

RETURN TO THE ETERNAL RECURRENCE:
Coleridge and the “Echo or Mirror Seeking of Itself”

by

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SIGNED: Pavan Kumar Reddy

DEDICATION

To my father,

T. Shantikar Reddy, the best man I have known.

And to my mother,

Laura Reddy, love and gratitude.

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ABSTRACT

“Return to the Eternal Recurrence: Coleridge and the ‘Echo or Mirror Seeking of Itself’” demonstrates how Samuel Taylor Coleridge provides a unique vision of reality in which all entities, processes, and creations are symbiotic parts of a single, all-encompassing world-soul whose existence and growth are rooted in the gradual expression of an innate spiritual power and intention. Following a divine blueprint, life is the germinating expression of God’s imagination, and evolution the progressive emergence of God’s image in creation effectuated through the human mind. Coleridge illustrates how, by utilizing the divine power of imagination, he is able to decipher the images from the material world as characters of God’s symbolic language of self-revelation; subsequently, through the divine “attribute” of reason, he is able to transform them into a corresponding symbolic language of poetry intimating God’s ideas to other minds. He realizes that his creativity is a finite repetition of God’s infinite act of creation in which “spirit,” God’s living and growing power of consciousness implanted in creation, beholds itself in its myriad self-reflections.

This project synthesizes and builds upon the theories of the major European Romantics, Idealists, and modern critics to establish a comprehensive explanation of Coleridge’s intricate and evolving philosophical ideas concerning the individual’s organic kinship with God and the role of art and creativity in revealing this kinship. I illustrate not only how the theory of organicism forms the foundation of the complex, reciprocal relationship between artistic expression and self-awareness, but also how there is an organic interrelationship between the individual’s developing self-consciousness and spirit’s growing awareness of its cosmic totality. Coleridge, I argue, self-consciously embodies this process in his life and works. He progressively attains a greater understanding of his developing self-consciousness and intellectual powers

through his meditative writings. He becomes cognizant that the process by which he develops his theories on poetry, art, and life is simultaneously a process of self-discovery. This activity mirrors a universal development of spirit in humankind coming to a greater awareness of itself throughout history as propounded by Immanuel Kant, G.W.F. Hegel, F.W.J. Schelling, among others, and Coleridge himself. Hence, Coleridge's growing self-awareness contributes to while it is simultaneous subsumed within universal spirit's progress and self-revelation. Coleridge's writings, I conclude, reveal that the macrocosmic and microcosmic processes are organically interrelated, interdependent, and symbiotic.

Coleridge develops and defines his unique individuality as a philosopher-poet while attempting to reconcile his Christian faith with Spinoza's pantheism. By revealing how his mind serves as an intellectual channel connecting European philosophy to British Romantic thought, chapters one and two demonstrate how Coleridge is a synthesizing, organic thinker attempting to establish his own "system" that brings "all knowledges into harmony." This synthesizing activity follows a spiritual mandate as well. I illustrate how Coleridge, following Schelling, contends that all the human senses and faculties, the mind's constitution, and our resulting understanding of reality are precisely what they ought to be based on God's structuring of them for God's own self-revelation as spirit. Imagination can decipher God's language in creation for a reason, and it communicates its own symbols to other minds. Coleridge's integrating philosophical project and creative activity are therefore spiritually purposeful. Chapter Three discusses Coleridge's famous description of the role of primary and secondary imagination in creating our knowledge of reality. He describes how imagination, working in harmony with reason, apprehends universal ideas associated with the appearances of material objects and creates its own system of symbols. The artist perceives himself and his existence as an act, a finite repetition of the infinite act and

expression of the “I AM.” Coleridge affirms that the value and purpose of art lies in how the artist repeats and propagates God’s operation and intention in his own creative activity.

The final chapters analyze a few of Coleridge’s poems that exemplify the concepts and theories expressed in his important philosophical and metaphysical prose works. They illustrate imagination’s organic processes and how its products, Coleridge’s poems themselves, are like organic entities. They recount Coleridge’s attempts to define his individuality in relation to his profound life experiences, Christian faith, and philosophical convictions. They discuss in metaphysical terms his evolving understanding of the relationship between his finite self and an infinite and eternal universal reality. Here, the philosophies of Pythagoras, Heraclitus, and Nietzsche help contextualize and explain the Romantic conception of “being” and “becoming” in the eternal recurrence of “time” in “eternity.”

Ultimately, Coleridge realizes there is a meaning in his ability to retain the awareness of his unique and separate individuality along with his strong sense of belonging to a greater common universal identity. He claims that the goal of existence is to become conscious of and participate in the oneness of God, as each individual is God’s agent and representative; it involves acquiring a mode of vision in which the multiplicity of creation is united harmoniously and intelligibly in each individual’s consciousness as a state of conscious “unity in multitude.” Through humankind, spirit or God’s consciousness in creation comprehends itself through its multiplicity. The individual manifestations of spirit gradually and independently become aware of themselves as unique microcosmic instances of the “one Life.” The selected poems demonstrate and embody the process of self-revelation, highlighting the role of love and nature, self-reflection, Christianized pantheism, and spirit’s progressive journey within the eternal and infinite recurrence of spirit in Coleridge’s unique yet philosophically integrative vision of reality.

INTRODUCTION

What we speak of as nature is a poem lying pent in a mysterious and wonderful script. Yet the riddle could reveal itself, were we to recognize in it the odyssey of the spirit, which, marvelously deluded, seeks itself, and in seeking flies from itself; for through the world of sense there glimmers, as if through words the meaning, as if through dissolving mists the land of fantasy, of which we are in search.

—F.W.J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 232

In this project, I demonstrate how Coleridge’s metaphysics reveals how the individual’s evolving self-consciousness mirrors, contributes to, and is subsumed by a single cosmic consciousness that is comprised of myriad individual evolving entities. I analyze how Coleridge represents—through his life, writings, and growing understanding of the world—a microcosmic analogue of the universal process of humankind evolving in consciousness. I argue that the process by which he creates and derives knowledge from his poetic expression follows an archetypal blueprint, described in his own philosophy, according to which all natural processes operate. Furthermore, he understands his imaginative acts to be finite repetitions of the primal and infinite act of spirit or God’s imagination. As the primal act of creation is everywhere expressed in innumerable forms and patterns, human artistic creation—the act of “embodying” consciousness—and reflection upon that creation, is a finite repetition of spirit’s infinite act of incarnation and self-discovery.

I demonstrate how the poems are to Coleridge organic creations that bear an organic interrelationship with their creator. Analogously, the poet, also an organic entity, bears the same organic interrelationship with universal spirit. To do so, I establish a theoretical and

philosophical framework by drawing on the prose works of Coleridge and German philosophers to identify the particular preoccupations and conceptions regarding the development of consciousness to increasingly higher levels, especially as this evolution pertains to both the theory of organicism¹ and models of repetition and recurrence. These concepts contribute to illuminating the philosophical as well as the more esoteric metaphysical ideas expressed in Coleridge's prose and poetry. The analysis and interpretation of these texts allow me to then demonstrate a series of interdependent and developing arguments concerning the relationship between the individual and the universal consciousness as well as the individual and his poetic creations portrayed in Coleridge's poetry. I argue that since such ideas are conveyed through literature, which is the reification or objectification of consciousness, they represent specific moments within finite human lives, which are themselves ephemeral moments within the being of universal spirit. So, ideas, much like transient human life, occur within individual lifespans that are themselves occurring as varying and evanescent recurrences within the continuum of spirit. This organically pregnant process of development is substantiated and embodied in Coleridge's life and chronicled in his autobiographical prose and poetry.

In the first three chapters, I engage directly with Coleridge's philosophical prose works that attempt to articulate his totalizing philosophical worldview. My analysis and interpretation draws important parallels between the European philosophers and British Romantics through Coleridge's own musings and preoccupations, especially as they relate to the discussion of organicism. Coleridge's religious and metaphysical conceptions regarding nature, reason, and

¹ Organicism is a broad theory. For a full explanation, see Chapter One, Section 1. In Chapter Two, I further elucidate the theory of organicism in the context of my arguments regarding Coleridge's metaphysics. For instance, Schlegel describes being as a becoming, Hegel connects this becoming with all expressions of growth and maturation in creation, especially to the concept of history of philosophical thinking as the development of the "Idea," and Hölderlin speaks of each thinking, breathing individual entity as the organic substance of the growing organism that is "spirit." Hölderlin relates how humans as fruit and foliage on the tree of spirit "perish, for thus they return to your root, and so shall I, O tree of life, so that I may again grow green with thee" (*Hyperion* 133).

imagination have important implications for understanding his view of the self and its relation to artistic creation. Namely, as I argue, the organic interrelationship between the poet and his poem is a microcosmic analogue of the interrelationship between the individual and the universal spirit. The goal of individuals is to attain a spiritual state of awareness whereby they come to see themselves as a part of the universal spirit, and through their own self-reflection and artistic creations contribute to God's ultimate self-revelation.

