

"A hat is a house./ I hid in his." (75)). And yet, since Being here is the only reality and the self the only frame of reference, while it is simultaneously the object of the quest, the protagonist must find his answers from within what he feels is a non-self. Like the spider who spins from his own bowel, the protagonist can only create from within, and asks for a voice to appear "in the form of a spider" (54) as a guide.

The sphinx-like directions given emerge from internal analogues of external elements.

Dark Hollows said, lee to the wind,
 The moon said, back of an eel,
 The salt said, look by the sea,
 (54)

The "hollows" are clearly the vacancies left at the loss of external (and paternal) identities. Told to "lee to the wind", to position himself so that the wind, the spirit, will direct him and give him force; by the cycle of existence - the moon - to look beyond sexuality, beyond the physical forces of existence; by the salt, that which gives savor and expression to existence, to search through the elements of life in the sea, his journey becomes more basic. The protagonist runs past a pastoral cameo, from which Wordsworth might have gained strength and meaning, to the "quick water", his own quick, and hunts for beginnings.

I'm an otter with only one nose;
 I'm all ready to whistle;
 I'm more than I was born;
 I could say hello to things;
 (84)

The similarity of images to those in the three quatrains in trimeter which describe what game the protagonist is hunting "by the shrunken lake" indicate that the quarry was known long before:

It's less than a leg ("LS", 54)
 I'm still waiting for a foot ("OLMLM", 84)
 And more than a nose ("LS", 54)
 Can it wrinkle its nose? ("LS", 54)
 It's sleek as an otter ("LS", 55)
 I'm an otter with only one nose ("OLMLM", 84)

The otter is both the father, Otto, his sexuality, and the sexuality of the son, the protagonist. "Oh, Lull Me, Lull Me" establishes the "communitive" value of the otter, the penis as bridge.¹⁰ "I could say hello to things" (84), exclaims the protagonist. And the communication works in two directions - both inward and outward. "Just under the water," traditionally a symbol for the unconscious, is to be found the essence of identity which was before felt as a lack, and the protagonist vacillates between directing himself further inward or moving outward, reviewing the dangers of greater internal penetration.

For further penetration into the self is fraught with

danger, which "The Pit" describes. As he asks question after question, the protagonist seems to penetrate deeper and deeper, the unnamed responder guiding him with directive statements rather than answers. "Where do the roots go?" (55) asks the naive hunter, and is told to look under the leaves; when he does, he finds moss, and inquires as to its creator. No answer is given, because there is no creator except for the stones whose very inanimance have caused the moss to exist. The image of moss, which is the subject of "Moss Gathering", suggests a comparison between the two poems. But although the moss indicates in both poems the passive eternity of the enveloping earth, the protagonist of "The Pit" is not at all alienated from the moss, but like a seed is close to becoming a part of it. The danger of remaining a moss encrusted stone, of returning from the animal to the vegetable and mineral and remaining there, is thus perceived, and a way out is sought. "Who stunned the dirt into noise?" (55): How does one become alive again after this death? Only the burrowing mole has the answer. The danger of rotting in the place he has only intended to visit is warned against, "Beware Mother Mildew", and the speaker commands himself to respond to exterior stimuli, to fight the entropy of the pit. The protagonist, who began his search with the knowledge of the danger, and "quailed", has now come to the very limits of safety.

The "physical and psychic exhaustion" of The Pit, is replaced by terror brought on by the awareness of the depths in which the protagonist finds himself. On the point of death and birth, "At the wood's mouth,/ By the cave's door" (55), the protagonist is like a plant about to grow; rejected by all external order, by animal and plant life, at war with the painful creative-erotic forces in himself, death is logical and preferable.

The sun was against me,
The moon would not have me.
(55)

The ontological stage of the protagonist is spiritual as well, the sun being both light and the light of God, of spiritual knowledge. And both are soon to be associated, in "The Return", with the father and the principle of order. The moon, representative of the cycles of birth and death, also seems to reject him, placing him below the cycle of life, and therefore in the position of a final death.

