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Review Article

Kant's *Dissertation*, Coleridge's Imagination and Metascience

Of the ten papers published in *Coleridge's Variety: Bicentenary Studies*,¹ only three are of major critical significance. Perhaps the most important is D.M. MacKinnon's "Coleridge and Kant", an examination by a professional philosopher of a poet's response to another professional philosopher. M.H. Abrams' "Coleridge and the Romantic Vision of the World" is a lucid exposition of Coleridge's "metascience", a subject that has attracted increasing attention over the past two decades. Thomas McFarland's "Coleridge's Anxiety" is a brilliant attempt at amateur Freudian as well as existential analysis by a literary scholar.

Of the remaining seven essays, John Beer has contributed two. "Ice and Spring: Coleridge's Imaginative Education" is a somewhat rambling analysis of Coleridge's philosophical interests as an "inspired charityboy", his relationship with Wordsworth, and the pattern of imagery in his poetry. "A Study by Glimpses: Coleridge's Later Imagination" is an equally rambling discussion of, among other things, Coleridge's "sense of magic", Keats and Carlyle on Coleridge, his interest in "animal magnetism", and its significance for his poetry. Kathleen Coburn in her "Coleridge: A Bridge Between Science and Poetry" investigates what "the father of the new chemistry [Humphry Davy] and the father of the new criticism" had in common. E.L. Griigs on "Coleridge as Revealed in His Letters" is informative; Dorothy Emmet on "Coleridge on Powers in Mind and Nature" is useful but uninspired; and Owen Barfield on "Coleridge's Enjoyment of Words" is thoroughly enjoyable. George Whalley's "Coleridge's Poetic Sensibility" and L.C. Knights' "Introduction" are the only essays that deal with some of Coleridge's critical principles.

It is not possible to examine all the essays here. But MacKinnon and Abrams in particular make important suggestions and raise significant questions that may perhaps be analyzed at some length. I shall, therefore, concentrate on these two essays, discuss briefly McFarland's new perspective on Coleridge, and conclude with critical comments on Whalley and Knight's treatment of Coleridge's critical principles.

II

Every literary scholar of Coleridge knows his *Critique of Pure Reason* backwards. If we confine ourselves only to one aspect of Coleridge's debt to Kant,

namely, his "philocrisy" or theory of "mental powers", we notice that there have been numerous discussions of Coleridge's Reason, Understanding, Fancy and Imagination in the light of the first *Critique*. Very few of these discussions are really of any great critical moment except for the admirable purpose of keeping oneself in intellectual shape. For the very difference between Coleridge's rationalistic view of Reason and Kant's *Critical* view is so obvious that it renders any comparison between them slightly more than academic. What would be far more momentous is a discussion of Kant's *De Mundi sensibilis atque forma et principii dissertatio* of 1770.² For Kant's epistemological position in the *Dissertation* rather than in any of his subsequent writings is closer to the Coleridge's philocrisy.

However, this daunting piece of Kantian metaphysics has scarcely received any significant notice in the writings of Coleridge scholars engaged with his philocrisy. Neither Muirhead, nor Snyder, nor Lovejoy, nor Coburn, nor Orsini, nor Jackson, nor Barfield, nor Fruman discuss it.³ What is true of these students of Coleridge's philosophy is also true of the more literary scholars such as Rene Wellek, D.G. James, R.H. Fogle, J. Appleyard, W.J. Bare, and the rest, including, of course, I.A. Richards, T.S. Eliot, and Herbert Read.⁴ MacKinnon, then, is the first modern scholar to supply the missing link in the contemporary discussions of Coleridge's philosophy by stressing the significance of the *Dissertation* for Coleridge's development.

MacKinnon provides a brief sketch of Kant's argument in the *Dissertation*. But it is useful to supplement it with the account given by Herman-J de Vleeschauer.⁵ The picture that emerges then is as follows: The *Dissertation* is divided into two parts. The first is concerned with the forms and principles of the sensible world, the second with the forms and principles of the intelligible world. Kant distinguishes between two uses of the intellect in relation to these two realms: the logical and the real. The logical use, which relates to the sensible world, "originates sensible appearances and universalises its object by submitting the material perception to the natural law which governs it. The result is the empirical concept which can never claim the dignity of a pure idea because of the indelible imprint left on it by the sensible origin of its matter" (Vleeschauer, p. 54). Thus the status of space and time as subjective forms depreciates "the ontological dignity of the world revealed to the sense" (MacKinnon, p. 193). On the other hand, the real use of the intellect, which relates to the intelligible world, creates its own *a priori* concepts through which it attains knowledge of the internal ontological essence of the sensible manifestations of a thing. These concepts such as substance, causality, etc., are neither empirically derived nor are they innate. They are derived *e legibus menti insitis* (MacKinnon, p. 193). In Vleeschauer's words, "They are the concepts which constitute the matter of metaphysics and morality" (pp. 54-55). They also "govern the real use of the understanding by means of which we know the ontological essence of existing things" (Vleeschauer, p. 55), and "enjoy commerce with the ultimate" (MacKinnon, p. 196). It is hardly necessary to add that Kant's position here with respect to the "real use" of the intellect is radically opposed to his criticism of Pure Reason (intellect) in the first *Critique*, though Coleridge considers the *Dissertation* to be a summary of the latter.

