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Coleridge as critic

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Coleridge as Critic

COLERIDGE
AS CRITIC

by
HERBERT READ

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Note

This essay was prepared as my contribution to a Symposium on the Great Critics held at the Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, but the text here printed is considerably longer than the lecture actually delivered on April 14, 1948.

H. R.

Coleridge as Critic

In concentrating on Coleridge's critical philosophy, which is my present intention, I am requiring from the reader a certain act of renunciation. There is no figure, in the whole history of English literature, who is so intrinsically fascinating,' and a very pleasant hour might be spent recalling Coleridge's personality in all its suggestiveness, its infinite variety and, to use his own word, its *multeity*. There is an entry in the recently published *Notebooks* of Henry James which well expresses this fatal attractiveness. That connoisseur in character, in dramatic situations, in psychological subtleties, had been reading the then recently published biography of Coleridge written by Dykes Campbell, and he says that he 'was infinitely struck with the suggestiveness of S.T.C.'s figure—wonderful, admirable figure—for pictorial treatment. What a subject some particular cluster of its relations would make for a little story, a small vivid picture. There was a point, as I read, at which I seemed to see a little story—to have a quick glimpse of the possible drama. Would not such a drama necessarily be the question of the acceptance by someone—someone with something important at stake—of the general *responsibility* of rising to the height of accepting him for what he is, recognizing his rare, anomalous, magnificent, interesting, curious, tremendously suggestive character, vices and all, with all its imperfections on its head, and *not* being guilty of the pedantry, the stupidity, the want of imagination, of fighting him, deploring him in the details—

failing to recognize that one *must* pay for him and that on the whole he is magnificently worth it.¹

From that particular suggestion emerged, eventually, one of James's best stories—*The Coxon Fund*. Though our aims are so different, and have no dramatic effect in view, yet the injunctions that Henry James proposed to himself are not altogether irrelevant to our purpose. "In particular, we must accept Coleridge for what he was, not merely as a person, but as an intellect, Vices and all"; and we must not be guilty of a partial portrait, of a selection of evidence designed to present a critic merely congenial—a critic of vivid perceptions, of penetrating insight—to the neglect of all that constituted the real substance and capacity of the man and his mind.

The danger is a real one, and has not been avoided by writers on Coleridge. We need not, I think, take too seriously those who try to dissociate the poet and the philosopher. An eminent dichotomist of this school was the late Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, who put forward the suggestion that Coleridge was a poet up to the moment he went to Germany, a young man of twenty-six. 'He had landed in Germany,' writes Sir Arthur, 'a poet; and a poet, so to speak, with his hand in his mind flushed with recent poetic feats, quick with poetry to come. He embarked from Germany . . . a poet lost . . . came back to England intensely and furiously pre-occupied with metaphysics. *This*,' suggests Sir Arthur, 'this and neither opium nor Mrs Coleridge's fretfulness, was the main reason why he could not recall his mind to poetry . . .'²

Admittedly there is a psychological problem; for some reason Coleridge was henceforth to find it increasingly difficult to write poetry; and in that wonderful but pathetic Ode: *Dejection*, which he wrote in his thirtieth year, and in which

¹ *The Notebooks of Henry James*. Ed. by F. O. Matthiessen and Kenneth B. Murdock. New York, 1947, p. 152.

² Introduction to *Biographia Literaria*. Ed. by G. Sampson, Cambridge, 1920, p. xxiv.

he openly confessed the failing of his 'genial spirits', he carried the psychological analysis of his mental state to a point of realistic revelation on which no external investigator is ever likely to improve. This Ode must be read in its original form, first published by Professor de Selincourt in 1937, for there Coleridge reveals the real source of his affliction:

*my coarse domestic Life has known
No Habits of heart-nursing Sympathy,
No Griefs but such as dull and deaden me,
No mutual mild Enjoyments of its own,
No Hopes of its own Vintage, None O! none—
Whence when I mourn'd for you, my Heart might borrow
Fair forms and living Motions for its Sorrow.*³

and then come lines for long familiar, but which lost some of their force from being separated from the immediately preceding lines I have just quoted:

*For not to think of what I needs must feel.
But to be still and patient all I can;
And haply by abstruse Research to steal
From my own Nature, all the Natural man—
This was my sole Resource, my wisest plan!
And that) which suits a part, infects the whole.
And now is almost grown the Temper of my Soul.*

Writing in this same year 1802, about four months after the composition of this Ode, Coleridge confessed to Southey that 'all my poetic genius (if ever I really possessed any *genius*, and it was not rather a more general aptitude of talent and quickness in imitation) is gone, and I have been fool enough to suffer deeply in my mind, regretting the loss, which I attribute to my long and exceedingly severe metaphysical investigations, and these partly to ill-health, and

The complete text is given by de Selincourt in his *Wordsworthian and Other Studies*. Oxford, 1947, pp. 67-76.

partly to private afflictions which rendered any subjects, immediately connected with feeling, a source of pain and disquiet to me.⁴

At first sight this might seem to confirm Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch's theory, that metaphysics destroyed the poet in Coleridge. But in another letter written only sixteen days earlier, Coleridge had said: 'Metaphysics is a word that you, my dear sir, are not a great friend to, but yet you will agree with me that a great poet must be *implicite*, if not *explicite*, a profound metaphysician';⁵ and there is that still more uncompromising statement in the *Biographia Literaria*: 'No man was ever yet a great poet, without being at the same time a profound philosopher.'⁶ The greatest poetry, as we shall see when we come to discuss Coleridge's theory of poetry, is precisely that in which 'the creative power and the intellectual energy wrestle as in a war embrace'.

The truth of the matter is, I think, that the concentration demanded by metaphysical investigations is a better anodyne for private afflictions than poetry, for in poetry the emotions are involved. But this does not imply, and Coleridge never for a moment entertained the idea, that metaphysics was foreign to poetry, or destructive of poetic genius. Coleridge repeatedly asserts that but for his afflictions he would have made it his business to embody his philosophy in his poetry; more exactly, to make poetry an instrument of metaphysical research.

It will already be evident that one of my main objects is to defend the philosopher in Coleridge. It would be outside my scope, and, indeed, beyond my capacity, to defend Coleridge's philosophy as such. But I shall try to show the relevance of the philosophy to the criticism and further, and in this departing from most predecessors in this field, I shall maintain that the criticism was deepened—was, indeed,

⁴ *Letters* (1895), I, 388.

Ibid., 372

⁶ *Biog. Lit.* Ed. by Showercross, Oxford, 1907. II, 19.

given another and greater dimension, by its dependence on a definite philosophical method.

