



Poetry, Philosophy, and the Vision of Human Life: Romantic Thought and the Philosophical Imagination in Wilfy Rebimbus

Dr Vincent Alva

POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH SCHOLAR

Associate Professor of English
Milagres College, Kallianpur
Udupi, Karnataka

Manipur International University
Imphal, Manipur

Date of Submission: 14-03-2026

Date of Acceptance: 27-03-2026

Abstract

This paper explores the enduring relationship between poetry and philosophy by examining the Romantic tradition alongside the reflective poetry of Wilfy Rebimbus. While philosophy seeks truth through reason and systematic inquiry, poetry approaches similar questions through imagination, emotion, and symbolic expression. The study traces this dialogue from Plato's suspicion of poetry to the Romantic redefinition of poetic imagination as a powerful mode of philosophical insight. Romantic poets such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, and Blake present nature, imagination, and the sublime as sources of deeper understanding that transcend rational limitations.

The paper further demonstrates how these Romantic philosophical concerns find resonance in the works of Wilfy Rebimbus, whose poetry reflects on human equality, social hypocrisy, suffering, mortality, and transcendence. Though rooted in a different cultural and historical context, Wilfy's verses reveal a similar philosophical depth expressed through simplicity and lived experience. By placing Romantic thought and Wilfy's poetry in dialogue, the paper argues that poetry serves as a universal medium of philosophical reflection. Ultimately, it establishes that poetic imagination not only complements philosophical reasoning but also expands the scope of human understanding by articulating truths that lie beyond the reach of logic.

Keywords

Poetry and Philosophy, Romanticism, Imagination, Nature and the Sublime, Humanism

The relationship between poetry and philosophy has been one of the most enduring and fascinating dialogues in the history of human

thought. Both disciplines attempt to explore the deepest questions of existence: the meaning of life, the nature of truth, the role of imagination, the experience of suffering, and the mystery of death. Yet they approach these questions through different intellectual methods. Philosophy traditionally seeks clarity through reason, argument, and systematic analysis, while poetry explores truth through imagination, emotion, metaphor, and symbolic language. Despite these methodological differences, the boundaries between poetry and philosophy have often overlapped. Many poets have functioned as philosophers of human experience, while many philosophers have relied upon poetic imagination to articulate complex ideas. This intimate relationship becomes especially visible in the Romantic period, when poets openly challenged the traditional separation between poetry and philosophy and asserted that poetic imagination could reveal truths inaccessible to purely rational thought. When the philosophical insights of Romantic poetry are viewed alongside the reflective verses of Wilfy Rebimbus, a remarkable continuity emerges. Although separated by geography, language, and historical context, both traditions reveal a shared concern with the fundamental realities of human life: nature, suffering, social injustice, mortality, and the hope for transcendence.

The tension between poetry and philosophy can be traced back to classical antiquity, particularly to the writings of Plato. In his philosophical dialogue *The Republic*, Plato famously expressed deep suspicion toward poetry and questioned its role in shaping society. According to him, poetry is fundamentally an imitation or *mimesis*. Since the physical world itself is already an imperfect imitation of the eternal forms, poetry, which imitates the physical world, becomes an imitation of an



imitation and therefore stands at a considerable distance from truth (Plato, 2007). From Plato's perspective, poets do not convey genuine knowledge; instead, they stimulate emotional responses that may mislead people and weaken rational judgment. He also worried that poetic narratives frequently portray gods and heroes behaving in morally questionable ways, which could influence the moral development of citizens. For this reason, Plato proposed that poets should be excluded from the ideal state unless they could prove that their work contributed positively to moral education.

Yet Plato's criticism contains an implicit recognition of poetry's immense power. The very fact that he feared poetry reveals his awareness of its capacity to shape imagination and influence collective consciousness. Poetry possesses a persuasive emotional force that can affect human perception in ways that purely logical discourse cannot. What Plato feared was precisely the emotional and imaginative potency of poetic language.

The Romantic poets of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries offered a powerful response to this Platonic suspicion. For Romantic thinkers, poetry was not merely imitation but a profound mode of understanding reality. Romantic poets believed that the deepest truths of human existence cannot always be expressed through logical reasoning alone. Instead, such truths emerge through imaginative insight, emotional experience, and symbolic expression. Poetry therefore became a philosophical activity that explored the relationship between the human mind and the universe.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge articulated this idea with remarkable clarity when he observed that "no man was ever yet a great poet without being at the same time a profound philosopher" (Coleridge, 1817/2009). In this statement Coleridge dissolves the traditional boundary between poetry and philosophy. For him, the poet is not merely an entertainer or storyteller but a thinker who explores the mysteries of existence through imaginative language. The Romantic movement thus transformed the cultural perception of poetry by presenting it as a form of philosophical insight.