One suspects that it is the Platonist Kant of the *Dissertation* as much as the Kant of the four works he mentions in *Biographia Literaria* that "took possession" of Coleridge "as with a giant's hand",⁶ He considers the *Dissertation* to be a "Masterwork of profundity and precision", a "model of steady investigation, clear conception and . . . elegant demonstration". He is surprised that though the German Universities "exploded" with the publication of the first *Critique*, "all remained silent" after the publication of the *Dissertation*. In fact, it is his firm opinion that the *Dissertation* "should always be studied and mastered previously to the study of the *Critique d.r.V.* and the works that followed it".⁷ What made the *Dissertation* so attractive to Coleridge was the fact that he found in it, in MacKinnon's words, "an attempt to formulate that kind of pure intellectual ascent to the ultimate which he desired" (p. 97). He who had fed on Plotinus as a boy was ready for the milk of Kantian paradise.

That the doctrine of the *Dissertation* has a significant bearing on Coleridge's philocrisy should be obvious. And one wishes that a lucid and engaging philosopher like MacKinnon had devoted some time to this subject. However, he confines himself to distinguishing between Kant's Imagination and Coleridge's and observes that the latter's primary and secondary imagination have pantheistic implications. He does not notice, though, that Kant's transcendent view of the intellect, which does not allow its "real use" any "contamination" with the senses, is different from Coleridge's transcendental view of Reason which allows ideas to manifest themselves as *conceptions* in the sensible world. This difference raises a number of questions for Coleridge, the solution of which takes the form of his theory of Imagination schematically stated in the 1818 or 1819 *scale*, the relevant part of which is as follows:

Reason
Imagination
Understanding⁸

Let me explain what I mean.

Kant's "logical use" of the intellect emerges as Coleridge's Sensual Understanding. Utilizing the *Dissertation* as well as the first *Critique*, Coleridge assigns to the Sensual Understanding the function of organizing the manifold of sensations in the light of the pure categories of the Understanding and further bringing this organized perception under empirical concepts.⁹ However, Kant's "real use" of the intellect does not emerge so simply in Coleridge's philocrisy. Whereas Kant operates with the faculty of the intellect, Coleridge has Reason as well as the Intellectual Understanding in his scheme. How does one explain this "proliferation" of philosophical weapons?

As we have seen above, Kant does not allow ideas any commerce with the sensible realm, but Coleridge does. The question that arises for Coleridge, then, is: How does this commerce come about? Reason as such is an organ of the supersensuous; and the sensuous by definition is not instinct with the supersensuous. How can Reason and the sensuous, then, get yoked together? Coleridge

solves this problem by postulating the Intellectual Understanding. Let us see why this postulate is necessary. The sensuous that is going to be related to Reason cannot be the "mere sensuous" organized under the categories and empirical concepts by the Sensual Understanding. It must be made *capable* of Reason so that the supersensuous could shine through the sensuous. The Intellectual Understanding is the *deus ex machina*, as it were, that confers on the sensuous the potentiality of Reason, not Reason itself.

The next question that Coleridge faces is this: Granted that Reason could shine through the sensuous if the necessary potentiality for Reason is conferred upon it by the Intellectual Understanding, how does the actual shining of Reason become possible? Coleridge's way around this problem is quite simple. A conjunction of Reason and the sensuous with a potentiality for Reason would make Reason available through the sensuous. But how does one bring about this conjunction? Coleridge postulates the faculty of Imagination as the mediator between Reason and the sensuous treated by the Intellectual Understanding. Coleridge needs this mediator on Kantian grounds. For Reason and the Intellectual Understanding are heterogeneous faculties, the former partaking of the supersensuous, and the latter the sensuous. And, according to Kant, heterogeneous faculties can be brought together only by means of a mediating faculty which is homogeneous with each of the disparate faculties. Imagination, which partakes of Reason as well as the sensuous, is best suited for the mediating role.

