revolutionary thinkers in the 1790s, S. T. Coleridge and William Godwin.

IV

Both Coleridge and Godwin articulated their views vis-à-vis the French Revolution, and during the 1790s both were self-acknowledged associationists. If Priestley epitomizes the political adaptation of the association of ideas before the Revolution, Coleridge and Godwin represent the reaction to that great political event from associationist thinkers in the pro-revolutionary camp. Since both writers changed their political and intellectual positions during their long career, the following discussion focuses on a particular phase of each writer: Coleridge in the mid-1790s and Godwin in the first edition of his most celebrated political treatise, *Political Justice*. As Coleridge was much younger than Godwin, his youthful enthusiasm towards the Revolution and associationist theory was more straightforward than Godwin's conditional assent. It is more convenient, therefore, to discuss the younger poet first as an instance of initial enthusiasm about the Revolution and then to look at Godwin for a more sober, cautious attitude facing the uncertain course of the French Republic when the initial optimism began to wane and signs of coming terrorism were becoming increasingly conspicuous.

Coleridge in his young days was an avid follower of Hartley's associationism. His first reference to

Hartley appears in a letter of November 1794; then in December of the same year he declares himself as a devoted Hartleyan who believes in this psychologist's associationist theory complete with the mechanistic, or "corporeal" hypothesis of vibration and the doctrine of necessity:

I am a compleat Necessitarian—and understand the subject as well almost as Hartley himself—but I go farther than Hartley and believe the corporeality of *thought*—namely, that it is motion—

(Letters 1. 137, original emphasis)

His loyalty to Hartley later moved him to name his first son Hartley Coleridge. Coleridge was an admirer of Priestley as well. In a self-sarcastic note later attached to *The Destiny of Nations*, Coleridge refers to himself of this mid-1790s period as one of "the Josephidites" (Coleridge, *Poetical Works* 147), meaning that he was a follower of Joseph Priestley and that he accepted Priestley's Unitarian doctrine that Christ was human, the son of Joseph.

Coleridge's familiarity with Hartley and Priestley is clearly expressed in his *Lectures on Revealed Religion* delivered and published in Bristol in 1795. These lectures include a passage directly inspired by the Hartleyan idea that individual growth might someday attain the highest moral sense, or, in Coleridge's words, "that blessed state of perfection in which all our Passions are to be absorbed in the Love of God" (Coleridge, *Lectures* 162). In addition, from Hartley Coleridge also inherits the concept of private affections extending to the love of all mankind. In a letter to Robert Southey in July 1794, less than a year before those lectures were presented to the public, Coleridge discusses the origin of philanthropy from this Hartleyan point of view:

The ardour of private Attachments makes Philanthropy a necessary *habit* of the Soul. I love my *Friend*—such as *he* is, all mankind are or *might be!* The deduction is evident—. Philanthropy (and indeed every other Virtue) is a thing of *Concretion*—Some home-born Feeling is the centre of the Ball, that, rolling on thro' Life col-

lects and assimilates every congenial Affection. (1. 86)

This epistolary remark is Coleridge's version of the benevolent effect of private affections conceptualized by Hartley. The same expanding love of affections from private to social and then to universal appears in the lectures as one of their cardinal principles:

Jesus knew our Nature—and that expands like the circles of a Lake—the Love of our Friends, parents and neighbours leads us to the love of our Country to the love of all Mankind. The intensity of private attachment encourages, not prevents, universal philanthropy. . . . (163)

Priestley's influence upon the Coleridge of this time is no less evident. The editors of those lectures have detected a number of borrowings from Priestley: necessity, perfectibility, optimism, and the millenarian expectation of a "universal fraternity of Love" (Patton and Mann lxxv). The Priestleyan notion of "process" as a synonym for progression or progressiveness is found in Coleridge's other lectures of the same year, *Moral and Political Lectures* and *Concione ad Populum*. In those addresses Coleridge employs Priestley's idea that the recognition of life as a necessary "process" enlarges one's perspective on reality and governs one's actions (Patton and Mann lxx; Coleridge, *Revealed Religion* 109n). Coleridge also uses the notion of morality as "process," an idea characteristic of Priestley, in a letter written a year after those Bristol lectures:

Christianity regards morality as a process—it finds a man vicious and unsusceptible of noble motives; and gradually leads him, at least, desires to lead him, to the height of disinterested Virtue. (1. 282-83)