Writing in 1840, six years after Coleridge's death, John Stuart Mill expressed the opinion that 'the class of thinkers has scarcely yet arisen by whom Coleridge [as a philosopher] is to be judged. The limited philosophical public of this country is as yet too exclusively divided between those to whom Coleridge and the views which he promulgated or defended are everything, and those to whom they are nothing. A true thinker can only be justly estimated when his thoughts have worked their way into minds formed in a different school⁵ have been wrought and moulded into consistency with all other true and relevant thoughts ; when the noisy conflict of half-truths, angrily denying one another, has subsided, and ideas which seemed mutually incompatible, have been found only to require mutual limitations. This time,' concluded Mill, 'has not yet come for Coleridge.'⁷

The Transcendental Philosophy, of which Coleridge was a late but brilliant luminary, has long ago taken its due place in the historical perspective of philosophy. Certain subsequent schools, of which the most contentious have been Hegelianism, dialectical materialism, positivism and pragmatism, have obscured for a time the originality and perennial force of that mansion of thought whose foundations were laid by Kant, whose glittering pinnacles were completed by Coleridge, Novalis and Kierkegaard. I must speak with caution in a country where pragmatism, I am told, is still regarded as the national philosophy; but if I am not mistaken, here as well as in Europe there has been in recent years a return to a more idealistic attitude in philosophy. This is shown in the remarkable interest now shown in Kierkegaard, and in the spread of a philosophy which, in some three distinct varieties, is known as *existentialism*. It

⁷ *London and Westminster Review*, March, 1840. Reprinted in *Disser-tations and Discussions*, Vol. 1, 1867, pp. 397—8.

will become evident as we proceed that Coleridge, no less than Kierkegaard, comes within the range of this revivalism.

Much research has been devoted to the origins of Coleridge's philosophy, and a controversy, not lacking in animosity, has continued from Coleridge's own day to our own. There has been a charge, not merely of derivation, but even of dishonest plagiarism, to which the untidy literary habits of Coleridge"yielded only too much evidence. Coleridge himself was aware of this accusation, and showed himself rightly sensitive to the imputation of dishonesty. He did his best to answer the charge, and in various contexts, made generous admission of his debts. I do not wish to spend any time going over the well-trodden grounds of this dispute, but it is desirable, for my purpose, to establish the main sources of Coleridge's philosophy—to allot the credits, as they say in Hollywood.

Coleridge was a polymath. He took all knowledge for his province, and from the day when 'the old Grey Friars re-echoed to the accents of the *inspired charity-boy*', as his schoolmate Charles Lamb called him, 'the young Mirandula, waxing, even in those early years, not pale at philosophic draughts of Jamblichus or Plotinus,' from that day until his death Coleridge continued to absorb knowledge from all quarters. He never lost his zest for learning, and a list of authors and works quoted in his writings would in itself fill a volume. It is never safe to assume that Coleridge had not read anything published before the year of his death. I remember my astonishment in discovering that he had read Vico's *Scienza Nuova*, long before Michelet rescued that great name from oblivion.⁸ When we say that Coleridge

⁸ It was lent to him by an Italian lawyer called Dr De Prati. See *Unpublished Letters*, II, 374. He was reading it when, in 1825, he paid a visit to Ramsgate, as we learn from the following characteristic note in a letter to Gillman: 'To Margate, and saw the caverns, as likewise smelt the same, called on Mr Bailey, and got the *Novum Organum*. In my hurry, I scrambled up the Blackwood instead of a volume of Giovanni Battista Vico, which I left on the table in my room, and forgot my

took all knowledge for his province we must insist on the literal meaning of the phrased It is not always remembered what a part the natural sciences played in his development. His main motive in going to Germany in 1798, apart from acquiring proficiency in the language, was to study chemistry and anatomy, mechanics and optics, philology and ethnology. His appetite was inordinate, his ambitions sublime.' 'I should not think', he wrote to Cottle, 'of devoting less than twenty years to an epic poem. Ten years to collect materials and warm my mind with universal science. I would thoroughly understand Mechanics; Hydrostatics 5 Optics and Astronomy; Botany; Metallurgy; Fossilism; Chemistry; Geology; Anatomy; Medicine; then the mind of man; then the minds of Men, in all Travels, Voyages and Histories. So I would spend ten years; the next five in the composition of the poem, and the five last in the correction of it. So would I write, haply not unhearing of that divine and nightly-whispering voice, which speaks to mighty minds, of predestinated garlands, starry and unwithering.'⁹ Alas, that divine and nightly-whispering voice was to fail him, but there is no doubt that he carried out the first part of this programme. At Gottingen he took courses, not only in German language and literature, but also in physiology and natural history. The study of philosophy was for a time postponed, but not forgotten; for Coleridge came back from Germany with £50 worth of 'metaphysical' books, and it was these which were destined to have a decisive influence on his own philosophy.

In assessing the relative importance of these influences it is well to have some regard to Coleridge's own statements, which often betray a significant emphasis. There is no doubt that the year in Germany was a decisive watershed in his

sponge and sponge-bag of oiled silk. But perhaps when I sit down to work, I may have to request something to be sent, which may come with them.' *Letters*, II, 744.

⁹ *Biog. Epistolaris*, I, 130 (May, 1797).

intellectual development. The impact of the systematic atmosphere of a German university—and, one might say, the impact of a nation in a state of vivid intellectual awareness—all this sufficed to make him realize that in his previous studies he had merely floundered—that his head was stored with 'crude notions'. What these crude notions were we know well: they were the product of a rapid and uncritical absorption of such mutually incompatible philosophies as those represented, on the one hand, by Plato and the Neoplatonists, Christian mystics like Jakob Boehme and William Law, the English divines and theologians, and, on the other hand, the much more sceptical tradition of Locke, Hume, Voltaire, Condillac and Hartley. |In the midst of these contending forces Coleridge had held on to what he called 'an exclusive consciousness of God', a faith, the consequence of a deliberate act of the will, enlightened by intuition, but defiant of the logical processes of the intellect. He had held on to this rock of faith, but there is no doubt that, at the time he went to Germany, his mind was 'perplexed'. He remained, as he says in the *Eiographia Liter aria*, a zealous Unitarian; he considered the *idea* of the Trinity a fair inference from the being of God; but he had doubts about the Incarnation, the redemption by the Cross, and many other matters of doctrine. 'A more thorough revolution in my philosophic principles, and a deeper insight into my own heart, were yet wanting'—such was his own analysis of the situation.¹⁰

It is tempting to consider how those doubts were resolved, but I must not be led astray from my main topic, which is Coleridge's critical philosophy. But Coleridge only established a critical philosophy as part of his general philosophy, and his critical activity cannot fairly be separated from his metaphysical activity—in fact, the epithet 'critical', in his case as in Kant's, is rather more important than the substan-

¹⁰ *Eiog. Lit.*, I, 137.

tive 'philosophy'. The 'critique' is a method of indirect affirmation. Kant felt that he could best establish the truth by criticizing the methods of reasoning, especially those used by Hume. We shall see that Coleridge made the criticism of *method* the basis of his aesthetics.