Thus, starting with the *Dissertation*, Coleridge, who takes a transcendental rather than a transcendent view of Reason, arrives at his theory of Imagination which is a Coleridgean transformation of Kant's "real use" of the intellect. The scale in which he states it is a brilliant summation of the complex cerebration involved in justifying a view of Reason which allows ideas to figure in the sensible realm as conceptions. The amazing metamorphosis Kant's "real use" undergoes in the theory of Imagination as explained above is a sure indication of Coleridge's originality.¹⁰ One must conclude that Coleridge possessed Kant, he was not possessed by Kant. To convict Coleridge of "Plagiarism" or "intellectual mediocrity" in this particular field is to underestimate, not Coleridge indeed, but one's own critical intelligence. Sound as MacKinnon's defence of Coleridge's originality is, I believe that a comparative study of the *Dissertation* and Coleridge's philocrisy is a far more telling argument in the poet's favour.

Another important point MacKinnon makes has, perhaps, profound implications for Kantian studies. Though Kant argues like a Platonist in the *Dissertation* and an Aristotelian in the first *Critique*, there is a certain continuity between the two works which Coleridge was quick to seize. MacKinnon writes: "Coleridge's reponse to the earlier work is impressive evidence of the extent to which the later work for all its rejection of the earlier's mystique of the pure intellect, is continuous with it in as much as the author is struggling all the time to come to terms with questions raised for him by the way in which he had hoped in his *Dissertation* to assign Newtonian dynamics its proper field and to reveal the pure intellect as equipped by nature to allow men commerce with the ultimate" (p. 196). So there is something to be said for Coleridge's "extraordinary gaffe" in regarding the *Dissertation* as a

perspicuous summary of the first *Critique*. And perhaps there is a message here for Kant scholars. Moreover, a study of Coleridge's response to Kant is an excellent training for Kantians. MacKinnon says: "The poet's work receives sufficient vindication if those who approach Kant primarily as philosophers, at the end of their efforts to make sense of Coleridge's treatment of Kant's formidable work, admit that they can never see it in quite the same way again" (p. 203). One is delighted to learn that the "mediocre" Englishman's response to Kant should give the pause at least to professional philosophers. Coleridge could not have desired a higher tribute than this though, undoubtedly, he would have said, as he did when the good Mrs. Gillman pointed out that his tea was getting cold: "It is better than I deserve . . . It is better than I deserve."¹¹

At the same time as Coleridge was creatively responding to the *Dissertation* in his scale of 1818 or 1819, he had come under the influence of Schelling. In fact, by 1816 Coleridge had "progressed from Kant to Schelling's dynamic philosophy" and begun using Schelling "to supplement and correct his Kantian views."¹² This change of philosophical perspective is most evident in his *Theory of Life*,¹³ the most complete statement of his metascience, or *Naturphilosophen*, or his vision. It is to this metascience that we now turn.

III

The respect with which Coleridge's metascience continues to be treated is amazing. In spite of the researches of Niedecker, J.W. Beach, and Rene Wellek¹⁴ establishing the derivative character of Coleridge's philosophy of nature, and in spite of Beach's well-argued contention that it is "a bizarre farrago of pretentious nonsense",¹⁵ the literary intellectual continues to pay it the tribute of his respectful consideration. The Schelling-Steffens origin of Coleridge's vision is usually ignored as irrelevant,¹⁶ and as far as the literary scholar's evaluation of it is concerned, Beach may as well have never written his critique.¹⁷ Fruman re-stated the arguments of the less popular school of Beach and Wellek,¹⁸ but apparently without any effect on the literary idolatry of *Theory of Life*. Barfield, for instance, does not even refer to the relevant criticisms of Niedecker, Beach and Wellek, let alone come to terms with them. M.H. Abrams is the latest recruit to this increasingly popular though esoteric cult of Coleridge's metascience. A cult that has survived well-founded criticism must obviously fulfill a social as well as a psychological need. But before we examine what these needs might be, let us take a brief look at Coleridge's theory.

Coleridge's metascience is an attempt to "exercise his understanding in the light of his reason", and he was confident that in a country like England he would not be "supposed to be out of his senses" for the trouble.¹⁹ What he says of the discoveries of "modern chemistry" could be considered to be his general opinion of the science of his day. He writes to Lord Liverpool on 28 July 1817: "I appreciate at their full value the useful inventions and brilliant discoveries of modern chemistry, from Stahl to Davy; but I dare not overlook that they were made during the *suspension* of the mechanic Philosophy relatively to chemical Theory . . ." (*CL*,

IV, 760-61). He further adds: "And I persist in the belief . . . that a few brilliant discoveries have been dearly purchased at the loss of all communion with life and the spirit of Nature" (*CL*, IV, 761). Coleridge's metascience seeks to supply a dynamic philosophy that will restore the lost sense of communion with "life and the spirit of Nature".