The concept of private affections leading to social amelioration and philanthropy, formulated by Hartley and later re-emphasized by Priestley, is again referred to in *Religious Musings* written shortly after the 1795 lectures. Coleridge in this contemplative poem

panegyricizes Hartley and Priestley in an enthusiastic expectation of the advent of a millenarian new world. Hartley is praised as the wisest human being for the discovery of the physiological mechanism of the association of ideas:

. . . he of mortal kind
Wisest, he first who mark'd the ideal tribes
Down the fine fibres from the sentient brain
Roll subtly-surgin'. (383-86)

Priestley is given no lower rank as a political activist, religious thinker and scientist: "Pressing on his steps / Lo! Priestley there, Patriot, and Saint, and Sage" (386-87). The annihilation of one's self in God, the ultimate attainment of Hartleyan association theory, is reaffirmed in this poem: "All self-annihilated it [the individual spirit] shall make / GOD its Identity: God all in all" (49-50). These lines are more than a conceptual reference to Hartley; they echo the actual wording employed in *Observations*, too:

. . . the Idea of God . . . must, at last, take place of, and absorb, all other Ideas, and He himself become . . . *All in All*. (1. 114, original emphasis)

. . . could Man really annihilate himself, and refer all to God, perfect Love would cast out Fear, he would immediately become Partaker of the Divine Nature. . . . (2. 62)

Along with this theological contemplation on earthly redemption, *Religious Musings* has a strongly apocalyptic character stemming from Coleridge's interest in the political affairs of the day. In Coleridge, associationism's political nature has already gone beyond the abstract stage reached in Priestley's theoretical discussion; it is linked directly to the historical context of the 1790s, i.e., the expectation of the imminent arrival of a millenarian world in the wake of the French Revolution. The political side of this poem is already evident in its "Argument," which includes "Millennium" and "Universal Redemption"

among its headings. In the body of the poem, describing the vision of “that blest future” (370) and of “the Saviour’s arrival” (372), Coleridge prophesies the coming of the millenarian “THOUSAND YEARS” (373). Correctly tracing the biblical process of the Apocalypse, this earthly paradise then proceeds to a truly universal redemption:

And lo! the Throne of the redeeming God
Forth flashing unimaginable day
Wraps in one blaze earth, heaven, and deepest hell.
(417-19)

Importantly, *Religious Musings* sees the road to redemption specifically in that recent political upheaval, the French Revolution. In the sections titled “The Present State of Society” and “French Revolution,” the poem declares that “the day of Retribution [is] nigh: / The Lamb of God hath open’d the fifth seal” (316-17). In the next line, “Even now the storm begins” (318), Coleridge claims that this political development towards a millenarian stage is not only imminent but has already begun.

Thus when Hartley’s ascending scale of human achievement finds a poetic vent in Coleridge’s *Religious Musings*, it assumes a far more radical character than would have been envisaged by its originator. This poem’s strongly political overtone is certainly an extension of Priestley’s reinterpretation of Hartley twenty years before; but more importantly Coleridge’s radical attitude in *Religious Musings* was a direct result of the French Revolution that showed him a momentary glimpse of a new world. It was at this time that the radical political potential of the association of ideas was fully recognized among British radical thinkers. Later, with the introduction of repressive policy by the government, the British pro-revolutionary movement practically died out by the late 1790s. The redemptive implication of associationism, however, is still extant in an internalized form in Coleridge’s “Frost at Midnight” written in 1797. In

this poem the train of association, beginning with the film of soot on the hearth grate, leads the narrator to the past days in his home town and finally to the thought of his baby child Hartley Coleridge. This association of ideas finally reaches the beatific vision of God pervading throughout the natural world: “God . . . from eternity doth teach / Himself in all, and all things in himself” (60-62). The associative train in “Frost at Midnight” no longer has such immediate relevance to political radicalism as in 1795, yet Coleridge in this poem is no less convinced of the redemptive function of Hartleyan associationism than he was in the mid 1790s.

Another prominent figure who recognized the political potential of the association of ideas is William Godwin. His *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, a political treatise first published in February 1793, offered British pro-revolutionary activists a basis of optimism when the course of the French Revolution began to show signs of deteriorating into terrorism. In January of that year Louis XVI was executed. This momentous event was followed by a series of further executions culminating in Robespierre’s Reign of Terror. In the atmosphere of doubt and disappointment spread among British political activists, Godwin’s book presented a prospect of a bright future based on rationalism and the perfectibility of mankind. Particularly interesting in our current discussion is that his rational optimism, too, is explicitly grounded on Hartleyan associationism and the accompanying notion of necessity.