I then demonstrate this in the remaining three chapters by examining Coleridge's poetry. Through his poetic articulations, he defines his self in relation to his faith, philosophical convictions, and experiences in nature. Three of his conversation poems—"The Eolian Harp," "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison," and "Frost at Midnight"—and the long poem "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" form the core of this analysis, and through them Coleridge expresses and explores some of his philosophical and religious preoccupations. His understanding of the individual's place in God's creation and his relationship with the universal spirit is thus organically formed, articulated, and demonstrated through his experiences and reflections. Furthermore, as an individual artist himself, Coleridge discovers that his finite and transient individuality is part of an eternal, cosmic totality and that his life and creative expressions are both finite analogues of the infinite and eternal act of divine imagination.

Context and Contribution

Contemporary scholarship has begun to focus increasingly on Coleridge's importance to as well as his literary and philosophical influence on later writers. This is owing partly to the studies of the recent publication of Coleridge's *Notebooks*, *Marginalia*, and lectures that have provided greater insight into Coleridge's thinking. They have begun to revise Coleridge's

reputation as a scattered thinker into that of a serious philosopher, and I have joined this discussion by attempting to provide a coherent approach to interpreting his understanding of the complex relationship between the individual and a universal reality in his complex, all-encompassing philosophy. To this end, I have closely examined Coleridge's new prose publications and placed them in closer conversation with several of his well-known poems.

This project analyzes Coleridge's works in relation to both European Romanticism and German Idealism so as to present a well-rounded, contextualized examination of his understanding of the development of subjectivity and the self's relationship with nature. I relate Coleridge's metaphysical musings to various conceptions of the "evolution" of consciousness,² namely how humankind progressively ponders the process of thinking about the self especially through artistic expression, as discussed by Immanuel Kant, G.W.F. Hegel, F.W.J. Schelling, Friedrich von Schlegel, Friedrich Schiller, J.G. Fichte among others.³ Along with the German Idealists and European Romantics, the major British Romantic poets contribute to shaping "the spirit of the age" or what J.G. Herder and others in Germany call *Zeitgeist*.⁴ "God," "Spirit," "Mind," "Being," "Will," "Imagination" are some of the different names these writers ascribe to the original substance and power that manifests creation and becomes the underlying essence of all things; its agency is gradually revealed through human creativity and expression. To

² The term "evolution," as it is used in this study, does not refer to the theory of natural selection, but, rather, to the concept originating in ancient philosophy and refined by Hegel and others, which proposes that all forms in nature express the gradual revelation of spirit; the diverse natural entities represent limited actualizations of corresponding absolute or archetypal forms and are parts of a teleological ordering of creation according to a spiritual plan.

³ It is, in fact, René Descartes and the Enlightenment thinkers who spearhead the study of self-consciousness and set the stage for the German Idealists who scrutinize the process of thinking about *thinking self-consciously*. It is the Romantics, however, who not only revolutionize the way we think about being and subjectivity, but also manifest through concrete artistic examples the wide array of experiences of self-discovery. They reveal the myriad new possibilities of experience, expression, and heights of consciousness. Hence, what makes the era from the mid eighteenth century to the mid nineteenth century particularly "Romantic" is the diverse expressions of the processes by which the spirit in humankind ponders and expresses itself self-consciously as spirit.

⁴ The major British Romantic poets, though each unique, join the major German Idealists and European Romantics in shaping what was recognized as "the spirit of the age" by addressing, expanding on, and exploring what these major philosophers propound. The simultaneous and seemingly coincidental expressions of similar concepts across Europe coalesce and thus substantiate the notion of a shared *Zeitgeist*.

Coleridge, Spirit is conceived as an author who reveals and realizes himself in his creation much like Coleridge's own expressions are finite and unique repetitions of God's creativity.

Works by continental philosophers serve to situate Coleridge in the intellectual climate and present a useful context for an in-depth exploration of Coleridge's philosophy and poetry. Modern critics provide another necessary reference, and my study is also energized by the critical legacy of M.H. Abrams and contemporary scholarship that owes a tremendous debt to Abrams. I position my argument in relation to Abrams's broad, overarching scope and tease out from his texts certain concepts that will buttress my own and serve as stepping stones toward new conclusions. Other critical texts, particularly those by Paul Hamilton, Gerald McNiece, Thomas McFarland, and Alexander M. Schlutz, not only inform my own study, but they also steer me to explore yet uncharted tributaries in this field. For example, Hamilton claims, "Hegel is a neglected figure in Coleridgean studies. No wonder, since Coleridge only read a few pages of his work. But Hegel, especially in his *Phenomenology*, remains not only the foremost commentator on the speculations of his age, but makes out of that commentary his own philosophy. For Coleridge's eclectic thinking to be out of the loop here would therefore be unusual" (Hamilton 7).⁵ Although Hegel's direct shaping influence on Coleridge seems slight, he nevertheless impacts and contributes to the thinking of the age to which Coleridge and many others were keenly attuned.⁶ Hegel was indeed the spokesman for his age on which he had a monumental philosophical influence, and I have chosen, where pertinent, to consider Hegel to shed light on some of my own assessments of Coleridge's philosophical career.

⁵ Hamilton keeps Coleridge "in the Hegelian picture to which he evidently belongs [...for] Coleridge's favoring of Schelling only reveals its full force if we know about the intellectual quarrel between Schelling and Hegel" (7).

⁶ Henry Crabb Robinson describes how "a German friend" who attended Coleridge's 1822 lectures was "delighted to find the logic and the rhetoric of his country delivered in a foreign language," and he convinced Robinson that "Coleridge's mind is much more German than English. My friend has pointed out striking analogies between Coleridge and German authors whom Coleridge has never seen" (Robinson 226). Hamilton adds, "Coleridge's career fits into the Hegelian plot in suggestive ways that picture him as a philosophical child of his time" (26).

Edward Kessler also provides direction in my analysis by describing how Coleridge brings his poetry “into the service of Being, in making it follow the ‘working of the mind’” (4). Kessler adds, “the end of the poetic process was not a poem (as an artifact), but a new knowledge of the self, a new awareness of Being. [...] For Coleridge, Being is a process, a coming into Being” (4-5). Being, I contend, is also an expression revealed through art. “Being is the energy shining through phenomena, a *movement* toward that ‘ultimate Being’” (6). Poetry, I argue, becomes Coleridge’s means of making his consciousness visible and concrete; his expression is a physical manifestation as a recurrence of a cosmic act of creation, which repeats the spirit’s seeking to find “echo or mirror” of itself. I expand on the notion that Coleridge believes in a “*telos* outside space and time, an absolute, a meaning that provides the end for man’s spiritual evolution” (6). The finite form of being, I argue, is both Coleridge himself and the individual poem he creates. Just as his being is an incarnation of consciousness in the being of spirit, his poem in turn is an objective *embodying* of his consciousness at a given moment in the continuum of his own developing selfhood which is subsumed within the “one Life” of universal spirit. Kessler’s project differs from mine in that using examples of specific and recurring metaphors in Coleridge’s works, he explores how Coleridge “struggled with metaphor and poetic form in order to create a new self” (12). However, what interests me is how poetic expression mirrors the process of evolving consciousness and how it becomes a finite repetition of the eternal act of creation in the infinite “I AM.” The poem is a finite expression in the developing succession of Coleridge’s consciousness; simultaneously, his entire life and body of work represent a singular articulation and instance of spirit, a moment in the eternal and infinite “I AM,” like an organism that grows independently in a vast and interconnected ecosystem of similarly maturing spirits. I situate and substantiate these arguments within Coleridge’s own theory of organicism.

Coleridge's preoccupations mirror those of the philosophers he read, and their ideas are often expressed in his works. I analyze a number of Coleridge's prose and philosophical works, including *Biographia Literaria*, "Theory of Life," *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, *Lectures on Literature*, and others to distinguish his unique position in the intellectual climate. However, by revealing how Coleridge serves as an important intellectual channel connecting European philosophy with British Romantic thought, Chapter One demonstrates Coleridge as a synthesizing, organic thinker attempting to establish his own "system" that brings "all knowledges into harmony" (*TT*, II, 248). Works by Charles Armstrong and Archie Bahm provide the critical and theoretical frame for my discussion of Coleridge's theory of organicism.

Although Romantic Organicism has hitherto been discussed broadly, but far from exhaustively, by numerous scholars, still much remains to be explored within the specific form of organicism I have chosen. My study provides new insights into a complex theory in Romanticism of the organic and interactive relationship between artistic expression and developing subjectivity. The principles of organicism are shown to operate at all levels in the relation between the individual and the collective and in the evolutionary process by which humankind's creativity is revealed to be the unfolding expression of God in creation. The theory of organicism demonstrates how every individual instance of spirit is part of the universal spirit and how the universal spirit is only able to conceive of itself because of the individuals who are simultaneously autonomous and subsumed within it. I ultimately examine how Coleridge develops and defines his unique individuality through his conscious aspiration to distinguish himself as a philosopher-poet and produce his own all-encompassing system.

An Outline of the Global Arguments

This project demonstrates that in Coleridge's metaphysics,

1. The individual's developing self-consciousness mirrors a universal process of humankind evolving in consciousness; both developments are interdependent.
2. Coleridge's creativity and reflection upon his creations is a finite repetition of the primal and infinite act of God's imagination or spirit's infinitely recurring act of incarnation and self-discovery.
3. The process of Coleridge's intellectual growth follows a divine blueprint according to which all natural processes operate.
4. Hence, the laws of organicism—assimilation, growth, and evolution—are expressed in innumerable forms and patterns in creation, including the development of philosophical thought throughout history, the individual's growing consciousness in his finite lifespan, and in the creation of art.
5. Hence the poems are to Coleridge organic creations that bear an organic interrelationship with their creator. Analogously, the poet, also an organic entity, bears the same organic interrelationship with universal spirit.