The primitives of Coleridge's metascience are the two powers, Light and Gravitation, which are not "real" light and gravitation but imagined pre-phenomenal concepts, of which "real" light and gravitation are only "exponents" or what Abrams calls "analogues" (p. 120). Each of these two powers or "energies" has two forces. "Under Gravity we place Attraction and Repulsion: and under Light the Powers of Contraction and Dilation . . ." ²⁰ By their "living and generative interpenetration" (Quoted by Abrams, p. 120) the powers and the forces achieve the condition of matter and enter the phenomenal realm accessible to the senses. Or as Coleridge himself puts it in a letter to A.A. Tulk in September 1817: "It is peculiar to the Philosophy [which he has outlined] to consider matter as a product . . . by interpenetration of opposite energies" (*CL*, IV, 775).

This evolution of two powers and four forces into matter proceeds along a "great ascending spiral" through several distinctive orders of organized forms, or what Coleridge calls "potences" or what Abrams refers to as "levels of organization". On the first level of organization we get magnetism, electricity, and galvanism. Next comes the inorganic world, followed by the organic world of plants and animals. Finally, we have the highest stage of organic life, man, at which point "consciousness" emerges.

Entities at one level of organization are linked to entities on all other levels by means of "correspondences", which are determined by an equivalence in the "predominance" of Light or Gravitation in their make-up. The entity on a lower level that corresponds to an entity on a higher level is for Coleridge a "symbol". In a sense therefore the entire universe is inhabited by symbols.

Though man's consciousness is a culmination of the "living and generative interpenetration" of two powers and four forces — one wonders if a psychoanalyst may not legitimately view this cosmic orgy as a sublimation of some sort — man comes to view himself as something apart from the rest of the universe and "places nature in antithesis to the mind, . . . as death to life". ²¹ This is the beginning of death in life. Coleridge's metascience is an antidote for this condition. It seeks to affirm life by demonstrating the unity of nature and man, matter and mind, indeed, of all creation, organic as well as inorganic.

Predictably, Coleridge's metascience, unlike Schelling's *Naturphilosophen*, has a Christian dimension to it. For instance, he interprets that "living educt of the imagination", "Let there be light and there was light" in such a way as to deduce from it his theory of Light and Gravitation (*CL*, IV, 771)! However earnest this enterprise may be — and one can give several instances of it from Coleridge — the ingenious Coleridgean attempt to reconcile his metascience with his religion provides an unflinching source of amusement, and makes one wonder if Coleridge's mind did not sometimes do avoidable violence to his matter. Abrams very wisely avoids any prolonged encounter with this aspect of Coleridge's metascience.

Of course, Abrams is aware that this Christian theological aspect of Coleridge's metascience is in the tradition of post-classical Western metaphysics. But he rightly suspects that this aspect may discredit the Coleridgean metascientific enterprise in the eyes of modern readers. "We need to look at his metascience enterprise from a new point of vantage" (p. 124). Abrams seeks to see it in contemporary idiom as "a myth of concern" or as "a myth of integration". When viewed in this light, one realizes that Coleridge sought "to put man and his mind back into nature, form which the sophisticated and highly specialised logic of science had severed him, by replacing the causal relations of the post-Newtonian world scheme with the primitive imaginative categories of analogy, correspondence, participation and identity" (p. 125). Consequently, the dead and meaningless universe is endowed with life, human purposes and values. Man becomes an integral part of the universe, "in which he can be at home, and by which he can sanction a workable rule of life" (pp. 125-26).

Abrams gives an example of what nature looks like when viewed through this scheme. He selects a passage from Appendix C of *The Statesman's Manual* in which Coleridge's imagination "transforms the *visibilia* into vision" (p. 127). This passage is a Coleridgean demonstration of the difference between the perception mediated by the Sensual Understanding and the perception mediated by the Imagination. It is too long to quote here but what Coleridge does is that he interprets the up-to-date botanical discoveries regarding plant life in terms of the "humanistic categories of encounter, commerce, kinship, participation and reciprocity", with the result that plant life is located in a universe which breathes one shared life (p. 129). The plant embodies Reason — "the same power in a lower dignity"; it is "the natural symbol of the highest life of reason"; it symbolizes the "unity of nature" as well as her "omniformity". Coleridge's metascience in action furnishes a "creative" way of looking at the universe.

However, one must point out that interpreted as "a myth of integration", Coleridge's vision appears to belong to the venerable Oriental tradition of the Upanishads, Jain metaphysics, Buddhist morality, and Hindu Bhakti! Abrams' interpretation, then, helps to universalize Coleridge's metascience at the same time as it would seem to de-Christianize it. Of course, Coleridge would have found Abrams' interpretation as well as the suggested Oriental connexion "scandalous" just as he found Schelling's philosophy of nature "literally scandalous". And in an age in which doctrinal differences did seem to matter to hundreds of Christian sects, the unChristian interpretation of his vision and its kinship with the primitive, pagan Oriental animism might, indeed, have disturbed Coleridge's anxious soul. Whatever Coleridge the man may have thought of this honorary membership of the pagan philosophical order, Abrams' strategy does help us to see that Coleridge the metascientist, however insignificant he may be as a philosopher of science, can claim an honourable place in what Aldous Huxley defines as "perennial philosophy".