What Coleridge owed to the critical philosophy of Kant, or to the Transcendentalists as a school, cannot be established accurately. Let us realize, once and for all, that we are not dealing with the scholarly lucubrations of an academic coterie, in which priorities and credits are of some importance. Coleridge was involved in something much wider and more fundamental—in a revolution of thought such as only occurs once or twice in a millennium. Such revolutions do not come about as a result of individual efforts: the individuals are swept along in a current which they, least of all men, can control. Kant's philosophy is inconceivable without the stimulus of Hume; Fichte is inconceivable without Kant, and Schelling without Fichte. Let us rather visualize this whole movement of thought as a fleet of vessels moving towards new and uncharted seas. Kant and Fichte, Schleiermacher and Schelling; Herder and the two Schlegels; Goethe and Schiller; Tieck, Novalis and Wackenroder—so many vessels advancing in the stream of thought, flashing signals from one masthead to another, and all guided on their way by the lodestar of transcendental truth") As they proceed from some harbour in the Baltic, they are joined by solitary vessels from neighbouring countries, and Coleridge is one of these, already armed and provisioned, his course set to the same destination.

Of his fellow-voyagers, Coleridge was to select two for closest alliance. We need not dismiss his obligations to the Schlegels, nor to Lessing and Schiller (Schiller in particular offers a correspondence of *aim*, as of endowments, which bring him into close sympathy). But Coleridge himself, by the warmth and fullness of his acknowledgments, gave

fullest credit to Kant and Schelling. Of Kant he said that he had taken possession of him 'as with the giant's hand'; that he had 'at once invigorated and disciplined' his understanding; and after fifteen years' familiarity with his works, he still read them 'with undiminished delight and unceasing admiration'.¹¹ That is humble discipleship; but towards Schelling, to whom his acknowledgments were equally full, he indicated a somewhat different, and perhaps more significant relationship. 'In Schelling,' he said, 'I first found a genial coincidence with much that I had toiled out for myself, and a powerful assistance *in what I had yet to do*.'⁹ What had yet to be done was the application of Kant's dynamic philosophy to one or two spheres which had only been vaguely indicated by the master. Of his followers, with the partial exception of Fichte, only Schelling, in Coleridge's view, had succeeded in completing the system, in consolidating its victories. In what remained to be done, the application of the system to 'the most awful of subjects for the most important of purposes', only Schelling's aid was of any real value.

Let me now try to recall, very briefly, the significant links between Kant and Schelling, and then we shall be in a better position to see how Coleridge added to them. A drastic simplification will be necessary.

The exceptional nature of Aesthetic judgments—that is to say, of the mental experience involved whenever a distinction of inherent value or worth is made between one work of art and another—was first recognized by Leibnitz. But there it remained—an anomaly unaccounted for—until Kant, in his *Critique of Judgment*, established a connection between the formal purposiveness of nature and the creative freedom

¹¹ *Biog. Lit.*, I, 99. Cf. *Letters*, 682. ' . . . I reverence Kant with my whole heart and soul and believe him to be the only philosopher, for *all men* who have the power of thinking. I cannot conceive the liberal pursuit or profession, in which the service derived from a patient study of his works would not be incalculably great, both as cathartic, tonic, and directly nutritious.'

of the artist. Kant did not venture beyond the suggestion of various analogies—beauty, for example, become the *symbol* of morality, and the creative activity in art the dynamic counterpart of the teleological principle of the universe. Kant was not himself an artist; he had no inner experience of the creative activity, and his use of illustrative material is conventional and uncertain. But Schelling, whose ambition it was to complete the transcendental philosophy, though perhaps not a very good poet, was at any rate a man of sensibility, with a keen appreciation of all the arts. On the basis of this appreciative knowledge he ventured to go a step beyond Kant, to pass from mere analogies to absolute identification. Art becomes 'the only true and enduring organon and document of philosophy'—'the keystone of its entire arch'. He imagined, as basic to the universe, an energy, or creative impulse which, when unconscious is manifested as nature; when conscious, as art. The objective world, which is unconscious, becomes conscious in the subjective activity of the ego—the conscious and the unconscious meet and are unified in the state of consciousness. The ideal work of art and the real world of objects are products of one and the same aesthetic activity. Art is the only permanent revelation of the nature of reality. He asks us to think of nature as a poem hidden in a secret and mysterious writing. If the secret could be revealed we should find that it was an odyssey of the human spirit, but the more we strive after its meaning, the more elusive it becomes. The senses, which are our only key, are baffled by a veil of words. It is like trying to get a glimpse of fairyland through fleeting clouds. A painting, too, which only comes to life when the veil between the real and the ideal world is lifted, is merely an aperture through which are projected the forms of the world of the imagination, which in its turn is a shimmering reflection of the real world. For the artist nature is much the same as it is for the philosopher—the ideal world manifesting itself under con-

tinual limitations. It is the incomplete reflection of a world that exists, not outside but within the artist.¹² This, admittedly, is still a very metaphorical manner of philosophizing, and a contemporary like Schiller, who had more practical experience of the poetic activity, rightly accused Schelling of putting the cart before the horse. Poetry, he pointed out, sets out from the unconscious and its difficulty consists in knowing how to realize, to make actual, the vague intimations that the poet derives from his unconscious, without at the same time sacrificing the vitality of the inspiration. The poet somehow has to manage...to...combine thought and sensibility intuition and reflection,¹³ Coleridge's point of departure from Schelling is of exactly the same nature.

If we were considering Coleridge as a philosopher, rather than as a critic, we should have to trace his relationship to Schelling in much more detail¹⁵ but enough, perhaps, has been said to establish a necessary connection. The distinction of Coleridge, which puts him head and shoulders above every other English critic, is due to his introduction of a philosophical method of criticism. English criticism before his time, in the hands of a Dryden, a Warton or a Johnson,

¹² Cf. *System des transcendentalen Idealismus* (\ 800), pp. 475-6.

¹³ Schiller, like Coleridge, always referred his theories to his own practical experience as a poet. Cf. his illuminating criticism of Schelling in a letter to Goethe, 27 March, 1801: 'He assumes that, in the realm of nature, one should take as a point of departure what is without consciousness, in order to attain to consciousness; whilst, in the realm of art, one sets out from consciousness to attain the unconscious. . . . I am afraid that these idealists do not profit much from experience; for experience teaches that the poet's unique point of departure is in the unconscious; I would even say that the poet should count himself lucky if he succeeds, more or less, while making use of a consciousness fully aware of its mode of operation, in recovering in the finished work, unattenuated, the first and still obscure total-idea which he had conceived of his work. Lacking such a total-idea, obscure but powerful, anterior to all technical apparatus, it is not possible for any poetic work to be born; and poetry, if I am not mistaken, consists precisely in knowing how to express and communicate this unconscious—in other words, in knowing how to embody it in an objective work of art.' The whole letter deserves careful reading, for like everything that Schiller wrote on aesthetic theory, it is full of wise perceptions and anticipations of later theories of art.

had been a criticism of technique, of craftsmanship—sometimes presupposing some general rules, such as that of dramatic unity, but oftener a merely mechanical, and at best an individualistic and arbitrary activity, resulting in such perversities, or rather inadequacies, as Johnson's remarks on Shakespeare. Coleridge changed all that. 'The science of Criticism', he himself observed, 'dates its restoration from the time when it was seen that an examination and appreciation of the end was necessarily antecedent to the formation of the rules, supplying at once the principle of the rules themselves, and of their application to the given subject. From this time we have heard little (among intelligent persons, I mean) of the wildness and irregularity of our Shakespeare. Nay, when once the end which our myriad-minded Bard had in view, and the local accidents that favoured or obstructed or in any way modified its manifestations are once thoroughly comprehended, the doubt will arise whether the judgment or the genius of the man has the stronger claim to our wonder, or rather it will be felt that the judgment was the birth arid living offspring of his genius even as the symmetry of a body results from the sanity and vigour of the life as an organizing power.'¹⁴

The 'method' that Coleridge introduced into criticism is expounded in a series of brilliant essays which make up the SecpncLSection of *The Friend*, one of the few parts of his work on which Coleridge himself looked back with any satisfaction.¹⁵ Method is said to become natural 'to the mind which has become accustomed to contemplate not things only, or for their own sake alone, but likewise and chiefly the relations of things, either their relations to each other, or to

¹⁴ MS. *Logic*. Cf. Snyder. *Coleridge on Logic and Learning*, Yale, 1929, p. 110.