These realizations result from a spiritual awareness, and Coleridge claims that

6. In humankind's evolution, the individual attains a spiritual awareness in which he sees his existence as a part of a universal "one Life"; his creativity and self-reflection contribute to spirit's self-revelation.

All these discoveries are possible, Coleridge argues, because

7. The human faculties and the mind's structure have been fashioned precisely to achieve a particular and necessary kind of understanding of reality that conforms to God's requirements.

Since consciousness emerges through the interaction of mind and nature (both expressions of God), knowledge is precisely what it ought to be for God's self-revelation as spirit.

8. Humankind's thirst for knowledge and developing understanding of God are guided by an innate spiritual "intention" or "will" operating through nature and the mechanism of the mind and senses dictating our knowledge of reality that ultimately leads to these precise realizations.

Organicism and the Divine Blueprint

In Chapter One, I begin by discussing Coleridge's theory of organicism in the context of German Idealism and European Romanticism. As an organic thinker, Coleridge assimilates, incorporates, and synthesizes several intellectual traditions into his own unique philosophy, which describes, as it simultaneously substantiates, the organic interrelationship between the individual's progress and that of universal spirit. Coleridge especially builds upon the ideas of Kant and Schelling concerning the self, the universal spirit, perception, and the possibility of self-consciousness.⁷ Coleridge also Christianizes Schelling's conception of being and Spinoza's pantheistic philosophy of reality and synthesizes them, along with various other philosophical schools of thought, to arrive at his own "higher," more comprehensive understanding of the individual's relation to universal being. In Coleridge's conception, the human mind, at the pinnacle of evolution in God's creation, repeats in manner God's expression and participates in God's creativity by expressing its own consciousness. I illustrate how Coleridge realizes, along

⁷ Hegel, for instance, argues that spirit is the essential reality of each thing; it exists for itself in order to become aware and to gain knowledge of itself as spirit. Spirit reveals itself in the world as an object of knowledge and comes to know itself in its concrete manifestations in which it finds itself reflected. It forms *space* and *nature* where it exists as a constant *becoming* and a constant action through and for itself; it also manifests *time* as a result of its becoming in nature, and it inaugurates *history* in its self-reflective unfolding in humankind. From "inconsistent" matter, through rudimentary sentience and animal instinct, through the emergence of human consciousness and self-awareness, and up to absolute knowledge, spirit travels through time and history evolving through stages that reveal its increasing awareness and knowledge. It maintains within its infinite scope all the different shapes, forms, and entities of its past stages, as well as their collective experiences and memories accrued along the voyage.

with some of his German contemporaries and influences, that the gradually developing image and understanding of God in the human mind is the result of the operation of a divine intention, where God as spirit in creation comes to a greater awareness of itself through the human mind.

According to Coleridge, philosophic thought follows an organic pattern of growth through history, and he sees himself belonging and contributing to that progression. All human expression constitutes the developing self-revelation of spirit through which spirit comes to a greater awareness of itself; the individual achieves greater self-knowledge through his own expressions, and hence both processes are symbiotic. Furthermore, Coleridge perceives the same divine blueprint executed in the plant also operating in human creative expression. In fact, philosophical thought, human consciousness, and works of art conceived in and derived from the human mind, all develop, like a plant, through assimilation, incorporation, and growth. This organic *modus operandi*, namely the organic properties of assimilation, growth, and evolution throughout nature, is recognized as the pattern for the development of the individual's thinking, for the evolution of humankind's consciousness, and for the fashioning of works of art. These processes are guided by a spiritual intention or "will" (of love) following a divine blueprint "derived from within" all things, and God's operational signature, creativity, and "intention" are "repeated" everywhere in nature and its processes (TL 545).

Coleridge discovers that the laws of organicism in all of God's creation are the same laws governing his mind's activity, operating in the progression of philosophical thought, and shaping human creative expression. Every part of the "one Life" is a "repetition" of the master blueprint that orders and dictates the operations of the cosmos. "Each part of nature contains in itself a *germ* of the omnipresence," which guides the process of evolution (*PL*, I, 326). Each individual evolves along with other individuals who make up the whole of humankind. Coleridge explains

that the consciousness of God, as the master artist, is reflected in his creation; it is the “germ” whose intention is to reveal itself to be the divine consciousness seeking to re-present itself to similarly self-revealing divine individuations. Evolution has lead up to humankind as the emerging image of God where God as spirit begins to behold itself as God manifest in creation.

In its highest expression in creation, spirit becomes the aggregate of individuals who are themselves *wholes*, gradually developing ever-increasing levels of understanding about what it means to be self-conscious as individuals in their finite lifespans and as spirit in the continuum of its being through time and history. Coleridge’s concept of “multeity in unity” explicates how every individual is both a whole in himself and a part of the universal spirit. The individual, who contributes to the whole through his unique activity and expressions, is in turn enriched by the constantly developing nature of the universal spirit. In fact, Coleridge reveals all philosophies, finite entities, actions, and creations to be integral parts of increasingly larger aggregates that are themselves elements of a single, organic, all-encompassing whole. Therefore, I argue that there is an organic and symbiotic interrelationship between an individual’s developing self-knowledge and humankind’s evolving consciousness. Through writing about the self, Coleridge observes, reflects on, and discovers the laws that govern his mind; he realizes that those same organic laws operate in all of God’s creation, as much in the progression of philosophical thought as in nature.

Moreover, Coleridge observes, the spirit of nature works in art “from within by evolution and assimilation according to a Law” (*LL*, II, 147). That is, the work of art follows the same organic properties as works of nature. Just as the “idea” or form of the plant is contained within the seed, a poem analogously takes shape around a central, unifying idea, which is the same law of spirit working through nature. This law forms part of spirit’s will-to-self-revelation. For Coleridge, God expresses himself in his creation. Nature is the reification of God’s thought, a

“modification of intelligence” or “appearance” of a higher spiritual intelligence, which allows spirit to perceive itself, both in nature and in the human mind. Art becomes the medium through which God, as spirit in the human mind, communicates with other minds. Imagination, as the divine power in the human mind, can decipher and read God’s symbolic language of self-revelation in creation; it is able to transform the images from the material world, using the divine “attribute” of reason, into its own corresponding symbolic poetic expression intimating God’s ideas to other minds where God as spirit beholds itself in its “multeity.”⁸ The individual, as a finite individuation of spirit, repeats the creative activity of the “infinite I AM” from which he derives his being. The poet is like God in that he creates a “second nature” according to the same organic pattern of operation that God uses to fashion the universe and the poet himself; the artist repeats or follows nature’s operation and intention in his own creative activity. Hence, the fundamental organic properties of assimilation, incorporation, and growth are expressed at all levels of being within the “one Life,” which is ever in the process of becoming a richer, more sophisticated “multeity in unity” and an increasingly higher divine individuation.

Therefore, I demonstrate how Coleridge’s metaphysics reveals that because human thinking is determined by the mind’s constitution that is fashioned by God, and because human consciousness emerges through the interaction with material reality that is God’s expression, there is therefore a spiritual intention and necessity dictating our knowledge of reality. While Coleridge agrees with the idealists that perception and the mind’s structures produce a limited and subjective understanding of reality, I point out that he also holds that knowledge, as an interpretation of the world, is precisely what it ought to be based on God’s fashioning of creation. I conclude, therefore, that, according to Coleridge, human faculties and the structure of

⁸ Nature, Coleridge asserts, is the “mirror” in which the mind beholds its own mode of operation and that the “one great Being whose eternal reason is the ground and absolute cause of all the correspondent realities in nature” is also the reason in the finite human being (*PL*, II, 489).

the mind have been molded precisely as they should be to achieve a particular and necessary kind of understanding of reality that conforms to God's requirements. That is, according to Coleridge, since nature and reality are reifications of God's thought, since human thinking is determined by the mind's constitution that is fashioned by God, and since consciousness emerges through the interaction of mind and nature (both expressions of God), knowledge is precisely what it ought to be for God's self-revelation as spirit. The very impetus of humankind's search for meaning and thirst for knowledge are guided by an internal spiritual "intention" operating through the mechanism of the mind and senses dictating one's knowledge of reality and which ultimately leads to this precise realization.

Furthermore, through the concepts of *Bildung* and *Logos*, as understood by Coleridge, I illustrate how the individual's growing self-awareness *mirrors* the same process in spirit's self-understanding through human creative expression. For Coleridge, the goal of existence is to become conscious of and participate in the oneness of God; this involves acquiring a mode of vision in which the multiplicity of creation is united harmoniously and intelligibly in each individual's consciousness so that through humankind, God as spirit comprehends itself in its multiplicity. Spirit, as God's living and growing power of consciousness implanted in creation, is gradually coming to behold itself as a "multeity in unity" through its myriad manifestations. Coleridge perceives his creativity and existence as a finite repetition of the infinite expression of the "I AM." Thus, I argue, through his creative activity, Coleridge comes to comprehend not only himself but also his significance in the universal life and spirit of God.