At the heart of Godwin’s rationalist thinking is the notion of human perfectibility. In its opening section *Political Justice* asserts that “perfectibility is one of the most unequivocal characteristics of the human species, so that the political, as well as the intellectual state of man, may be presumed to be in a course of progressive improvement” (1. 11). This notion of collective amelioration is accompanied by the belief in the perfectibility of the individual: “No mind can

be so far alienated from truth, as not in the midst of its degeneracy to have incessant returns of a better principle" (1. 29). With this conviction both in collective and individual progress, Godwin in 1793 was able to expect a universal expansion of the French Revolution as an exemplary type of human progress:

... only six years elapsed between the completion of American liberty and the commencement of the French revolution. Will a term longer than this be necessary, before France, the most refined and considerable nation in the world, will lead other nations to imitate and improve upon her plan? (1. 224-25)

Godwin's notion of human perfectibility here assumes the form of a millenarian regeneration of the whole world, of which the American and French Revolutions are important interim stages.

This optimistic belief in progress and perfectibility is, at least in part, based on the Hartleyan psychology of associationism and the accompanying principle of necessity. *Political Justice* admits its indebtedness to Hartley, and although not explicitly stated, Priestley might have been behind Godwin's idea of progress, too. In fact, despite his reputation as an atheist at the time of *Political Justice*, Godwin started as a Calvinist Christian and once took up Priestleyan Unitarianism in his religious career (Jonathan Wordsworth, *Visionary Gleam* 53). Godwin's intellectual allegiance to Hartley and Priestley is reflected most clearly in his view on human psychology. In Book 4, Chapter 7, "Of the Mechanism of the Human Mind," Godwin develops a detailed exposition of the human psychological mechanism on the grounds of Hartley's associationism. The only reservation Godwin holds about Hartley concerns the vibration doctrine:

The sagacity of Hartley, in having pointed out the necessary connexion of the phenomena of mind, and shewn the practicability of reducing its different operations to a simple principle, cannot be too highly applauded. The reasonings of the present chapter, if true, may be considered as giving farther stability to his principal doctrine by freeing it from the scheme of material automatism with which it was unnecessarily clogged. (1. 320)

Along with his allegiance to Hartley's psychological position, Godwin follows both Hartley and Priestley in accepting necessitarianism and rejecting free will. *Political Justice* in fact devotes two full chapters to the discussion of the doctrine of necessity as "a foundation for our reasoning respecting the different provisions of political institution" (1. 283-84). His definition of necessity is thoroughly Hartleyan:

He who affirms that all actions are necessary, means, that, if we form a just and complete view of all the circumstances in which a living or intelligent being is placed, we shall find that he could not in any moment of his existence have acted otherwise than he has acted. (1. 285)

This statement is reminiscent of Hartley's version of necessity:

... a Person cannot do indifferently either of the Actions A, and its contrary a, while the previous Circumstances are the same; but is under an absolute Necessity of doing one of them, and that only. (*Observations* 1. 500, original emphases)

For rationalist Godwin the human mind is a mechanism whose fundamental mode of operation is passive reaction, in accordance with the necessitarian laws of association, to the sensations coming from the external world. "Man is in reality a passive, and not active being" (*Political Justice* 1. 310), he remarks, adding that the will can be defined as "one of the different cases of the association of ideas" (1. 303).

Having looked at the associationist side of *Political Justice*, we can understand the nature of Godwin's contribution to the associationist tradition. Loyal to adopting the framework of associationist theory and the doctrine of necessity, this political philosopher applied those theories to the actual developments of politics in his time and attempted a prediction of the future from the same necessitarian perspective. Like his contemporary Coleridge, Godwin closely

watched the progress of the French Revolution and tested the political relevance of association theory on the political reality of the mid 1790s. Unlike Coleridge, Godwin places specific emphasis on individual human progress by the exercise of reason, which is supposed to realize a collective renovation of the human race in peaceful fashion. His method of amelioration is therefore gradual reformism by necessary development, not violent revolution. However, that he predicted rapid expansion of the two civil revolutions of the day within his reformist framework means that he, too, partook of the contemporary atmosphere of revolutionary radicalism. With Coleridge and Godwin, associationism was redefined as a ground scheme for social renewal by the mid 1790s.

