

On S. T. Coleridge's Theory of Imagination

— in relation to Kant —

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1

Coleridge's theory of imagination is to be found in some of his works including *The Friends*, *Biographia Literaria*, *Lectures on Shakespeare*, and *Table Talk*. Yet now let us consider the brief summary of an account of imagination in the *Biographia Literaria* which is, short as it is, a rather systematic statement of conclusions arrived at after elaborate preparation and preliminaries. Here 'imagination' is considered either as primary or secondary:

The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the *kind* of its agency, and differing only in *degree*, and in the *mode* of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially *vital*, even as all objects (*as* objects) are essentially fixed and dead.¹⁾ (Italics in the original; the same shall apply in the following)

Although Coleridge's distinction between the primary and the secondary imagination has been argued in various ways by many critics, the interpretation by Shawcross is one of the most orthodox : "The

primary imagination is the organ of common perception, the faculty by which we have experience of an actual world of phenomena. The secondary imagination is the same power in a heightened degree, which enables its possessor to see the world of our common experience in its real significance. And the creations of art are the embodiment of this vision."²⁾

The primary imagination is generic and fundamental. According to Shawcross' explanation, it is "the faculty by which we have experience of an actual world of phenomena." This means namely that only through the imagination, the copula between subject and object, or idea and image, can we perceive the external world as reality.³⁾ Coleridge states: "all human perception," or our consciousness of the world, is a continuous creative act. We make the world, but do not passively receive it, and thus repeat "in the finite mind... the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM," which is the consummate reconciliation of subject and object, and to be identified with the Absolute, or God. He claims that the mind works actively in the act of perception; it knows its objects by its own energy and under its necessary forms. He also observes: "If the mind be not passive, if it be indeed made in God's Image, and that, too, in the sublimest sense, the Image of the Creator, there is ground for suspicion that any system built on the passiveness of the mind must be false, as a system."⁴⁾ Coleridge's assertion is, speaking thus of the primary imagination, that the mind is essentially creative, and that we are making our own world in the commonest every day acts of perception.⁵⁾

The secondary imagination is an echo of the primary one. Both are

essentially identical in that they are creative, yet differing only in degree and in the mode of perception. The secondary is the heightened and specialized imagination of poetry or art, which requires the aid of conscious will to realize itself in artistic products. This imagination of the mental agent of poetry and the arts "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate" the stubborn raw material into new and living wholes. For this creative and formative faculty, or imagination, he coined a new term, "Esemplastic" from the Greek words "meaning to shape into one."⁶

The faculty to idealize and to unify is of vital consequence in the secondary imagination. Coleridge defines beauty as "multeity in unity"⁷ and expounds its faculty in his theory of poets:

The poet, described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other, according to their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone and spirit of unity, that blends, and (as it were) *fuses*, each into each, by that synthetic and magical power, to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination. This power... reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities: of sameness, with difference; of the general, with the concrete; the idea, with the image; the individual, with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness, with old and familiar objects...⁸

The passage is a summary of Coleridge's poetic theory which may be called "the organic unity of objective idealism."⁹ His imagination as creative faculty is the "synthetic and magical power" which "diffuses a tone and spirit of unity." Moreover he explains that the 'multeity in unity', one of the primary functions of imagination, is "the soul that is everywhere, and in each; and forms all into one graceful and intelligent whole."¹⁰

To recapitulate, in Coleridge, imagination, especially the secondary one, is the faculty of poets or artists which renders unity to all particular things in multitude, reconciliation to opposites, and creates the ideal universe in a living organic whole. Coleridge's imagination is the heart and centre of his critical creed, so we cannot discuss his idea of poetic art apart from his idea of imagination.¹¹

In Coleridge, fancy is clearly distinguished from imagination. It ranks below imagination because, instead of making all things new, it merely constructs patterns out of ready-made images culled from the memory: "fixities and definites." It arranges images while, unlike imagination, it cannot fuse them into unity, and its products are merely superficial and mechanical.¹²

