

William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

Tekst:

William Wordsworth

Filosofiske spørsmål:

Øyvind Olsholt

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This poem describes a meeting between a man and an 8-year-old girl from the country. He asks her how many brothers and sisters she has got and she answers: "We are seven". However it turns out that two of them are dead. Despite this the girl keep on telling that she has seven brothers and sisters. (Taken from the collection "Lyrical Ballads" from 1798.)

We are seven

A simple child, dear brother Jim,
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,
What should it know of death?

breath: pust

limb: lem, kroppsdel

death: død

I met a little cottage Girl:
She was eight years old, she said;
Her hair was thick with many a curl
That clustered round her head.

curl: krøller

clustered: lå tett i tett

She had a rustic, woodland air,
And she was wildly clad:
Her eyes were fair, and very fair;
—Her beauty made me glad.

rustic: landlig; *woodland air:* skogaktig vesen

clad: kledd

"Sisters and brothers, little Maid,
How many may you be?"
"How many? Seven in all," she said,
And wondering looked at me.

"And where are they? I pray you tell."
She answered, "Seven are we;
And two of us at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea.

I pray you tell: vær snill og si meg det

dwell: bor, lever

"Two of us in the churchyard lie,

churchyard: kirkegård

My sister and my brother;
And, in the churchyard cottage, I
Dwell near them with my mother.”

cottage: hytte, koie

”You say that two at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea,
Yet ye are seven !—I pray you tell,
Sweet Maid, how this may be.”

ye: gammel form for *you*: dere
maid: pike

Then did the little Maid reply,
”Seven boys and girls are we ;
Two of us in the churchyard lie,
Beneath the churchyard tree.”

beneath: nedenfor

”You run about, my little Maid,
Your limbs they are alive;
If two are in the churchyard laid,
Then ye are only five.”

”Their graves are green, they may be seen,”
The little Maid replied,
”Twelve steps or more from my mother’s door,
And they are side by side.

replied: svarte

”My stockings there I often knit,
My kerchief there I hem;
And there upon the ground I sit—
I sit and sing to them.

stockings: strømper; *knit:* strikke
kerchief: hodetørkle; *hem:* kantsy

”And often after sunset, Sir,
When it is light and fair,
I take my little porringer,
And eat my supper there.

sunset: solnedgang

porringer: grøtbolle

”The first that died was little Jane;
In bed she moaning lay,
Till God released her of her pain;
And then she went away.

moan: stønne
released: frigjorde

”So in the churchyard she was laid;
And, when the grass was dry,
Together round her grave we played,
My brother John and I.

"And when the ground was white with snow,
And I could run and slide,
My brother John was forced to go,
And he lies by her side."

slide: skli, ake

"How many are you, then," said I,
"If they two are in Heaven?"
The little Maiden did reply,
"O Master! we are seven."

maiden = maid

"But they are dead ; those two are dead!
Their spirits are in Heaven!"
'Twas throwing words away: for still
The little Maid would have her will,
And said, "Nay, we are seven!"

spirit: sjel

'Twas: forkortelse for it was

nay: nei

Some philosophical questions

1. *How can this girl be so certain that they are still seven brothers and sisters? Why can't she just accept that John and Jane are dead and buried? Or is this perhaps the wrong question – maybe there is nothing to accept, maybe death doesn't exist for this little girl? If so, Does that mean that there is something she has misunderstood? Or is it we (the man in the poem) that has misunderstood?*

does death exist or does it not? Who is right: the man that says that they now are five brothers and sisters and that John and Jane have gone to heaven – or the little girl who thinks that they are seven and that John and Jane are still with her? Can both be right at the same time?

2. *What would you feel if you should lose your pet animal? What if you should lose one of your closest friends? What if you should lose your brother or sister or even your parents? Is it possible to be happy when you have lost someone you really care about? And is it possible to go on loving that which you have lost? What is the difference between such love and the love you have to "real" persons?*

3. *suppose you have a girl/boyfriend, then s/he leaves you. You are deeply hurt and very sad, but still you keep loving her/him. It is as if this person still lives within your soul. So you go on loving her/him. But isn't it right to say that this person no longer exists for you, that s/he is "dead" for you? S/he has left your life and still you keep her/him inside you. S/he exists for you.*

Maybe the girl in the poem felt just like that for her deceased brother and sister?

4. *The man in the poem cannot quite understand the girl. On the other hand, she cannot understand him. He is an adult, she is a child. Is it always difficult for children and adults to talk together? Why does a child think and feel differently from adults? And why do adults think and feel so differently from a child? Should children try to become more like adults? Or should adults try to become more like children? Either-or or both-and?*