The Romantic revolution in literature emerged partly as a reaction against the rationalism of the Enlightenment. Enlightenment thinkers emphasised reason, scientific method, and empirical knowledge as the primary means of understanding the world. While these intellectual developments contributed significantly to scientific progress, many Romantic writers felt that excessive reliance on

rationality had diminished humanity's connection with emotion, imagination, and nature. Romantic poets therefore attempted to restore balance by emphasising the emotional and spiritual dimensions of human experience.

One of the most significant philosophical themes in Romantic poetry is the idea that nature possesses moral and spiritual significance. For Romantic poets, nature is not merely a physical environment or scenic background; it is a living presence that shapes human consciousness. William Wordsworth stands as one of the most influential voices in articulating this vision. Wordsworth believed that the natural world possesses the power to awaken moral awareness and spiritual insight within the human mind.

In his celebrated poem *Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey*, Wordsworth reflects on the profound influence of nature upon human perception. He writes:

"While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things." (Wordsworth ll. 47–49)

These lines suggest that nature allows the human mind to perceive deeper realities that remain hidden during ordinary experience. The "quiet eye" represents a state of contemplative awareness in which the individual becomes receptive to the spiritual significance of the natural world. For Wordsworth, nature becomes a teacher capable of guiding human beings toward moral understanding. Wordsworth's philosophical interpretation of nature appears even more clearly in another famous passage:

"One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can." (Wordsworth ll. 21–24)

In this statement Wordsworth challenges the assumption that philosophical wisdom arises solely from intellectual reasoning. Instead, he proposes that a simple encounter with nature can reveal insights about human morality and existence that surpass the teachings of traditional philosophers. Nature therefore functions as a spiritual educator that shapes the human mind.

The Romantic vision of nature also includes an awareness of the sublime. The concept of the sublime refers to experiences of overwhelming grandeur or power that evoke both awe and fear. Such experiences remind human beings of their smallness within the vast universe and confront them with the limits of human understanding. Percy Bysshe Shelley explores this philosophical idea in



his poem *Mont Blanc*, where he reflects on the majestic mountain landscape and the mysteries of existence:

“And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea,
If to the human mind’s imaginings
Silence and solitude were vacancy?” (Shelley ll.
142–144)

Shelley’s lines suggest that the human mind plays a crucial role in shaping the meaning of the natural world. Without imagination, even the most magnificent landscape might appear empty. The sublime experience therefore involves a dynamic interaction between nature and human consciousness.

The sense of nature’s overwhelming power also appears in Coleridge’s *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. In this poem the mariner encounters an eerie and terrifying oceanic landscape that reflects the mysterious forces of the universe:

“The very deep did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!

Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.” (Coleridge ll. 123–126)

Through such imagery Coleridge emphasises that nature is not always benevolent or comforting. It can also appear strange, frightening, and morally indifferent. The sublime experience forces human beings to confront the complexity and unpredictability of existence.

Another central concept in Romantic philosophy is the power of imagination. For Romantic poets’ imagination is not merely a decorative literary device but a fundamental human faculty that shapes perception and creativity. Coleridge elaborated this idea in *Biographia Literaria*, where he distinguished between the primary and secondary imagination. The primary imagination refers to the universal human ability to perceive the world, while the secondary imagination represents the creative power through which poets transform ordinary experience into artistic expression (Coleridge, 1817/2009).

This imaginative transformation becomes vividly visible in Coleridge’s poem *Kubla Khan*, which presents a dreamlike landscape of extraordinary beauty and mystery:

“A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e’er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover.” (Coleridge ll. 14–16)

The imagery of this poem illustrates how imagination can create symbolic worlds that transcend ordinary reality. Through imagination the poet gains access to deeper layers of meaning.

John Keats further developed this philosophical vision through his concept of “negative capability.”

According to Keats, a great poet possesses the ability to remain comfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity rather than demanding rational explanations for every experience. In *Ode to a Nightingale*, the poet imagines escaping the limitations of human mortality through the eternal song of the nightingale:

“Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down.” (Coleridge ll. 14–16)

The nightingale symbolises the timeless continuity of artistic expression, contrasting with the fleeting nature of human life. Keats’s poetry often reflects a profound meditation on beauty, mortality, and the limits of human understanding. His famous line from *Ode on a Grecian Urn* expresses this philosophical insight:

“Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.” (Keats ll. 49–50)

This statement suggests that aesthetic experience itself can reveal philosophical truth.

William Blake, another visionary Romantic poet, offered an even more radical philosophical interpretation of imagination. Blake believed that human perception is shaped by mental habits that restrict the ability to perceive the infinite nature of reality. In one of his most celebrated statements he writes:

“If the doors of perception were cleansed everything
would appear to man as it is, infinite.” (Blake, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*)

Blake’s philosophy suggests that imagination has the power to liberate human perception from conventional limitations.

When these Romantic ideas are considered alongside the poetry of Wilfry Rebimbus, an interesting philosophical continuity becomes visible. Wilfry Rebimbus may not belong to the Romantic tradition historically, yet his poetry expresses reflections that resonate strongly with Romantic humanism and philosophical thought. His poems explore themes that have always been central to philosophy: human birth, social inequality, suffering, mortality, and the search for meaning.