2

In some of Coleridge's letters to his friend Thomas Poole in 1797 which tell about his early mental life, we can see his congenital dispositions, or nature: his ceaseless adoration not for "a mass of little things" coming through senses but for "the great" and "the whole" through his spiritual eyes.¹³ In this sense, he may be called 'a born Neo-Platonist', and this nature of his never changed even after his meetings with a lot of thinkers or philosophers. We have to notice, however, that he had the important opposite aspect in his development of thought. As a schoolboy at Cambridge, he began to investigate English empiricism such as Locke's and Hartley's in earnest. Shawcross' statement on this point is: "Thus early was he awakened to consciousness of that inward discord which it was the task of his life to explain

and to resolve — the discord engendered by the opposing claims of the senses and intellect on the one hand, and of what he here chooses to call the heart on the other."¹⁴ This 'heart-and-intellect conflict' will play an important role as the motive in the formation of his thought hereafter. Where is the way to the reconciliation of his claims conflicting between heart and intellect, that is, the way which enables him to make up at once the idealistic world of 'the Unity' his native mind aspires after and the objective world of phenomena his intellectual mind requires? Now he sets out to make pilgrimages of thought in search of the way to reconcile them.

First he came to undergo the influence of David Hartley. He was so deeply captivated as to name his eldest child after the philosopher, but presently it dawned upon him that according to the doctrine our mind is merely a passive receiver of external impressions and, far more important to Coleridge, it brings disbeliefs in the free will of man and all moral obligation. His inner conflict emerged again, and he had to go "sounding on [his] dim and perilous way"¹⁵ to reconcile his opposing claims.

It was Kant that gave a clue to the inner conflict of Coleridge who had been distressed with the split between subject and object, mind and nature. Even after he "had successively studied in the schools of Locke, Berkeley, Leibniz and Hartley," he "could find in neither of them an abiding place for [his] reason,"¹⁶ and yet at last he found the way to escape from his labyrinth. Judging from some of his letters, Coleridge's serious study of Kant likely began soon after his return to England from Germany in 1800 or 1801. Coleridge recalls those days in the *Biographia Literaria*:

The writings of the illustrious sage of Königsberg, the founder 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 adamant chain of the logic; and I will venture to add... the *clearness* and *evidence*, of the "Critique of the Pure Reason;" of the "Judgement;"... took possession of me as with a giant's hand. After fifteen years' familiarity with them, I still read these and all his other productions with undiminished delight and increasing admiration.¹⁷

Then our intention is to explore the following themes: what Coleridge adopted from Kant who took strong hold of him "with a giant's hand," with whom he had been familiar for fifteen years since, and how his acquirements from Kant contributed to the construction of his literary criticism. On this subject there has been a constant argument that he obtained from Kant the distinction between understanding and reason. This distinction surely lies behind many of Coleridge's later discussions in *The Friend*, *Aids to Reflection*, *Table Talk*, *Logic*, and others, and plays a part of much account in those writings.

Granting this fact, we would like to look at another aspect of Kant's influence upon Coleridge. His *Logic*, first published in 1781, is helpful for our pursuits. In the first place it will be of much use to read the following two letters. One is that to Poole, dated March 16, 1801, which has become famous.

The interval since my last Letter has been filled up by me in the most intense Study. If I do not greatly delude myself, I have not only completely extricated the notions of Time, and Space; but have overthrown the doctrine of Association, as taught by Hartley, and with it all the irreligious metaphysics of modern Infidels — especially, the doctrine of Necessity.¹⁸

As Wellek puts it, the passage shows that with Kant's writings Coleridge

could extricate the notions of time and space for the first time.¹⁹ From a new viewpoint he was able to gain the foothold to abandon with confidence Hartley's doctrine of association as "the irreligious metaphysics of modern infidels."

The other is the letter of April 8, 1825, in which he explains what Kant's philosophy meant to him.

...Immanuel Kant I assuredly do value most highly; not, however as a Metaphysician but as a Logician, who has completed and systematized what Lord Bacon had boldly designed and loosely sketched out in the miscellany of Aphorisms, his *Novum Organum*—in Kant's *Critique of the Pure Reason* there is more than one fundamental error; but the main fault lies in the Title-page, which to the manifold advantage of the Work might be exchanged for — An Inquisition respecting the constitution and limits of the Human Understanding.²⁰

The letter tells us that Coleridge learned from Kant not metaphysics but logic, and that he read the *Critique of Pure Reason* as a writing of understanding, or of logic. This does not mean, however, that we may underestimate Kant's influence upon Coleridge. What is the logic Coleridge learned from Kant? It would be a matter of primary importance for us. The *Logic* already mentioned above helps us to consider the question. The editor J. R. de J. Jackson wrote the detailed outline of the book in the introduction, which we will follow in the next section.²¹