¹⁶ 'Were it in my power, my works should be confined to the second volume of my "Literary Life", the Essays of the third volume of the "Friend" (Section II), with about fifty or sixty pages from the two former volumes, and some half-dozen of my poems.' Letter to J. Britton, 28 Feb. 1819. Cf. Raysor, *Shakespearian Criticism*, Vol. II, p. 526.

the observer, or to the state and apprehension of the hearers. To enumerate and analyse these relations, with the conditions under which alone they are discoverable, is to teach the science of method.¹⁶

To avoid the impression that method is merely a sterile system of classification, Coleridge illustrated its meaning from the art of Shakespeare. He sees it as 'the unpremeditated and evidently habitual arrangement of . . . words, grounded on the habit of foreseeing, in each integral part, or (more plainly) in every sentence, the whole that the poet then intends to communicate'.¹⁷ Mrs Quickly's relation of the circumstances of Sir John Falstaff's debt to her is given as Shakespeare's illustration of the want of method in the uneducated and the habitual use of method is shown by contrast in Hamlet's account of the events which accompanied his proposed transportation to England. Then, making further use of this same illustration, Coleridge shows how an 'exuberance of mind . . . interferes with the forms of method; but sterility of mind, on the other hand, wanting the spring and impulse to mental action, is wholly destructive of method itself.'¹⁸ 'The terms system, method, science, are mere improprieties of courtesy, when applied to a mass enlarging by endless appositions, but without a nerve that oscillates, or a pulse that throbs, in sign of growth or inward sympathy.'¹⁹ He brings this analysis down to a significant point—significant, I mean, for Coleridge's whole philosophy—the necessity, in all mental processes, for 'a staple, or starting-post, in the narrator himself. Mental confusion is due to 'the absence of the leading thought, which', (and here Coleridge is introducing one of the terms which have since become current in literary criticism) 'borrowing a phrase from the nomenclature of legislation, I may not inaptly call the initiative'. Granted a starting-

¹⁶ *The Friend* (4th edn., 1850), III, 108.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 112

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

Ibid., p. 132.

post, then 'things most remote and diverse in time, place, and outward circumstance, are brought into mental contiguity and succession, the more striking as the less expected.'²⁰ But the method must not be stretched into despotism—that way lies the grotesque and the fantastical. 'Confusion and formality are but the opposite poles of the same null-point.' Method, true method, implies 'a progressive transition', and for a transition to be continuous there must be a preconception. Thus in Shakespeare, 'in all his various characters, we still feel ourselves communicating with the same nature, which is every where present as the vegetable sap in the branches, sprays, leaves, buds, blossoms, and fruits, their shapes, tastes, arid odours.' The excellence of Shakespeare consists in 'that just proportion, that union and interpenetration, of the universal and particular, which must ever pervade all works of decided genius and true science'.²¹

Coleridge reveals his debt to Kant and Schelling in all that follows, but he is everywhere giving the critical method his own application. He distinguishes between two kinds of relation—that of *law* (which is the Kantian conception of the category, of the truth originating in the mind) and that of *theory*, which is the relation of cause and effect, leading to the generalizations of science, the arrangement of the many under one point of view. Between these two relations, says Coleridge, lies method in the fine arts, which is partly a synthetical activity based on knowledge and experience, but this activity dominated by the intuitive conceptions of the artist. Coleridge described the process by means of which this domination is achieved as 'esemplastic', a word which has never taken root in our language. Whatever he might call it he always had in mind his own creative experience as a poet, and it is that fact which gives a sense of realism to all his theorizing. In this he was but following his own maxim,

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

²¹

Ibid., p. 116.

to the effect that in order to recognize his place in nature, man must first learn to comprehend nature in himself, and its laws in the grounds of his own existence. In this spirit Coleridge becomes the first psychologist in criticism—he was, indeed, the first literary critic to make use of the very word 'psychology'.

This psychological analysis of the workings of the poetic process in himself, and, so far as external examination could yield the facts, of the same process in his friend Wordsworth, led Coleridge to formulate what I would call the romantic principle in art. To this principle he gave several formulations, but the substance of them does not vary. From Schelling he had got the idea that art was 'a dim analogue of creation'; but creation itself was the process to be rendered a little less dim. In the separate tasks assigned to himself and Wordsworth in the composition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, while Wordsworth was to 'consider the influences of fancy and imagination as they are manifested in poetry', Coleridge's task was 'to investigate the seminal principle'

elf. Wordsworth was to sketch 'the branches with their poetic fruitage'; Coleridge 'to add the trunk, and even the roots as far as they lift themselves above the ground, and are visible to the naked eye of our common consciousness.'²²

Professor Raysor, whose editorial work on Coleridge has put us all under a great debt, has described Coleridge's theory of the imagination as 'eccentric' and 'unfortunate'; and Coleridge himself as 'a mediocre philosopher'.²³ I do not know from what more positive standpoint Professor Raysor is criticizing the critic and philosopher to whom he has given such loving care; but from my own standpoint I must dissent from these strictures. Its terminology apart, I believe that Coleridge's theory of the imagination has been proved essentially sound by later and more scientific researches;

²² *Biog. Lit.*, I, 64.

²³ *Shakespearian Criticism*, pp. xxxiii n., xlvi n.

and as for his philosophy, I would now like to suggest that in this sphere, too, Coleridge, so far from being mediocre, anticipated in many important respects the point of view to which the philosophy of our own time is busily returning.

Coleridge was convinced that the imagination, in its highest potency, was something 'essentially *vital*'.²⁴ He also felt that its source was in the unconscious—'there is in genius itself,' he said, 'an unconscious activity; nay, that is *the* genius in'the man of genius.'²⁵ What Coleridge meant by the unconscious, and what Schelling meant by it, is not in doubt; they both make frequent references to the unconscious activity of the dream, and they were both directly influenced by Mesmer, from whose pioneer work on hypnosis developed, in good time, the whole theory of a dynamic unconscious that Freud made the basis of his doctrine and practice of psycho-analysis. For Coleridge, as for Schelling, the unconscious was a reality of immense psychological significance.²⁶

The distinction between reason and understanding was of course, of ancient origin; and Plato had been aware of the irrational sources of inspiration. But Fichte was perhaps the first philosopher to elaborate a threefold principle of knowledge. On the basis of Fichte's analysis, Schelling distinguished three 'potencies'. Again, I must stop on the threshold of metaphysics, but I think it can be stated, quite simply, that these three potencies of Schelling's represent,

²⁴ *Eiog. Lit.*, I, 202.