The Pantheism-Christian Synthesis

In Chapter Two, I demonstrate how Coleridge's pantheistic organicism falls under an overarching Christian frame and forms the basis of Coleridge's totalizing philosophical worldview. While attempting to reconcile his Christian faith with Spinoza's pantheism, Coleridge goes beyond seeing God as simply spirit-in-creation and establishes a united conception of reality in which God is both an absolute beyond creation *and* spirit engaged in gradual self-revelation. Much of Coleridge's metaphysics attempts to reveal and explicate the fundamental unity of the universe through the conception of the "one Life" that connects humankind, nature, and God. As a Christian philosopher, Coleridge acknowledges God as a "living and personal God, whose Power indeed is the *Ground* of all *Being*, even as his will is the efficient, his Wisdom the instrumental, and his Love the final, Cause of all *Existence*, but who may not without fearful error be identified with the universe, or the universe to be considered an attribute of his Deity" (*CL*, IV, 894).⁹

Coleridge conceives of God as absolute, perfect, and ideal, who remains beyond and separate from the universe, and also as one who is manifest in his creation as spirit in which he is an "all in all," "one omnipresent Mind" ("Religious Musings" 50, 114), "one Life" comprising of infinitely diverse manifestations. As eternal and infinite, God is then separate and absolute, but also an evolving "all"; he is timeless and transcendent, but also immanent and acting through time.¹⁰ The conception of a triune God presents Coleridge with the solution to his pantheist

⁹ "To William Hart Coleridge," 8 December 1818.

¹⁰ Schelling describes God in creation as an evolving representation: "I posit God as the first and the last, as Alpha and Omega, but as Alpha he is not what he is as Omega." For at the beginning he is merely '*Deus implicitus*,' and only 'as Omega is he "*Deus explicitus*.'" God as absolute at the beginning is without oppositions; the image of God at the end is achieved through knowledge, by bringing about "'a higher, truly all-encompassing unity'—the 'perfect inclusion of all-in-one'" (*CB* 233). Creation can be compared to a stream that is running into and forming a large reservoir; at first, God's image in the reservoir is ruffled because of the water flowing into it; however, as the water rises, the image gradually becomes clearer and more defined. Although God's reflection is not the same as God himself as subject, if the water is conceived as a substance of God and its flowing an action originating from God,

dilemma. God is the Father who eternally begets the Son, and the Holy Spirit is eternally derived from both. The Holy Spirit is an act in which the Father and the Son are made one, united in force and effect. The “life of Deity” is “the eternal unity in the eternal alterity and distinction” (OM 209). It is the “potentiality of all things.” Therefore, God is “The One in all & th’o all, and over all (=the self-existing God, having the Ground within himself. The Ground: the Almighty and reality of God & potentiality of all things. The Father, Son, & Holy Ghost” (M 561). The word “potentiality” is significant as it suggests immanence, a divine plan, and process in creation. Coleridge’s theory of organicism applies also to the individual’s relation to God-as-spirit; the individual is both a separate entity and a finite manifestation of spirit that is part of an all-encompassing “one Life.” The progress of the individual and the whole complement and feed into each other, and they evolve together as the gradual unfolding expression of God’s self-revelation as spirit.

Coleridge’s conception of “Logos,” as God’s directive for the design of creation, is one of a developing process in which humanity evolves to an awareness of its own divine nature and intrinsic kinship with the spiritual universe. Christ, as the “Eternal Word,” the Son, and God incarnate, represents logos and is the cause and agent of redemption (M 720). As the coincidence of both God and man, divine nature and human nature, Christ is the living symbol and the embodiment of the way by which humankind may come to consciously participate in the life of God: “The universal living word creates the world in the sense that Christ, *absolute reason*, or immediate self-consciousness, self and not-self, human and divine, finite and infinite are united.” “The ideal of ultimate knowledge was for Coleridge an incarnation, a presence or revelation of the divine, the infinite *I AM*, in our consciousness” (McNiece 27, 162). This “ultimate

then the gradual formation of God’s reflection is akin to God in every way except that it is not God as he is “absolute.”

knowledge” and the truths revealed to human consciousness, Coleridge affirms, can only be expressed symbolically because symbols represent the synthesis of the infinite and the finite, the real and the ideal, idea and form, representing logos.

Imagination, Reason, and Love: Powers and Attributes of Deity

In Chapter Three, I continue my discussion of Coleridge’s understanding of the role of the senses and the interpreting mind in determining humankind’s relation to knowledge and truth. Coleridge agreed with the German idealists that the understanding of the phenomenal world is fundamentally determined by the structures of perception and the mind. The power of imagination, specifically “primary imagination,” according to Coleridge, is at the heart of this world-making and knowledge-deriving process. Primary imagination generates reality or experience in the very act of perception; it produces images in the mind, gives content to thought, and determines how the mind perceives and actually *creates* reality. It follows an organic process by which the physical world is assimilated and converted into nourishment for thought. “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” (*BL*, I, 304). Since it is “the prime agent of all human perception,” Coleridge affirms that it yields a particular and *intended* version of reality based on God’s fashioning of the world and the mind. It emerges as finite human self-consciousness, inherited from God’s absolute consciousness, and becomes the foundation upon which self-reflection is developed into higher states of knowledge and awareness.

Coleridge defines “self-consciousness” as an “act” and the “I AM” as the act of knowing of God; hence, self-consciousness is “not a kind of being, but a kind of knowing” as “an act”

(*BL*, I, 284-5). The “I am” is a finite act corresponding to the action of the “great eternal I AM” (*BL*, I, 275), and so the act of knowing of the individual mind is a finite repetition of God’s act of knowing as spirit. Coleridge asserts that the individual’s consciousness of his power of knowing is the awareness of the divine, not God as the omniscient and perfect deity, but as he is manifest as spirit. Since “I AM” is God’s self-revelation and is the foundation of all self-consciousness, human self-consciousness, therefore, contains the essence of this revelation and self-seeking; it is an echo of God’s self-consciousness.

Therefore, just as creation is an act of God, self-consciousness is an “act,” a repetition in the finite mind, of the infinite creativity of God because in the finite mind the “act” of creating the opposition of subject and object is repeated. That is, the construction of the self involves identifying the “self” in opposition to an object and also, therefore, ultimately allowing the self to become an object for itself, for self-contemplation in relation to what it perceives it is not.¹¹ However, Coleridge adds that within the infinite I AM, which is universal “spirit, self, and self-consciousness,” there is actually no distinction because “object and subject, being and knowing, are identical, each involving and *supposing* the other. In other words, it is a subject which becomes a subject by *the act* of constructing itself objectively to itself; but which never is an object except for itself” (*BL*, I, 270-9). For within the universal spirit, everything is fundamentally the same self. The perception and experience of distinction allows there to be, only conceptually, a subject and an object, for a conception of “self” to be at all possible, and for the finite mind to make this discovery as spirit. The primary act of self-duplication occurs in the

¹¹ That is, the concept of an identity is conceivable only because of this coming into antitheses. The original unity of being is reconfigured through creation into a unity of infinite qualities and states and, therefore, it no longer simply remains infinite potentiality, but becomes infinite actuality, infinite multiplicity, and infinite personality. The individual’s search for meaning is itself a finite act of creation that participates in the infinite life and creativity of God. It repeats the primal act of separation into antitheses so that “I” can emerge from “not-I,” mind from nature, where all antitheses are derived from the same source and unity.

“I AM” so as to achieve self-consciousness and self-contemplation. This process is re-duplicated in the individual instances of spirit. Underlying this primary act and its iterations in creation is a “will” to self-knowledge. All acts (i.e. of the mind, of reason, etc.) are expressions of this will of seeking and knowing of God through creation. To know, to think, to self-reflect, are all actions of the finite mind; the mind or “reason” (as the unity of mind) is an act within the universal I AM, which is the only true self.

Like the German Idealists, Coleridge argues then that the key to deciphering reality lies in the intrinsic link between mind and nature, both of which, according to Coleridge, are expressions of the same divine language. That is, I argue, Coleridge conceives of the universe as God’s expression, and the human mind perceives nature as a symbolic language precisely because it is fashioned as a finite analogue of God’s mind: “The forms of matter” are understood “as words, as symbols” expressing “the wisdom of the Supreme Being” (*PL*, II, 848). The key to deciphering God’s doctrines lies in the power of imagination. Coleridge explains that since the universe is a product of God’s imagination, words and objects correspond because there is an analogy between the language of God (i.e. nature) and words created to represent the objects of nature. The divine power that uttered the universe into existence is repeated in the human mind that identifies objects with words. Symbols disclose the “living Word” or “Logos” (*M* 62), and since human imagination is analogous to God’s creativity, Coleridge contends that humans possess and participate in divinity through their imaginative creations; poets are the prophets and decipherers of symbols. The symbolic language of art and poetry is then a repetition of God’s creative act and symbolic expression. The poet’s process of creation and self-reflection is a microcosmic repetition of spirit’s process of embodying consciousness in external form. Poetry presents the self’s consciousness as a concrete artistic object, as self reflected for self-reflection.