When Coleridge died in 1834, most of his writings passed into the hands of his friend and literary executor, J. H. Green. After Green's death, his library was auctioned in 1880, when the manuscript of the *Logic* appeared. Then it passed through the hands of several buyers, and finally in December 1899 was bought by the British Museum, where some scholars of Coleridge have read it since. But

most of us have not been allowed to read it directly but through the fruitful research book of A. D. Snyder's labour, *Logic and Learning*, including many abstracts from the manuscript *Logic*. At last in 1981, edited by Jackson, it was published as one volume of *The Collected Works of S. T. Coleridge*, whose publication opened the *Logic* to us general readers.

Substantial parts of the *Logic* are translations or quotations from works by other writers—especially Kant, Moses Mendelssohn, and Schelling. Accordingly there occurs the problem of plagiarism, which faces us whenever we try to research his thought or philosophy. Since this paper, however, cannot afford to grapple with the problem, we will conduct the succeeding parts of our analyses in terms of the following understanding: although most parts of the *Logic* are translations or quotations from other writers and scarcely does it contain his original thought, it will supply us with what we need in our enquiries: what he adopted from other thinkers or philosophers to create his criticism.

One of Coleridge's main aims in the *Logic* was to introduce yet unknown logic of Kant to English readers in a satisfactory form. Coleridge who assuredly valued Kant most highly not "as a Metaphysician but as a Logician," offered Kant's logic to his readers in this very writing. Coleridge acts throughout as a faithful interpreter of Kant in the field of logic. He comments and explains, paraphrases and selects, but he does not offer new arguments. That may be in part because it was very difficult for him to improve on Kant, and in part because, as the editor points out, what he was interested in was not the technical difficulties solved by Kant but the consequence

of Kant's solutions.

Concerning the characteristics of the *Logic* Jackson states:

The *Logic*, like the *Critique of Pure Reason*, restricts its discussion to the limits and procedures of the understanding. It does not deal directly either with sense experience or with the pure reason. And yet Coleridge's account carries an undertone of digression that bears purposefully upon our conceptions of sense experience and the pure reason. He seems unable to resist recurrent discussions of the way in which we see things and the way in which God may be supposed to see things. This undertone may not be wholly deliberate, but it provides a hint of aims in the *Logic* that have not been openly declared.

The passage tells us that the *Logic* by Coleridge deals not only with understanding but with sensibility and reason, though logic usually does only with understanding. To him logic means the theory of knowledge, or epistemology. Wellek remarks: "Coleridge sees in Kant the final and complete theoretician and analyst of our knowing faculty."²² Moreover the *Logic* enables us to catch a glimpse of his more advanced philosophy, his metaphysics. The *Logic* therefore supplies a foundation for his other philosophical writings and helps to fill a gap in his general argument.²³

Kant, who was awakened by Hume from his dogmatic slumber, makes the assertion:

Hitherto it has been assumed that all our knowledge must conform to objects. But all attempts to extend our knowledge of objects by establishing something in regard to them *a priori*, by means of concepts, have, on this assumption, ended failure. We must therefore make trial whether we may not have more success in the tasks of metaphysics, if we suppose that objects must conform to our knowledge.²⁴

Kant himself likened this change in point of view to Copernicus' primary hypothesis on the universe. This revolution in thinking, "the

Copernican turn," is termed epistemological subjectivism,²⁵ in other words, transcendental idealism in terms of Kant himself [B 519], which is, as it were, the basic thought of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

In this way of thinking, knowledge cannot be possible even if we are only given objects independent of the mind. It is not until matters given to us are determined by the form of sensibility which exists a priori in the mind that objects are composed for our knowledge. Then we cannot know things in themselves but only objects in so far as they appear to us. Kant's attempt to reconstruct metaphysics which has fallen into all contempt, through self-knowledge of reason, or the epistemological subjectivism, may be the main subject of his critical philosophy. In the study of Kant's influence upon Coleridge we should not disregard these points: how did Coleridge adopt the epistemological subjectivism, or transcendental idealism, which is the core of Kantian philosophy? and what influence did it exert upon Coleridge? we will next focus our exploration on the part of "Transcendental Aesthetic," the theory of sensibility in the *Critique*, especially on the notions of space and time which are principal constituents of the chapter.