The "death" and the movement toward rebirth is captured in the short, frozen, prose-like sentences which follow the panic, and which gradually lengthen as they begin to thaw, to return from the sentence of death. The pit itself freezes and forces the protagonist outward to warmth. Vacillating before, on the edge of birth by the cave's door, he found the rejection by external reality terrifying. But when now "All the caves are ice" (56),

he has no alternative but to move outward. Although he wishes to remain in the womb-like existence, to be "rubbed in father and mother" (56), the mother has already proved to be the dangerous "Mother Mildew", and the father the factor which forces his exit from the dangerous place, "Father Fear". And his new movement forces a change: In "The Pit" the protagonist asked, "Who put the moss there?" and was answered, "The stones have been here too long." (55), but now the moss is gone, since father's look "drained the stones." (56).

The thaw continues in the three gliding quatrains which follow. There are visions of liquidity, "gliding shape", and "substance flowing" (56), and then an involuntary physical response - tears - which awakens the senses.

Like a slither of eels
 That watery cheek
 As my own tongue kissed
 My lips awake.

(56)

Although this autoerotic image proves the essential shellfishness of the protagonist, the frame of reference of self shifts suddenly and violently in the next verse: a social self is discovered. A barrage of questions and orders register the confusion of growth, "Is the seed leaving its old bed?" (56), and the disappointment at the life into which the protagonist returns, its alienation from his own deep responses, is expressed. "Where, where are the tears of the world?" (56). It is his tongue, the

medium of communication from "Open House", the social identity, which has awakened the protagonist with a kiss, and the two aspects of identity seem to line up in battle. The time order, first lost by the desecration of the earth by the child in "Moss Gathering" and found with such pain in the succeeding poems, appears lost again as the speaker calls out to his self:

Goodbye, goodbye, old stones, the time-order is going,
I have married my hands to perpetual agitation,
I run, I run to the whistle of money.

(56)

But the battle stops suddenly at its frantic climax. Money, the goal of the social self, and water, the passive goal of the unconscious, are polar opposites - and are merely lined up as opposites and then forgotten, for the time being, as the journey outward continues. Only in "O, Thou Opening, O", can the two opposites be united, when "Waking's/ Kissing./ Yes" (98). The journey has now only begun.

The return voyage matches the "way in" with spatial accuracy: the bird asked directions on the protagonist's voyage inward is passed on the return trip:

Has the bird left?
The stalk still sways.

(56)

And the worm he had asked for companionship is now speculated to have something in common with the protagonist, a jungian shadow.

The light of the external world, however, is too suddenly and too completely reached and a return to a principle of order is necessary, a balance between the elements previously encountered. The present journey is compared with a similar event in the past. In the past, however, there was a solution:

Once I stayed all night.
 The light in the morning came slowly over the white
 Snow.
 There were many kinds of cool
 Air.
 Then came steam.

Pipe-knock.

(57)

The ice and the thaw are reviewed, but in the past, the pipe-knock pulled the worlds of darkness and light, plant and human, nature and order, all together through the principle of "ordnung". Like the child in the greenhouse waiting for his father to make the world productive, the speaker of It was beginning winter awaits "A lively understandable spirit". The echoes of The Four Quartets in this poem serve to keep the principle of religious illumination at one with the individual psychological unity through comprehension.

The "partly apprehended" illumination¹² of these poems is remembered and struggled after in the sequence which follows, a literal journey out of the abyss of non-entity. The titles, "The Long Alley", "A Field of Light", and "The Shape of the Fire", reveal the direction which the

poems follow, the final poem being the most complex and the most significant in a sequential consideration.

"The Shape of the Fire" must be considered in detail if only because it was apparently created to balance "Where Knock Is Open Wide". A cursory glance at the two poems reveals numerous paired images. For example:

Stepped in wet. Over stones.
One, his nose had a frog,
But he slipped out. ("WNIOW", 73)

A toad folds into a stone
("TSOTF", 64)

The worm has moved away
("WNIOW", 73)

Farewell, farewell, fond worm.
("TSOTF", 64)

"The Shape of the Fire" is the conclusion of the episode, the speaker a Prospero surveying his work and bidding a fond farewell to his magic. He leafs through the pages of his story, and, in the first part, begins to move out of the realm of the self and the poetry of the self. Next he encounters the ego, and in part 3 resolves ego and self. Part 4 and 5 are the reconciliation and conclusion, the shaping of the fire, the sublimation of ordnung.

