IDEALISM IN KANT AND COLERIDGE

By

Doris Hartwell Hawse

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Dedicated to E. M. H. and to J. L. H.

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CHAPTER I

PRELIMINARIES

In a shadowy general sense idealism represents a belief in the superiority of the realm of spiritual activity over the forces of the visible world, and is therefore opposed to materialism, pragmatism, and even logic . . . when logic becomes too dogmatic and unimaginative . . . if they are considered sufficient in themselves. More particularly, idealism characteristically embraces the ideas of God, of immortality, of the freedom of the human will, and of its intuition or power of conscience with regard to moral laws. Secondarily may appear the concepts of the symbolism of nature (as a material manifestation of spiritual truth); of the duty of living the present moment worthily whatever it be concerned with; of an enveloping divine "over-soul" of which self-same substance are God, and man's soul, and from which man may mystically draw inspiration and ecstasy; of the replacement of the child-like conceit of happiness by duty or "blessedness"; of the effect of self-abnegation and suffering in ennobling the soul of man, if he transcend his pain. In short, idealism is concerned with the affairs of the soul, with the conduct of life, with abstractions and absolutes, against all which the materialists can so easily draw up intellectual batteries, but which the heart and soul have never been able completely to relinquish; so that their deep instinctive love is often held proof enough for the existence of

these intangibles. Man always craves some sort of compensation for his conflict and his toil, and there is no way to satisfy this desire, according to the idealists, except by drawing on that inner or spiritual life which strict realism cannot openly recognize.

By more restricted definition, idealism is the philosophical doctrine which holds that ideas are the only objects immediately known, and it connotes the conception of ideas as the essentials behind their external revelation as objects.[1] But this interpretation of the term is practically synonymous with that which is concerned with material symbols and spiritual significances; so that there is no civil war within the terminology of idealism, in spite of these equally widely used strict and broad definitions of it.

Modern idealism may be said to have originated in early Christianity and the sensitive individualism it expressed. But it became, and for ages remained, an other-worldly retreat for the few; in religion it was gradually entangled in theological abstractions, in literature it was also usually far removed from reality. The practical Chaucer dismissed it to realms of

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1. Adams, in his chapter on Plato, with whom this strict definition is commonly associated, says: "The commanding features of the Platonic idea are these two: first, the concept stands for realities apprehended, and not at all for any way of apprehending or mode of apprehension. And secondly, the Platonic idea is an object of thought, and not of sense experience, because it possesses true permanence and stability, and is not a process in time."
(Adams, George P., Idealism and the Modern Age, p. 67.)

clerical discourse, Spenser conceived of it only in fanciful terms, and perhaps only Shakspere really tried to reconcile the discord of mankind with the ideal of harmony that existed in his mind. Then the mystical poets of the seventeenth century read it into the beauty of nature, seeing the physical as the garment of the spiritual, but even they thought little of the ideal potentialities of man himself, for they treated him as a mere brutish sinner to be saved by the church. The effete Eighteenth sought to put out the persistent light, and to forget the need for ideal values in correctness and uninspired commonsense. The early Nineteenth, in turn, reasserted principles with fresh vigor, and declared them not uselessly abstract but a practical necessity in the vicissitudes of earthly existence. Christianity, certain thinkers reiterated, should be carried into every department of week-day life. Romanticism, as it developed, became not a mere private, esthetic, or academic concern, but sent out its values to be a directing force in the thought of much of the western world.[1] But the century became increasingly preoccupied with reality, reality of the most utilitarian sort, and, with natural science extending its horizon, with technical discoveries multiplying and social conditions changing, the late Nineteenth, more than any other epoch, broadened the aspect of life on earth and improved the human lot there[2] . . . and lost sight of its soul. The age

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1. Fausset, Hugh, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, pp. 259-260.
2. Eucken, Rudolf, The Problem of Human Life, p. 190.

did not close joyfully, but with a note of deep and growing discontent, with the spiritual depression, as it were, which it has bequeathed to us of the nineteen-hundreds. Carlyle wrote about it, alternately pleading and thundering against the hollow outward show that religion was become, and at the need for a new growth of the spirit to fill its empty symbolism; and even the pagan cultivated Arnold was moved by the lack of attention, in his age, to the soul and its inspiration.

The new idealism of the early nineteenth century was as yet too unformed to offer itself to all; it existed as Romanticism chiefly among the literary; and the old idealism was too abstract and too lacking in practical reality. Although realism's surface-culture was and is inadequate alone, the content of life itself has changed too much to permit a return to the traditional cloistered type of idealism; the conception must be deeply and more firmly rooted in daily need and use in order to meet increased obstacles and complications. Yet the spiritual life must be elevated above the need for dependent connection with the earthly or the seen; it must escape the pressure of nature and of tangible life. The spiritual world must be absolutely independent of the physical and mental ones; it is not to receive its truth from humanity, but humanity is to measure its truth by the criteria of the spiritual sphere. Thus idealism becomes a new reality . . . the reality of true

values superior to, and unprejudiced by, human affairs.[1] Given a vital contact with the daily life of man by his use of it as a constant moral touch-stone, it must yet be out of reach of his logic and his intellectual proving. If it exist in and of and for the soul, it may not be judged by mental or other methods, since they are not of its sphere and are not valid there as a consequence.

Immanuel Kant believed these things, saw them lucidly, and embodied them in a system of beautiful order and completeness. Samuel Coleridge beheld them poetically half-veiled as in a dream, and expressed them sometimes unconsciously and indirectly, sometimes plainly with almost inspired clarity, often ill and obscurely. This thesis represents an effort to amplify the foregoing statement, in the hope that some conclusion may be reached regarding the nature of idealism in philosophy and in literature.

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1. Eucken, Rudolf, op. cit., p. 191.

CHAPTER II

THE IDEALISM OF KANT

Kant is idealistic both because a characteristic of his philosophical system is his continual attention to, and emphasis upon, ideas instead of objects, and because he includes in that philosophy the basic idealistic tenets: the existence of God, the existence of the human soul and its quality of immortality, and the freedom of the human will or the power of its intuition or conscience as a moral guide. The more general idealistic attributes are also tacitly implied in his thinking. He may therefore be considered completely and characteristically an idealist, from every important point of view.

Kant's train of philosophic thought in brief follows:

Nothing is possible to man's intellectual comprehension except what lies in the realm of his sensory experience. Beyond that he cannot go. The only world he knows and can prove the existence of is that of the external objects about him, which his visual and other sensuous notions confirm. Experience thus tells him what is, but not that it necessarily is what it is and not otherwise; it never gives him any really general truths, without which the pure or speculative reason, anxious for food of that type, is dissatisfied.[1] So this reason leads one to assume that behind each of the images one knows about

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1. Schuyler, Aaron, A Critical History of Philosophical Theories, p. 301.

is a perfect idea of that object, perfect as man's conception of it cannot be, since each man looks subjectively upon the external world and since each has an impression of it peculiar to himself. In other words, any given man's particular images of objects exist only in his own mind, built there from the information supplied by his particular sensory messages. To know a thing independently of our own sense experience is impossible, for things in the process of becoming known to us must inevitably change their character. Even if the object did by chance correspond to our image of it, how could we be aware of the fact, since we cannot take up a third position outside both object and image? Kant suggests that all things conform to our individual conceptions, that we know things only insofar as they enter into the forms of our thought and intuition, know them only in the shape given to them by our own mental constitution.[1] (Like Copernicus, Kant transfers the center of observation from the observed to the observer, from the object to the subject.)

Hence the only standard unchangeable image of any object, as it were, among all these individually varying ones, is the idea of that object that is conceived of as the reality for which the object itself is but an external manifestation or symbol. Ideas are therefore a priori concepts, the hypothetical

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1. Eucken, Rudolf, op. cit., p. 200.

causes behind all these tangible effects, concepts true from the beginning of things without benefit or need of the data of experience, since they have existed before experience.

> " . . . we have seen how, from the mere logical form of our knowledge, there arise pure a priori conceptions, which yield the consciousness of objects antecedently to all experience, or rather point to the synthetic unity that alone makes empirical knowledge of objects possible."[1]

> " . . . to know a thing completely it is necessary to know all that can possibly exist (about that thing), and to determine the thing in question, either affirmatively or negatively, by reference to our own ideal."[2]

> Ideas are transcendent "inasmuch as they overleap the limits of all experience, in which no object can be presented that is not adequate to the transcendental idea."[3]

> " . . . the conception of an individual object . . . is completely determined by the mere idea of it. This is what is meant by the ideal of pure reason."[4]

> "In its ideal, reason finds the prototype of which all things are but imperfect copies or ectypes, and from which they derive the material of their possibility. To this ideal things approximate more or less, but they must always remain at an infinite distance from it."[5]

> "The supreme reality we must conceive, not as the sum of all things, but as the necessary condition of their possibility."[6]

> " . . . objects of sense are possible only in relation to our thought, which supplies the a priori element or empirical form that is implied in them."[7]

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1. Kant, Immanuel, The Critic of Pure Reason: Transcendental Logic, trans. by John Watson, p. 140.
2. Ibid., p. 196.
3. Ibid., p. 141.
4. Ibid., p. 196.
5. Ibid., p. 197.
6. Ibid., p. 199.
7. Ibid., p. 200.

Man's pure reason (die reine Vernunft)--that part of his mind by which all speculation or theorizing, all logical exercise is carried on--can easily conceive of this invisible idea behind the object, and is able very practically to prove the truth of the conclusion by the manifold visible manifestations of its workings. But, moreover, this active speculation-loving mental department is willing and eager to seize upon other abstract ideas, such as those of God, immortality, and the like, and to endeavor to prove their existence too. But here it finds itself baffled, for where can be found the sensuous materializations of the intangible idea in these cases? Nowhere; therefore, says the inexorable Kant, we can prove the existence neither of God nor of immortality, in spite of all the efforts of the pure reason, because it is limited to the world of experience. When it tries to prove these two controversial concepts, and others of similar nature, its logical or theoretical reasoning is futile; it is soon stopped by insurmountable antinomies[1] in science and paralogisms in theology.[2]

Having swept away unanswerably the possibility of the existence of these age-old supports of religion and philosophy in his cold brilliant Critique of Pure Reason, Kant turns, in

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1. An antinomy is a paradoxical co-existence of two irreconcilable concepts, as, those of the ideas of infinity, finiteness, met with in efforts to "prove" God.
2. A paralogism is an unconsciously fallacious statement, as, that the soul is incorruptible; the category of substance is a finite one unapplicable to an infinite being.

his Critique of Practical Reason, and reveals them still standing impregnable, not by any inconsistent attempt at proof or argument, but by placing the circumstance of belief in them on a new and higher plane: in the sphere of the practical reason (die praktische Vernunft). The pure reason cannot prove God's existence or even logically grant it; the practical reason can and must do so. The pure reason stops with intellectual matters, with logic and proof and speculation and conclusion; the practical reason goes on to the mystical higher ground of intuition and moral law. It is called practical because it has to do with the practical needs of man's conduct of life, because it is employed in actual ethical practice, because man has found it absolutely needful in his daily living.