3

Kant exerts himself to prove in detail why and how space and time are two a priori forms of intuition and draws his conclusion, and Coleridge also makes efforts in the *Logic* to introduce Kant's arguments of space and time in translations and quotations. But in order to make clear what Coleridge adopted from this disquisition of Kant and how

he made the most of it to construct his literary criticism, we need not examine all of the parts of the *Logic* on time and space, nor go into all the intricate philosophical polemics on them in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Some useful parts of the *Logic* concerning space and time, sometimes compared with the *Critique* of Kant, will be sufficient for our present aim.

We will begin with the exposition of the notion²⁶ of space in the *Logic*:

... space is not an empirical (experiential) conception. It is not a conception that has been drawn from outward experiences. For in order to my referring any given sensations produced in me to somewhat external to me, i. e. to somewhat in a different place of space from that in which I myself am, and in like manner, in order to represent the component parts of any total impression as outward to and beside each other, therefore not merely as being different each from the other, but as being each in a different place or point of a given space — to be able to do this, I say, we must already have the representation of space itself to begin.²⁷

The passage is almost the translation of the *Critique* [B 38]. To sum up, though not easy, space is not an empirical notion: if the notion of space is drawn from outer experience, then we first of all have to represent sensations as something in another place in space. But we cannot represent sensations as such until we have the representation of space itself.

Coleridge continues to explain the notion of space with his own illustration: "If we ask ourselves what we mean by a thing, as opposed to a thought," we will find that we mean something extended, and in like manner when we make the divisions between objects into these which merely occupy a space, like a rainbow, or into those which fill a space, like a solid body, in both the cases the space itself is

preconceived (pp. 155-56). Then he comes to the conclusion after the *Critique*: "The representation space, therefore, cannot have been borrowed from those relations of outward appearances made known to us by experience; but this outward experience is itself possible only on the supposition of space," and he expounds:

Space is a necessary representation and, like all representations combined with a sense of necessity, a representation *a priori* as the pre-existing basis of all external intuitions. Try the experiment: attempt to imagine that there is no space—try to fancy it away—you will find it impossible ... Space therefore is the precondition of all appearance. It is that without which apparent things could not appear (p. 156).

That is partly the translation, and partly the paraphrase of the *Critique* [B 38-9]. The argument in the passage runs as follows: the *a priori* representation of space preconditions all appearances, and makes possible all objects of external intuition. Then he puts an emphasis on the ideality of space: "If space be neither an outward thing nor any property of outward things, it must in some sense or other be a quality or faculty or the necessary result of some faculty or quality in the mind itself (p. 156)."

Thus following the *Critique*, Coleridge has given an exposition as to how and why space is an *a priori* form of intuition and now has reached the conclusion:

By space we mean no property of things in themselves, nor of any single thing, nor do we by space represent any relations they bear to each other arising out of the nature of the things themselves and which would remain after we had abstracted all the subjective conditions under which they are beheld. For neither absolute nor relative properties or determinations of things can be represented previously to the existence of the things themselves to which they belong, and cannot, therefore, like space, be contemplated

a priori (p. 158).

The paragraph corresponds to Kant's argument: "Space does not represent any property of things in themselves, nor does it represent them in their relation to one another." That is to say, space does not represent any determination that attaches to the objects themselves [B 42]. Then the *Logic* says:

... space is nothing else but the common forms of all appearances of the outward senses — the subjective condition of that sense or sentiency... under which alone intuition is possible. Now since the receptivity of the subject, or the mind's capability of being affected by objects, must of necessity exist antecedent to all particular affections and therefore to all intuitions of these objects, we may easily understand how the form of all appearances ... is to be assumed as previous to all actual perception of things (pp. 158-59).

That is the translation of the *Critique* [B 42]. The summary is that space is the subjective condition of sensibility, under which alone intuition of outer objects is possible for us.

The *Logic* presents the exposition of the notion of time in the same way as that of space. Yet one example of it will do here:

Time is the formal condition *a priori* of all phenomena universally. Space as the pure form of all outward intuition is ... confined to outward phenomena exclusively. On the other hand, as all representations ... do of themselves necessarily belong to our inward state and as this inward state again falls under the formal condition of inward intuition, consequently of time, time must be the condition *a priori* of all phenomena, of all appearance, universally (p. 171).