V

Like its spectacular outbreak, the down turn of the French Revolution was similarly spectacular. This civil revolution, regarded by contemporary thinkers as a seminal occasion of a renewal for the entire world, began to show a leaning towards terrorism as early as 1792. Then, with the execution of the king and the subsequent ascendancy of the Jacobins led by Robespierre, it became clear that the reality of the Revolution could not live up to its initial idealism. On the contrary this event exposed the cruelty and irrationality of what was meant to be the reign of reason. The Revolution turned into a tragic scene in which freedom and exercise of reason raged uncontrollably against humanity.

It was in the late 1790s, after the Revolution turned into collective violence, that William Wordsworth started writing a totally new kind of poetry. In a sense his literary project was an answer to the human cruelty and irrationality exposed in this revolutionary violence. Among his poetic principles Wordsworth still uses the framework of associationist psychology. However, the poet does not expect a revolutionary

change or its rapid expansion worldwide as Coleridge, and, with some reservation, Godwin did before him. Having witnessed the unfortunate result of the French Republic first-hand, he turned towards a milder form of progressivism to be realized through the poetic education of sensibility. This new attitude has an obvious affinity with the emerging field of biological evolutionism. The chief propounder of this school of thought was Erasmus Darwin, who was actually a source of Wordsworth's contribution to *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798. Interestingly, Darwin, too, employs associationism in his system of evolution in his biological treatise *Zoonomia* of 1794. Associationism has made another significant step forward in these two thinkers. Instead of supplying scientific grounds for the political scheme of revolution, the association of ideas is now integrated in the milder progressivism of evolution. When Wordsworth manifests his expectation of "the milder day" to come, his conviction is underwritten by Hartleyan associationism adapted in the framework of Darwinian evolutionism. For the last section of this article, I shall discuss the associationist aspect of Darwin's theory and its conceptual use by Wordsworth in his own formulation of evolutionary progressivism.

The association of ideas is an important part of Darwin's biological thinking in *Zoonomia; or, the Laws of Organic Life*. Published in 1794, this apparently odd combination of psychology and a theory of organisms had the potential to help Wordsworth's reformulation of associationism in the late 1790s. *Zoonomia's* fundamental thesis is that the vital principle, or life itself, is a uniquely organic phenomenon, not to be explained away by mechanistic formulae borrowed from physics or chemistry. On this assumption, Darwin postulates "the spirit of animation" existing only in the animal body. This vital spirit is implicitly conceptualized by the author as a kind of actively moving fluid, the supply and expenditure of which activate sensorial and kinetic movements of the

organism. This vitalist conception is a break with the eighteenth-century mechanistic position of Hartley, because by the introduction of this active fluid Darwin can systematically reject the mechanistic doctrine of nervous vibration constantly haunting the contemporary thinking of human behaviour (*Zoonomia* 1. 33). Nevertheless, while proposing this new vitalist framework, Darwin still draws on traditional associationism. Among the four ways in which the spirit of animation operates, he includes that Hartley-derived theory of association:

These four faculties of the sensorium during their inactive state are termed irritability, sensibility, voluntariness and associability; in their active state they are termed . . . irritation, sensation, volition, association. (1. 32)

Associative links, Darwin argues, stay fixed once acquired by habit or frequent repetition: “By frequent repetition, these motions acquire associations, which continue during our lives” (1. 49).

This vitalist version of associationism is linked in Darwin’s thinking with biological evolution, a form of progressive improvement of humanity. This is a new development in the political interpretation of associationism: till Coleridge and Godwin associationism’s political adaptation had been growing increasingly radical. Darwin’s position certainly shares a firm conviction of human progress with Coleridge and Godwin, but his notion of progress is a much gentler biological evolutionism. Furthermore, unlike those two political thinkers, Darwin’s progressivism was not a direct reaction to the French Revolution. He formulated his optimistic progressivism chiefly from biological observations and the Hartley-derived associationist doctrine. In the section of *Zoonomia* titled “Of Generation” Darwin speculates on the possibility of evolutionary development among living creatures. To demonstrate this proposition, he particularly refers to three observed phenomena: metamorphoses from the larva to imago in some insects,

changes produced in animals through cultivation or accidents, and inheritable mutations. Thence, and from general similarities of structure among animals, Darwin hypothesizes the existence of evolution in the warm-blooded animals:

. . . when we revolve in our minds the great similarity of structure, which obtains in all the warm-blooded animals, as well as quadrupeds, birds, and amphibious animals, as in mankind; from the mouse and bat to the elephant and whale; one is led to conclude, that they have alike been produced from a similar living filament. (1. 502)

Later in the same section Darwin more boldly extends this assumption to other categories of living things: “one and the same kind of living filaments is and has been the cause of all organic life” (1. 507).