²⁵ *Misc. Crit.*, 210.

²⁶ There is a beautiful illustration of his conception of the interaction of body and mind at the end of Lecture XIII of the course of 1818 (*Misc. Crit.*, p. 213), repeated in the essay 'On Poesy or Art'. Cf. *Biog. Lit.*, Vol. II, p. 263. 'The seeming identity of body and mind in infants, and thence the loveliness of the former. The commencing separation in boyhood, the struggle of equilibrium in youth; from thence onward the body first indifferent, then demanding the translucency of the mind not to be worse than indifferent; and finally, all that presents the body as body becoming almost of an excremental nature.' In such a manner, perhaps, Schelling might have conceived his 'Odysee des Geistes'.

first, an irrational non-ego ; second, rational consciousness; and finally, a development of rational consciousness into a higher form of subjective consciousness. It has already been pointed out by an American scholar, Dr Bolman, of Columbia, that Schelling's use of the three potencies in psychic life corresponds to Freud's threefold description of personality in terms of the id, the ego, and the super-ego.²⁷

Now let us turn to Coleridge's theory of the imagination. He begins by telling us what the transcendental philosophy demands—first that two forces should be conceived which contradict each other by their essential nature;"secondly, that these forces should be assumed to be both alike infinite, both alike indestructible. 'The problem will then be to discover the result or product of two such forces, as distinguished from the result of those forces which are finite . . .' The next step is 'to elevate the thesis from notional to actual, by contemplating intuitively this one power with its two inherent indestructible yet counteracting forces, and the results or generations to which their interpenetration gives existence, in the living principle and in the process of our own self-consciousness. By what instrument this is possible the solution itself will discover, at the same time that it will reveal to and for whom it is possible.'²⁸

The one power that issues from the interpenetration of these two assumed forces, Coleridge adds, is 'inexhaustibly re-ebullient'—it cannot be neutralized, but must issue as a tertium quid, in finite generation. 'This tertium quid can be no other than an interpenetration of the counteracting powers, partaking of both.'²⁹

Having delivered this flight into 'High German Transcendentalism', Coleridge breaks off to interpose in his *Biographia Literaria* that 'very judicious letter' from a friend 'whose practical judgment I have ample reason to estimate

²⁷ Frederick de Wolfe Bolman, Jr., in his edition of Schelling's *The Ages of the World*. Columbia Univ. Press, 1942, p. 166 n.
²⁸ *Biog. Lit.*, 197 -8
²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

and revere', namely himself; a letter in which he anticipates with humour and modesty the objections of those who, like Professor Raysor, regret his meddling in metaphysics—of the many, as he says, to whose minds his speculations on the esemplastic power will be utterly unintelligible. He then gives, in summary form, his famous definition of the Imagination, in its threefold potency—namely:

- the *primary* imagination, the living Power and Prime Agent of all human Perception;
- the *secondary* imagination, an echo of the primary, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still identical with the primary in the *kind* of its agency, and differing only in *degree*, and in the *mode* of its operation,
- and finally the *fancy*, no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and place, blended with and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will, which we express by the word *choice*.

These summary definitions are amplified and illustrated throughout the whole of Coleridge's literary criticism, and it is my contention that that criticism derives its penetrative power from the use of the systematic method he had established by his philosophical speculations. I have already mentioned the famous illustration of Shakespeare's poetic use of method; illustrations of Coleridge's own critical use of method abound in his lectures and miscellaneous writings. One example will suffice—the blinding sword that he drives between the talents of Beaumont and Fletcher and the genius of Shakespeare. 'What had a grammatical and logical consistency for the ear,' he said, 'what could be put together and represented to the eye, these poets (Beaumont and Fletcher) took from the ear and eye, unchecked by any intuition of an inward impossibility, just as a man might fit together a quarter of an orange, a quarter of an apple, and the like of a lemon and a pomegranate, and make it look like

one round diverse coloured fruit. But nature, who works from within by evolution and assimilation according to a law, cannot do it. Nor could Shakespeare, for he too worked in the spirit of nature, by evolving the germ within by the imaginative power according to an idea—for as the power of seeing is to light, so is an idea in mind to a law in nature. They are correlatives that suppose each other.³⁰

This, let me say in parenthesis, is one more statement of what I have called the romantic principle—the idea that the imagination is a shaping power, an energy which fuses* melts and recombines the elements of perceptipn, and bodies them forth in a unity or synthesis which is the work of art. Coleridge everywhere insists on the difference between 'form as proceeding' and 'shape as super-induced'—'the latter is either the death or the imprisonment of the thing;—the former is its self-witnessing and self-effected sphere of agency'.³¹ And this, of course, is the precise difference between classical and romantic art.³²

But Coleridge, in his lecture on Beaumont and Fletcher, went on to make a further distinction which he regarded as of the utmost importance—'Shakespeare shaped his characters out of the nature within; but we cannot so safely say, out of *his own* nature, as an *individual person*. No! this latter is itself but a *natura naturata*, an effect, a product, not a *power*. It was Shakespeare's prerogative to have the universal which is potentially in each *particular*, opened out to him in the *homo generalis*, not as an abstraction of observation from a variety of men, but as a substance capable of endless modifications, of which his own personal existence

³⁰ *Misc. Crit.*, pp. 42-3.

³¹ 'On Poesy or Art', *Biog. Lit.*, II, 262.

³² But one should recognize that some so-called classical art is, in the sense of Coleridge's distinction, romantic (Euripides, for example; even Racine), and that some so-called romantic art is classical (much of Goethe, for example; even Wordsworth). The real distinction is between academic art and personal art; between 'tradition and the individual talent'.

was but one, and to use *this one* as the eye that beheld the other, and as the tongue that could convey the discovery.¹³³ Here again Coleridge is anticipating the hypotheses of modern psychology, for what seems to be suggested in this passage is some conception such as that of a *collective unconscious*, a deep store of phyletic experience to which the poet has direct access, and of which he is the inspired exponent. Inspiration, however, is no arbitrary process; nor is beauty a copy of the mere externals of nature. The artist must master the essence, the *natura naturans*, 'which presupposes a bond between nature in the highest sense and the soul of man. . . . Man's mind is the very focus of the rays of intellect which are scattered throughout the images of nature. Now so to place these images, totalized, and fitted to the limits of the human mind, as to elicit from, and to superinduce upon, the forms themselves the moral reflexions to which they approximate, to make the external internal, the internal external, to make nature thought, and thought nature—this is the mystery of genius in the Fine Arts.'¹³⁴

The process might be illustrated in Coleridge's all too brief references to the function of language in poetry. Coleridge realized, long before the theory of *Einfühlung* or *Empathy* had been formulated, that 'to know is to resemble'. The artist 'must imitate that which is within the thing, that which is active through form and figure, and discourses to us by symbols—the *Natur-geist*, or spirit of nature, as we unconsciously imitate those we love, for so only can he hope to produce any work truly natural in the object and truly human in the effect. The idea which puts the form together cannot itself be the form. It is above form, and is its essence, the universal in the individual, or the individuality itself—the glance and the exponent of the indwelling power.'¹³⁵ Following up this notion there is a

¹³³ *Misc. Crit.*, pp. 43-4.