The first line identifies the poetry previously discussed:

What's this? A dish for fat lips.
(64)

The next lines identify the protean protagonist:

Who says? A nameless stranger.
 Is he a bird or a tree? Not everyone can tell.
 (64)

This rather objective view of the past performance indicates in itself an emergence from the world of the self, and indeed the next few lines introduce images of arrival; the recession of the waters of the unconscious to the crying of spiders (standard psychoanalytical symbol for children and infants as well as a standard roethkean symbol of self-regeneration and self-creativity), the landing of a boat, the calling of a ripe pod ready to burst open.

Ambivalence prevails in this section; the desire to emerge from the shell of the self ("Mother me out of here" (64)) is coupled with nostalgia for that with which he has identified his self ("Weeds, weeds, how I love you." (64)). The barrenness of this ambivalence, however, necessitates a further step. The fruit of this journey into the self has already been borne, the poems have been written, and a new movement must begin.

In Open House, vision was the sense most highly valued because it raised the individual above the senses. This sense is suddenly rediscovered in "The Shape of the Fire"; the protagonist suddenly realizes that his vision has been directed only downward, and inward - an incomplete vision at best. From the Journals:

The discovery comes at last, that the self, which seemed so marvellous and inexhaustible, was really desolate and barren.¹³

Here it is expressed as a maxim:

In the hour of ripeness, the tree is barren
(64)

Barren because incomplete. Another half is needed:

When I took off my clothes
To find a nose,
There was only one shoe
For the waltz of To,
The pinch of Where.
(64)

And the social self, so long ago deserted, "the flat headed man", is welcomed. "Have you come to unhinge my shadow?" (65): The ego is no longer dangerous to the unconscious, the shadow, the self, for, as he soon points out, "The edge cannot eat the center." (66). In Open House this external image was at best a source of painful humor:

You're likely to go on living for years,
With a nurse-maid waddle and a shop-girl simper,
And the style of your prose growing limper and limper.
(23)

But here the self is strong enough to face his ego and his "bodily decrepitude". The protagonist, from a position of safety, explains to the "flat-headed man" what has happened to him. The pre-verbal journey and the reason for it is patiently explained:

Last night I slept in the pits of a tongue
.....
I grew tired of the ritual of names.....
(65)

As well as the dangers encountered:

Who, careless, slips
 In coiling ooze
 Is trapped to the lips,
 Leaves more than shoes;
 (65)

Now is the time to emerge:

Who waits at the gate?
 (65)

Like DeQuincey's explanation of the knocking at Macbeth's gate, the question here brings the speaker out of the self-defined world into "reality". Previous efforts have been premature and therefore unsuccessful. For example:

That was a close knock. See what the will wants.
 ("The Long Alley", 61)

Now the time is right and the "lewd whisper" (66) of the self will diminish, the "eye" emerge from "the wave" (66).

At this point the speaker has both sides of the self. Emerging from, yet still grasping the depths of self, he glimpses also the beauty of the external reality. He knows of the time when "Death was not" (66), and sees the world outside - other objects, other people, as things of beauty. The first human being appears in the sequence, as an objet d'art.

To follow the drops sliding from a lifted oar,
 Held up, while the rower breathes, and the small
 boats drift quietly shoreward.
 (67)

As recently as "The Long Alley", to touch the world outside was certain death, the self too weak to remain separate:

Reach me rose, sweet one, still moist in the loam.

.....
 Bend down, small breathers, creepers and winders;
 Lean from the tiers and benches,
 Cyclamen dripping and lilies.

.....
 Light airs! Light airs! A pierce of angels!
 The leaves, the leaves become me!
 The tendrils have me!

(61)

But in "A Field of Light" the discovery comes:

I could watch! I could watch!
 I saw the seperateness of all things!

(63)

The self and the world are not one. The prior vision of unity is no longer necessary nor possible. Empathizing with the symbol rather than identifying with it, the speaker can appreciate it from the outside, and therefore comprehend its beauty, something he could not do when the world was incorporated in his own being.

To be by the rose
 Rising slowly out of its bed,
 Still as a child in its first loneliness
 To see cyclamen veins become clearer in early sunlight
 (67, emphasis supplied)

Although the speaker perceives the similarity between the rose and his own childlike aloneness, and the transparency of his own veins and the cyclamen veins, he employs metaphors to ~~sepa~~rate himself from his symbols.

As images, the rose blooming and the rower drifting shoreward corresponds to the state of acceptance, serenity and fruition which characterizes the protagonist's ontology. As objects, they are separate from the protagonist, objects

which can be appreciated with empathy, with comprehension, in part because they have once been a part of the protagonist.