In this scheme of evolution, association plays an important role. Darwin supposes that the primordial filament of rudimentary life is moved by alternating processes of irritability and sensibility; these, coupled with voluntariness and associability, cause the differences of form by which the whole living creation takes its myriad shapes (Beer 149). This evolutionary process presupposes that acquired habits and characters, including associations, are inheritable. Here it is specifically David Hartley upon whom Darwin’s account draws. Darwin refers to Hartley’s proposal that the acquired habits are retained in the afterlife and applies this idea to biological generation:

The ingenious Dr. Hartley in his work on man, and some other philosophers, have been of opinion, that our immortal part acquires during this life certain habits of action or of sentiment, which become for ever indissoluble, continuing after death in a future state of existence. . . . I would apply this ingenious idea to the generation or production of the embryo, or new animal, which partakes so much of the form and propensities of the parent. (1. 480)

It is shown in this passage that part of Darwin’s work in *Zoonomia* is to translate the otherworldly conception of Hartley into biological heredity. Related to

this heritable habit-formation is the notion that parents' imagination affects the embryo. Darwin particularly emphasizes the genetic function of the male parent's imagination:

. . . the first living fibre, which is to form an animal, is produced . . . with propensities, or appetencies, which shall produce by accretion of parts the similarity of form, feature, or sex, corresponding to the imagination of the father. (1. 519)

The importance ascribed here to the mental faculty of imagination is a further proof of the essential role of psychological association for Darwinian evolutionism.

Although not primarily a political idea, Darwin's evolutionism shares the eighteenth-century position of progressive improvement of the whole world:

This idea [Hume's idea of gradual development of the world] is analogous to the improving excellence observable in every part of the creation; such as in the progressive increase of the solid or habitable parts of the earth from water; and in the progressive increase of the wisdom and happiness of its inhabitants; and is consonant to the idea of our present situation being a state of probation, which by our exertions we may improve, and are consequently responsible for our actions.
(1. 509)

Congruous with this vision of universal progress is Darwin's idea of "organic happiness." Darwin holds a conviction that the amount of happiness in the world is constantly increasing, a belief remarkably similar to that of Hartley's. We have looked at how Hartley's associationism includes the idea of "Overbalance of Happiness," or a progressive cancellation of pains by pleasures through association. In *Phytologia*, a later work on the flora, Darwin, too, reaches the same position. Although nature seems to be dominated by the "eat or be eaten" principle, in a more comprehensive perspective this world is essentially benevolent. The more active creatures, which are more likely to survive, have a greater capacity for pleasure; therefore, the evolutionary struggle for existence maximizes the total amount of "organic pleasure," or pleasure shared by living organisms, in the world (King-Hele

337-38).

"Organic pleasure" is again mentioned in *The Temple of Nature*, which was completed in the late 1790s but remained unpublished until 1803. This poem, titled *The Origin of Society* at the manuscript stage, describes the process of evolution up to mankind's formation of society. Evolution begins with the spontaneous birth of "the first specks of animated earth" (1. 248), which grow into "the plant and insect" (1. 249). The process continues until it generates the whole series of the flora and fauna:

First forms minute, unseen by spheric glass,
Move on the mud, or pierce the watery mass;
These, as successive generations bloom,
New powers acquire, and larger limbs assume;
Whence countless groups of vegetation spring,
And breathing realms of fin, and feet, and wing.
(1. 297-302)

The subsequent process of evolution includes the passage from asexual generation to that of heterosexual reproduction. The latter is not only superior in its inherent capacity of remedying inherited diseases but also in the greater amount of organic happiness accompanying sexual intercourse. The poem is concluded with the triumph of organic happiness:

Shout round the globe, how Reproduction strives
With vanquish'd Death—and Happiness survives;
How Life increasing peoples every clime,
And young renescent Nature conquers Time.
(4. 451-54)

In this prophetic vision, Darwin, consciously or unconsciously, inherits Hartley's prediction of the prevalence of pleasure. In the mid to late 1790s, when the political prospect of renovation of the world was becoming unlikely, Darwin's evolutionism proposed a more suitable alternative than the directly political positions of Coleridge and Godwin. Moreover, the fresh formulation of Darwin did not remain inside the realm of biological science. His associationist evolutionism was succeeded in the literary field by Wil-

liam Wordsworth.