Pagan or not, what concerns Abrams more is the practical character of Coleridge's metascience and its contemporary relevance. He says that it is "a reputable metaphysics which has intellectual, emotional and aesthetic appeal and

implies important rules for the conduct of life" (p. 132). He assures us that "It is also eminently pertinent to our time". Our developing technology has turned "Coleridge's metaphoric death into a grimly literal possibility". But Coleridge's metascience or vision will "release the emotions, the energies, the invention and the will to salvage our world while it is still fit to live in" (p. 132). Never was the professional concern for the mess we live in better expressed.

This is a serious claim and it is seriously advanced by an eminent professor. In order to judge it, we should ask ourselves why in the first place it was necessary for Coleridge to evolve such a vision. It is not enough to refer to the "mechanistic world of death" claimed to have been introduced by Newtonian physics, etc. For that generalization quietly ignores the contemporary social reality to which Coleridge's vision was ultimately a response. Nor is it enough to say that the "vision" "humanized" science and the universe by "restoring" the heart, emotions, and the imagination. For the question is, did it really humanize science and the universe? Or did it "humanize" them *for* Coleridge? And what difference did it really make to Coleridge's tormented life? What effective "workable" rule did *he* derive from his vision? And finally, how did it help any of his admirers who have recorded their admiration "in more than a hundred surviving memoirs" (p. 128)?

In other words, what should be determined first is the precise social significance of Coleridge's vision. Abrams, following the idealistic suggestion of John Stuart Mill, has tried to determine the "psychological" need the vision fulfilled. But that does not tell the whole story. It does not tell us what the vision achieved for Coleridge as a member of a society that was in the process of being transformed by the triumph of industrial capitalism. It also ignores the alienation of a man who, "functionally", was mostly on the fringes of his society, and who was supported by the generosity of its more "productive" members.

Coleridge's idealistic metascience is essentially a personal response of a mind revolted by the world of death introduced by industrial society. It renders the world fashioned by industrialism and its correlates of mechanistic science and philosophy compatible with Christian and spiritual values by *imaginatively* restoring the sanctity industrialism has overthrown and the holiness industrialism has sacrificed. It enables him to affirm *imaginatively* that the spirit indwells here and now, even in our industrial world and time ruled by "fancy" and characterized by social chaos, only if we have the imagination to see the unity we have done our best to destroy. What Coleridge's vision is asking for, then, is a change of heart that will enable him to make his peace with the world of which he is the sternest critic.²² It does not ask for any radical change in the world itself. The latent function of his vision, its creative promise apart, is to save, in Carlyle's words, "his crown of spiritual manhood", to enable him to escape from "the black materialisms and revolutionary deluges", and to reconcile him to the public hell of contemporary reality by creating a private paradise of a universe that is integrated at the cerebral level.²³ It is essentially an attempt to restructure and recondition his own perception in a valiant effort to accept the world he is powerless to change. Coleridge's vision is a refined substitute for opium.

Coleridge's vision did nothing to change the science of his day; it made no difference to his world either. This was the period, as Engels has pointed out in the second chapter of his *Dialectics of Nature*, of rampant empiricism when important discoveries were made in science without any thought of theory. Coleridge, of course, was free to play his elaborate theoretical parlour game of "potencies", "exponents", "symbols", "powers", "forces", and "living and generative interpenetration" with the established scientific facts of his day. To see him at his metascientific work is to watch "an ineffectual angel beating his luminous wings in the void." It seems that Carlyle was the only man who realized the futile and make-believe character of Coleridge's vision.²⁴ If Coleridge's "Concentricals" were "dashed to nothing" by a Carlylean Snore, that Snore was a better evaluation of Coleridge's vision than Carlyle ever managed to suggest in words.

It is too difficult to see what "workable rule" of life Coleridge derived from his "vision". Abrams is significantly silent on this point. He does not tell us what "workable rule" the writers of those "surviving memoirs" derived. Nor does he tell us what "workable rule" he himself has derived, though he commits himself to the position that Wittgenstein notwithstanding,²⁵ philosophy "changes everything by discovering a new way of looking at things" (p.114).²⁶ It is possible that Abrams's "workable rule" consists in the Coleridgean way of looking at things, a way that affirms "reverence for life", "unity of nature", and "integrated vision of the world".

And indeed this "new way of looking at things" is particularly significant today. It would enable us to make our peace with the world we live in, and affirm in fantasy what we deny in actual life. It would enable us to affirm our "reverence for life" while we rationalize our reluctance to relieve world starvation. It would enable us to affirm the "unity of nature" while we defoliate a whole country and would do it again if we could. It would enable us to affirm our "integrated vision of the world" while the world itself "moves in appetency on the metallated ways of time past and time future." This was the social significance of Coleridge's vision in the nineteenth century. And this is its significance even today. Abrams has unconsciously realized this significance with his customary accuracy.