Therefore, art reproduces what the physical world intimates; it repeats the creative processes governing nature, for nature itself is understood as an eternally self-developing work of art. The indwelling spirit in nature is “the holy and ever-actively creating primal energy of the world, which begets and actively produces all things from itself.”¹² Like Schelling, Coleridge asserts that the same immanent spirit in nature also works in humans. Art must imitate nature’s creative process and organize itself around a central governing idea and grow “by evolution [...] according to a law” (*LR* 147). In his shaping activity, a true artist “properly engages the primal energy with his own creative activity [and] produces works resembling nature” (McNiece 83). Schelling explains, “the artist should indeed, above all things, imitate that spirit of nature which, working at the core of things, speaks by form and shape, as if by symbols; and only in so far as he seizes this spirit, and vitally imitates it, has he himself created anything of truth” (*PA* 9-10). Schelling understands that mind and nature, form and matter share a fundamental unity and kinship, which are gradually disclosed in the mind’s creative activity.

Therefore, Coleridge proclaims, the artist’s or poet’s process of creation is a microcosmic repetition of God’s process of embodying consciousness in nature. “Secondary imagination” interprets and reorganizes the mind’s images of the world in relation to the “ideal” or the truth accessed through the power of higher “reason.” Imagination “gives birth to a system of symbols” and using reason infuses them with universal truths. Hence, the phenomenal world is re-created and raised to higher levels of meaning through the human mind, specifically through the power of reason. That is, through the poet and artist, individual expressions of meaning are produced, and spirit once again becomes embodied and expressed in a symbolic language, but at a higher degree of meaning than found in nature. Consequently, two symbolic worlds emerge: nature and

¹² F. W. J. von Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art: An Oration on the Relation Between the Plastic Arts* (London: J. Chapman, 1845).

art. The world of “nature” is a spontaneous creation of primary imagination in the very act of perception; art, on the other hand, is the willed and deliberate renovation of the world of “nature” as an image in the mind reconfigured in terms of the ideal provided by higher reason. Art, according to Kant and Coleridge, is a “second nature”¹³ created from perceived nature. The artist’s conscious and willful act of creation echoes or reduplicates God’s creativity, and art carries with it the logic of the creative process, which reveals to the artist the nature of his own mind and imagination. He perceives himself as an extension of the I AM’s infinite expression.

By dissolving in order to recreate and unify, imagination functions like an organism. It assimilates, combines substances, feeds on material from the senses, and breaks down identities of absorbed materials to produce new formations and identities. Its product, the poem, itself is like a living organism in which every part, like organs of a body, is integral, necessary, intimately related, and non-arbitrary. Furthermore, just as the process of creating art follows the pattern of organic development, so too is the act of assimilating and interpreting the information *from* art; the interpretation of poetry is an organic process that repeats the artist’s original act of incorporating and decoding the spirit’s script in the world. Therefore, the manner by which the mind and self-consciousness develop, the process of creative expression, the creative products themselves as distinct individual entities, and the way in which products of imagination nourish other minds, all follow the divine pattern and blueprint of organic growth and production.

Furthermore, according to Coleridge, the divine power of imagination discloses humankind’s potential and is the instrument that allows humans to transcend to higher states of consciousness and knowledge to ultimately participate in God’s, and each individual’s own, self-revelation. It is the evolutionary principle: “The imagination is the distinguishing characteristic

¹³ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, Vol. 1, pp. 144. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, pp. 192. Translated by Eric Matthews as “another nature” and “second nature” by James C. Meredith.

of man as a progressive being; and I repeat that it ought to be carefully guided and strengthened as the indispensable means and instrument of continued amelioration and refinement” (*LL*, II, 193). Since the knowledge of reality depends on the nature and structure of the mind, to Coleridge, there is an analogy between the mind’s operation and nature’s processes in producing a necessary knowledge. Coleridge discovers these truths, necessarily, through his “faith” both in God and in the constitution of the mind, specifically in the power of reason as “the attribute of the Deity” in humans (*PL*, II, 612). The “one great Being whose eternal reason is the ground and absolute cause of all the correspondent realities in nature” is also reason in the finite human being (*PL*, II, 489). Although the foundation of knowledge is based on the mind’s constitution and we are therefore trapped within representation, as Kant argues, all human senses and the mental faculties nevertheless conform to God’s requirement of them, Coleridge affirms; therefore, our self-creation is proportionate to God’s becoming. As in the individual so too in humankind’s mental evolution, the organic process by which a plant develops serves as a blueprint, the “symbol of that higher life of reason.” The human mind, through the supreme faculty of higher reason, becomes “the mediator of a new and heavenly series” (*SM* 73). Coleridge describes an evolution in nature in which the organic process itself gradually grows more sophisticated and potent; evolution reaches its crowning end when it reveals through the artist’s creative expressions the spirit all the while seeking and, in seeking, expressing itself as spirit; spirit is no longer a veiled force and intention in nature, but a revelation.

Finally, Coleridge’s writings reveal that the divine element of love, like those of reason and imagination, contributes to revealing spirit’s operation in creation. The power of love allows Coleridge to *experience* kinship and unity with spirit. In fact, Coleridge describes spirit as a force or essence of love where God, “Himself being all, he communicated himself to another as to a

Self. But such communication is Love, and in what is the re-attribution of that Self to the Communicator but Love? [...] Love is the Spirit of God, and God is Love” (*OM* 210). Since God is love, according to Coleridge, the experience of love in creation must therefore be spiritually meaningful. The feeling fuels and guides his search for meaning. It is because of the way imagination and reason operate upon the natural world and the unadulterated love inspired by experiences in nature that the poet is able to read God’s symbolic language of self-revelation; the individual, as an individuation of spirit, comes to a greater knowledge of himself and his fundamental unity with all things through these divine attributes. Humankind’s role in God’s creation is fulfilled by virtue of those divine faculties replicated in individuals, intentionally, for this ultimate spiritual end.

The Poems

In the second portion of this project, Chapters four and five use Coleridge’s conversation poems to demonstrate the role of nature, love, imagination, self-reflection, and artistic expression in contributing to Coleridge’s growing self-awareness, knowledge of his spiritual nature, and experiences of belonging to a cosmic oneness. His act of composing a poem is simultaneously an act of self-reflection upon his profound and defining life experiences and, therefore, the poem relates his developing self-awareness through the very process of composing it. Many of the theoretical, philosophical, and religious ideas in Coleridge’s prose works that are examined in the first three chapters are exemplified, substantiated, and developed in his poems. Through a close reading of Coleridge’s “The Eolian Harp,” “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison,” “Frost at Midnight,” and, in Chapter Six, “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” I demonstrate how Coleridge is able to reflect upon, draw meaning from, and define his individuality in relation to

his profound life experiences, Christian faith, philosophical convictions, and interactions with nature. The poems demonstrate his organically integrative philosophy and understanding of reality. More importantly, they illustrate his growing knowledge of his relationship as a finite being with an infinite and eternal “one Life.”

The mind in this process becomes its own object of study, and the poem becomes an expression of that study. For instance, in “Frost at Midnight,” the mind is shown to seek and interpret everywhere echo or mirror of itself as part of spirit’s self-seeking action in nature. The poem exemplifies Coleridge’s argument that it is in the mind’s constitution, following God’s fashioning of the mind and nature, that it should read God’s symbolic language in nature. That is, the mind seeks God because it is, in its essence, a self-seeking instrument. The “inherent laws of human nature,” which contain the divine essence of self-seeking, are fashioned according to the universal template of the infinite I AM so that the individual “I am” is a finite repetition within the infinite I AM. Furthermore, Coleridge adds that it is also in the inherent laws of human nature to create art. In humans, who are made in God’s image, God has created the unique capacity to discover and learn these truths from nature and art.

Hence, through an analysis of his conversation poems, I demonstrate that for Coleridge, the significance of a poem is not so much what it relates but what it reveals about his spirit and growing self-knowledge. It represents both “a brief eddy” or finite creation within the finite life of the poet as well as an “act” within the vast ocean of the “pure Activity” of infinite being to which that moment belongs (*Anima Poetae* 184). Indeed, for Coleridge, “being” is a process of becoming just as the act of writing a poem, I argue, is a becoming in which meaning is gradually developed and then revealed. Just as a poem represents a moment from Coleridge’s life, Coleridge’s life is a moment within the eternal and infinite “one Life.”

Infinite Recurrence of Spirit and the Eternal Return

Through my analysis of “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” in the final chapter, I discuss the concept of *repetition* so important in Coleridge’s conception of the “infinite I AM,” in the broader, more cosmic context of an eternal and infinite recurrence. I use the phrase “eternal and infinite recurrence” uniquely in this study to refer to Coleridge’s idea of the process by which the eternal fountain of spirit continually pours out ephemeral echoes or mirrors of itself into creation, repeating eternally the act of producing individuals who represent spirit to itself through its otherness. Spirit is ever in the process of re-presenting itself more completely and diversely through the collectivity of unique individuals progressing in different configurations through time; with each generation, individual manifestations repeat the journey of consciousness, but at higher and greater levels of awareness as past knowledge is incorporated and developed.

Out of the infinite I AM’s eternal act of creation, individual emanations of spirit manifest in the phenomenal world and begin the process of self-discovery, and, thus, creation is a great universal thinking process of spirit thinking things through so as to know itself. Universal spirit gains an awareness of its cosmic totality through the consciousness of its constituting manifestations. Spirit in humanity creates and labors through history just as, I argue, each individual undertakes life’s laborious journey as a microcosmic analogue of world history; his finite life and activity feeds into and partakes of that great educational collective journey of spirit through the ages, for immanent in humankind is the spirit’s will-to-self-consciousness.