Wordsworth held a belief both in associationist psychology and in progressivism inherent in the contemporary republican politics. In the first half of the 1790s Wordsworth was a strong sympathizer of the French Revolution. Indeed, living for a time in France, he was close to the heart of the event as a first-hand witness and presumably involved in some republican activities. His allegiance to associationism is amply demonstrated in a number of references to this school of psychology both in his poetry and prose works. Like Priestley, Coleridge and Godwin, he was among thinkers who adopted Hartley's system in their political progressivism. Furthermore, following the model set by Erasmus Darwin, Wordsworth took the position of evolutionary progress, which was congenial to the atmosphere of the late 1790s and onwards.

Wordsworth's commitment to republican politics and accompanying progressivist thought began in a seminal form in his first trip to France in 1790, where the French Revolution was right under way. In this brief stay, the poet deeply felt the millenarian atmosphere of the Continent as recorded in his poetic autobiography written fourteen years later:

... 'twas a time when Europe was rejoiced,
France standing on the top of golden hours,
And human nature seeming born again.
(*Prelude* 1805. 6. 352-54)

The second visit to France, undertaken the next year, turned out to be a year-long stay. During this time Wordsworth's republican position was firmly established through friendship with French revolutionary activists. He confesses in an autobiographical passage that he became "a Patriot" (9. 125), or one committed to the Revolution. The millenarian fervour, which he had found among French people in his previous visit, now became his own passion. Wordsworth prophesies in *The Prelude* that he will "see the People having a strong hand / In making their own Laws,

whence better days / To all mankind" (9. 532-34). This later self-portrayal corresponds precisely with contemporary records of that time in *Descriptive Sketches*. This earlier poem, written in 1792 in revolutionary France, predicts an imminent reign of liberty: "Liberty shall soon, indignant, raise / Red on his hills his beacon's comet blaze . . ." (774-75). It is also indicated in this poem that the poet in 1792 explicitly expects a millenarian renewal of the world:

Lo! from th' innocuous flames, a lovely birth!
With it's own Virtues springs another earth:
Nature, as in her prime, her virgin reign
Begins, and Love and Truth compose her train.
(782-85)

According to Wordsworth, this pro-revolutionary attitude had also been nurtured by his education at home and by the republicanism native to British soil. The Cambridge of Wordsworth's undergraduate days was a stronghold of radical movements. In 1789 Cambridge University welcomed the French Revolution; it is recorded that a great number of the Senate members were friendly to the Revolution and there was a proposal for a dinner to celebrate the Bastille event (Roe 15). In *The Prelude* of 1805 Wordsworth does not refer to this event, yet he points out the general democratic culture of Cambridge and in praise of this he in effect calls the university a republic: "... something there was holden up to view / Of a Republic, where all stood thus far / Upon equal ground . . ." (9. 229-36). The poet also mentions the equalitarian atmosphere at Hawkshead Grammar School in which no one "Was vested with attention or respect / Through claims of wealth or blood . . ." (9. 225-26). This favourable view of his native district is not necessarily a retrospective idealization by the mature Wordsworth. In the eighteenth century there was a widely circulated notion that despite its monarchical regime the English Constitution was practically a republic because it had realized many of the republican principles proposed in the Civil War through the Glo-

rious Revolution and subsequent reforms (Fink 117). Hence Wordsworth's retrospective look to Cambridge and the Lake District is not necessarily coloured by nostalgia, but might have reflected this political theory that recognizes a model of the republic in the established order of Britain. As I have discussed elsewhere, it is presumably because of this strong background that Wordsworth's allegiance to the egalitarian cause inspired by the French Revolution did not fluctuate in his lifetime (Koguchi, "A Faith That Fails Not" 16-17).