The final image, the most perfect in the entire sequence because the most comprehensive, ties all of Roethke's poems together, from "Cuttings" to "Where Knock" to "The Shape of the Fire". The long journey has ended, suddenly and completely. The identity first felt in "Cuttings" and felt more completely in "Where Knock", is now perceived as similitude, comprehended, encompassed from without. As the tone becomes less excited, more serene, the lines become longer, imitative of the waters of the unconscious which have been given flowing form.

To know that light falls and fills, often without
our knowing
As an opaque vase fills to the brim from a quick
pouring,
Fills and trembles at the edge yet does not flow
over,
Still holding and feeding the stem of the contained
flower.

(67)

The fire, which had been accepted in "The Long Alley" as a purifying, humanizing factor (cf. "Call off the dogs, my paws are gone./.../Give me my hands;/I'll take the fire." (61)) and in "I Need, I Need" as the source of creativity, sexual and spiritual ("I know another fire./Has roots." (76)) is in the title of this poem given both meanings. Passion, creative forces are shaped, controlled, the depths of the self are molded into art as the waters

feed the flower. There is a perfect balance here, the vase is tremblingly full, but does not flow over - until the next poem.

"Praise to the End!" is about a shift in balance. "Onanism equals death" says Roethke in "Open Letter".¹⁴ There is a tendency to interpret these lines as a vestige from the puritanical upbringing of the poet: the speaker, having masturbated, is awaiting the inevitable strike of lightning. It seems to me inconsistent with Roethke's overall treatment of sex to write about the physical act of masturbation merely as an intellectual pun, however. Masturbation here is relevant to the development of the protagonist if it is also symbolic. Onanism is also a way of writing poetry, of communicating, and the whole of Praise to the End! to this point may be considered a form of autoejaculation, a self-stimulating ecstasy. Mazzaro, for example, refers to Praise to the End! as "poetry which tends to slight the reader."¹⁵ This self exploration leads to a further development of self, an understanding which may now, tentatively, be applied to the outside world.

The verses of "Praise to the End!" are both explicitly sexual and explicitly referential to The Lost Son, and both implications must be read simultaneously. For example:

Where are you now, my bonny beating gristle,
 My blue original dandy, numb with sugar?
 (86)

is obviously addressed to the sexual organs. However, the lines which follow:

Once I fished from the banks, leaf-light and happy:
 On the rocks south of quiet, in the close regions
 of kissing,
 I romped, lithe as a child, down the summery streets
 of my veins,
 Strict as a seed, nippy and twiggy.
 Now the water's low.
 (86)

is as obviously a description of the return to the blithe childhood of The Lost Son, accomplished through the passivity of water, which now is low. In this context, the first lines quoted, then, also refer to the child, unhardened and saplinglike in his form and strength.

Lacking the candor of dogs, I kiss the departing air;
 I'm untrue to my own excesses.
 (86)

To cling to what was, to remain a child in an adult body, to remain within the self when it has become a complete and therefore rounded being, capable of communication with other beings, is equal to onanism which is the death of the individual. Roethke poses the question: "Is the protagonist a mindless euphoric jigger who goes blithering into oblivion? No."¹⁷. He does not die, but prepares the way out of the self. What we have been calling the individuation process must now become the objectification process. Roethke notes:

...The discovery comes at last: that the self, which seemed so marvellous and inexhaustible, was really desolate and barren;¹⁸

or, in the words of Michael Robartes:

The soul remembering its loneliness
Shudders in many cradles; all is changed,
It would be the world's servant.
("The Phases of the Moon", 20)

The very first sentences of "Praise to the End!" reveal the necessity of coming to terms with the past and future so that the outside world may be taken into account. The "wood" of the forest of self now seems dark, close, to the speaker and he registers the first note of self-consciousness (in the traditional sense) in the sequence, "For whom have I swelled like a seed?" (85). In this question is a retrogressive look at The Lost Son and the poems of Praise to the End! in which the speaker has actually swelled and developed like a seed. The movement until now has been entirely self-absorbed, however, almost entirely unconscious of audience. Now there is, and will be throughout the sequence, a sophistication, a removal, an objective regrouping of forces.