The passage is fairly the apt translation of the *Critique* [B 50-1] which says: while space is the pure form of all outer intuition, time is that of inner intuition, and then it can be said that "time is the formal *a priori* condition of all appearances" because outer appear-

ances are included in inner ones.

Most of the passages we have seen on the notions of space and time are in part the translations and in part the paraphrases of the *Critique*. The *Logic*, however, cannot be accepted only as such. It is none other than Coleridge's own work; the fruits of the unwearied labour with which he grasped, interpreted, and gave explanation to the *Critique* for himself. That will be shown by some happy illustrations of his own on the Kantian doctrine of the ideality of space.

Coleridge provides one example of them by means of a well-known instrument, the kaleidoscope. At every motion of coloured fragments inside the tube we see some new and distinct forms of beauty, prismatically reflected, in endless succession. What shall we call this property "common in kind to all the thousand successive figures presented to us?" He calls it "evidently symmetry." This symmetry is not an attribute of the materials themselves in the tube but "subsists wholly in the instrument itself; in the constitution and constituent laws (or mode of action) of the kaleidoscope itself this symmetry originates and by these it is communicated not to the fragments themselves but to the figure in the beholder's mind resulting from this arrangement, and that they are all so arranged as to fall under one common form, viz. that of symmetry, is the work of the instrument itself." Symmetry is to the kaleidoscope what space is to the faculty of sense, that is, space is not an objective reality but a form in the mind of beholder (pp. 163-65). On this passage Orsini points out: "This simile brings out Coleridge's brilliant capacities for imaginative illustrations of abstract doctrines."²⁸

Now let us see what characteristics of Kant's notions of space and time Coleridge agreed to, and what he adopted from them. As

we have seen above and some scholars, in particular, Wellek, Orsini, and Muirhead point out,²⁹ it was the ideality of the Kantian doctrine of space and time which Coleridge repeatedly supported. The doctrine holds that space and time are not objective; a conception drawn from outward experience. or any property of things in themselves, but subjective; a priori forms of sensibility, pure intuitions, or the subjective condition under which alone outer intuition is possible for us. Namely, they are the functions of the mind that organize the data of experience into an ordered whole, and make experience itself possible. Kant believed that our perceptions of objects are based on our subjective conditions, framed by our a priori forms of space and time, and so arranged according to the constitution of the mind [B 34-6].

The *Logic* assures us that Coleridge adopted the very idealistic theory of Kant on space and time. He also in his other work comments on his "conviction that space was not itself a thing, but a mode or form of perceiving, or the inward ground and condition in the percipient, in consequence of which things are seen as outward and coexisting."³⁰ It is quite obvious that Coleridge found satisfaction in the ideality of the Kantian doctrine of space and time: they are a priori forms of sensibility, or pure intuitions. But the question remains whether exclusively this aspect satisfied him so much as to expound the Kantian doctrine with his own elaborate illustrations.

Kant claims:

[Time] is no longer objective, if we abstract from the sensibility of our intuition, that is, from that mode of representation which is peculiar to us, and speak of *things in general*. Time is therefore a purely subjective condition of our (human) intuition (which is always sensible, that is, so far as we are affected by objects), and in itself, apart from the subject,

is nothing. Nevertheless, in respect of all appearances, and therefore of all the things which can enter into our experience, it is necessarily objective [B 51].

Time and space have a transcendental ideality in that they are subjective forms and purely subjective conditions of our intuitions. Nevertheless, in so far as appearances occur in space and time, they have an empirical reality, in other words, an objective validity in respect of all objects which are given to our senses. Probably Coleridge must have been in search of this Kantian doctrine that space and time simultaneously have transcendental ideality and objective validity, for he was able to support neither Hartley's materialism nor Berkeley's subjective idealism. In the *Logic* he states:

[I]f we use the term "objectively" to express the object in the absence of, or perfect abstraction from, all that is communicated to the representation of this object by the mind or the subject as the instrument and medium of the representation—in the strictly *metaphysical* sense of the word—time is nothing objective, but wholly subjective.