Although one cannot escape beyond the sphere of experience with the pure or speculative reason, one can by means of the practical reason turn his gaze inward upon his own consciousness and his own soul, and find there the moral law. Turner writes, "The moral consciousness alone takes us beyond experience to the immutable, eternal, and universally valid ground on which all higher truth rests."[1] This moral law, which exists in the consciousness of every human being, is unconditional and authoritative, and upon its incontrovertible truth rest the postulates of the

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1. Turner, William, A History of Philosophy, p. 326.

freedom of the will, the existence of God, and the immortality of the soul. Religion, then, according to Kant, can be based neither on science nor on theology (as witness antinomies and paralogisms); it can only be founded on ethics. This ethical or moral basis must be absolute, furthermore; it may not be derived from questionable sense-experience or precarious inference; it must spring from the inner self by direct perception, or, by intuition. We must find a universal and necessary ethics . . . a priori principles of morals as absolute and as certain as the laws of mathematics.[1]

Durant puts the authoritativeness of "the moral law within" thus: "The most astounding reality in all our experience is precisely our moral sense, our inescapable feeling, in the face of temptation, that this or that is wrong. We may yield, but the feeling is there."[2] Thus we know, not by reason but by vivid feeling, that we must avoid behavior which, if adopted by all, would render social order impossible. We should ever "act as if the maxim of our action were to become by our will a universal law of nature."[3] A Carlylian sense of duty becomes the guide to our conduct; the hope for happiness is negligible:

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1. Durant, Will, The Story of Philosophy, p. 200.
2. Ibid., p. 206.
3. Kant, Immanuel, Critique of Practical Reason, p. 139.

"Morality is not properly the doctrine how we may make ourselves happy, but how we may make ourselves worthy of happiness."[1] This absolute command to duty proves the freedom of our wills, the fundamental concept advanced by Kant, for we could never have conceived such a notion as duty if we had not felt ourselves free. There can be no freedom without law, for only a free mind can choose a goal or recognize a law. We have no immediate consciousness of freedom, but we have an immediate consciousness of the moral law, which implies freedom.[2]

To quote:

> ". . . freedom must not be regarded as lawless, but simply as independent of laws of nature. A free cause does conform to unchangeable laws, but these laws are peculiar to itself; and, indeed, apart from law a free will has no meaning whatever."[3]
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> ". . . a free will is the same thing as a will that conforms to moral laws."[4]
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> "It cannot be in any way proved that the will of man is free, unless it can be shown that the will of all rational beings is free. For morality is a law for us only in so far as we are rational beings, and therefore it must apply to all rational beings. But morality is possible only for a free being, and hence it must be proved that freedom also belongs to the will of all rational beings. Now I say, that a being who cannot act except under the idea of freedom, must for that very reason be regarded as free so far as his actions are concerned . . . all the laws that are inseparably bound up with freedom must be viewed by him as laws of his will."[5]

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1. Kant, op. cit., p. 227.
2. Turner, op. cit., p. 219.
3. Kant, Immanuel, The Metaphysic of Morality, p. 250.
4. Ibid., p. 251.
5. Ibid., p. 252.

> "Reason must therefore regard itself as the author of its principles of action, and as independent of all external influences."[1]

> "The will of a rational being . . . can be his own will only if he acts under the idea of freedom, and therefore this idea must in the practical sphere be ascribed to all rational beings."[2]

The other two postulates rest upon and follow this one. Since the attainment of perfect holiness by complete harmony with the moral law is the highest good, and also man's irresistible duty, as he realizes when he recognizes the moral law, and since it cannot possibly be accomplished in one life-time, the conviction of eternal life is necessary in order that we may put forth our whole strength with hope of ultimately achieving it.[3] Immortal duration alone is sufficient for the complete fulfillment of the moral law. This just law urges towards virtue, the desire to transgress conflicts with it, and the struggle must continue at least throughout the span of earthly life.[4] Yet the very nature of the law connotes the idea of perfection under its mandates as an obligation; so one must believe in eternal life if one believes in the moral law itself.

> "Created beings . . . can never hope in this life, or, indeed, at any imaginable point of time in the future life, to be in perfect harmony with the will of God, but they may hope for this harmony in the infinite duration of their existence as it is surveyed by God alone."[5]

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1. Ibid., p. 252.
2. Ibid., p. 252.
3. Eucken, op. cit., p. 215.
4. Turner, op. cit., p. 300.
5. Kant, Immanuel, The Critique of Practical Reason, p. 295. (Translation of John Watson).

> "The object of a will that is capable of being determined by the moral law, is the production in the world of the highest good. Now the supreme condition of the highest good is the perfect harmony of the disposition with the moral law. Such a harmony must be possible, not less than the object of the will, for it is implied in the command to promote that object. Perfect harmony of the will with the moral law is holiness, a perfection of which no rational being existing in the world of sense is capable at any moment in his life. Yet holiness is demanded as practically necessary, and it can be found only in an infinite progress towards perfect harmony with the moral law. Pure practical reason therefore forces us to assume such a practical progress towards perfection as the real object of our will.
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> "Now, this infinite progress is possible only if we presuppose that the existence of a rational being is prolonged to infinity, and that he retains his personality for all time. This is what we mean by the immortality of the soul. Thus immortality is inseparably bound up with the moral law. It is a postulate of pure practical reason, that is, a proposition that cannot be proved theoretically, but which depends upon an a priori law of unconditioned validity."[1]

The moral law postulates the existence of God, for its imperative nature implies that there exists somewhere a good not only supreme but complete, an embodiment of that perfect goodness which is the sum of all the conditions implied in the moral order. The intelligent world also points to an intelligent author, the moral world to a moral author, and the rational world to a rational author.[2] Nature is often hostile to the performance of duty; duty and happiness (or even justice to the dutiful) do not frequently coincide in

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1. Ibid, pp. 294-295.
2. Bowne, Borden P., Kant and Spenser, p. 213.

this world. So it is necessary to conclude that a higher intelligence must exist who is in accord with man's moral strivings. Man could not work sincerely for the realization of the moral good if he thought his efforts as ultimately powerless as they seem in his present existence; so the demand naturally arises for a moral order superior to the natural, and therefore for an all-powerful being at its head.[1]

> "This second postulate of the existence of God rests upon the necessity of presupposing the existence of a cause adequate to the effect which has to be explained.
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> "There is no reason whatever, in the case of a being who is a part of the world and is dependent upon it, why the moral law should imply a necessary connection between morality and happiness proportionate to happiness. For the will of such a being is not the cause of nature, and therefore he has no power to bring nature into complete harmony with his principles of action.
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> "He must therefore postulate the existence of a cause of nature as a whole, which is distinct from nature, and which is able to connect happiness and morality in exact harmony with each other. Now, this supreme cause must be the ground of the harmony of nature, not simply with the law of the will of a rational being, but also with the supreme principle of the agent's will. That cause must therefore be in harmony not merely with the form of morality, but with morality as willed by a rational being, that is, with his moral character. The highest good is thus capable of being realized in the world only if there exists a supreme cause of nature whose causality is in harmony with the moral character of the agent. Now, a being that is capable of acting from the consciousness of law is a rational being, an intelligence, and the causality of that being, proceeding as it does

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1. Eucken, op. cit., p. 195.

> from the consciousness of law, is a will. There is therefore implied in the idea of the highest good a being who is the supreme cause of nature, and who is the cause or author of nature through his intelligence and will, that is, God. If, therefore, we are entitled to postulate the highest derivative good, or the best world, we must also postulate the actual existence of the highest original good, that is, the existence of God. Now it is our duty to promote the highest good, and hence it is not only allowable, but it is necessarily bound up with the very idea of duty, that we should presuppose the possibility of this highest good. And as this possibility can be established only under condition that God exists, the presupposition of the highest good is inseparably connected with duty, or, in other words, it is morally necessary to hold the existence of God."[1]

Man's natural disposition, and also the moral law within him, go so far beyond all that is merely useful or advantageous in this life that he is led by them to esteem the mere consciousness of righteousness above everything else, feeling an inner call, and, by his conduct in this world and the surrender of many advantages, to fit himself to become a member of a better world, which he sees in his idea. This powerful and incontrovertible proof, accompanied by our constantly increasing recognition of a design pervading all that we see around us, and by a contemplation of the immensity of creation, remains, though we cannot logically explain or understand it.[2]

The theoretical faculty is not self-contradictory when it remains in its own field; it is only limited in itself and liable

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1. Kant, op. cit., pp. 296-297.
2. Bowne, op. cit., p. 176.

to contradictions when it goes beyond the limits established in its own nature. But inasmuch as man is not merely speculative but active, not merely theoretical but practical, not a mere understanding but will and conscience, belief may be practically determined for us by the practical necessities arising out of life itself; so that what the understanding or pure reason cannot do because of its own inherent limitations, life itself may accomplish because of its own practical needs and by means of its moral and religious intuitions. Religion and conscience have life itself on their side, whereas atheism and materialism have neither life nor its ideals as allies, while their very reasoning is rendered invalid according to the general results of Kant's critical philosophy.[1]

According to Kant man is not merely Intellect, but Will also, and conscience; he is religious. The intellect alone cannot reach many of the truths which we steadfastly believe in spite of it. But, although it cannot touch them with its proofs, it can overturn arguments against them, and "destroy knowledge to make room for rational belief." Life implicitly implies the conceptions of God, freedom, immortality, postulates without which the mind would fall into discord, and life lose itself in inner contradictions.[2]

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1. Bowne, op. cit., p. 180.
2. Ibid., p. 183.

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The foregoing commentary and quotation endeavor to demonstrate Kant's unquestionable idealistic characteristics, both in his stress upon the doctrine of ideas, which makes him an idealist according to the restricted definition of the word as one who believes in ideas as the only objects really known in fixed form, and also in his adherence to and explanation of the great general tenets of a broader idealism: God, freedom, immortality.

His important contribution to philosophy is his shifting of truth and reality from object to subject, from the world to the soul. The discovery in man's own being of a spiritual depth, a realm of absolute ideas, of infinity, results in a lifting of him clear of the narrow and petty elements of humanity, and frees him from all the selfish interests and aims of daily life. There is scarcely any thinker of modern times who has done so much to raise man's spiritual level, to increase reverence for human nature, to place man's center of gravity within himself.[1]

His influence on the development of nineteenth century thought can hardly be overestimated: in many of its particulars modern idealism derives from him, as does also contemporary non-dogmatic ethico-religious thought. He influenced not only

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1. Eucken, op. cit., p. 255.

German literature, but that of England, through Coleridge and others. Philosophy owes to him the energetic assertion of the grandeur of the moral law as the foundation of ethics. He inaugurated transcendental criticism.[1]

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1. Turner, op. cit., p. 301.

CHAPTER III

A GENERAL VIEW OF COLERIDGE'S IDEALISTIC TENDENCIES, AND HIS INDEBTEDNESS TO KANT

Although Coleridge follows Kant both in time[1] and in doctrine, he has often the effect of obscuring or of rendering involved the logically clear terms and precepts of his predecessor.