Coleridge’s conception of being and becoming is central to the individual’s search for meaning through art. While the progress of spirit in each individual contributes to humankind’s growth, Coleridge refers to Schiller and other German Romantics who conclude that humankind’s progress must necessarily follow an endless upward spiral trajectory toward

infinitely higher stages of awareness. I relate this theory to the traditional concept of “eternal return” which is defined as “an idea which posits that the universe has been recurring, and will continue to recur, in a self-similar form an infinite number of times across time or space.” I also juxtapose this theory of the “eternal return of the same” or eternally repeating creation of the cosmos with my description of Coleridge’s “eternal and infinite recurrence” of spirit through the infinite I AM. Both cosmic cycles of repetition co-exist in the world of the “Rime” and in the *form* of the poem as a work of art.

Spirit’s journey follows a circuitous, ascending spiral track, along which particularized emanations of spirit grow to ever-increasing levels of consciousness of themselves as unique individuals in their finite lifespans. As parts of the collective of humankind, each finite journey mirrors, while it is subsumed by and contributes to, the collective voyage. The individual who comes to an increasing awareness of himself during his finite lifespan mirrors the process of the universal spirit coming to an awareness of itself through time and history. Spirit’s journey ultimately arrives at a stage where individuals realize they are none other than spirit coming to an awareness of itself in and through their unique lives. I demonstrate through Coleridge’s works that not only is there a complex, reciprocal, and organic interrelationship between the individual and universal spirit, but that this interrelationship is analogous to that of the individual poet and his poem; both are repetitions of God’s *act* of creative self-revelation occurring at all levels and stages of spirit’s manifestation.

This dissertation thereby illustrates through Coleridge’s works a conception of the individual’s process and experience of spiritual and intellectual growth and argues that this process is organically and symbiotically interrelated with the grander, cosmic motion of spirit’s coming to awareness of itself. Artistic creativity, and in Coleridge’s case, poetic expression, is an

essential and integral activity within this process and experience of participation. Through poetic expression, the poet re-enacts the primal act of creation and participates in the eternal expression of the infinite I AM and, through access to the divine elements within himself, understands and experiences the greater meaning of his role in the eternal and infinite recurrence and “coeternal intercirculation of Deity” (*OM* 206).

Through a close study of Coleridge’s philosophical texts and as understood within the context of European Romanticism and German Idealism and ultimately substantiated and demonstrated in his poetry, this dissertation presents a unified and comprehensive study of the many interrelated topics in Coleridge’s metaphysics that illustrate the individual’s organic and symbiotic relationship with the universal “one Life.” In the first three chapters, I introduce Coleridge’s prose and philosophical texts and draw the intellectual bridges between his ideas and German philosophy as well as the role of imagination, reason, love, and Christian doctrine in Coleridge’s theory of organicism. In Chapter Three, I account for imagination and the manner in which for Coleridge the relation between the artist and his art is analogous to that of the individual and the universal “one Life.” My analysis of Coleridge’s poetry in the last three chapters demonstrates these principles, themes, and journeys of self-revelation. Coleridge, I argue, *embodies* this progression through his mystical experiences of universal unity, and he *expresses* it in his biographical works, which become reifications and records of his developing consciousness.

CHAPTER 1: FRACTALS OF MIND

This chapter introduces some of the foundational concepts and arguments that will be developed and substantiated gradually throughout this dissertation. I begin by discussing how Samuel Taylor Coleridge forms a bridge between continental philosophy and British Romanticism. I focus first on the intersection of German Idealism and Romantic organicism, which features heavily in Coleridge's philosophical worldview. This enables me to then trace the influences and interactions of these concepts with his genuine commitment to the authority of Christian doctrine in the next chapter. In this chapter, however, I present one portion of my greater illustration of how Coleridge synthesizes several intellectual traditions into his own philosophy that defines the individual's role in the spiritual universe and relates the individual's progress to a universal spiritual evolution; furthermore, I illustrate how the theory of organicism and Coleridge's metaphysics are particularly relevant to that relationship. Coleridge asserts, "I have endeavored to unite the insulated fragments of truth and frame a perfect mirror. I show to each system that I fully understand and rightfully appreciate what that system means; but then I lift up that system to a higher point of view, from which I enable it to see its former position where it was indeed, but under another light and with different relations" (*TT* 248-9). Indeed Coleridge's entire philosophy is founded on a perception of wholeness and organic unity, and as I will demonstrate, he perceives the development of philosophic thought as following an organic pattern of growth through history: one branch of thinking leads to another, and each offshoot becomes the cause of others. I argue that Coleridge sees himself belonging and contributing to history's organic and dialectic process, incorporating what were once temporary stages of understanding into a more comprehensive knowledge.¹⁴

¹⁴ In this way, Coleridge is very much akin to Hegel for whom the philosophy of each age is complete in itself; it reflects the character and consciousness achieved by that age. The philosophy of each era has an individuality that

I first discuss how the development of philosophical thought across history follows the principles of organicism; also, the organic properties of growth, assimilation, and evolution throughout nature will be shown to be the *modus operandi* for the development of the individual's thinking, for the evolution of humankind's consciousness, and for fashioning works of art. Immanuel Kant, G.W.F. Hegel, F.W.J. Schelling, Friedrich von Schlegel, and Friedrich Schiller, among others, perceive the story of the evolution of consciousness as a metanarrative and autobiography in which universal spirit, as the collective of human consciousness, relates its own coming to an awareness of itself through its innumerable instances of creative self-expression. Spirit becomes conscious that it is all the while narrating through the whole range of human expression its means of becoming-conscious-as-a-narrator of its own *Bildungsroman*. This process, I argue, is mirrored and replicated analogously in Coleridge, whose writings are for him a means of attaining heightened self-knowledge and self-consciousness. My analysis draws important parallels between the European philosophers and British Romantic thought, through Coleridge's own musings and preoccupations.

Coleridge, like Hegel, perceives an evolution of consciousness throughout human history, which can be measured in the way philosophical thought itself has progressed. Philosophical thought, human consciousness, the individual mind, and works of art conceived in and derived from the individual's mind, all develop, like a plant, through assimilation, incorporation, and growth. I will continue to demonstrate throughout the dissertation that this *modus operandi* is executed by a spiritual intention in all things following a divine blueprint. Ultimately, Coleridge's concept of "multeity in unity" explicates how every individual is both a whole in himself and a part of the universal spirit. The individual, who contributes to the whole through

contributes to constructing the absolute for consciousness. Even when philosophies contradict one another, they all co-exist within the absolute, just as competing individuals taken together make up a society.

his unique activity and expressions, is in turn enriched by the constantly developing nature of universal spirit. I argue that there is an organic interrelationship between an individual author's developing self-knowledge and humankind's evolving consciousness. Therefore, through writing about the self, Coleridge observes, reflects on, and discovers the laws that govern his mind; he realizes that those same organic laws operate in all of God's creation, as much in the progression of philosophical thought as in nature itself.

Moreover, I argue, Coleridge perceives the same divine blueprint executed in the plant also operating in human creative expression. This blueprint, "derived from within," is the "intention" in nature "repeated" in all things (TL 545). The work of art follows the same organic properties as works of nature. A seed contains the "idea" of a plant, which, according to Coleridge, is also part of spirit's will-to-self-revelation; analogous to the growth of a plant, the idea unfolds and a poem takes shape around a central, unifying theme. For Coleridge, God expresses himself in his creation, and all of nature is God's language. The poet is like God in that he creates a second nature according to the same organic pattern of operation that God uses to fashion the universe and the poet himself. These core concepts, introduced with respect to organicism here, will be further developed and substantiated in later chapters.

1. Coleridge and the Intellectual Climate

Coleridge connects European philosophy with British Romantic thought. A century earlier, Lord Shaftesbury in England exerted a significant influence on mainland European philosophy, evincing a long-standing tradition of intellectual cross-pollination across the English Channel. An example of this connection is the idea, pervasive in eighteenth-century German thought, that a poet's expression is analogous to divine creativity. In fact, this concept has

existed since antiquity; Shaftesbury, however, re-energizes it in modern European thinking. He declares a true poet is a “second Maker, a just Prometheus under Jove. Like that sovereign artist or universal plastic nature, he forms a Whole, coherent and proportioned in itself” (“Soliloquy” 93). Similarly, Coleridge states in *The Watchman* that a poet’s work is akin to divine creation, and the poet develops “the powers of the creator, and by new combinations of those powers to imitate his creativeness” (132). Both Coleridge and the German philosophers draw from a philosophical legacy, even beyond Shaftesbury, that ultimately makes their ideas compatible. In fact, Coleridge claims to have anticipated the German thinkers when he states that after he read Kant, Fichte, and Tetens he found his former ideas already expressed in them: “They had been mine, formed, and full formed in my own mind, before I had ever heard of these Writers. [...] was jubilant when I found my own ideas well expressed already [...] and lastly, let me say, because (I am proud perhaps, but) I seem to know, that much of the matter remains my own, and that the Soul is *mine*” (CN, II, 2375).