To say that such a vision will release "the emotions, the energies, the invention and the will" of a firmly entrenched bourgeoisie in the current phase of international finance capitalism is as absurd as it is academic and idealistic. Yes, a bicentenary lecture must demonstrate the "contemporary relevance" of Coleridge. But not in this woolly fashion which ignores the implications of Coleridge's vision and interprets the current world situation as a crisis of "emotions", "energies", "invention", and the "will".

IV

McFarland's psychoanalytic study of Coleridge is distinguished from other productions of this cross-disciplinary genre by the fact that it is sound psychoanalysis as well as sound literary biography. His thesis can be summarized briefly. He regards Coleridge's opium-addiction, hypochondria, and the habit of

procrastination as "neurotic attempts" to cope with a deeper malaise rather than as "unmixed evidence of the malaise itself" (p.139). These symptoms are characteristic of the "compulsive repetition" neurosis (p.139) and point to a "massive anxiety" (p.142). The next step in the argument is to trace the sources of this anxiety to Coleridge's childhood. "If we seek the origin of an anxiety so pervasive, so shattering and so neurotically persistent, as Coleridge's, we look, in this post-Freudian age, almost as a matter of course to his childhood" (p.143). The two most important childhood sources of Coleridge's anxiety are "his relation with his mother" ("primal anxiety"), and "castration anxiety" or his relationship with his older brothers (p.140). After a searching analysis of Coleridge's epistolary references to his mother, his dreams of a "threatening woman", and his presentation of the "mother-figure" in "Ancient Mariner" (Nightmare Life-in-Death), McFarland concludes: "The anxiety produced in the infant Coleridge by his mother's coldness and inattentiveness was probably not only a source of his lifelong neurotic malaise, but also a factor in his failure to develop a strong sense of his own being" (p.148). His analysis of Coleridge's relations with his brothers leads to the same conclusion: "Coleridge developed an extreme anxiety from his relation to his brothers" (p.149). These two orders of anxiety operated in conjunction to produce "a pink, friendly infant of enormous mental powers" (p.153) harried by enormous psychological problems.

Coleridge sought to come to terms with both these forms of anxiety "by having himself adopted, as it were, by the various mother-brother combinations" (p.153). Middleton, Southey, Poole, Wordsworth, and Gillman successively occupied this role. Thus Coleridge reclaimed "his evacuated sense of self by dependence on another" (p.155).

This evacuated sense of self and the need to allay his "castration anxiety" by identifying "with the strength of an accepting brother" provides "the original basis for Coleridge's compulsion to plagiarize" (p.156). His plagiarisms are to be looked upon as so many attempts to "rejoin the brothers", and to reclaim the "essential something that he always felt to be wanting in himself" (p.157). On this analysis (as De Quincey was the first to realize without the advantage of psychoanalysis) Coleridge was a literary kleptomaniac, not an intellectual pirate. Similarly, his marginalia spring from the same psychological source as his plagiarisms. What those marginal notes with their technique of exfoliating his own thoughts round the insights of others indicate is his desire to "rejoin the brothers". Coleridge himself seems to have realized the psychological want underlying these rather odd scholarly procedures. He says: "My nature requires another Nature for its support, & reposes only in another from the necessary Indigence of its Being."²⁷ The Indigence he refers to, one may add, is not intellectual but psychological.

McFarland is aware that this kind of Freudian analysis would make Coleridge out to be a patient, an impression he does not wish to leave with the reader. He therefore proceeds to supplement his Freudian analysis with an existentialist analysis of Coleridge's anxiety or "dread". This change of perspective enables him to present Coleridge as an existential hero, his neurosis being "as it were, the index of his intellectual powers" (p.161). If, as Kierkegaard says, "the greater the anxiety,

the greater the man", Coleridge is a very great man indeed. McFarland says: "Coleridge, I have always felt, is in a special way a hero of existence: though life bore him down, he fought from his knees. He did not take refuge in suicide, which was the way chosen by Kleist, by Chatterton, by Nerval; he did not become mentally unbalanced, as did Holderlin, Cowper, Ruskin; he did not become misanthropic, as did Swift, or Schopenhauer..." (p.162). This is certainly eloquent; it expresses McFarland's affection for his subject, an affection every Coleridgean claims to share, no matter what his bias. But McFarland does not consider the possibility that Coleridge's metascience could be a species of madness, for it is a well-known fact that obsessive-compulsive neurotics with a turn for metaphysics are amazing system-builders. But such a consideration would not suit McFarland's thesis that Coleridge's tragic existence is "an icon for the larger nature of our situation" (p.164), and that he occupies "an honoured role in our cultural memory" (p.165).