In the matter of terminology, he borrows and complicates: Kant uses the one term Reason, dividing it into the pure (die reine Vernunft) and the practical (die praktische Vernunft), respectively indicating its lower and higher functions, the intellectual and the moral; Coleridge makes unqualified Reason (which he calls Vernunft) the nobler member, and the Understanding (which he terms Verstand) the lesser.[2] Kant, as has been noticed in the preceding chapter, does not permit the Pure Reason to operate beyond experience, although it constantly attempts to do so. Hence God and other super-sensuous ideas cannot be apprehended by it. But the Practical Reason, by means of its intuition of moral law and necessity, can postulate these ideas, and show their truth, once the fundamental postulate of the freedom of the will is accepted as unquestionable fact. Coleridge

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1. Kant, 1724-1804; Coleridge, 1772-1834.
2. Only rather inconspicuously, in his Aids to Reflection, does Coleridge divide Reason into the "speculative" and the "practical", the former being relative and closely allied to Understanding, the latter only remaining absolute. Elsewhere he employs the terms as indicated above.

says, on the other hand, that it is only with the Reason that one can understand spiritual as opposed to material or sensuous matters. With the Understanding, he holds, one perceives only the world of phenomena or externals. This faculty bases its judgments on the mere outward appearances of things, and is therefore worthless; the Reason only, by its moral intuition, can perceive things as they are and grasp truths independently of the senses.[1] Coleridge allows the Reason the apparently unlimited power of reaffirming what the Understanding has found it necessary to deny; whereas Kant has the one go onward only where the other has left off at the limit of its powers.[2]

This arbitrary juggling of terms indulged in by Coleridge is but one of the caprices encountered in an effort to study his theories. In his work he gives a general impression of organized philosophy and of a knowledge of Kant, but if one bends too fixed

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1. Fausset, op. cit., p. 311. Coleridge says: "The dependence of the Understanding on the representations of the senses, and its consequent posteriority thereto . . . (may be) contrasted with the independence and antecedency of Reason." (Aids to Reflection, p. 252).

And, again: "By the 'understanding' I mean the faculty of thinking and forming judgments on the notices furnished by the sense, according to certain rules existing in itself, which rules constitute its distinct nature. By the pure 'reason' I mean the power by which we become possessed of principles--the eternal virtues of Plato and Descartes, and of ideas, not images . . ." (The Friend, p. 164 n.)

2. Vaughan, C. E., "Coleridge", C. H. E. L., XI, 152.

a gaze upon his "system" it shifts, fades, and disintegrates into detached shreds and particles. A biographer, Charpentier, writes that "although he welcomed every idea that seemed to him capable of fitting into his vast framework of spiritual and religious philosophy, which obsessed him, he never succeeded in giving his ideas any precise shape, and never seriously made any systematic classification of them."[1] It becomes necessary, therefore, to select out of Coleridge's voluminous confusion certain principles and fragments of principles that do stand firm, and which, although they are disunited, reveal his idealism, and, incidentally, his indebtedness to Kant.

Coleridge early discovered Plato, both through the Neo-Platonist Plotinus and directly, and his natural affinity for the abstract and the mystic was fed thereby.[2] He began constantly to dwell in the world of ideas, upon heights from which the external appearances of things seemed but shadow and sham. Kant's work (which Coleridge tasted first and but slightly in Germany (1798-1799), and savored fully later during his Maltese sojourn (1803, summer)) with its definite Platonic elements (notably in the doctrine of ideas and in the moral law implanted in the soul, for Plato's "proof" of immortality cannot be compared to Kant's explanation of its existence) confirmed, fortified, and disciplined his natural predilections and his

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1. Charpentier, John, Coleridge, the Sublime Somnambulist, p. 72.
2. Ibid, pp. 83-85.

philosophic development. His speculative thinking and his reasoning began to show a considerable likeness to that of the Germans.[1] His criticism was deeply and fortunately influenced by that of the Romantic school in Germany, then bathed in a wave of intellectual inspiration and stimulation.[2] "As a whole, his work shows a general parallelism to the intuitive, idealistic, and historical movement of ideas which gives German Romanticism its essential character."[3] Halleck says of him, "He became an idealist and used the idealistic teachings of the German metaphysicians to combat the utilitarian and sense-bound philosophy of Bentham, Malthus, and Mill."[4] Coleridge himself advises his disciples thus conclusively: "Once for all, read Kant, Fichte . . . and then you will . . . track me."[5] W. G. T. Shedd, the editor of Coleridge used in this work, gives the following decision: "If he is to be called

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1. Herford, C. H., The Age of Wordsworth, p. 96.
2. Pater, Walter, Sketches and Reviews, p. 200.
3. Cazamian, Norris, A History of English Literature, Part II, p. 360.
4. Halleck, Reuben P., New English Literature, p. 35.
5. Coleridge further acknowledges the Kantean influence thus: "The writings of the illustrious sage of Koenigsburg, the found of the Critical Philosophy, more than any other work, at once invigorated and disciplined my understanding. The originality, the depth, and the compression, of the thoughts; the novelty and subtlety, yet solidity and importance of the distinctions; the adamantine chain of the logic; and I will venture to add . . . the clearness and evidence of the Critique of the Pure Reason; and Critique of the Judgment; of the Metaphysical Elements of Natural Philosophy; and of his Religion within the bounds of Pure Reason, took possession of me as with the giant's hand." (Biographia Literaria, p. 91.)

after any one of the great founders of philosophical systems among the moderns, Coleridge was a Kantean."[1] And again:

> ". . . it is very evident that his closest and longest continued study was applied to Kant himself. . . . The two minds who did most toward the formation of Coleridge's philosophic opinions were Plato and Kant. From the Greek he derived the doctrine of Ideas. . . . From the German he derived the more strictly scientific part of his system--the fundamental distinctions between the Understanding and the Reason . . . and between Nature and Spirit. With him also he sympathized in that deep conviction of the absolute nature and validity of the great ideas of God, Freedom, and Immortality--of the binding obligation of Conscience --and generally of the supremacy of the Moral and Practical over the purely Speculative."[2]

Then, lest this ardent admirer seem to attribute to Coleridge a method he did not possess, one might take into account Hazlitt's word on the subject; according to him, the poet ". . . wandered into Germany and lost himself in the labyrinths of the Hartz forest and of the Kantean philosophy."[3]

Critics and other authorities thus obviously agree that Coleridge was strongly influenced by his German predecessor. Hitherto, however, our view has been a fairly general one; it now becomes necessary to consider more specific likenesses, still not of whole systems, but, in the case of Coleridge, of isolated principles, which, singly, bear a considerable resemblance to like parts of the Kantean whole.

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1. Shedd, W. G. T., The Complete Works of Samuel T. Coleridge, p.25.
2. Ibid., pp. 21-22.
3. Hazlett, William, "The Spirit of the Age", in H. W. Garrod's Coleridge--Poetry and Prose.

Kant's distinguishing contribution, that of emphasis of the subjective instead of the objective, his attention to the individual's idea rather than to the visible object that idea refers to, finds a very audible echo in Coleridge's writings (Carlyle says, "I still recollect his 'object' and 'subject', terms of continual recurrence in the Kantean province."[1]); since Coleridge, submerged in introspection and egocentricity, found in the theory once more a confirmation of his inherent inclinations. He conceived all nature as a mirror or reflex of man's intelligence,[2] and one of his besetting problems was that of interpreting matter in terms of mind.[3] Charpentier considers that he suffered--as artist, idealist, man--from a sort of "subjective hysteria". Indeed, he carried subjectivity so far that the outward world lost reality for him, and he overemphasized ideas until everything but mind seemed non-existent. Through an excess of perverted sensibility he recoiled from the realm of fact outside himself, by contact with which his idealism might have found reality, his imagination more healthful functioning.[4]

In his remarkable conversations he was wont to query: Is the thing-in-itself (the noumenon or idea) separate from

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1. Carlyle, Thomas, The Life of Sterling, p. 226.
2. Pater, Walter, Appreciations, with an Essay on Style, p. 88.
3. Herford, op. cit., p. 59.
4. Fausset, op. cit., p. 290.

the phenomenon or image in the perception?[1] He was dominated by mind to the extent that he could not recognize the division between idea and manifestation.[2] His early exposure to the Berkeleyan extremism (which holds that the world exists only in the mind) had had its effect, which was to weaken still more his naturally nerveless grasp of reality.

On the other hand, he legitimately used the concept of the idea behind the object by attempting constantly to penetrate to first principles or absolutes through the adventitious husks that overlay them. Thus he accepted the existing framework of society, but at the same time sought the idea behind each existing institution and established form of thought, the idea obscured by accretion of circumstance.[3] He endeavored to effect a new and more vital interpretation of accepted things, which were being rendered lifeless by attention only to the outward letter and by neglect of the inward spirit.[4] As for nature, he

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1. Fausset, op. cit., p. 295.
2. Yet Dowden persistently maintains that he always distinguishes between subject and object, mind and world. (Dowden, Studies in Literature, p. 101.)
3. "The . . . system, then, denies all rightful origin to government, except as far as it is derivable from principles contained in the reason of man, and judges all the relations of man in society by the laws of moral necessity, according to ideas . . . Nothing is to be deemed rightful in civil society, or to be tolerated as such, but what is capable of being demonstrated out of the original laws of the pure reason. Of course, as there is but one system of geometry, so according to this theory there can be but one constitution and one system of legislation, and this consists in the freedom which is the common right of all men, under the control of that moral necessity, which is the common duty of all men." (The Friend, p. 165.)
4. Dowden, Edward, The French Revolution and English Literature, p. 98.

saw it as but a cloak for the eternal laws of God, a visible symbol for the unseen. "Coleridge, by celebrating God's omnipresence, was enabled to discover spiritual life in the smallest as well as the greatest things of creation, and was convinced that each interpreted the divine language in its own way."[1] The Romantic idea that nature is the mouth-piece of God was his own; Wordsworth borrowed it from him.[2] When one hears a voice in the beauties of nature, it is the voice of God in his own soul; when one has learned this, Nature is never afterwards limited to mere sense-impressions. The image of the thing is supplanted by the thoughts it awakens (of which it is really the appearance) and the soul is swept towards God, in whom thought and image had their source.[3]

Such a statement brings us to a realization of Coleridge's inherent transcendentalism, the mark of the Romantic. This term denotes a belief in the unity of the essential spirit of man and of nature with God, and is named as it is because it transcends the physical and sensuous. It connotes many of the beliefs of idealism, as will appear in the following paragraph from Dowden:

> "The word transcendental in a general sense may be used as opposed to the empirical way of thinking

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1. Charpentier, op. cit., p. 264.
2. Ibid., p. 200.
3. Brooke, Stopford, Theology in the English Poets, p. 301. Cf. Wordsworth's stages in appreciation of nature, wherein the contemplative or spiritual supersedes the sensuous. See Chapter 4 of this work: "Hymn before Sunrise in the Vale of Chamouni."