¹³⁴ 'On Poesy or Art', *Biog. Lit.*, II, 257-8.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 259.

passage on language in one of Coleridge's unpublished Notebooks which runs:

'A man of Genius using a rich and expressive language (the Greek, German, or English) is an excellent instance and illustration of the ever individualizing process and dynamic Being, of Ideas. What a magnificent History of acts of individual minds, sanctioned by the collective Mind of the Country, a Language is—This Hint well deserves to be evolved and expounded in a more auspicious moment. *Qy* whether words as the already organized Materials of the higher Organic Life . . . may not after a given period, become *effete*? How rightly shall we conceive this marvellous Result, a Language?—A chaos grinding itself into compatibility. But this would give only the Negative attributes.'³⁶

Coleridge was never to find an auspicious moment to evolve and expand this hint, though in his criticism of Wordsworth's poetry he distinguishes between 'words used as the *arbitrary marks* of thought, our smooth market-coin of intercourse', and words which convey pictures, 'either borrowed from *one* outward object to enliven ~and particularize some *other*; or used allegorically to body forth the inward state of the person speaking; or such as are at least the exponents of his peculiar turn and unusual extent of faculty.'³⁷ There are other hints scattered throughout his criticism which show Coleridge's interest in the stylistic manipulation of words, but obviously lie had a profounder conception of the function of language. This conception I find well expressed by a modern philosophical critic, Jean-Paul Sartre:

'For the poet, language is a structure of the external world. The speaker is *in a situation* in language; he is invested with words. They are prolongations of his meanings.'

³⁶ This notebook is still in the possession of the Coleridge family. The extract quoted here is printed in Snyder, *Coleridge on Logic and Learning*, p. 138.

³⁷ *Biog. Lit.*, II, 98.

his pincers, his antennae, his eyeglasses. He manoeuvres them from within; he feels them as if they were his body; he is surrounded by a verbal body which he is hardly aware of and which extends his action upon the world. The poet is outside of language. He sees words inside out as if he did not share the human condition, and as if he were first meeting the word as a barrier as he comes toward men. Instead of first knowing things by their name, it seems that first Jie has a silent contact with them, since, turning toward that other species of thing which for him is the word touching them, testing them, palpating them, he discovers in them a slight luminosity of their own and particular affinities with the earth, the sky, the water, and all created things.³⁸

This is an observation that Schelling, no less than Coleridge, would have found very sympathetic, and perhaps it is to be expected that a modern existentialist should speak the same language as one of the earliest exponents of existentialist philosophy. I realize that it may cause some surprise to hear Coleridge described as an existentialist, but I think it would not be difficult to justify the label. The origins of existentialism are usually traced to Kierkegaard; but a much better case can be made out for Schelling, as Dr Bolman has already pointed out.³⁹ No doubt Coleridge was here again in debt to Schelling, but there is an actuality and eloquence

³⁸ From *Qu'est-ce que la Littérature?* 1947. Trans. by Bernard Frechtman in *Partisan Review*, Nov.—Dec., 1947, p. 570. As for the 'testing' and 'palpating' of words, cf. the following passage from the manuscript *Logic*: 'In disciplining the mind one of the first rules should be, to lose no opportunity of tracing words to their origin; one good consequence of which will be, that he will be able to use the *Language* of sight without being enslaved by its affections. He will at least secure himself from the delusive notion, that what is not *imageable* is likewise not *conceivable*. To emancipate the mind from the despotism of the eye is the first step towards its emancipation from the influences and intrusions of the senses, sensations and passions generally. Thus most effectively is the power of abstraction to be called forth, strengthened and familiarized, and it is this power of abstraction that chiefly distinguishes the human understanding from that of the higher animals—and in the different degree in which this power is developed, the superiority of man over man chiefly consists.' Cf. Snyder, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-7.

³⁹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 8n, 56n, 198n.

in his statement of the problem which suggests that he had discovered it for himself. Take, for example, the following passage from *The Friend*:

'Hast thou ever raised thy mind to the consideration of existence, in and by itself, as the mere act of existing? Hast thou ever said to thyself thoughtfully, It is! Heedless in that moment, whether it were a man before thee, or a flower, or a grain of sand,—without reference, in short, to this or that particular mode or form of existence? If thou hast indeed attained to this, thou wilt have felt the presence of a mystery, which must have fixed thy spirit in awe and wonder. The very words,—There is nothing! or,—There was a time, when there was nothing! are self-contradictory. There is that within us which repels the proposition with as full and instantaneous a light, as if it bore evidence against the fact in the right of its own eternity.

'Not to be, then, is impossible: to be, incomprehensible. thou has mastered this intuition of absolute existence, thou wilt have learnt likewise, that it was this, and no other, which in the earlier ages seized the nobler minds, the elect among men, with a sort of sacred horror. This it was that first caused them to feel within themselves a something ineffably greater than their own individual nature . . .⁴⁰

I cannot pursue these metaphysical speculations of Coleridge's much further; I must content myself with pointing out that, writing before Kierkegaard was born, Coleridge had already formulated the terms of an existentialist philosophy—the *Angst* or sacred horror of nothingness, the 'Abyss or chasm, which the moral being only . . . can fill up', the life in the idea which 'may be awakened, but cannot be given', the divine impulse, 'that the godlike alone can awaken'.⁴¹ . . . ~~~

⁴⁰*The Friend*, III, 192.

⁴¹ A further quotation from Essay XI of the third volume of *The Friend* (p. 202) will illustrate in still further detail the existential nature of Coleridge's philosophy: 'The groundwork, therefore, of all pure

Once again we have come to the frontiers of philosophy, but once again I must affirm that philosophy directed the course and determined the ends of Coleridge's criticism. It had been very tempting—it still is tempting—to assign to art a teleological function. Schelling, in his earlier works, had not hesitated to do this—to make art the copula or connecting link between transcendental being and human consciousness—only in the work of art could man make an objective representation of the nature of the supreme reality. But that, as Coleridge and indeed Schelling himself were quick to perceive, would lead to an identification of the moral and the aesthetic. I personally believe that that identification is still possible, but for Coleridge, as later for Kierkegaard, there was inherent in the human situation an ineluctable Either/Or. For Coleridge a 'standpoint', or a 'starting-post' as he called it, was a psychological necessity—a knot must be tied in the thread before we can sew, as Kierkegaard expressed it; and Coleridge, at an early age, had made his standpoint the Christian revelation. He had a horror of any kind of self-consistent system—that seemed to him merely a dialectical trick, a mechanical top spinning in nothingness, not touching the human heart. The inevitable result of all consequent reasoning', he said, 'in which the reason refuses to acknowledge a higher or deeper ground

speculation is the full apprehension of the difference between the contemplation of reason, namely, that intuition of things which arises when we possess ourselves, as one with the whole, which is substantial knowledge, and that which presents itself when, transferring reality to the negations of reality, to the ever varying frame-work of the uniform life, we think of ourselves as separated beings, and place nature in antithesis to the mind, as object to subject, thing to thought, death to life. This is abstract knowledge, or the science of the mere understanding. By the former we know that existence is its own predicate, self-affirmation, the one attribute in which all others are contained, not as parts, but as manifestations. It is an eternal and infinite self-rejoicing, self-loving, with a joy unfathomable, with a love all comprehensive. It is absolute; the absolute is neither singly that which affirms, nor that which is affirmed; but the identity and living *copula* of both.' The further discussion of this aspect of Coleridge's thought is taken up again in the Appendix which follows this essay.