In one of his simple yet profound observations, Wilfry reminds humanity of its common origin:

“No one has come into this world
Except from the womb of his mother.” (*Kogul Gayta* 23)

This statement appears straightforward, yet it contains a powerful philosophical implication. It reminds human beings of their shared humanity and common beginnings. Philosophical traditions associated with humanism emphasise the dignity



and equality of all human life. Wilfy's poetic reminder echoes this humanistic principle.

Another philosophical dimension of Wilfy's poetry emerges in his critique of social hypocrisy related to wealth and status. In a striking observation he writes:

"When money makes noise in your pocket
People come running for donations
You will be invited for every programme
You will be the inaugurator of all the events."
(*Kogul Gayta* 65)

These lines expose the superficial nature of social recognition based on wealth rather than moral worth. Philosophers throughout history have criticised the moral distortions produced by materialism. Wilfy's poetry reflects this social philosophy by revealing the gap between genuine human values and socially constructed prestige.

Wilfy's poetry also confronts the problem of suffering, a question that has troubled philosophers across centuries. Natural disasters often provoke reflections about the nature of existence and the possibility of divine justice. Wilfy captures this emotional questioning through the lines:

"Can't understand why it happens
Heart cries to think about it
For whose sin this punishment
Earth shakes, Earth quakes."
(*Kogul Gayta* 369-70)

These lines echo what modern philosophy describes as the existential problem of suffering. Thinkers such as Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre explored similar questions about the apparent indifference of the universe to human suffering. Wilfy's poetry does not attempt to provide philosophical solutions; instead, it expresses the emotional experience of confronting tragedy and uncertainty.

The awareness of mortality is another recurring theme in Wilfy's poetic reflections. Human life is fragile and temporary, and many philosophical traditions emphasise the importance of recognising this impermanence. Wilfy expresses this idea with striking simplicity:

"It's evening now
Get up man and move out of this world
How much pride you showed for four days and four nights
You see, today without your knowledge the sun has sunk."
(*Kogul Gayta* 17)

These lines resemble the reflections found in Stoic philosophy, which emphasised humility in the face of mortality. By reminding human beings of the brevity of life, Wilfy encourages a more reflective understanding of human existence.

The theme of love and transcendence also appears in Wilfy's poetry. In a touching expression of hope beyond mortality, he writes:

"If possible my love
Meet me in next life."
(*Kogul Gayta* 117)

This idea resonates deeply with Indian philosophical traditions that emphasise the continuity of the soul. According to the *Bhagavad Gita*, the soul is eternal and cannot be destroyed. Just as a person discards worn-out garments and puts on new ones, the soul discards one body and takes another. Wilfy's poetic imagination echoes this philosophical belief in the continuity of life beyond physical death.

When viewed within the larger tradition of poetic philosophy, the works of Wilfy Rebus demonstrate that philosophical insight does not belong exclusively to academic discourse. Philosophy can emerge from everyday experience and ordinary observation. Through simple language and familiar situations, Wilfy's poetry expresses reflections that resonate with universal philosophical concerns.

The dialogue between poetry and philosophy therefore continues across cultures and historical periods. Romantic poets demonstrated that poetry could serve as a powerful vehicle for exploring the mysteries of nature, imagination, and human existence. Similarly, the poetry of Wilfy Rebus reveals how everyday experiences can become sources of philosophical reflection.

Poetry thus becomes more than an artistic form; it becomes a medium through which humanity reflects upon its own existence. By blending imagination, emotion, and reflective insight, poetry allows human beings to approach truths that remain difficult to articulate through purely logical discourse. The philosophical vision expressed by Romantic poets and Wilfy Rebus reminds us that the search for meaning is not confined to philosophical treatises but can also emerge from the imaginative language of poetry. In this sense the poet becomes not merely a creator of aesthetic beauty but a thinker who interprets the human condition and reveals the deeper truths of life.

Bibliography

- [1]. Blake, William. *The Complete Poems*. Penguin Classics, 2004.
- [2]. Camus, Albert. *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Translated by Justin O'Brien, Vintage, 1955.
- [3]. Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Biographia Literaria*. Oxford University Press, 2009.
- [4]. Keats, John. *Selected Poems*. Penguin Classics, 2001.



-
- [5]. Plato. *The Republic*. Translated by Desmond Lee, Penguin Classics, 2007.
- [6]. Rebimbus, Wilfy. *Kogul Gaytha*. Jerosa Company, 2015.
- [7]. Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Existentialism Is a Humanism*. Translated by Carol Macomber, Yale University Press, 2007.
- [8]. Shelley, Percy Bysshe. *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*. W. W. Norton, 2003.
- [9]. Wordsworth, William. *The Prelude*. Oxford University Press, 2008.
- [10]. Wordsworth, William, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. *Lyrical Ballads*. Oxford University Press, 2008.