> dominant during the eighteenth century in France and England alike. The empirical thinker derives all ideas from experience, some asserting that we obtain these ideas through the senses alone. The transcendental thinker believes that the mind contributes to its own store ideas as forms of thought not derived from experience. If the empirical thinker is a theist, he will desire an apparatus to connect the Divine Spirit and that of man; the transcendental seems to see the natural and supernatural touch and interpenetrate. The soul of the literature of the last century has been transcendental--as is apparent in the view taken of nature and of man. One is taught to see nature's God through nature, and to see God's spirit in man's soul."[1]

Coleridge ever strove for such a unity, an all-embracing harmony of man with the universe. He considered that our greatest achievement is to know ourselves parts of one wondrous whole, and the sense of oneness was very strong with him, particularly in his early years.[2]

An evident inference from transcendental or mystic proclivities is a belief in intuition or conscience or the inward law. Coleridge's absorption in the subjective and the introspective would very naturally lead to a dependence upon intuition as a guide for conduct and as a touch-stone for all truth. Intuition is, furthermore, another unfailing characteristic of the Romantic transcendentalist. God's voice is in our own souls:

> "Coleridge's somewhat wavering metaphysics, made up, above all, of desire, and only borrowing the fragments of a system from the German disciples of Kant, is based upon an intuition of the essential

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1. Dowden, Studies in Literature, p. 88.
2. Spurgeon, Caroline, Mysticism in English Literature, p. 47.

> unity existing between our spirit and the divine. To descend to the depth of our consciousness is to discover the immanent being; in this way we are able to penetrate beyond the plane of appearance and sense; it is only in questioning ourselves that we can unravel the universe; the true, the only events are those of the soul, and the special domain of poetry is this inner theatre."[1]

His distrust of the intellect as sole guide, and his belief in the necessity of some kind of intuitional act to the apprehension of reality was strengthened, of course, by his study of the German transcendental philosophers. "Following Kant, he gave the rather misleading name of 'reason' to the intuitive power by which man apprehends God directly,"[2] and, in his view, imagination is the faculty which in the light of this intuitive Reason interprets and unifies the symbols of the natural world.[3]

The moral law of Kant, which reveals itself in the Practical Reason, enabled Coleridge to assert for man an intuitive knowledge of ultimate principles, an inner wisdom, a spiritual insight.[4] A spiritual being, considered Coleridge, must be able to comprehend spiritual truths, and this is the heart of his religious philosophy. The faculty of belief in spiritual truth is in Coleridge Reason, corresponding to the Practical Reason of Kant. To quote Dowden:

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1. Cazamian, op. cit., p. 304.
2. Spurgeon, op. cit., p. 229.
3. Ibid., p. 200.
4. Herford, op. cit., p. 216.

> "The Reason is that which is highest in each individual man, yet no man can call it his own; he does not possess it, he partakes of it; the Reason is the present Deity in the soul. The primary truths of theology and of morals are witnessed to by their own light, which is the light of Reason; it is in us, or we are in it, but it is not ours, nor of us."[1]

There remain to be definitely pointed out the three great idealistic tenets: God, Freedom, Immortality, concepts that have been indicated already, inseparable as they are from those of Reason, of intuition, of Transcendentalism as a whole. Coleridge believed in the three, and wrote of them directly in his philosophical works and indirectly in his poetry and in his criticism. Carlyle, in the midst of his frank revelation of faults, says of him:

> "A sublime man; who, alone in those dark days (of materialistic preoccupation), had saved his crown of spiritual manhood; escaping from the black materialisms, and revolutionary deluges, with 'God, Freedom, Immortality' still his; a king of men."[2]

Of the existence of God, Coleridge himself writes:

> "The idea of the Supreme Being appeared to me to be as necessarily implied in all particular modes of being as the idea of infinite space in all the geometric figures by which space is limited."[3]

Again, he wrote:

> "The (passive) belief in a God and a future state . . . does not indeed always beget a good heart; but a good heart so naturally begets the belief that the very few exceptions must be regarded as strange anomalies."[4]

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1. Dowden, Studies in Literature, p. 86.
2. Carlyle, Thomas, op. cit., p. 228.
3. Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, Chap. X, p. 103.
4. Ibid., p. 207.

And, in a passage including all three ideas:

> "God gave us reason, and with reason he gave us reflective self-consciousness; gave us principles, distinguished from the maxims and generalizations of outward experience by their absolute and essential universality and necessity, and, above all by superadding to reason the mysterious faculty of free-will and consequent personal amenability, he gave us conscience--that law of conscience, which, in the power, and as the indwelling word, of a holy and omnipotent legislator . . . unconditionally commands us to attribute reality, and actual existence, to those ideas . . . of soul, of free-will, of immortality, and of God."[1]

This, on the will and its freedom particularly, appears:

> ". . . intelligence or self-consciousness is impossible, except by and in a will. The self-conscious spirit therefore is a will; and freedom must be assumed as a ground of philosophy, and can never be deduced from it."[2]

> "This principium commune essendi et cognoscendi, as subsisting in a will, is the mediate or indirect principle of the ultimate science alone, i. e., of transcendental philosophy alone."[3]

It is hardly necessary to restate that Coleridge is a complete idealist, in his terminology, in his adherence to the most fundamental of idealistic principles, and in his general turn of mind towards ideas rather than reality. He owes to Kant his terminology, or rather his division of man's speculative and intuitive powers (represented respectively by Verstand and Vernunft), since Kant's actual terms are not preserved by him; and also his emphasis on God, Freedom, Immortality, and his conception of the Freedom of the Will as the most basic of

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1. Coleridge, The Friend, p. 106.
2. Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, p. 173.
3. Ibid., p. 174.

these basic tenets, although one hesitates to point out indebtedness here, because these ideas are characteristic of idealism generally, and are able to be arrived at independently by any number of thinkers. Scholars agree, however, that Kant influenced Coleridge's train of thought strongly; therefore, the idealism of Kant is in greater or less degree behind the idealism of Coleridge.

It now becomes fitting to examine his three fields of literary production, the critical, the poetic, and the philosophic or religious, and the specific works included in each, for their individual traces or proofs of idealism.

CHAPTER IV

INDIRECT EVIDENCE OF COLERIDGE'S IDEALISM: HIS POETRY

There is revealed in the poetry of Coleridge a clearly-marked spiritual evolution--from Necessitarianism to Transcendentalism or Unity. The dividing line between these two states is usually considered to fall about 1798 or 1799, the time of his visit to Germany. In the first period (1794-1798) his spiritual thought was governed by the idea that God, the center of all, predetermines or necessitates the fate of all life. This conception, expressed here and there in the earlier poems merely as opinion, is sublimated into a pervasive spiritual atmosphere in the Ancient Mariner. The harshness of the Calvinistic type of Necessitarianism Coleridge softened by a strange combination with this doctrine of the Unitarian one which holds that God is love, that all are elect, that no human being can therefore be given over to eternal punishment. The principle that God is love, and that love is all, logically left no room for evil; so Coleridge became an unqualified optimist. His very vague and theoretical sense of the world's wrongs and of the evils perpetrated by mankind gave way to the equally nebulous idea that soon the human race should be changed into a blessed brotherhood of man--indeed, a fairly widespread conception in the last decades of the eighteenth century.[1]

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1. Gingerich, Solomon, Essays in the Romantic Poets, p. 54.

As for Necessity, the poet's ideas came to him from eighteenth century Hartley,[1] naturalist and associational philosopher; from Priestley,[2] scientist and theologian; from Godwin,[3] who based all the reasoning in his influential Political Justice on the principle. His feeling for Unity Coleridge gradually gathered from Plato, Plotinus, Berkeley, idealists all, and from the Bible, especially St. John. One of his ambitions was to harmonize his own interpretations of the Scriptures and of the teachings of his favorite philosophers. Temperamentally, as has been mentioned, Coleridge was prone to endeavor to reduce all things to one principle, and to find the One in the Many. In drawing on the more ancient sources of the Bible, and Plato, for the mystic principle of Unity, and in attempting to express it as he did in terms of emotion and imagination, he anticipated the spirit of the nineteenth century thinkers, and so far became the prophet of that age.[4]

He believed that the only real inspiration was a kind of intuition or ecstatic foreboding, and nothing was more favorable

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1. Hartley, David, (1705-1757) founded the Associationist School of psychology, holding that all states of higher consciousness grow from simple sensation.
2. Priestley, Joseph, (1733-1804), a chemist and a non-conforming minister. He was a Necessitarian, influenced by Hartley; he wrote on science and religion.
3. Godwin, William, (1756-1836) arrived at complete overthrow of all existing institutions--political, social, religious. His greatest work, Political Justice, influenced the English Romantic poets almost as a body, in their earlier thinking.
4. Gingerich, Solomon, op. cit., p. 60.

to it than a trance-like state of dreaming. His best poems are those in which he expresses his other-worldly visions.[1] His natural fondness for the unreal and his acquired longing to escape reality made the imaginative his own peculiar realm. The fantastic and the entirely abstract early absorbed him, and he was vitally kindled only when he wrote of the far-off and dream-like, for, lacking the passion of a great poet, he was likely to descend to sentimentality when he treated simple human subjects.

But poetry needs to be concrete. Coleridge, troubled with his incapacity for reconciling his subjective vision with the objective world, haunted by a sense of beauty that transcended particular objects,[2] vainly tried to objectify by metaphor and personification; the image itself eluded him. His earlier poetry and his later metaphysics alike show this defect of over-abstraction. The more he desensualized his nature by purely abstract thought, the more discursive his thought and expression became. In the Ancient Mariner alone did he make the unreal real, and it was a miracle of circumstance that he was never able to repeat.[3]

Logically enough, he became remarkable as poet and analyzer of pathological states, for these constituted the only physical

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1. Charpentier, op. cit., p. 309.
2. Cf. Shelley's progression from beautiful objects to the pure idea of beauty: "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty."
3. Charpentier, op. cit., p. 40.

realities he could not elude--except through the use of narcotics --by slipping into the world of fancy. Of them he was abnormally aware because of his strange insensibility to ordinary external stimuli, which had troubled him since extreme childhood; since the external was vague to him, the inner received a morbid attention. Says Gosse of this preoccupation:

> "Coleridge is conspicuous, to a degree beyond any writer between Spenser and Rossetti, for a delicate, voluptuous melancholy, and a pitying absorption without vanity in his own conditions and frailties, carried so far that the natural objects of his verse take the qualities of the human Coleridge upon themselves."[1]

Poetry became to him the same refuge from mental pain that metaphysics, and, incidentally, opium, provided later on. All three may be said to have induced the sort of unworldly ecstasy which Coleridge always strove for. Constitutionally unable to see nature except with an over-subjective, self-centered gaze, he could never find the release and the tranquillity that Wordsworth derived from a sympathetic and detailed study of it; Coleridge's approximation of peace came to him only from unreality, as Wordsworth's from a contemplation of concrete objects and their meanings. The latter saw the eternal behind the transient, but he linked the two; the former's sense of the infinite remained, as it were, amorphous for lack of contact with the definite.

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1. Gosse, Edmund, Modern English Literature, p. 419.