Together with his position as a revolutionary activist, Wordsworth's subscription to associationism is also a demonstrable fact. The lines written in 1794 for a revised version of *An Evening Walk* indicate his indebtedness to Hartley. The usages of "trembling" and "vibrating" in reference to the perceptive faculty of the mind are instances of borrowing from Hartley's vibration doctrine (Koguchi, "Breeze Running through Ideas" 37-39). Then in the late 1790s, the association of ideas reappears as an important theory of creative processes in the poet's mind. Quite a few references to associationism and other related psychological principles occur in the poetry written towards the end of the 1790s. Some are straightforward Hartleyan, such as the reference to the passivity of the perceptive function of the mind in "Expostulation and Reply," and the mind's progress towards a "moral" state through the reception of incoming sensations in "The Tables Turned." On the other hand, in some of the meditative blank verse and argumentative prose of the same period, Wordsworth introduces his own version of associationism, which is free from the mechanical hypothesis of vibration and furnished instead with active power for perception and image-forming.

The prominent place of this active association in Wordsworth is best indicated by "The Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*" of 1800. This prose document offers an elaborate account of the associative processes in the mind leading to poetic creation. Using the associa-

tionist framework, Wordsworth defines the principal purpose of the poems in *Lyrical Ballads* as to trace "the primary laws of our nature: chiefly as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement" (122-24). Then he describes the process of poetic composition which, though he does not use the very term here, can be called associationist:

... our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings; and as by contemplating the relation of these general representatives to each other, we discover what is really important to men, so by the repetition and continuance of this act feelings connected with important subjects will be nourished. . . . (126)

Following this account of the creative process Wordsworth assertively adds the educational function of association, this time employing the necessitarian aspect of Hartley's original thesis:

... such habits of mind will be produced that by obeying blindly and mechanically the impulses of those habits we shall describe objects and utter sentiments of such a nature and in such connection with each other, that the understanding of the being to whom we address ourselves, if he be in a healthful state of association, must necessarily be in some degree enlightened, his taste exalted, and his affections ameliorated. (126)

The notion of the education of the reader's mind indicates Wordsworth's indebtedness to the doctrine of optimistic progress in Hartleyan associationism. In addition, like the political interpreters of associationism before him, Wordsworth envisages the coming of a new era: ". . . the time is approaching when the evil will be systematically opposed by men of greater powers and with far more distinguished success" ("Preface" 130). Although this refers to a renewal of the literary tradition and sensibility, not to a political reform, we can certainly observe a redemptive power of association reappearing here in a literary statement. In a very different context, therefore, Wordsworth reasserts the millenarian potential of the association of ideas claimed by Priestley, Coleridge

and Godwin.

Wordsworth's expectation of the coming of a new age, advanced in "The Preface," is not simply a hope for a sudden revolutionary change. The poet had already abandoned this straightforward path in the late 1790s; by that time he already realized too well the failure of the French Revolution. His disappointment with the Terror regime in Republican France is detailed in Books 10 and 11 of the 1805 *Prelude*. This unfortunate political development forced him to have recourse to Godwin's rationalism and gradual reformism. In a letter of 1794 he remarks: "I recoil from the bare idea of a revolution" (124); and elsewhere he praises Godwinian reason as "the herculean mace / Of Reason" (*Salisbury Plain* 543-44). In fact he repeats the Godwinian idea of maximum exercise of reason leading to amelioration: "Freedom of inquiry is all that I wish for . . . let the field be open and unencumbered, and truth must be victorious" (*Letters* 125). However, his Godwinian phase was short-lived. In 1796 Wordsworth clearly broke with Godwinism and in the following year he turned to the "One Life" pantheist philosophy brought to him by Coleridge, who had pulled out from radical politics by that time. Apparently a retreat into an apolitical realm, Wordsworth's adoption of that religious philosophy has a positively political significance. Pantheism has an inherent affinity with republicanism; the egalitarian ideal accompanying this type of politics is compatible with a pantheist world order where a spiritual presence indiscriminately pervades the universe, rather than with the traditional Christian order which presupposes a rigid hierarchy imposed by a supernatural force (Jacob 80). "One Life," in short, has the potential of uniting all human beings in a republican community of equality. As John Beer argues, Wordsworth's retirement from the political scene is thus given ultimate sanction (77); living a self-communing life can be regarded as a different form of serving mankind by working for the attainment of that equal-

tarian community of pantheism. Hence, it can be claimed that Wordsworth towards the end of the 1790s embraced a new kind of gradualist progressivism, which appeared to be like that of Godwin but was very different in essence. By the end of the decade, his political progressivism had gone through the test of time and came close to the Darwinian idea of evolutionism.