Crabb Robinson describes how “a German friend” who attended Coleridge’s lectures in 1822 was “delighted to find the logic and the rhetoric of his country delivered in a foreign language,” and he convinced Robinson that “Coleridge’s mind is much more German than English. My friend has pointed out striking analogies between Coleridge and German authors whom Coleridge has never seen” (Robinson 226). In fact, Paul Hamilton remarks in *Coleridge and German Philosophy* that “Coleridge’s career fits into the Hegelian plot in suggestive ways that picture him as a philosophical child of his time” (26).¹⁵ Like Hegel, Coleridge asserts that

¹⁵ Though there is scant evidence of Hegel’s direct shaping influence on Coleridge, Hegel nevertheless impacts and contributes to the thinking of the age to which Coleridge and many others were keenly attuned. In *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition*, Thomas McFarland warns, in reference to Coleridge, that it would be a “greatest ignorance” to separate Hegel from the other thinkers of his time (xxx). Gerald McNiece argues that although “Coleridge didn’t read much of Hegel [...] he did examine and annotate at least the beginning sections of Hegel’s *Logic*, and he seems to have noted the promise for him in Hegel’s general position. [...] Hegel often illuminated Coleridge’s problems [and] they have interesting areas of common concern” (McNiece 40). For instance, Coleridge “affirms the evolution

life's purpose is to establish connection with God. Spirit is known in and as self-consciousness, and, as I will illustrate through Coleridge's discussion of the "infinite I AM," this realization reveals the fundamental unity of the divine and the human. This discovery, moreover, is the fruit of a long historical process of the evolution of philosophical thinking.

In *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge continues to declare his originality: "Indeed all the main and fundamental ideas, were born and matured in my mind before I had ever seen a single page of the German Philosopher; and [...] before the more important works of Schelling had been written, or at least made public" (*BL*, I, 161).¹⁶ Yet, Coleridge acknowledges that "In Schelling's 'Natur-Philosophie,' and the 'System des transcendentalen Idealismus,' I first found a genial coincidence with much that I had toiled out for myself, and a powerful assistance in what I had yet to do" (160).¹⁷ Hence, Coleridge's affinity for Schelling has an underlying rationale. Schelling offers the scaffolding for Coleridge to articulate his own philosophy, which

of matter into spirit, while conveying the horror of matter divorced from spirit" (Kessler 114). Hamilton concludes that Coleridgean scholars neglect Hegel because Coleridge read very little of his work. Nevertheless, considering Hegel's monumental influence on the philosophical thinking of his age, "for Coleridge's eclectic thinking to be out of the loop here would therefore be unusual." Hamilton keeps Coleridge "in the Hegelian picture to which he evidently belongs [...for] Coleridge's favoring of Schelling only reveals its full force if we know about the intellectual quarrel between Schelling and Hegel" (7). Unless otherwise stated, all quotes by Hamilton are from *Coleridge and German Philosophy*.

¹⁶ Coleridge attributes the initial similarities between himself and Schelling to their common philosophical influences ranging from the Neoplatonic philosophers to Kant. Furthermore, Schelling was interested in Plotinus and Boehme, both of whom Coleridge had studied before encountering Schelling's works. Coleridge and Schelling drew from the same philosophical foundation, as did most of the German intellectuals. Indeed, Coleridge found ideas from a number of other philosophers he had previously read echoed in Schelling, including Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Spinoza, Kant, Behmen, Boehme, and Proclus. He admits, however, that since Schelling is his "predecessor, though contemporary," any resemblances between their ideas must be "wholly attributed" to Schelling, and that he must therefore not be accused of "ungenerous concealment or intentional plagiarism" (*BL*, I, 164). Thus, *Biographia Literaria* attempts to make Schelling accessible to an English audience.

¹⁷ Nevertheless, unwilling to entirely relinquish claim to his own ingenuity, Coleridge again declares, an identity of thought, or even similarity of phrase, will not be at all times a certain proof that the passage has been borrowed from Schelling, or that the conceptions were originally learnt from him. [...] Nor is this coincidence at all to be wondered at. We had studied in the same school; been disciplined by the same preparatory philosophy, namely, the writings of Kant; we had both equal obligations to the polar logic and dynamic philosophy of Giordano Bruno; and Schelling has lately [...] avowed that same affectionate reverence for the labors of Behmen, and other mystics, which I had formed at a much earlier period. (*BL*, I, 161)

Later, Coleridge asserts, his views are largely "unborrowed and completely my own" (163n).

theologizes many of Schelling's important concepts. Early in his career, Coleridge expresses ideas he would later find in Kant and Schelling; it is this intellectual sympathy that led him to study these philosophers in the first place, for he had already realized the truth of their wisdom in his own early meditations. This, to some extent, upholds his claims to originality in *Biographia Literaria*. Coleridge proclaims, "I regard truth as a divine ventriloquist" (*BL*, I, 161-4). Indeed, according to Kant and Schelling themselves, all knowledge and philosophic thinking are organic. Although every great philosopher is an original, "his originality is never in the elements with which he works, nor in the conclusions he reaches, nor in the logic by which elements lead to conclusions" because every great philosopher, as Kant describes in his *Logik*, "'builds, so to speak, his own work on the debris of another'" (McFarland xxxi). His originality lies in the nature of his stance. Coleridge himself notes that philosophy exerts a particular influence on cultures: "It combines itself as a color, as it were lying on the public mind—as a sort of preparation for receiving thought in a particular way, and excluding particular views, and in this way its effect has been great indeed" (*PL*, II, 825). Like the philosophers of his age, Coleridge is cognizant of the thread of influence connecting each successive philosophical era to his own.¹⁸

Coleridge's intellectual association with Schiller is also significant. In *Coleridge, Schiller and Aesthetic Education*, Michael Kooy contends that, despite the lack of scholarly consensus regarding the extent of Coleridge's knowledge of Schiller's aesthetics, Coleridge in fact "had

¹⁸ Even Schelling declines to make charges of plagiarism against Coleridge due to this precise realization: Schelling also read Coleridge. [...] Schelling writes that reading Coleridge is very much like reading one of his own works. He doesn't put it quite simply, and states instead that it is delightful to find one of his own works that had been neglected in Germany so well understood. But the hare of plagiarism is raised. 'One ought not to charge a true fellow-genius with that kind of thing,' says Schelling handsomely. [...] Again, the issue of unattributed borrowings, that Schelling is prepared to overlook, has perhaps obscured the more substantial connection between his own understanding of mythology and Coleridge's philosophy of language. To appreciate that link is to agree with Schelling that Coleridge had something to contribute to Schelling's own argument. (Hamilton 104-5)

easy access to nearly the whole of Schiller's corpus, much of it in his own library"(4).¹⁹ Not only was Coleridge a very diligent reader, but based on his keen interest in contemporary German philosophy, in theater, in Kant, and on his translations, including Schiller's own *Wallenstein*, it is clear that he read Schiller, Schelling, Schlegel and the other major German philosophers of the time, including, most likely, Hegel. In fact, Kooy brings to light how Schiller informs Coleridge's notions on aesthetic education and the autonomy of art: "Through his first-hand knowledge of contemporary German philosophy and literature, and, more specifically, his reading of many Schiller texts and the translating of *Wallenstein*, Coleridge knew of Schiller's argument for 'aesthetic education' and it informed his own work on the subject" (193). Coleridge draws on terms and ideas from Schiller's many essays on aesthetics in *Biographia Literaria* and *The Friend*, confirming Coleridge's fifteen years' familiarity with Schiller's works. Therefore, there is ample reason to believe that with Coleridge's erudition, access to German texts, and affiliation with Germanophiles, we need not solely rely on the argument that a shared intellectual climate is responsible for the similarities between Coleridge and the major eighteenth- and nineteenth-century German philosophers.²⁰

As a synthesizing organic thinker, Coleridge claims to consider past philosophical systems as younger stances of human thought that he contemplates, comprehends, and then raises to a higher degree. Here, the chapter's discussion becomes pertinent to the global argument. Coleridge states that his "system" attempts to bring "all knowledges into harmony" by uniting "insulated fragments of truth" (*TT* 248). "I show to each system that I fully understand

¹⁹ Kooy further notes, "In addition, by looking at the literary culture of the day it is possible to see that the whole range of Schiller's work was available to Coleridge in England both before and after his trip in 1798-99, through periodicals like the *Monthly Magazine* and *The German Museum* as well as through the loose affiliation of English Germanophiles he kept in contact with" (4-5).

²⁰ Kooy affirms that Schiller "was the first of the German Idealists Coleridge read; the moral bias in his aesthetics, already so like his own, naturally took root in his own thinking [as did Schelling's]" (96). I shall later delve into some of the ideas on aesthetics shared by Coleridge and Schiller and reveal how Coleridge addresses Schiller's work in his own unique, yet organically integrated philosophy.

and rightfully appreciate what that system means; but then I lift up that system to a higher point of view, from which I enable it to see its former position where it was indeed, but under another light and with different relations” (*TT* 248-9). This statement demonstrates the notion of a growing, organic body of philosophy. In the post-Kantian German philosophers, “Coleridge discovered a worldview so congenial that it is almost impossible to disentangle what [...] is properly his and what he may have derived from German influences.”²¹

My point is neither to vindicate Coleridge from the charge of plagiarism, nor merely to laud his erudition; rather, it is to illustrate that what is characteristic of Coleridge’s mode of thinking, and indeed of all Romanticism, is its drive to unity, an organic impulse that transcends the dissecting and classifying propensity of eighteenth-century thinking. This organic thrust is expressed in his mind’s effort to reveal a ubiquitous and universal organization or system of truth consisting of a harmonious ecosystem of infinitely diverse and interrelated elements. What is particularly organic, and indeed Romantic, about the nature of Coleridge’s thought is that his ideas are not loosely catalogued in his mind, but are ever in the process of being integrated and organized into an organic whole.