His finest poem, the mainly Necessitarian Ancient Mariner, is rooted in the concrete, in physical activity, in spite of its imaginative story or the allegorical interpretation some students read into it.[1] The poem, despite its expression of the doctrines of Necessity and also Unity, contains no ponderous reasoned-out religion, no obtrusive theological arguments, but only a sort of refined aura or undefined spirit of the poet's religious meditations, and this almost in spite of him, for he endeavored to write a purely imaginative work. His fancy, however, could not entirely escape the influence of all his religious meditations; the

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1. Namely Fausset (op. cit.), who considers the poem "no mere miracle of inventive fantasy, but an involuntary projection into imagery of his own inner discord." The stagnation of Coleridge's faculties this biographer sees symbolized by the becalming of the ship, and this and the subsequent effortless movement of the vessel expressed his spiritual experience--a lethargy of his creative powers and the belief that only by some miracle of ecstasy which should transcend all personal volition could he elude his impotence, the demon he feared. The very sin against nature of the killing of the albatross shows forth Coleridge's morbid divorce from the physical. The communion of the mariner with the water animals (glittering, animated, tireless things that Coleridge loved because of the sense of the death of his own powers) represents that intercourse with life from which he might hope to gain absolution. The passing of the old sailor from land to land telling his tale is Coleridge's seeking relief his life long in endless monologues. His own never-satisfied need for simple and devout human relations is represented in the walk to the kindly kirk. In the shriving by the hermit he forecasts the conventional religious port he himself drifted to in the end. Such a point of view seems rather more ingenious than authentic; Coleridge's mentality was not one to project such an accurate and detailed allegory, even unconsciously, the procedure being one somewhat too systematic for his temperament.

religious atmosphere of the poem is the logical outcome of them.[1] It is moral in its very essence, in its implicit recognition of moral values and of the spiritual death that dogs their frustration; but at the end, nevertheless, Coleridge, uncertain that this would be visible to anyone except himself, with his ever-present sense of a moral obligation he could not meet, added the conventional didactic tag.[2] Unfortunately he was too moral and metaphysically minded to be purely a lyrical poet, to communicate the experience for its immediate value alone.

The wonder of the Ancient Mariner is the fusing of the supernatural external events with the deep spiritual occurrences in the heart of the chief character, which latter contribute most of the religious suggestiveness. The character of the mariner itself makes such a blending possible, and he, indeed, is one of the most distinctive creations in modern literature.[3]

His most striking characteristic is that he does not act, but is acted upon, throughout the course of events, and this feature expresses the Necessitarianism of the composition. The mariner has no will of his own; he is completely passive to the powers outside himself, and, in its turn, to the new law of life revealed to him. Coleridge saves him from insipidity by endowing him with his own inward fervency, an intensity of feeling the

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1. Gingerich, op. cit., p. 198.
2. Fausset, op. cit., p. 300.
3. Gingerich, op. cit., p. 250.

chief source of the sustained lyricism that gives so much of its fresh simplicity and charm to the poem, and by giving him a child-likeness of spirit that excuses passivity.[1] His naivete is preserved even when he approaches the sophistication of generalization, by means of language especially simple at such places:

> "He prayeth well, who loveth well
> Both man and bird and beast.
>
> "He prayeth best, who loveth best
> All things both great and small;
> For the dear God who loveth us,
> He made and loveth all."

The mariner's ethics is that of a simple-hearted child. He thought nothing of his impulsive shot until his fellows pointed out that it was a crime; then he at once accepted their verdict, as a child that of its parent, and the act became monstrous to him, and the agony that follows an inadvertent evil by an otherwise innocent person became his. He conceives, in his simplicity, that the objects of nature are avenging personalities persecuting him, the culprit. Everything conspires against him--and he lies passive under the strokes of fate and necessity.[2]

Nevertheless the character has almost equally strong elements of Unitarianism. He discourses on the principle of universal love, to him one of the two contending forces of the

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1. Ibid., p. 216.
2. Ibid., p. 235.

universe--the other is loneliness:

> "O Wedding Guest! This soul hath been
> Alone on a wide wide sea;
> So lonely 'twas, that God himself
> Scarce seemed there to be."

His anguish comes from separation from the love of comrades and of God; his absolution and salvation from his new-found love for all things both great and small; in loving humble animals he returns to the love of God, who made them. Universal religious fellowship (one of Coleridge's idealistic hopeless dreams) is expressed in

> "O sweeter than the marriage-feast,
> 'Tis sweeter far to me,
> To walk together to the kirk
> With a goodly company!"

The style of this, Coleridge's master-piece, is the simple and natural one of Wordsworth's rustic works, for it was written under his potent influence, which affects the nature description likewise, giving it a range and an accuracy not altogether natural to Coleridge when left to himself.[1] Even so, he spiritualizes nature in his own way, touching it with the weird and romantic quality of his own peculiar imagination. His also is the curious insight into the mysteries of the troubled primitive human personality he portrays.[2]

Besides the direct idealism of the Unitarian belief, there is, in the metaphysics appearing in the Ancient Mariner without

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1. Brooke, Stopford, Theology in the English Poets, p. 78.
2. Crawshaw, William, The Making of English Literature, p. 80.

any reference to experience or possibility, an evidence of the advanced or extreme idealism beforementioned with regard to Coleridge--idealism in which matter and reality no longer exist except as projections of the mind. However, the same might be justly said of any work of the imagination alone.

Christabel is the second production resulting from Coleridge's "shaping spirit of imagination" by which he mixed and recombined the images and reflections that floated by on the passive stream of his poetic genius. Charpentier says that

> ". . . in Christabel and elsewhere Coleridge falls into that trance-like condition in which the mind unfolds and develops completely, ignoring the laws governing men and those of the universe. Excepting Blake, no other poet has done creative work so wholly free from the control of his reason. In his day dreams Coleridge found it easy to forget the data of experience altogether."[1]

Christabel, like the Ancient Mariner, represents a character passively acted upon--this time by a single evil spirit instead of by the forces of the natural universe. Coleridge's earlier poems were obtrusively religious, the Ancient Mariner had a subdued under-current of religion, but Christabel is entirely detached from it, has in fact, as Gingerich puts it, "almost fallen out of religion on the other side"; it is as it were negatively religious. In the first part of this poem, Coleridge comes near realization of his ideal of pure imagination unmixed with any earthly alloy. It is exceedingly fragile and delicate, verging upon the shadowy and impalpable, and represents the ultimate that

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1. Charpentier, op. cit., p. 283.

Coleridge could reach in that sort of work without dispensing with logical structure and sequence of ideas as he does in Kubla Khan.

Christabel is handled with more artifice than is the Ancient Mariner, perhaps because Coleridge was trying to compensate for something less of inspiration and spontaneity. He uses an elaborate meter suitable to the subject matter and the setting, replacing with it the lyric simplicity of the ballad. The undisguised miraculous element present in the Ancient Mariner is here drawn beneath the surface and expressed by hints and suggestions, while the outward incidents themselves are natural and practicable; so that Coleridge succeeds in the difficult task of rendering the supernatural by daylight. The difference in the second part is evidence of his inevitable inability to maintain himself in the rarefied imaginings which were the essence of his undertakings but which, too, were the subtle spiritual regions in which he found his home. He was haunted by the marvelous and the preternatural, less perhaps for their own sake alone than as a symbol of the abiding mystery he was so fond of seeing everywhere in life, within and outside man, as a sign of the spiritual presence which binds all in mystic unity. It is this faith which gives a deeper meaning to all his fairy creations.[1]

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1. Vaughan, op. cit., p. 38.

Kubla Khan is an extreme example of the involuntary, almost automatic process that produced the Ancient Mariner and Christabel. In the former the imagination achieves absolute independence of fact. Gingerich terms it "a fragment of pure esthetic luxury," and it does indeed represent the luxury of complete irresponsibility, of entire separation from the demands of convention, logic, or reality.

The Transcendental attitude of mind that was to dominate Coleridge's thinking is indicated in a poem as early as 1799, the Lines Written in the Hartz Forest. Its theme is that outward forms depend for their beauty upon what the perceiving mind contributes to them, mind being the active agency in determining the nature and quality of perception.[1] Here for the first time Coleridge expresses the Transcendental conception of the might of the mind.

The fullest expression of the Transcendental principle, however, is to be found in the Dejection: An Ode, written in 1802. Around the statement of this principle, set in the center of the poem, the poet weaves his personal experiences, against a background of night and storm suitable to his despairing mood. Upon the contribution the mind makes to nature and to all it beholds, is the stanza:

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1. Cf. Kant's subjective view of things: man's idea of an object is more important than the image itself.

"O Lady! we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature live:
Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud!
And would we ought behold, of higher worth,
Than that inanimate cold world allowed
To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,
Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
Enveloping the earth--
And from the soul itself must there be sent
A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
Of all sweet sounds the life and element!"

The more personal parts of the poem deal with Coleridge's inability to feel deeply, which ability seems dried up at its source--he feels the loss of his short-lived spontaneity. Nature gives him no fresh inspiration; in the absence of his one-time imaginative power he can only turn to theological research, his sole remaining resource.

"But now afflictions bow me down to earth:
Nor care I that they rob me of my mirth;
But oh! each visitation
Suspends what nature gave me at my birth,
My shaping spirit of imagination.
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 only plan:
Till that which suits a part infects the whole,
And now is almost grown the habit of my soul."

He is aroused from his revery by the raving night-wind, which symbolizes his own mental unrest, even despair. Then the piece ends with the hope that his "friend"[1] may never know such agonizing vigils, that "she" may be watched over by calm stars,

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1. Wordsworth; changed to an unnamed "Lady" at the time of a difference between the poets.

and arise joyful with the morning.

The importance of the poem in a view of Coleridge's spiritual life is inestimable. The generalization, the theme of the whole thing, that we receive back only in proportion as we give, that nature lives only in us, is as radical Transcendentalism as most of the Ancient Mariner is Necessitarianism. The mind now is not regarded as an automaton, but as an original creative force; nature is but a mirror for the reflection of man's mentality. All the color and beauty and life we ascribe to nature are derived from some inward energy of the soul.[1]

Although Coleridge probably lived many tolerable and even pleasant days after this writing, the kind of joy necessary for the working of his creative imagination never returned to him with its original freshness; research and abstract reasoning became in truth his only substitutes. He held, unlike Poe, who could use sorrow and melancholy in his verse, that truly creative art must be inspired by joy, that poetry is the overflow, in spontaneous manner, of powerful emotions.[2]

Seldom afterwards did he write similarly--once in the To William Wordsworth, 1807, after reading the Prelude. Here he reasserts the transcendental principle of the self-determining power of the mind. The disparity between the poet's ideal and

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1. Gingerich, op. cit., p. 216.
2. Ibid., p. 230.

his prevailing mood is even greater than in the earlier poem: he recognizes with bitterness the impossibility of ever realizing his poetic ideal. If he could not produce the kind of poetry that his heart pronounced good, he would remain silent--as, in fact, he did.

The Hymn before Sunrise in the Vale of Chamouni, produced at about the same time as the Dejection, aims to be more specifically religious than the latter, and shows a strong abstract tendency. In it Coleridge's Reason[1] comes into perfect union with God. The Dejection ode had conceived the finer aspects of nature as possessing what the mind of man contributes to them; in this Hymn is formulated a complementary truth: that Nature herself is but the mouth-piece of the Mind of the Divine. The Mind of God and the Reason of man are the two sovereign entities of existence; the objects of nature are but the reflex of either.[2]

Here Coleridge expresses once more his rapt absorption in the spiritual idea behind the physical image:

> "O dread and silent Mount! I gazed upon thee,
> Till thou, still present to the bodily sense,
> Didst vanish from my thought: entranced in prayer
> I worshipped the Invisible alone."