Gradual progress of humanity is the primary theme for the first poem written after his settling in Grasmere Village in 1799, *Home at Grasmere*. It is in this poem that Darwin's evolutionism is introduced as a conceptual support for Wordsworth's millenarian vision. Epistolary evidence has established that in the spring of 1798, two years before *Home at Grasmere*, Wordsworth studied Darwin's *Zoonomia*. The poet wrote Joseph Cottle an urgent request to send him a copy of that book (Wordsworth, *Letters* 199); a few weeks later his sister Dorothy Wordsworth wrote Cottle a note that Darwin's book "completely answered the purpose" (*Letters* 214) that his brother had held in mind. A clear outcome of this reading is "Goody Blake and Harry Gill" of the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads*, which is openly based on a factual story recorded in *Zoonomia*. It is not easy to work out the detail of Darwin's further influence on Wordsworth. Yet from the pressing tone of Wordsworth's request to Cottle, it is highly probable that the significance that this biologist had for the poet was not limited to a single episode among his clinical records. Indeed, with the supporting evidence of the Wordsworths' letters and the mediating presence of the immensely learned Coleridge, John Beer reads Darwin's evolutionary theory in the progressivism developed in *Home at Grasmere* (Beer 148-50). I shall conclude this article with discussion on this blank-verse poem, partly following Beer's interpretation.

It is described in this poem that on their way to Grasmere Village, Wordsworth and Dorothy visited the site where the incident later to be recorded in the

poem "Hart-Leap Well" occurred. In this numinous spot they saw the vision of a future world:

And when the trance
Came to us, as we stood by Hart-leap Well—
The intimation of the milder day
Which is to come, the fairer world than this—
.....
Both in the sadness and the joy we found
A promise and an earnest that we twain,
A pair seceding from the common world,
Might in that hallowed spot to which our steps
Were tending, in that individual nook,
Might even thus early for ourselves secure,
And in the midst of these unhappy times,
A portion of the blessedness which love
And knowledge will, we trust, hereafter give
To all the Vales of earth and all mankind.
(*Home at Grasmere*, MS B. 236-56)

The gently ascending path towards universal prevalence of "blessedness" through the poet's personal "love and knowledge" is quite distinct from Godwin's version of progressivism drawing upon pure rationalism. This passage has also departed from Coleridge's religious principle of "One Life" (Jonathan Wordsworth *Borders* 356), for that transcendent principle does not have an immediate role in conducting the poet and his sister towards the blessed future of "the milder day." Hence these quoted lines come close to Darwin's evolutionism; like Darwin's theory, the implied position of gradual progress is principally secular and concerns the whole range of life: personal, collective and generational. Darwin has theorized on the principle of organic happiness increasing step by step with each generation. For Wordsworth, too, blessedness is not brought about all at once but comes as a result of continuous improvement in love and knowledge for successive generations. Wordsworth returning to the village of Grasmere shows a determination to be a model in the process of human development by extending love and benevolence to the world from himself and from the circles of his family and friends. And it is implied in this expansive vision that while being within the framework of Darwinian evolutionism, *Home at Grasmere* also inherits the sociopolitical

potential of Hartley's associationist doctrine. This is not nearly as spectacular as the apocalyptic vision of young Coleridge or Godwin's prediction of universal revolution. Still, it can be claimed that Wordsworth in *Home at Grasmere* carried out the momentous task of offering a positive vision at a time when such vision seemed almost impossible.

The political appropriation of the association of ideas has thus come full circle with Wordsworth. From its inception by David Hartley, the eighteenth-century associationist tradition was potentially political. This aspect was first fully articulated by Joseph Priestley in the radical climate of the late eighteenth century. After the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789, associationism was more fully recognized by thinkers like Coleridge and Godwin as a scientific basis for an imminent renewal of human history. It was after this millenarian hope had subsided that Wordsworth put forward a milder, more mature interpretation of associationism in *Home at Grasmere*. In Wordsworth's context was Darwin's biological evolutionism, which was yet another interpretation of Hartleyan associationism. Thus, while still retaining its political potential, with Darwin and Wordsworth the psychological theory of association of ideas was subsumed in a different kind of scientific thinking. At the beginning of the nineteenth century this biological theory of continuous progression was still able to offer a redeeming vision of universal happiness, "the fairer world" to be realized on the earth.

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