If, on the other hand, we take the word in the more usual and practical sense as applied to the phenomena themselves, and mean by it that such and such appearances are common to all men under the same circumstances and do not arise from any peculiarities in an individual subject or any particular sort and number of individuals, and that they may therefore be safely reasoned on and confidently anticipated—in this sense time has an objective reality (pp. 171-72).

Coleridge, who had been suffering from his heart-and-intellect conflict, could never agree with the one-sided solution of the notions of space and time, and therefore he became attracted by Kant's doctrine that they have not only subjectivity but objectivity. In the *Logic* he refers to the celebrated controversy on the ideality on space between Leibnitz, a continental rationalist, and Samuel Clarke, a defender of

Newton's philosophy, who corresponded with each other in 1715 and 1716.³¹ Coleridge remarks: "Leibnitz was so far in the right that he denied the subsistence of space independent of the mind; but he grievously erred in representing it as nothing more than a confused perception arising out of the indistinctness of all particular figures whether from the distance or the minuteness of the objects." On the contrary, Clarke and English philosophers "contended with truth that space was not abstracted from any object nor generalised from any class of objects: but they erred in the too hasty conclusion that therefore it must itself exist objectively." Thus from the Kantian viewpoint that space is undoubtedly objective in so far as the term "objective" is used as the contrary to "accidental," but if the term is used in opposition to "subjective," the space is eminently subjective, he now criticizes both the idealistic error by Leibnitz and the empirical one by Clarke (pp. 159-60).

4

We have ascertained that Coleridge adopted the Kantian epistemology which lays emphasis upon the activities of the subjective faculties, though not ignoring the objective independent of our mind. With this adoption he has now reached the bridgehead which enables him to abandon the English empiricists' doctrine: the mind of man is entirely passive and inert, and incapable of producing anything of its own, so it is likened to a blank sheet upon which only experience inscribes the data of sense. He opened an attack on the empiricists' doctrine of the passive mind. In 1801 in a letter to Poole, he rejected the

idea that the mind is only "a lazy looker-on on an external world."³²⁾ And in the *Biographia Literaria* he compared it to "the mere quick-silver plating behind a Looking-glass!"³³⁾

One of the typical manifestations of his development from English empiricism to German idealism may be the letter of 1801 to Poole quoted above, which says he had "not only completely extricated the notions of time, and space; but had overthrown the doctrine of Association." What arouses our interest in this letter is, Jackson says, that at such an early date religious consequences are attached to the theme of space and time. English empiricists brought disbelief in the free will of man and moral obligation. But for Coleridge who could not help longing for an idealistic world incessantly, the most noxious consequence of empiricism was atheism and "all the irreligious metaphysics of" infidels. Accordingly the letter shows that Kant discusses space and time almost purely from an epistemological point of view in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, while Coleridge treats them with direct theological implications in the *Logic*.³⁴⁾

Certainly one of the commonest views on what and how Coleridge adopted from Kant may be this: he obtained the distinction between understanding and reason. And besides, we have researched another aspect of Kant's influence on Coleridge, no less significant than the former: he adopted the Kantian transcendental idealism, or epistemological subjectivism, which endows at once subject and object with the possibilities of being, with still greater emphasis upon the activity of the subjective function. This new viewpoint of the activity of the mind enabled him to abandon the doctrine of mechanical association as entirely passive to outer particular impressions, and as likely to lead

to atheism. It opened up fresh probabilities for him to construct the vital and creative theory of imagination: it is the faculty of organic unity which renders reconciliation to opposites or discordants and makes up living relationships among all things.

Now we have arrived at the conclusion, which is in full agreement with Basil Willey's assertion supported by J. V. Baker.⁹⁵⁾

Willey fears:

some readers are misled by the oracular sublimity of Coleridge's definition of ... 'The Primary Imagination', he declares (in oft-quoted words), 'I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM.' This is not to be dismissed as metaphysical babble; a weight of thought, indeed a whole philosophy, lies beneath each phrase.

Willey goes on to point out:

Coleridge is here summarizing the great struggle and victory of his life—his triumph over the old tradition of Locke and Hartley, which had assumed that the mind in perception was wholly passive, 'a lazy looker-on on an external world'⁹⁶⁾

Furthermore the following passage from the *Logic* proves that Coleridge, upon the Kantian view of pure intuition, considers original and constructive imagination without reference to passive impressions from outer objects.