The following ecstatically describes the transcendental blending of the soul with the spirit of nature, and its intoxica-

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1. One cannot reiterate too frequently that Coleridge's "Reason" is the higher faculty by which the supersensuous is apprehended.
2. Gingerich, op. cit., p. 220.

tion with the divine:

> "Yet, like some sweet beguiling melody,
> So sweet, we know not we are listening to it,
> Thou, the meanwhile, wast blending with my Thought,
> Yea, with my Life and Life's own secret joy:
> Till the dilating Soul, enrapt, transfused,
> Into the mighty vision passing--there
> As in her natural form, swelled vast to Heaven!"

To study others of Coleridge's best poems for his spiritual outlook would be repetition; those that remain--notably the Frost at Midnight and the Ode on the Departing Year--express once more his profound conception of Unity, and his kindred idea of universal harmony, of all things' working together for good. The best of his brief later poems are short allegories of the spiritual life, such as Love's First Hope, The Visionary Hope, Work Without Hope, Love.

The reason for Coleridge's poetic death was that in the long run his original natural impulse to abstractions was stronger than the impulse within him to concrete poetical representation. His chief interest in life was religion, but a man who would be the poet of a transcendental religion must balance his ethereal matter by a development of the simple, emotional, pictorial side of his art. The great central point of departure for Coleridge's prose--the superiority of the Reason over the Understanding--he was not able to render successfully into poetic imagery. Moreover, he had perfected his poetic form or style between the years 1794-1799, and he could not shake off the habit of it. It was a form not suited

to serious religious poetry, but to marvelous or supernatural subjects. To remain a poet and to be a philosopher or theologist, he would have had to begin again and develop an entirely new poetic method.[1]

There was a gaping fissure in the man's mind between the physical and the spiritual, and so between him and the natural world. His poetry died away for want of a true morality which he could never express in his particular style, and he could only drift into the port of conventional religion in his late years. Fausset says that the organic life of nature never ran healthily enough through his veins to be translated by his higher faculties into vital spiritual activity.[2]

Insofar, however, as Coleridge did come into contact with nature and with life, he was an inspired poet, and "poets and creative philosophers are alike idealists: the one translates experiences into images, the other into terms of thought; the one embodies in an artistic form, the other in a logical system."[3]

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1. Gingerich, op. cit., p. 226.
2. Fausset, op. cit., p. 302.
3. Ibid., p. 320. Also see Coleridge's idealistic definition of poetry: I adopt with full faith the principle of Aristotle, that poetry, as poetry, is essentially ideal, that it avoids and excludes all accident; that its apparent individualities of rank, character, or occupation must be representative of a class (or, of an idea); and that the persons of poetry must be clothed with generic attributes, with the common attributes of the class; not with such as one gifted individual might possibly possess, but such as from his situation it is most probable beforehand that he would possess." Biog. Lit., Chap. XVII, p. 217.

CHAPTER V

INDIRECT EVIDENCE OF COLERIDGE'S IDEALISM: HIS CRITICISM

Kant's transference of man's standard of truth from an external position to one within himself--in his intuition--results in the subjectivity which in Coleridge's poetic productions very often made him see all nature abnormally in terms of himself, but which in his critical work gave rise to that subjective and appreciative school of criticism which is called Romantic. The whole fact of Coleridge's idealism with regard to his criticism, then, rests upon the restricted interpretation of the term as having to do with ideas, which, according to Kant, are conceived by each separate individual in his peculiar way; this belief brings about a subjective rather than an objective emphasis, from which in turn the Romantic criticism has its being.

Coleridge's criticism was of the psychological and moral type which in Germany was attempting to interpret literary works in a philosophical manner.[1] He combined a poetic intuition, a sort of psychological sensitiveness, and a wide familiarity with all kinds of philosophy, into that stimulating criticism which took into account the purpose of the author, his point of view, his feelings, and which discarded the iron-clad arbitrary requirements of the Thomas Rymer and Francis Jeffrey type of

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1. Charpentier, op. cit., p. 240.

objective criticism that had preceded it.[1] Coleridge found in German criticism a confirmation of some of his own innovations and principles, and indeed borrowed some of the reasoning of that school. The Germans, as was Coleridge, were studying art and literature less for their own sake than for the light they threw on the nature of the intellectual and moral faculties of the artist. A news report of the first lecture of Coleridge's 1811 series reads:

> "Unlike most professional critics on works of taste, his great object appears to be to exhibit in poetry the principles of moral wisdom, and the laws of our intellectual nature, which form the basis of social existence."[2]

His method was not to measure a given piece of work against a set of fixed rules, as did the followers of classical criticism, notably Jeffrey, but to study the writing until he found there the soul of the author,[3] and then to interpret the work in its light, aided by an analysis of his own individuality, his own reactions, in each case. In his literary criticism his consciousness of what was ill in himself served a creative purpose. In interpreting his own through other characters he could face reality,

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1. Stoll (Elmer E.), in his book Shakespeare Studies, refers to Coleridge's being guided by the intention of the author. (P. 258).
2. Coleridge's Shakesperian Criticism, ed. by Thomas M. Rayson, p. 145.
3. See his summary of the characteristics of Shakspere's dramas, wherein he says: ". . . to judge with fairness of an author's work, we ought to distinguish what is inward and essential from what is outward and circumstantial." Notes and Lectures upon Shakespeare, general edition, Shedd, W. G. T., p. 56.

while his self-knowledge enabled him to substitute a psychological for an ethical judgment of human nature.[1] So he did when he wrote upon Hamlet: placing himself in Hamlet's circumstances, he wrote a brilliantly original explanation of that complicated personality:

> "In order to understand him, it is essential that we should reflect on the constitution of our own minds. Man is distinguished from the brute animals in proportion as thought prevails over sense: but in the healthy processes of the mind, a balance is constantly maintained between the impressions from outward objects and the inward operations of the intellect:--for if there be an overbalance in the contemplative faculty, man thereby becomes the creature of mere meditation, and loses his natural power of action. Now one of Shakspeare's modes of creating characters is to conceive any one intellectual or moral faculty in morbid excess, and then to place himself, Shakspeare, thus mutilated or diseased, under given circumstances. In Hamlet he seems to have wished to exemplify the moral necessity of a due balance between our attention to the objects of our senses, and our meditation on the workings of our minds,--an equilibrium between the real and the imaginary worlds. In Hamlet this balance is disturbed: his thoughts and the images of his fancy are far more vivid than his actual perceptions, and his very perceptions, instantly passing through the medium of his contemplations, acquire, as they pass, a form and a color not naturally their own. Hence we see a great, an almost enormous, intellectual activity, and a proportionate aversion to real action, consequent upon it, with all its symptoms and accompanying qualities. This character Shakspeare places in circumstances under which it is obliged to act on the spur of the moment:--Hamlet is brave and careless of death; but he vacillates from sensibility, and procrastinates from thought, and loses the power of action in the energy of resolve."[2]

Shakspere had the effect upon Coleridge, by showing him perfect agreement between the material and the spiritual, the

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1. Fausset, op. cit., p. 291.
2. "Hamlet", Shedd edition, p. 145.

sensuous and the intellectual, of stirring up in him afresh the fruitless longing to bring about such a miracle in his own personality and work.[1] In Shakspere he also found a kinship of poetic experience, in which self-expression, a hunger for the universal, and a fine critical sense were all harmonized. Shakspere had made real and concrete and human a universality of knowledge which in Coleridge remained for the most part a mass of shadows.

When his mind was held by the object criticized, and his being concentrated in an act of immediate apprehension, his criticism creatively blended synthesis and analysis, estimating art by absolute as well as relative standards; but such a coordination depended too much upon his rare animated moods--when he was depressed he lost it in abstractions. In his moments of inspiration he stood high in English criticism, but they were only occasional. A pietistic mysticism, composed of subjective dreaming and conventional dogma, gradually encroached upon his vital analysis and exposition of imaginative experience, and his life lost, in his last years, even the limited definiteness it had possessed in this one department.[2]

The moral ideal he never could achieve himself he conceived in Shakspere as a vital, chaotic, originating force subdued to perfect justice, harmony, coherence. He described the ideal

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1. Charpentier, op. cit., p. 300.
2. Fausset, op. cit., p. 189.

experience as "an exquisite harmony of all the parts of the moral being, constituting one living total of head and heart," and this coordination of all the faculties in the creative act he saw to be essentially characteristic of Shakspere's genius.[1]

He observed also that the greatest of the Shaksperean tragedies show the everlasting conflict between the ideal and the material; and that only in the final gesture of The Tempest, and then only by means of the miraculous and the supernatural, is the ideal predominant over its material hindrances. So Coleridge might have reasoned as a result of his own life-long vain efforts to reconcile the ideal he carried in his mind with the outward circumstances he found so unwieldy and at last gave up trying to manage. He ever looked for some miraculous sudden inspiration that would give him back a measure of efficacy in dealing with life's realities, and only by means of a very miracle could he have come into touch with the concrete.

In connection with Shakspere, however, Coleridge did become positive and creative, not merely meditative, for once; and in his dramas found a world as real as the actual one, in which, moreover, the ideal was never attenuated, but remained heroic even in apparent or outward defeat, and in which mind, sense, and spirit joined into a perfect whole.[2]

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1. Ibid., p. 190.
2. Ibid., p. 240.

From the fact that Shakspere used the principle of balance or attraction of opposites, and also gave organic unity to his plays by working from within outward,[1] Coleridge concluded and demonstrated that Shakspere's intellectual judgment was fully equal to his native genius, and thereby repudiated the eighteenth century notion that his talent was wild and irregular. He also considered that without a reverential or religious view of the human heart the profoundest erudition could not suffice to understand Shakspere,[2] a fundamental tenet of Coleridge's criticism being that it contemplated "reciprocal relations of poetry and philosophy to each other; and of both to religion and the moral sense." A worthy critic, in Coleridge's estimation, must be not only a true psychologist, but a religious philosopher as well; and it is his own psychological penetrativeness and philosophical background that give his critical remarks their depth and insight.

The philosophical basis of the Coleridgean literary criticism is the same that underlies his theory of esthetics: outwardly art is governed by the position of parts and by mechanical relations (in the case of poetry, for example, by metrical forms), which require dexterity of manipulation and the use of Understanding, chiefly; inwardly it contains

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1. See essay on characteristics of Shakspere's dramas already cited.
2. Gingerich, op. cit., p. 216.

that which originates in the spirit of the artist himself, and which partakes of the absolute--his inner emotional or spiritual nature, his Will and Reason. The depth and fullness of this real self of the artist, contributed to the work of art, constitutes the degree of creative energy it possesses, and determines its worth.[1]

The application of this fundamental Transcendental principle (that of piercing the outward symbol and perceiving the spirit behind it, by means of the intuition or higher Reason) to the art of poetry was the chief purpose of Coleridge's Shaksperean lectures and of his only written critical work, the Biographia Literaria.