This essay on Coleridge, then, is a good Freudian diagnosis as far as it goes; but it is also a moving existential analysis. It may be added, though, that its strength lies in the fact that the psychoanalytic and existentialist substructures are not indispensable for establishing McFarland's conclusions. The evidence itself that he presents from Coleridge's writings supports them without any of these props. Of course, the props are useful for those who want them. But even if the psychoanalytic and existentialistic scaffolding were proved to be defective, the conclusions would still remain valid as critical insights.

It should be clear from the philosophical and psychoanalytic interests of the three major essays discussed above, that this book as a whole says very little about Coleridge's criticism — a fact that L.C. Knights comments on in his excellent though brief introduction. However, some of the remaining essays do offer expository comments on Coleridge's critical principles. But one has the uncomfortable feeling that these comments rarely illumine anything which Coleridge himself does not express with much greater clarity and precision. Consider, for instance, Whalley's scholarly "Coleridge's Poetic Sensibility". This essay is a sound analysis of the role of perception in poetic making. Whalley points out that a miracle of perception is not a *poetic* miracle. For what are needed to transform the former into the latter are, among other things, "words and rhythms that body forth the acts themselves of perceiving" (p.8). A certain enriching and cumulative activity intervenes and provides the "intensity of epiphany" through images (p.16). What this activity consists in becomes clear from the exposition Whalley provides. "In short, that the more intensely perceived the image — and with that intensity the stronger and more complex the feeling — the more the rendering of the intense image became not so much a symbol of something as a generative symbol acting as its own expository definition" (p.16). Lest this should sound a little involved, Whalley makes his meaning clearer on the next page. "Images achieve symbolic character only under certain conditions. Acute observation is not in itself enough, partly because the observation has to be worded in order to become poetry at all, partly because a peculiar interanimation of the senses is needed to achieve the functional richness and power that invests symbolic events." This argument is

established through seventeen pages of rigorous reasoning.

But what we have here is essentially a sermon on a text provided by Coleridge. This is what Coleridge says in *Biographia Literaria*:

Images, however beautiful, though faithfully copied from nature, and as accurately represented in words, do not of themselves characterize the poet. They become proofs of original genius only as far as they are modified by a predominant passion; or by associated thoughts or images awakened by that passion; or when they have the effect of reducing multitude to unity, or succession to an instant; or lastly, when a human and intellectual life is transferred to them from the poet's own spirit (II,16).

One may be excused if he finds the text more "quickenning" than the sermon. Perhaps we have encountered here an unavoidable handicap of most exiguistical Coleridge scholarship.

A more refreshing and enlightening use of Coleridge's critical principles or "organising insights" (a phrase derived from Appleyard, p.ix), will be found in the last four paragraphs of L.C. Knights' Introduction. Utilizing what Coleridge says about poetry as "a form of energy" and about the activity of the poet's mind as well as the reader's, Knights offers a precise definition of the central Leavisite criterion of "realization". Realization, in his words, is "that sense of living actuality that comes about when the mind is called on to do several different things simultaneously, and finds that they cohere in one complex act of attention" (p.xxii). He further points out that this essentially Coleridgean concept of realization, associating as it does energy, vividness and precision, is "a fundamental criterion not only for literature but for the life of the mind" (p.xxii). Thus, for instance, the nature of pornography as well as fanaticism can be readily understood with reference to this principle (p.xxii).

But Knights is misleading at times. Consider, for instance, his discussion of Coleridge's concept of the Imagination. Analyzing it purely in terms of "energy", he concludes: "The Imagination is a form of energy, but it is not undirected *elan vital*; it 'struggles to unify' not only thoughts and feelings that often war unnecessarily with each other, but the different modes of being through which the self, including the subliminal self, exercises its power. It is a function of the whole person, a dynamic integrating force through which we not only come to know ourselves and the world, but experience that sense of creative freedom which in 'Dejection' is called joy. I do not know any more profound account..." (pp.xxii-xxiii). But this account misses the essential profundity of Coleridge's discussion of the Imagination. Imagination matters for Coleridge precisely because it is, like the divine incarnation, a profound intersection of the sensuous with the supersensuous,²⁸ or in Eliot's terms, a divine conjunction of "the still point" and the "turning world". Knights secularizes a concept that is literary as well as metaphysical or quasi-theological. As a consequence, it seems to be more empirical than anything else. But it would be a mistake to think that Knights' reading represents essential Coleridge.