than it can itself supply, and weens to possess within itself the centre of its own system, is—and from Zeno the Eleatic to Spinoza, and from Spinoza to the Schellings, Okens and their adherents, of the present day, ever has been—pantheism under one or other of its modes, the least repulsive of which differs from the rest, not in its consequences, which are one and the same in all, and in all alike are practically atheistic, but only as it may express the striving of the philosopher himself to hide these consequences from his own mind'⁴²

These religious considerations were decisive, but they were linked in Coleridge's mind with aesthetic considerations. He had come to realize, from his investigations into the nature of dramatic poetry, that all dramatic effect was dependent on a tragic sense of life. 'To the idea of life,' he wrote in his "essay on Toesy or Art", 'victory or strife is necessary; as virtue consists not simply in the absence of vices, but in the overcoming of them. So it is in beauty.'⁴³ The wisdom in nature gave unity and perfection—the thought and the product were one; but since there is no reflex act, no element of consciousness of existence, so there could be no moral responsibility. But in man there is reflexion, there is freedom, there is choice. This not only makes man 'the head of visible creation'; it requires him to impose upon the images of nature the categories of moral reflexion—to make thought nature, and nature thought. J

At this point we must stop, for there Coleridge stopped. He had discovered that 'existence is its own predicate'; that the dialectic intellect is 'utterly incapable of communicating insight or conviction concerning the existence or possibility of the world, as different from Deity'. But he did not trace out the consequences of this discovery for his philosophy of art. It was left for Kierkegaard to pronounce the absolute Either/or—*either* the aesthetical *or* the ethical. The final

⁴² *The Friend*, III, 204.

⁴³ *Biog. Lit.*, II, 262-3.

beauty, for Coleridge and Schelling no less than for Kierkegaard, was the beauty of holiness; but it was left to Kierkegaard to point out, eloquently, loquaciously, that beauty in man (as distinct from beauty in the work of art) requires a certain perspective, movement, history; and in such a condition of 'immanent teleology', as he called it, we have 'passed beyond the spheres of nature and of art and are in the sphere of freedom, of the ethical'.⁴⁴

Coleridge's critical activity debouched (I can think of no more appropriate word to describe the physical effect) into this ethical realm, and as we are on this occasion restricted to his aesthetical realm, we must now take leave of him. I have given regrettably little account of the *variety* of Coleridge's criticism—of the brilliance and range of his perceptiveness. But those are incidental features of his work which must be appreciated extensively—without the intermediation of a secondary critic. I have confined myself to general aspects of Coleridge's criticism, because only in that way can we realize the greatness of his achievement. He made criticism into a science, and using his own experiences and those of his fellow poets as material for his research, revealed to the world for the first time some part of the mystery of genius and of the universal and eternal significance of art.

⁴⁴ Cf. *Either/Or*. Trans. W. Lowrie. Princeton, 1944, II, 229.

Appendix

It may be useful in a brief appendix to trace the subsequent history of that 'poetic monism' which was first suggested by the *Critique of Judgment*, then more firmly outlined by Schelling, and which from the first held many attractions for Coleridge. Coleridge 'thought the *Kritik der Urtheilskraft* the most astonishing of all Kant's works'—an ambiguous remark recorded by H. C. Robinson (*Diary*, 15 Nov. 1810). (Coleridge's alternating attraction and repulsion *vis a vis* any form of pantheism is amusingly illustrated in another entry in Crabb Robinson's *Diary*: '1812. Nov. 5. . . . He walked with me to A. Robinson's for Spinoza wh. I lent him. In the course of a few minutes while standing in the room, Coleridge kissed Spinoza's face at the title page, said his book was his gospel, &, in less than a minute, added that his philosophy was after all false. . . . Did philosophy commence in an *It is* instead of an *I am*, Spinoza would be altogether true. And without allowing a breathing space he parenthetically asserted: "I however believe in all the doctrines of Christianity, even of the Trinity." ') Coleridge's final reaction to Schelling is expressed in a marginal note on the *Briefe uber Dogmatismus und Criticismus* (*Biog. Lit.*, 2nd edition, Appendix): 'The more I reflect, the more convinced I am of the gross materialism of the whole system!' But meanwhile Schelling himself had been moving away from his neat, monistic system of antitheses. He had broken with Hegel as early as 1806, and the subsequent development of his thought was

largely a reaction away from Hegel's panlogism. Dr Bolman remarks (*Op. cit.*, p. 35) that 'it was not until after 1827 that Schelling precisely stated the difference. That difference has to do with Schelling's self-confessed change in attitude toward his own early philosophy of nature, and that change revolves round the concept of God. Of his own philosophy of nature prior to 1804, Schelling had said:

'God was that subject which remains *as* subject, victorious over all, which can no longer fall into the object; just this subject had passed through all nature, through all history, through the succession of *all* moments, from which it appeared only as the final result. This passing through was represented as a real movement (not as a progress in mere thought), represented even as real process. Now I can indeed conceive God as end and mere result of my thought, as he was in ancient metaphysics, but I cannot conceive him as result of an *objective* process.'

Dr Bolman further quotes Schelling as saying, 'Real thought is that whereby something opposed to thought is overcome. Where one has only thought, and that abstract thought, for content, thought has nothing to overcome.' Schelling had, in effect, isolated for the first time the problem which has remained basic in modern philosophy—the struggle between conceptual necessity and existential freedom. That Coleridge was fully aware of the same problem has been my contention in the foregoing lecture. Coleridge criticized the early Schelling on precisely the same grounds that the later Schelling criticized Hegel—that he tried to make pure thought or logic account for existence; and with such a rationalist conception one could never enter the realm of existence. 'Hegel's formal approach to free creation ended, according to Schelling, in pantheism of the worst kind, in which God has no freedom but enters endlessly into process', (Bolman, *op. tit.*, p. 37)—which is exactly Coleridge's criticism of Schelling.