In his criticism his whole outlook is conditioned by his deep sense of the principle of inwardness, and he added to it his grasp of the idea of organic unity or harmony in all things created, for he was the first English writer to insist that every work of art has unity, or, is an organic whole. Furthermore, structure, scenic effect, poetry, characters, or whatever, all spring from a common root in the soul of the artist, and all enhance the imaginative effect he instinctively has in view.[2]

The Transcendental or intuitional method of perceiving the power of the poet's mind within, and of seeing it work itself

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1. Ibid., p. 225.
2. Vaughan, op. cit., pp. 94-100.

outward in the form of its art, makes of the critic a true psychologist, and Coleridge's criticism is full of instances that reveal an extraordinary understanding of the inner workings of the human mind.[1] In truth, he first turned his eye inward and knew himself; after that, he understood others. And it was through his Transcendental method that he came into so intimate a knowledge of the mind's deepest-hidden traits. In addition to the masterful insight in his treatment of Hamlet, his skill plays upon Othello, Cleopatra, and many other Shaksperean characters. On Lear he writes:

> "In Lear old age is itself a character,--its natural imperfections being increased by life-long habits of receiving a prompt obedience. Any addition of individuality would have been unnecessary and painful; for the relations of others to him, of wondrous fidelity and of frightful ingratitude, alone sufficiently distinguish him. Thus Lear becomes the open and ample playroom of nature's passions."[2]

And on Lady Macbeth:

> "Lady Macbeth, like all in Shakspeare, is a class individualized:--of high rank, left much alone, and feeding herself with day-dreams of ambition, she mistakes the courage of fantasy for the power of bearing the consequences of the realities of guilt. Hers is the mock fortitude of a mind deluded by ambition; she shames her husband with a superhuman audacity of fancy which she cannot support, but sinks in the season of remorse, and dies in suicidal agony."[3]

Coleridge's criticism forms an epoch-making body of work in English criticism, and in European to a lesser extent. In

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1. Gingerich, op. cit., p. 91.
2. "Lear", Shedd edition, p. 140.
3. "Macbeth", Shedd edition, p. 170.

both practice and theory he offered a sharp contrast to the critics of the preceding century. First of all he ruled out the assumption, current from Horace on, that the object of poetry is to instruct or to make morally better; this may be, said Coleridge, an incidental effect of poetry, but its true end or function is to give immediate pleasure through the medium of beauty. The following definition from Coleridge includes also his idea of unity within a single work:

> "A poem is that species of composition, which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its immediate object pleasure, not truth; and from all other species--(having this object in common with it)--it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the whole, as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component part."[1]

Coleridge is very evidently in line with the long pleading of German culture for the consideration of the things that are hidden, for what lies behind the apparent, unseen. It is a challenge for the recognition in the concrete of the invisible soul of the creative artist.[2] No other Englishman, in the opinion of Cazamian, has brought such breadth of mind or such keen vision to the discussion of esthetic values, even though in criticism his judgments are influenced by his great doctrinal preconceptions. To quote the same author:

> "Accustomed as he is to reach to the heart of things, to find there the same vital impulse which animates

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1. Biographia Literaria, (Shedd edition), p. 371.
2. Pater, op. cit., p. 69 . Also see Carlyle's Sart or Resartus, especially the chapter, "Natural Supernaturalism."

> his own thought, and to see this secret life produce what becomes the apparent world of the senses, Coleridge is thus able to discern with an unerring insight the paths along which a central impulse has radiated towards the fundamental ideas, aspects, and characteristics of a work."[1]

Such a method of thrusting through the phenomenal, the perceptible, to the noumenal or essential ideas that gave birth to the manifestation in question is but one more expression of the idealistic concept set forth herein under such variously assorted headings. In literature the outward object is the written word, behind it lies the intangible idea it expresses. The function of the Romantic or Transcendental critic is to determine what idea, in the mind of the author, is back of his work, and to criticize, when this original thought has been ascertained, the literary production, by judging whether or not the writer has attained his aim.

Evidence of Coleridge's idealism in the field of criticism can be deduced, in most cases, only by inference and implication, for, by the very nature of this type of literature, he gives little or no direct light on it in his actual writings. But one can perceive, when Coleridge criticizes, the influence or the use of the idealistic principles which were such an intrinsic part of his being, namely, in his critical work, that of subjectivity, with its attendant idea: reliance upon the intuition or the inner voice in matters of literary judgment.

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1. Cazamian, op. cit., p. 276.

CHAPTER VI

DIRECT EVIDENCE OF COLERIDGE'S IDEALISM: HIS RELIGIO-PHILOSOPHICAL WRITINGS

Coleridge's mind is generally conceded to have been of a profoundly religious nature.[1] He forever longed for a really personal relation with that Mind and Will at once the source of all reality and a living presence in the soul. Philosophy, however necessary it is as a ground or condition of religion, could never for him take its place adequately.[2] What Coleridge craved at heart, and what was the essence of his religion, was a personal communion with God; so that his whole philosophy became in a sense a philosophy of religion: he himself spoke of it as a Theosophy or Theognosy . . . a wisdom or knowledge which was the crown of all lesser wisdom, a knowledge to which all other knowledge but led upward.

Furthermore, even if his natural predilection had not turned him in his maturity towards religion and speculative philosophy, he might have come to them as a refuge, for the purely fanciful had failed him in poetry, the lyric impulse had died there; and reality continued to prove disturbing to him in his preoccupation with the preternatural. He may have consoled himself for his poetical sterility and for his incompetence in practical affairs by his remarkable theoretical

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1. Muirhead, John H., Coleridge as Philosopher, p. 35, p. 219.
2. Ibid., pp. 35-36.

fertility and industry.

At all events, Coleridge turned in his later years to philosophy and theology. The psychologically-minded Fausset considers that his gradual change from Unitarianism (which, it will be remembered, superseded his youthful Necessitarian views) to Trinitarianism coincided with his own complete loss of the power of unified experience. Whether the characteristic divided and tangential qualities of his own personality effected a belief by him in a triune God is a question scarcely answerable, but certain it is that he came to the conception of a more personal deity, a Christian one, fashioned indeed in his own idealized image, and much less cold and remote than a Unitarian Mind one with all nature.

But conventional Christianity never became to Coleridge a vital faith, rooted in action, since active experience was essentially foreign to his character; it remained only a vast body of doctrine placed between himself and the disturbances of reality. His was a more or less passive acceptance of orthodox dogma as a something fixed in the everlasting flux of life and of his own nature.[1] About this mass of doctrine he wove his

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1. However, he did give the Christian creed several personal variations, as, a certain Platonic flavor to his New Testament doctrine (notably in St. John's Gospel); and he exerted himself sufficiently to inaugurate modern Biblical criticism, which sees the Bible as a product of many phases of thought, in course of more or less perfect development, not as verbally inspired or dictated. The Scriptures are to be read or studied like any other literature in the light of their continuous growth and relations one part to another.

decorative philosophical draperies,[1] and indeed made several not unimportant contributions to it.

His distinctive touch was the interpretation of Christianity in the light of the moral and spiritual life, making it tenable by the higher reason; in short, he showed it to be a philosophy as well as an evangel. The great principle of Evangelical theology had been that theological dogmas were true without any reference to a subjective standard of judgment; they were to be accepted as true as pure data of revelation, or as parts of an authorized creed. Reason had nothing to do with their choice or rejection. Coleridge, on the contrary, reverenced the spiritual consciousness, the divine light, in man, and held that faith must rest not merely on objective data, but must be based on internal experience.[2] This is essentially the Transcendental conception, and it also goes back to Kant's emphasis upon the subjective.

To return once again in a specific manner to the touchstones we have set up for idealism, the ideas of the freedom of the will, of God, and of the immortality of the soul: in applying them to Coleridge's religious or philosophical works, perhaps the most direct and abundant evidence of his idealism discovers itself. Besides attention to these fundamental idealistic principles, he writes of certain related developments or variations that support

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1. Fausset, op. cit., p. 241.
2. Tulloch, John, "Coleridge as a Spiritual Thinker", The Living Age, p. 557 ff.

each in its degree, his idealistic proclivities. These are, to name but several, image and idea, subject and object, mysticism, Reason and Understanding.

In the Biographia Literaria, that volume which has as much to do with Coleridge's spiritual life as with his outward literary one, are found these lines on subject and object, on phenomena and noumena:

> "Now the sum of all that is merely OBJECTIVE, we will henceforth call NATURE, confining the term to its passive and material sense, as comprising all the phenomena by which its existence is made known to us. On the other hand the sum of all that is SUBJECTIVE, we may comprehend in the name of the SELF or INTELLIGENCE. . . . Now in all acts of positive knowledge there is required a reciprocal concurrence of both, namely of the conscious being, and of that which is in itself unconscious."[1]

Again:

> "The highest perfection of natural philosophy would consist in the perfect spiritualization of all the laws of nature into laws of intuition and intellect. The phoenomena (the material) must wholly disappear, and the laws alone (the formal) must remain. Thence it comes that in nature itself the more the principle of law breaks forth, the more does the husk drop off, the phoenomena themselves become more spiritual, and at length cease altogether in our consciousness."[2] (This is to say, in the terminology we have employed elsewhere, that the object or image is replaced by the pure idea for which it stands.)[3]

On the distinction between Reason and Understanding, or Vernunft and Verstand, which he so patently borrowed from Kant,

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1. Biographia Literaria, p. 163.
2. Ibid., p. 164.
3. Cf. Shelley on pure beauty (Hymn to Intellectual Beauty): gradually one attains the abstract idea itself, freed from all adventitious external coverings.

Coleridge writes in The Friend:

> "By the 'understanding' I mean the faculty of thinking and forming judgments on the notices furnished by the sense, according to certain rules existing in itself, which rules constitute its distinct nature. By the pure 'reason' I mean the power by which we become possessed of principles--the eternal verities of Plato and Descartes, and of ideas, not images--as the ideas of . . . justice, holiness, free-will, and the like, in morals"[1]

Coleridge returns to this distinction in the Aids to Reflection:

> ". . . the human reason, considered abstractly, as the source of positive science and theoretical insight . . . has only a negative voice. If not the abstract or speculative reason, and yet a reason there must be in order to a rational belief--then it must be the practical reason of man, comprehending the will, the conscience, the moral being with its inseparable interests and affections--that reason, namely, which is the organ of wisdom, and, as far as man is concerned, the source of living and actual truths."[2]

> ". . . Reason is the power of universal and necessary convictions, the source and substance of truths above sense, and having their evidence in themselves."[3]

One observes that Coleridge has abandoned, in part, the confusing terms Understanding and Reason, and employs instead Kant's original designations, Pure or Speculative Reason, and Practical Reason, as in the following:

> "Contemplated distinctively in reference to formal (or abstract) truth, it is the Speculative Reason; but in reference to actual (or moral) truth,

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1. The Friend, p. 164.
2. Aids to Reflection, p. 215.
3. Ibid., p. 241.

as the fountain of ideas and the light of the conscience, we name it the Practical Reason."[1]

One of Coleridge's clearest explanations of this improved terminology is inserted in an obscure footnote to one of his appendices:

> "The Practical Reason alone is Reason in the full and substantive sense. It is Reason in its own sphere of perfect freedom; as the source of ideas, which ideas, in their conversion to the responsible Will, become ultimate ends. On the other hand, Theoretic Reason, as the ground of the universal and absolute in all logical conclusion, is rather the light of Reason in the Understanding, and known to be such by its contrast with the contingency and particularity which characterize all the proper and indigenous growths of the Understanding."[2]

Then this poetic word is given to Reason's grasp of religion:

> ". . . Religion passes out of the ken of Reason only where the eye of Reason has reached its own horizon; and . . . Faith is then but its continuation: even as the day softens away into the sweet twilight, and twilight, hushed and breathless, steals into the darkness."[3]

Coleridge follows Kant in the use of fundamental postulates; of them he says:

> "The word postulate is borrowed from the science of mathematics. In geometry the primary construction is not demonstrated but postulated."[4]
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> "All speculative truths begin with a postulate, even the truths of geometry. They all suppose an act of the will; for in the moral being lies the source of

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1. Ibid., p. 241.
2. Aids to Reflection, p. 367 (note).
3. Biographia Literaria, p. 393.
4. Ibid., p. 160.