In "Four for Sir John Davies", the dance is a symbol for the unity of the universe. Here the symbol is partially developed as the unity is partially developed. "Bumpkin, he can dance alone" (85) echoes the notion of the unity of the self, with no relationship to the unity of the world. The dance comes to include a partner, symbolic of

the inclusion of the universe, only in "Four for Sir John Davies". "Praise to the End!" leads to this.

Although the past has not yet been resolved in the mind of the protagonist, past relationships have been stripped of all their social defenses, and can now be treated cleanly. So although the speaker feeds the ghost of his father, and apologizes, he uses his hands:

The rings have gone from the pond.
The river's alone with its water.
All risings
Fall.

(85)

The effect of all this stripping away has been a numbed individual, "dead at both ends" (85)²⁰, like a pond into which time explosives have been tossed but are not due yet to go off. Yet the explosives which will break the deadlock are set to go off as the title suggests. "Praise to the End!" signals the conclusion of creation as certainly as it does in the Prelude - the final creature, the poet.

The objectification process begins with the awareness of the passive sing-song: "What footie does is final." (86), the last line of each verse, reminds him. The past relived and relived cannot be altered, though the protean protagonist returns in his original forms. Indeed the return itself has become a mechanical, non-creative act: "An exact fall of waters has rendered me impotent" (86).

The emergence from the shellfishness of selfishness

occurs chronologically at the age of adolescence and according to Yeats' vision as the moon becomes brighter and round. The speaker accordingly returns to adolescent memories when the world of self burst and the world outside became a reality.

The sky cracked open
 The world I knew;
 Lay like the cats do
 Sniffing the dew.
 (87)

The phases are also specifically referred to:

I wore the sun with ease.

 Desire was winter-calm,
 A moon away.
 (87)

and later: —

The dark showed me a face.

 The light becomes me.
 (88)

Now the protagonist is in the later teens, prepared to become one of Yeats' saints.

I've crawled from the mire, alert as a saint or dog.
 (88)

His attempt to reach out of self is met with a cosmic reaching out to him - a universal movement, and he commands a further immersal in the world:

Wherefore, O birds and small fish, surround me.
 (88)

The world does not engulf him, however; it is the speaker who must command the action, and in "Unfold!

Unfold!", the realization comes that the protagonist must act for himself. Since he "can't crawl back through these veins", and is unable to move forward, he turns to the dead for advice:

The dead speak noise...

It's time you stood up and asked
Or sat down and did...
(89)

The practical advice of self-help, the "whelm of proverbs", leads at first to a recapitulation of the journey, the symbols previously developed now functioning as an efficient short hand. The short hand and the use of the past tense serve also as distancing devices from this painful experience, and help to bring the sequence to a resolution.

The eye perishes in the small vision.
What else has the vine loosened?
I heard a dead tongue halloo.
(90)

The dead, previously enslavers of the individual, drawing one to them with clutching hands, have become anticipators of the protagonist's voyage, benevolent rather than malevolent. Once the individual has become an individual, he is free to find his links with the past. The phrase, "I'll seek my own meekness" (91), indicates he has passed through the need to be isolated and superior, and can now acknowledge and accept aid.

In their harsh thickets
The dead thrash.
They help.
(91)

Roethke explains and travels through the very process of "Praise to the End!" and "Unfold! Unfold!" in "How to Write Like Somebody Else" when he explains how he was once the victim of those he imitated and had to learn to use them, to let them help him. From "Cuttings" when the need was to cut himself off from the past and others, the protagonist has developed an identity, a sense of self, and because of this, he is not in imminent danger of being smothered by others (not until he develops an intimate relationship with an other in Words for the Wind). As Roethke says of imitation:

In a time when the romantic notion of the inspired poet still has considerable credence, true "imitation" takes a certain courage. One dares to stand up to a great style, to compete with papa.²¹

These lines deserve notice because they point out the remarkable similarity between Roethke's protagonist and Roethke the poet (if not Roethke the man). The ability to use tradition is precisely the difference between Open House in which the speaker warns, "The spirit starves/ Until the dead have been subdued" ("Feud", 4), and Praise to the End which culminates in the affirmation, "the dead...help" (90).