These later speculations of Schelling's were continued by Kierkegaard and taken up again by Husserl, and are now the preoccupation of Heidegger, Jaspers, Marcel, Sartre and other so-called Existentialists. But in this note I am more concerned with the fate of Schelling's earlier 'nature' philosophy, for it was by no means liquidated by calling it pantheism. It was given a new stimulus by the biological theory of evolution, and both Nietzsche and Spencer are to be reckoned among its renovators. But its most formidable restatement has been due to Bergson, whose ambition it was to unite biology with metaphysics, the theory of life with the theory of knowledge. It seemed to Bergson that a theory of knowledge (such as Kant's or Schelling's) which does not place the intellect in the general evolution of life 'will teach us neither how the frames of knowledge have been constructed nor how we can enlarge or go beyond them. It is necessary that these two enquiries, theory of knowledge and theory of life, should join each other, and, by a circular process, push each other on unceasingly'. (*Creative Evolution*, Eng. trans., 1914, p. xiv).

Personally I retain a considerable respect for the position reached by Bergson, but a more recent treatment of the whole subject will be found in the *Philosophie der Lebendigen Wirklichkeit* by Richard Woltereck. I believe that Professor Woltereck did not live to complete his work, and I have only seen the second volume of the trilogy he planned (*Ontologie des Lebendigen*, Stuttgart, Enke Verlag, 1940). It is not a work that I can read with any ease or understand with any certainty; but I can perhaps indicate its bearing on the problems which agitated Coleridge and still agitate all thinking men. Naturally the ontology of a practical biologist like Woltereck cannot accommodate the irrational notion that 'all true reality has both its ground and its evidence in the will, without which its complement science itself is but an elaborate game of shadows' (*The Friend*, III, 201). It is

not quite clear what Coleridge meant by the 'will*' in this context, but he would certainly have regarded it as manifested only in human consciousness; whereas Woltereck assumes that will is inseparable from the life-process, which, ever since its origin, has been 'thrown back on its own resources, its own potencies, specific determinants (ideas), intentions and inner impulses, all of them subjective *powers* which are the immanent possession of concrete life-carriers'. This is not just the materialism of a scientist opposed to all idealistic philosophies. Nor is it the familiar doctrine of vitalism, nor any kind of 'pan-psychism'. The 'genetic monism' of a single, progressive differentiation and intensification of life is contrasted with the pluralism of 'radically' different realities implicit in the idea of somatic, psychic and spiritual life forces. This new ontology tries to analyse the phenomenal characteristics of physical and, more particularly, living reality together with the objective, elementary characteristics lying behind them, and then to understand all these characteristics synthetically, as a whole. It insists that reality is one progressive flow of events, from which not only consciousness, but organic life itself has been disengaged or particularized—'life is a jump-like intensification of not-life, dying is a jump-like relapse into this prior form of reality.' Attention is focused on '*the continuous fact of anamorphosis*, the single total process leading *upwards* from the elementary physical states of cosmic nebulae to a-biotic differentiation, then to simple and increasingly differentiated life, and finally to spiritual events, spiritual creativity and spiritual freedom'.

Woltereck at this point opposes his view to Heidegger's. He admits that knowledge of existence implies certain 'resonances', and that one of these is the 'dread' arising from the consciousness of Nothing and the feeling of shipwreck that Heidegger has placed in the centre of his teaching. But there is an equally valid and biologically more positive 'resonance'

which was first described by Aristotle—the amazement and wonder of the man awaking to contemplation and discovery, which is bound up with the inner urge to knowledge, in its turn a deepened and intensified form of 'curiosity'. This more positive 'resonance' has associated with it a *joy-fulness* and inner *impulse to* assimilate, examine, understand, create. The sciences as well as the arts are born of this impulse. All the high and genuine values which are expressed in art, or in love, or in the perception of truth, have their origin in this same impulse.

Nobody, Woltereck admits, can say which of these 'resonances' has the more significance for mankind as a whole: *the approach to transcendence* following on the feeling of shipwreck, or *the inward intensification* through some profound experience that transcends the ordinary sphere of self, an intensification coming from feelings directly contrary to 'dread' and 'shipwreck'. This heightened sense of vitality in a man so gripped forms the *polar opposite* of the fundamental feeling described by Jaspers and Heidegger.

We can now return to Schelling and Coleridge and see that they were aware of both these resonances. There is plenty of Aristotelian wonderment in Schelling—the Schelling who said that 'the best course of a life devoted to philosophy might be to begin with Plato and end with Aristotle'⁷, (*Samt. Werke*, II, 1, 380; quoted by Bolman, p. 39). As for Coleridge, his enthusiasm for teleology is very evident in a passage like the following:

'In all inferior things from the grass on the house top to the giant tree of the forest; from the gnats that swarm in its shade, and the mole that burrows amid its roots to the eagle which builds in its summit, and the elephant which browses on its branches, we behold—first, a subjection to universal laws by which each thing belongs to the whole, as interpenetrated by the powers of the whole; and secondly, the intervention of particular laws by which the universal laws

are' suspended or tempered for weal and sustenance of each particular class. Hence and thus we see too that each species, and each individual of every species, becomes a system, a world of its own. If then we behold this economy everywhere in the irrational creation, shall we not hold it probable that by some analogous intervention a similar temperament will have been effected for the rational and moral? Are we not entitled to expect some appropriate agency in behalf of the presiding and alone progressive creature? To presume some special provision for the permanent interest of the creature destined to move and grow towards that divine humanity we have learnt to contemplate as the final cause of all creation, and as the centre in which all its lines converge?' (*The Friend*, III, 197-8).

There are further Coleridge's remarks in the essay 'On Poesy or Art' on the essential interdependence of form and life: his express belief that living or life-producing ideas 'are essentially one with the germinal causes in nature'. There is again his statement that 'the *rules* of the Imagination are themselves the very powers of growth and production'. (*Biog.Lit.,II,65*).

The importance of Woltereck's ontology is that it *reconciles* the rules of the imagination and the powers of growth which Schelling, and Coleridge, too in the end, felt to involve a contradiction, and which Kierkegaard presented as an inescapable dilemma. 'The scientist', writes Woltereck, 'who resolves to write or even to read an ontology is little inclined, but nevertheless *compelled*, to recognize a fact which he is wont to leave to psychology and philosophy and not acknowledge as belonging to his province. This is the fact that non-spatial *inner* data, or experiences of the INSIDE are just as real and just as important for knowledge as the 'external' or material-extensive objects of our observation by means of sense-organs and instruments. The ontology of INSIDE events investigates and evaluates the 'categorical'

experiences or internal events that are not reducible to other facts; we found such to be, for instance, *resonance* (in the form of dread, fear, amazement, rapture), and we can also cite the impulsion of the will to self-expression, furthermore let us say curiosity, the need of pleasure and value, the feeling of freedom . . . and various other internal facts the discussion of which we leave to the psychologist.'

The resonance that impels us to self-expression and to what Woltereck elsewhere calls the highest capacity of all, *self-intensification*, certainly leads to the creation of both aesthetic and ethical values, and these are given the highest place in the teleological process. Woltereck's consideration of the many problems involved is much more complete and much more complex than this note would suggest, but in my opinion his scientific approach to the fundamental problems of metaphysics has brought us in sight of that reconciliation of science and metaphysics which was one of Coleridge's, as it was one of Bergson's, dearest desires.

I should not conclude this note without acknowledging the help I have received from Mr R. F. C. Hull, who has not only communicated his enthusiasm for Woltereck's work to me, but also put at my disposal some pages of translation that he had made for his own use.