> the intellectual. The first step to knowledge, or rather the previous condition of all insight into truth, is to dare communicate with our very and permanent self."[1] (To find therein the great postulates set forth by Kant.)

Of Kant's three idealistic postulates, the basic principles of concepts upon which he built the "practical" part of his philosophy, Coleridge writes much. On the primary idea, the free human will, he says:

> "If there be aught spiritual in Man, the Will must be such. If there be a Will, there must be a spirituality in Man."[2]
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> "It is the glory of the Gospel charter and the Christian constitution, that its author and head is the Spirit of truth, essential Reason as well as absolute and incomprehensible Will."[3]
>
> "God gave us reason, and with reason he gave us reflective self-consciousness; gave us principles, distinguished from the maxims and generalizations of outward experience by their absolute and essential universality and necessity; and above all, by superadding to reason the mysterious faculty of free-will and consequent personal amenability, he gave us conscience . . . (which) unconditionally commands us to attribute reality, and actual existence, to those ideas, and to those only, without which the conscience itself would be baseless and contradictory, to the ideas of the soul, of free-will, of immortality, and of God. To God, as the reality of the conscience and the source of all obligation: to free-will, as the power of the human being to maintain the obedience which God through the conscience has commanded, against all the might of nature; and to the immortality of the soul, as a state in which the weal and woe of man shall be proportioned to his moral worth."[4]

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1. The Friend, p. 108.
2. Aids to Reflection, p. 192.
3. Ibid., p. 200.
4. The Friend, p. 106.

Here, in a paragraph, Coleridge shows forth his debt to Kant, by summarizing almost the entire belief of the latter on the three fundamental ideas so important in his philosophical system.

In other places, on the idea of God alone, Coleridge writes:

> "(Moral law is) exclusively an attribute of the Supreme Being, inseparable from the idea of God. . . . From the contemplation of law in this its only perfect form, must be derived all true insight into all other grounds and principles necessary to method, as the science common to all sciences . . ."[1]

> "It is the office, and, as it were, the instinct of Reason, to bring a unity into all our conceptions and several knowledges. On this all system depends; and without this we could reflect connectedly neither on nature nor our own minds. Now this is possible only on the assumption or hypothesis of a One as the ground and cause of the universe, and which, in all succession and through all changes, is the subject neither of time nor change."[2]

Typically Coleridgean in feeling is this:

> "We proceed from the self, in order to lose and find all self in God."[3]

After such a mystical line it is fitting to turn to Coleridge's realization of the influence of mysticism upon his own thinking. He writes the following of George Fox,[4] William

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1. Ibid., p. 418.
2. Aids to Reflection, pp. 210-211.
3. Biographia Literaria, p. 174.
4. Fox, George (1624-1691), founder of the Friends' or Quakers' Society. He felt mystic manifestations of God within himself, and advocated "divine light" or inspiration, without which the Scriptures could not have their greatest influence on the soul.

Law,[1] and Jacob Behmen:[2]

> ". . . the writings of these mystics acted in no slight degree to prevent my mind from being imprisoned within the outline of any single dogmatic system. They contributed to keep alive the heart in the head; gave me an indistinct, yet stirring and working presentiment that all the products of the mere reflective faculty partook of death, and were as the rattling twigs and sprays in winter, into which a sap was yet to be propelled from some root to which I had not penetrated, if they were to afford my soul either food or shelter."[3]

Coleridge did penetrate to this inner sap or life-fluid, which was for Kant and for him the higher or Practical Reason, which partakes of the infinite, being concerned as it is with such spiritual ideas as God and immortality.

Coleridge continues his spiritual reminiscences thus:

> "For a very long time, indeed, I could not reconcile personality with infinity; and my head was with Spinoza, though my whole heart remained with Paul and John. Yet there had dawned upon me, even before I had met with the Critique of Pure Reason, a certain guiding light. If the mere intellect could make no certain discovery of a holy and intelligent first cause, it might yet supply a demonstration that no legitimate argument could be drawn from the intellect against its truth. And what is this more than St. Paul's assertion that by wisdom, --(more properly translated by the powers of reasoning) --no man ever arrived at the knowledge of God?"[4]

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1. Law, William (1686-1761), a mystical English divine. He wrote on mysticism, on practical divinity, on controversial questions.
2. Behmen, Jacob (1575-1624), a German mystic of the Protestant faith. He professed inward illumination as source of speculative power. He was essentially theological in his philosophy, although often abstruse because of his extreme mysticism.
3. Biographia Literaria, pp. 90-91.
4. Ibid., p. 125.

That Coleridge's religio-philosophical books (notably The Friend, Aids to Reflection, and parts of the Biographia Literaria) form, in addition to supporting the characteristically idealistic tenets of free-will, God, and immortality, and the stricter conception of the idea behind the image, from which also idealism takes its name, a veritable great web of spiritualism, is apparent even from these widely random selections. Often, as has been demonstrated in the above quotations, Coleridge writes religious philosophy that possesses a strong flavor of the Kantean doctrine of the Critique of Practical Reason. At other times he fills many pages with dazzling Transcendental mysticism so rarefied as to be nearly incomprehensible.

In a word, he stood for all things of the spirit, for spiritual and moral values against the rising dark tide of materialism (the industrial revolution was beginning); and he earnestly believed what he talked and wrote. He had always lived in an inward realm detached from externals, and he developed a strong conviction that the spiritual was peculiarly his stronghold.

> "The belief in a spiritual background of the material universe was Coleridge's special field of exploitation. He sought more ardently and more ingeniously than any man of his age to penetrate the limits of matter and to enter understandingly the world of the spirit. This titanic onslaught made him a marked man in his later life and became the chief basis of his influence."[1]

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1. Craig, Hardin, and Thomas, J. M., English Prose of the Nineteenth Century, p. 8.

Coleridge marks that point where Romanticism and official theology meet. His religious works are passionate protests against the negation of soul which was involved in presenting Christian dogmas as incomprehensible mysteries to be believed on the sole evidence of miracles seen and reported and mechanical verbal inspiration. The heart of Coleridge's philosophy of religion is that to a spiritual being spiritual truths must have a meaning--an inward meaning understandable by the higher Reason alone. The religious conscience of the nineteenth century echoes him, and the criticism of the Bible inculcated by Arnold and others follows the path where he led.

CHAPTER VII

RECAPITULATION

At this juncture, a retrospective view, or a summary, of the wide-lying points of this paper becomes necessary in order to draw together its parts into the unified whole to which they rightfully belong. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to indicate the aims of the author, and to touch once more upon the way in which they have--one hopes--been already demonstrated.

First, idealism has been defined, or, at least, characterized. From a consideration--not in this work--of the philosophies of a series of idealists (namely, Plato, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius; Kant, Carlyle, Emerson; Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley) a group of tenets common, as a whole or partially, to all of them, was formed, and the most universal of these idealistic tenets, in turn, selected as a sort of standard to be used in estimating the idealism of Kant and Coleridge. These oft-reiterated fundamentals are the ideas of Free-Will (elsewhere spoken of as conscience, self-reliance, or intuition), of God (called also Nature, Universal Will, the Over-soul), of the Immortality of the Human Soul. The restricted --and indeed original--definition of the term idealism, which Plato used, has also been noticed here; it stands for the ideas, or intrinsic realities or absolutes, behind the visible images or manifestations or symbols of those ideas, the images or

objects being perceptible by the senses, the pure ideas only by the intuition or the higher Reason. Lastly, there must be taken into account the certain broad general conception of idealism simply as opposed to materialism, a conception of widespread popular acceptance, which makes idealism roughly synonymous with spirituality.

Secondly, two recent idealists, Kant of the late eighteenth century, Coleridge of the nineteenth, men with certain interesting similarities and striking differences, have been chosen, and a comparison attempted between the idealistic portions of their thinking. Except where a clear understanding of the parts used has depended upon a consideration of them, those of their works which do not particularly apply to idealism have been disregarded.

Thirdly, a brief exposition of Kant's philosophy, with emphasis upon that section of it which especially expresses or supports the principles fixed upon as touchstones of idealism, has been made; it is accompanied by illustrations from the English versions of his works. In a word, Kant shows that ideas in general, and the conceptions of freedom, God, and immortality in particular, cannot be apprehended by the Speculative Reason, for its logical categories of space and time are transcended by them. He proceeds to demonstrate that only by the Practical Reason, that spiritual part higher than the intellectual, and by an act based on faith, can these concepts be conceived in

all their truth. It is a commonplace that Kant "destroyed" knowledge to make room for faith; his three Critiques culminate in absolute spiritualism.

Fourthly, a general comparative view of Kant and of Coleridge as philosophers is presented, in which Coleridge's acknowledged indebtedness to Kant is included, as well in terminology as in matter, and a broad view of Coleridge's beliefs is essayed as a foreword to an examination in some detail of the evidences of idealism in his three types of writings. The standards of idealism before settled upon are applied to his philosophy as a whole, and proof of his adherence to them adduced.

Fifthly, three chapters consider in turn Coleridge's three fields of endeavor: poetry, criticism, religion and philosophy, and illustrate the idealistic tendencies displayed in each. In poetry his idealism usually takes the form of symbolism and of a mystic unity of God, man, and nature. In criticism, it is revealed by his essentially Romantic manner of considering literature: by his seeking in a work the soul and aim of the writer, and by his use of his own intuition for this intensive appreciation of it. In the religio-philosophical works even more direct evidence is perceptible: here Coleridge expresses his belief in the fundamental holdings of idealism, and also writes upon ideas as the essence of external objects. In this chapter the evidence is most abundant and

most direct; in earlier ones inference has been at times necessary.

These five divisions represent the sub-theses conceived as essential to the upholding of the main proposition: idealism in Kant and Coleridge, and, as such, have been presented and supported insofar as has been found practicable.

Much incidental matter has been included on the subject of Coleridge's peculiar and erratic personality, since he, after all, is the dominant figure in this work for the reason that its emphasis is in the main literary, and since his own capricious temperament had so great an effect on all that he wrote. His lack of system and method, perhaps overemphasized, has been remarked, his occasional ambiguousness of expression, and the vague general aura of the mystic and strange which hangs over his mind and work.

Fundamentally and primarily, Coleridge was a Romantic, for, unlike the debonair so-called Classicists of whom Pater is so typical, he could never exist content with the present earthly moment, basking with pagan happiness in its joys, and accepting fatalistically its clouds, but ever longed, with a kind of homesickness or endless regret, for the distant horizon, eschewing the here and now. Said the understanding Lamb, of him,

"From his childhood he hungered for eternity."

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