In conclusion, one may say that though *Coleridge's Variety* is not the best single

volume published on Coleridge between 1969 and 1975, it is not a mean achievement for a bicentenary project to publish at least three major essays that may be expected to provoke considerable discussion in the years to come.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 John Beer, ed., (London: Macmillan, 1974).
- 2 Hereafter referred to as *Dissertation*. MacKinnon assigns 1771 as its date.
- 3 J.H. Muirhead, *Coleridge as Philosopher* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1930); Alice Snyder, ed., *Coleridge on Logic and Learning* (New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1929); A.O. Lovejoy, "Coleridge and Kant's Two Worlds," *ELH*, 7 (1940), 340-62; Kathleen Coburn, "Coleridge Redivivus," in *The Major English Romantic Poets*, eds., C.D. Thorpe, C. Baker, B. Weaver (Carbondale: Southern Illinois U. Press, 1957); pp.113-125; G.N.G. Orsini, *Coleridge and German Idealism* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois U. Press, 1969); J.R. de J. Jackson, *Method and Imagination in Coleridge's Criticism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969); Owen Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought* (Middletown: Wesleyan U. Press, 1971); Norman Fruman, *Coleridge, the Damaged Archangel* (New York: George Braziller, 1971).
- 4 Rene Wellek, *Immanuel Kant in England* (Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 1931); Wellek, "Coleridge," in *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950* (New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1955), II, 151-187; D.G. James, "The Thought of Coleridge," in *The Major English Romantic Poets*, pp.100-112; James, "Kant's Influence on Wordsworth and Coleridge," *Listener* (August 31, 1950), pp.311-12; R.H. Fogle, *The Idea of Coleridge's Criticism* (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1962); John Appleyard, *Coleridge's Philosophy of Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. Press, 1965); Walter Jackson Bate, *Coleridge* (New York: Macmillan: 1968); I.A. Richards, *Coleridge on the Imagination* (London: Kegan Paul, Trubner and Trench, 1934); T.S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (London: Faber, 1933); Herbert Read, "Coleridge as Critic," in *Coleridge*, ed., Kathleen Coburn (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1967).
- 5 *The Development of Kantian Thought*, trans., A.R.C. Duncan (London: Thomas Nelson: 1962). Subsequent references to this edition will be made in parentheses.
- 6 ed., John Shawcross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), I, 99. Subsequent references to this edition will be made in parentheses.
- 7 Coburn, ed., *Inquiring Spirit* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951), p.141.
- 8 The full scale appears on the endpapers of a volume of Tennemann's *Geschichte der Philosophie*, British Museum Copy, C.43.C.24. Quoted by Jackson, p.115, and Barfield, p.219. The date is assigned by Jackson, p.115.
- 9 I have discussed this view in "Coleridge's 'Philocripsy' and His Theory of Fancy and Secondary Imagination," *SIR*, 13 (1974), 242-44.
- 10 Of course, Coleridge is not a philosopher of the same class as Kant, which he might have been if he were to establish his insights philosophically. His unphilosophical desire to spare the reader hundreds of pages of "metaphysical moonshine" may not be a rationalization of intellectual lassitude or worse. But it surely condemns him to a minor rank as a philosopher.
- 11 Thomas Carlyle, *The Life of John Sterling* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1888), p.50.
- 12 Sam G. Barnes, "Was *Theory of Life* Coleridge's 'Opus Maximum'?", *SP*, 55 (1958), p.501.
- 13 *Theory of Life (Hints Towards a More Comprehensive Theory of Life)* in *Selected Poetry and Prose of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed., Donald Stauffer (New York: Random House, 1951).
- 14 Niedecker's research is not available in English. J.W. Beach, "Coleridge's Borrowings from the German," *ELH*, 9 (1942), 36-58; Fruman, *The Damaged Archangel*, pp.121-134; Wellek, *History*, II, 153.
- 15 Beach, p.50.
- 16 A typical instance of this tendency is to be seen in Barnes, "Theory of Life."
- 17 See, for instance, the much acclaimed article by Craig Miller, "Coleridge's Concept of Nature," *JHI*, 25 (1964), 77-96.

- 18 Fruman, pp.123ff.
- 19 E.L. Griggs, ed., *Collected Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), Subsequent references to this edition, cited as *CL*, will be made in parentheses.
- 20 Quoted by Barfield from an Egerton manuscript, *What Coleridge Thought*, p.141.
- 21 Barbara E. Rooke, ed., *The Friend* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), I, 520.
- 22 Carlyle, *Life of John Sterling*, p.51.
- 23 Carlyle, *Life of John Sterling*, p.46. Carlyle was the first critic to recognize the "escapist" character of Coleridge's "theosophic metaphysics."
- 24 *Life of John Sterling*, p.53.
- 25 In *Investigations*, 2nd ed. (1953: Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963), Wittgenstein says that philosophy "leaves everything as it is" (Section 124).
- 26 It would seem that Wittgenstein credits philosophy with discovering "a new way of looking at things" (Section, 401). That by doing so it "changes everything" is Abrams' "philosophical" gloss. Literary criticism too can have its chiliasm!
- 27 Quoted by McFarland, p.158.
- 28 This view is discussed at some length in "Coleridge's Philocrisy," pp.250-253.