... [in the pursuit of the nature of primary perception] we must evermore bear in mind that we are throughout treating of mental processes wholly abstracted from all outward realities, and consequently that we must learn to consider the sense itself, or the faculty of original and constructive imagination, aloof from all sensation and without reference to any supposed passive impression from objects extrinsic to the percipient (p. 75).

There has been a well-known discussion that Coleridge's theory of

imagination is built on the foundation laid by Schelling's Philosophy of Identity. And yet our enquiries have corroborated that it was Kant's epistemology of mind's activity in his logic that made it possible for Coleridge to abandon the Hartleian empirical materialism passive to external objects, and for him paved the way to the theory: 'imagination' is the creative faculty of organic unity "that forms all into one graceful and intelligent whole."³⁷

Notes

- 1) S. T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, 2 vols, ed. J. Shawcross (1907; rpt. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1979), I. 202.
- 2) *Ibid.*, I. 272.
- 3) Richard Harter Fogle, *The Idea of Coleridge's Criticism* (1962; rpt. Westport: Greenwood, 1978), p. 54.
- 4) S. T. Coleridge, *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, 6 vols. ed. E. L. Griggs (1956; rpt. London: Clarendon Press, 1966), II. 709.
- 5) Basil Willey, *Coleridge on Imagination and Fancy* (1946), pp. 3-4.
- 6) *Biographia Literaria*, I. 107.
- 7) *Ibid.*, II. 230.
- 8) *Ibid.*, II. 12.
- 9) Gordon Mckenzie, *Organic Unity in Coleridge* (California: California Univ. Press, 1973), p. 35.
- 10) *Biographia Literaria*, II. 13.
- 11) Margaret Sherwood, *Coleridge's Imaginative Conception of the Imagination* (Norwood Editions, 1975), p. 21.
- 12) *Biographia Literaria*, I. 202.
- 13) *Collected Letters*, I. 346-48, 352-55.
- 14) Shawcross, ed. op. cit., introd. I. xii-xiii.

- 15) *Biographia Literaria*, I. 74.
- 16) *Ibid.*, I. 93.
- 17) *Ibid.*, I. 99.
- 18) *Collected Letters*, II. 706.
- 19) René Wellek, *Kant in England* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1933), p. 72.
- 20) *Collected Letters*, V. 421.
- 21) S. T. Coleridge, *Logic. The Collected Works of S. T. Coleridge*, vol. 13. ed. J. R. de J. Jackson (Princeton Univ. Press, 1981), introd. by Jackson, pp. xxxiii-lxvii.
- 22) Wellek, p. 74.
- 23) Gian N. G. Orsini *Coleridge and German Idealism* (Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1969), p. 261.
- 24) Norman Kemp Smith, trans., *Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (1929; rpt. London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 22, or B. xvi. All subsequent references are to this edition. Hereafter page references will be cited in the text by the page numbers of the second edition of the original: [B], which was the one Coleridge owned. See Orsini, p. 256.
- 25) Takeo Iwasaki, *Kant 'Junsui Risei Hihan' no Kenkyu* (Tokyo: Keiso-shobo, 1965), pp. 24-32.
- 26) Kemp Smith points out that according to the Kantian terminology 'concept' here should be changed for 'notion'. Norman Kemp Smith, *A Commentary to Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason'* (London: Macmillan, 1918), pp. 99-100.
- 27) Coleridge, *Logic*, ed. Jackson, p. 155.
All subsequent page references to the edition will be cited in the text.
- 28) Orsini, p. 94.
- 29) See Wellek, pp. 106-107; Orsini, pp. 92-3; John H. Muirhead, *Coleridge as Philosopher* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1930), p. 67.
- 30) S. T. Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection, Statesman's Manual. The Complete*

Works of S. T. Coleridge, vol. 1. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1871), p. 217.

- 31) Paul Robert Wolff, *Kant's Theory of Mental Activity* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1963), pp. 2-8.
- 32) *Collected Letters*, II. 709.
- 33) *Biographia Literaria*, I. 82.
- 34) Jackson ed. op. cit., introd., pp. lxiv-lxv.
- 35) James Volant Baker, *The Sacred River: Coleridge's Theory of the Imagination* (1957; rpt. New York: Greenwood, 1969), p. 123.
- 36) Basil Willey, p. 3.
- 37) *Biographia Literaria*, II. 13.

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