To be able to use the past, to use the world outside, without disintegrating or dissolving into the identity of another, is indeed a formidable accomplishment. It is only from this point of integration that action in the

world is possible, that one may dare "cry love!". Yeats describes Phase 18:

Now, for the first time since Phase 12, Goethe's saying is almost true. "Man knows himself by action only, by thought never. [compare to: "It's time you stood up and asked/ Or sat down and did ...("Unfold! Unfold!", 89)] Meanwhile the anti-theoretical tincture begins to attain, without previous struggle or self-analysis, its active form which is love - love being the union of emotion and instinct....Perhaps now, and for the first time, the love of a living woman ("disillusionment" once accepted) as apart from beauty or function, is an admitted aim, though not yet wholly achieved.²²

A perfect introduction to "I Cry Love! Love!".

If being in the self is comparable to a fish being in water, the blood the same temperature as the environment, then moving out of the self is like the evolutionary process of amphibiation, moving out onto the shore.

I've traced these words in sand with a vestigial tail;
Now the gills are beginning to cry.
(92)

The tree with which the protagonist has until now identified himself is similarly locked into its environment, absorbed in self. Now:

Who untied the tree?
(93)

Not only is the tree loosed, but the freedom has been accomplished through another being, the mother, recognized as an other, and yet not an enemy. The birth remembered is not a sudden loss, a fall, but a cooperative effort:

We met in a nest. Before I lived.
 The dark hair sighed.
 We never enter
 Alone.

(93)

The progression in "I Cry Love! Love!", from mastery of self, to the loneliness of "my own desert", to a catalogue of acceptance, is one of a gradual acceptance of Freud's "Reality Principle", a major stage for any individual. But there is much further to go.

In "O Thou Opening, O" the birth which began in "I Cry Love! Love!" is continued. The self and ego regroup their forces, forming a united front from which to face the world. The desire of the self (depth) and the ego (height) to unite, and their alienation from one another, is apparent immediately:

The Depth calls to the Height
 - Neither knows it.

(97)

In the next lines the depth and height discuss their differences. The fourth verse is from the depth, from the unstructured instinctive vision of the self.

Thrum-thrum, who can be equal to ease?
 I've seen my father's face before
 Deep in the belly of a thing to be.
 The Devil isn't dead; he's just away.

(97)

Without the development of Praise to the End! these lines could very well be likened to the rantings of a schizophrenic, and so the ego conceives it. "If we, who are so untimely linked together in one body, are to go mad, at

least permit me to prepare a face for it", it seems to say. "I'll change my image, and my shoes"(97). The image is of the cynic, which must be prepared to cope with such bizarre behavior. The prose section which follows belongs to the cynic who retraces the profound inner voyage with a sneer. All that was struggled through so painfully is ridiculed by the "practical" ego, who is a bit of a facile Irish shrew. The gentle self in response reaches out:

Hear the sigh of what is.
 Be a pleased rock
 On a plain day.
 Waking's
 Kissing.
 Yes.

(98)

The basic image of stones and rocks, their association with the depths of the earth and the psyche, is revised somewhat for purposes of compromise: To be pleased, to be conscious and self-satisfied, is to unite self and ego, primordial self with social self. The temporary union of self and ego in "The Gibber", then serving the purpose of shocking the self out of its primordial depths ("As my own tongue kissed/ My lips awake" (56)), has now become permanent. Autoeroticism is here symbolic of the union of self and ego. The ego, symbolized by the larks'prattle that was silenced in "I Need, I Need" because it was too remote from the immediate concerns of the self, is now united with these more basic concerns, for the center of interest of the self has also shifted

somewhat, "The lark's my heart!" (99).

It is the potential of freedom from the cycles of growth, "the round home of a root" (99), the assumed result of the marriage of the self, which is the cause of the great excitement and anticipation in the final lines of "O, Thou Opening, O", the possibility of leaving one's inner world without disintegrating into the air. As long as the borders of identity, the shape of the fire, hold, the protagonist is "safe".

I see; I seek;
I'm near.
Be true,
Skin.
(99)

By the very metaphor of self-identity employed in the title "The Shape of the Fire", and by the address to his own skin here, it is clear that the concept of identity is a continually changing one. For the protagonist has emerged into the world, into the realm of time and space, and there will always be threats of destruction. Rollo May discusses this matter in roethkean terminology:

One of his [Nietzsche's] most crucial existential emphases is his insistence that the values of human life never come about automatically. The human being can lose his own being by his own choices, as a tree or stone cannot. Affirming one's own being creates the values of life.²³

With the creation of a sense of self, The protagonist moves out into the existential universe - the world of

Roethke's later poetry.