²¹ Kathleen Coburn defends Coleridge against accusations of plagiarism and, in fact, praises Coleridge’s skill in offering greater insights into his borrowed material than his sources themselves could provide: “Coleridge borrows only when his own thinking has reached almost the same point as his creditor’s, so that he feels able fully to enter into the other’s thought, indeed more fully than the propounder very often; he sees its further implications and applications and makes it his own by loading it with his own accumulated knowledge” (55). He does not plagiarize intentionally, but believes, as do many other great thinkers, that all knowledge is a shared possession, an enterprise that thinkers past and present participate in, interact with, and build upon. This is because Coleridge, like Schelling also believes that the reality of the human spirit is composed of a universal system of truth that is neither invented nor created, but, rather, discovered by great thinkers. As McFarland points out, then, “Such a view abrogates all philosophical property rights and leaves no room, we immediately realize, for any such category as ‘plagiarism’—we cannot steal what we already own. The truth of things already exists, and the work of individual philosophers no more ‘creates’ the ‘universal system’ of philosophy than Columbus created America” (51). Truth is not a possession, but a reality one participates in and channels; it is a divine voice speaking through different bodies. McFarland concludes “that no philosophy is original, that all philosophers use the materials afforded them by their traditions and their peers, that what has always been important in philosophy has been, not originality of materials, but the coherence and consequence of the ordering of them—the reticulation of the materials” (49).

Indeed, *Biographia Literaria* is such an attempt to establish a coherent and unified philosophical system. It is an unconventional autobiography that chronicles Coleridge's reflections on the process of thinking things through *as* he is recording them. It is an account, not of his life, but of his thinking. It is an autobiography of the mind's developing convictions on poetry, life, and the creative process; specifically, Coleridge employs the biographical genre as the framework for his critical speculations on literature, philosophy, and aesthetics. Most notably, his "object [is] to investigate the seminal principle" or "imagination" (*BL*, I, 88), which is the element of God in creation.

Biographia Literaria also melds Coleridge's discoveries resulting from introspection with his attempts to reconcile the ideas of Spinoza, Kant, Fichte, and Schelling, among others, with his Christian beliefs.²² When Coleridge asserts that he wants his readers to *think*, he means that they must develop and exercise their ability to observe their own minds. In *Aids to Reflection*, he states, "It is a matter of great difficulty, and requires no ordinary skill and address, to fix the attention of men on the world *within* them, to induce them to study the processes and superintend the works which they are themselves carrying on in their own minds; in short, to awaken in them both the faculty of thought and the inclination to exercise it (14)." For Coleridge, it is by discovering the truths about his inner self and about the structures of consciousness and thinking, in this case with the shared insights of contemporary continental philosophers, that the truth about reality outside himself is revealed. That is, I contend, through autobiographical writing, Coleridge is able to observe, reflect upon, and discover the laws that govern his mind

²² Coleridge sets out to present a more comprehensive account of the poetic process than is outlined in Wordsworth's "Preface" to *The Lyrical Ballads*. He describes in conspicuously organic terms how Wordsworth "has drawn a masterly sketch of the branches with their poetic fruitage" but Coleridge wishes "to add the trunk, and even the roots as far as they lift themselves above the ground, and are visible to the naked eye of our common consciousness" (*BL*, II, 88).

and realize that those same laws operate in all of God's creation. To that end, I next analyze Coleridge's theory of organicism.

2. Fruit and Kernel of Coleridge's Organicism

To prove my thesis regarding the organic interrelationship between an individual author's developing self-knowledge and humankind's evolving consciousness, I begin by discussing Coleridge's theory of organicism and his concepts of "individuation," "multeity," and "unity" in relation to his conception of the "one Life." An analysis of these concepts is crucial to understanding Coleridge's conception of the individual's relation to the universal spirit. In his influential study, *Romantic Organicism*, Charles Armstrong uses three main principles of organicism derived from Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* as the conceptual framework for understanding Romanticism: "external delimitation," "interdependence of parts," and "hierarchical totalization." I shall utilize the example of an oak tree to elucidate these principles and discuss their relevance to Coleridge as a synthesizing, organic thinker.

An oak produces seeds that propagate its species just as its existence originated in a seed from another oak. It draws nourishment from outside its physical body, from the soil and the air, and converts it into its own organic substance. In this first principle of "external delimitation," the organism creates the external boundary or physical demarcation of its being. The oak, then, is not only a portion of a larger forest but is its own organism. Similarly, a human being has his own individual selfhood, and individuals are delimited and differentiated from one another by their physical forms, even within the larger organism that is "humanity" in which individuals co-exist symbiotically. The second principle of "interdependence" is exemplified in the unique functions of the various parts of the oak that operate reciprocally to maintain its existence. This

is analogous to an individual human being's constitution. He is a whole in himself with organs, limbs, and senses that have unique and individual functions and that are yet interdependent. That is, each part exists and operates for the sake of the other parts and for the sake of the whole. Furthermore, I argue that this analogy extends to the individual's evolving consciousness in relation to the "body" of the family, society, humankind, and, ultimately, even the universal "one Life." Each increasingly larger whole is comprised of smaller wholes, each consisting of self-conscious individuals maintaining the wholes to which they belong through their symbiotic interactions, just as each individual is simultaneously conscious that he is a whole in himself. Beyond the individual is the conscious and mutually beneficial co-existence and interaction of the self and other similarly self-conscious entities, who, like the self, are acting for the benefit of the whole. In his fragment on "Patriotism," Coleridge speaks in evolutionary terms of the oriental principle where "all are sacrificed to a PERSONAL ONE," and of antiquity where each individual is "sacrificed to the ABSTRACT ALL," and, finally, of the modern Christian era where one "sacrifices to every other what is necessary for the Constitution of a Whole." In the latter example, Coleridge describes a mutuality in which "the Integer consents to become a Part in order to preserve itself as an Integer" (TL 802-3).

This notion introduces the third principle, which encompasses while it also transcends the first and second principles. "Hierarchical totalization" is the governing idea around which interrelationship and delimitation are organized, to which they are subordinated, and from which they take their directive. It unifies around itself, as the fundamental and executive idea, all the various parts into a totality, which ultimately produces the oak or the individual human being. The idea of a governing, executive principle within all organic entities is crucial to my assertion, which I will soon demonstrate, that Coleridge perceives the operation of the same divine

“intention” in creation “repeated” in the processes of the human mind and again repeated in its creative activity.²³

In “Theory of Life,” Coleridge explains that an “individuation” in nature results from a “power which discloses itself from within” (510). The entity with the greatest “individuation” is one with the greatest totality of diverse elements constituting its singular being. Further, the measure of an entity’s status in the hierarchy of organisms in nature, i.e. its individuation, is the result of the combination of the centrifugal and centripetal forces of “extension” and “intensity”:

“The tendency to individuation [...] constitutes the common character of all classes [and...] the degrees both of intensity and extension, to which this tendency is realized, form the species, and their ranks, in the great scale of ascent and expansion” (516). Individuation is the process by which a person becomes a unique individual, distinct from other individuals though also becoming so in relation to them. One becomes a unique human being while simultaneously belonging to a common humanity. Coleridge asserts that all human activity is a process of cultivating the tendency to “individuation.” Therefore, life is a movement from latent potentiality to actuality. Individuality begins as a potentiality, which becomes actualized when humanity perceives its growth through evolving stages of distinct singularity through history up to individuated personality. “Each step involves a kind of purification, as humanity gradually abandons anonymity in order to adopt an increasingly particularized identity” (Kooy 202). So it is with an individual human whose growth and maturation is a process of gaining unique individuality from a state of unthinking infancy. Individuation results from the interaction between the operation of an innate divine essence or power and the forces and circumstances of

²³ Furthermore, as I shall demonstrate in Chapter Three, Coleridge describes the operation of imagination and its effect on the creation of selfhood in these organic terms because imagination follows, like in all natural entities, the operational signature or *modus operandi* of the divine creator whose creativity is “repeated” everywhere, in all universal processes, and in the human mind’s activity.

the outer world. This interaction is characterized by the organic processes of assimilation, integration, and growth.

This concept of individuation plays a significant role in Coleridge's organic theory of the individual's relation to the collective and universal "one Life." The goal of individuation is the realization of one's true potential, the fulfillment of one's innate and unique qualities, and the expression of one's personality while maintaining the greatest possible freedom for one's self-determination. The process of reaching one's self-actualization, of evolving into one's individuality, of fulfilling one's individuation and highest potential, is one of maturation through the organic process of assimilation, integration, and growth of knowledge. Coleridge notes that base elements in nature, such as metals, are "simple bodies" and are "the form of unity with the least degree of tendency to individuation" (TL 515). These elements, nevertheless, have a "life" that is expressed in the "power which affects and determines their comparative cohesion" (508). What determines the rank of a species in nature or the greatest individuality of an organism is where "the greatest dependence of the parts on the whole is combined with the greatest dependence of the whole on its parts" (512). It is the organism with the greatest degree of complexity in the interrelation of the parts and the greatest variety of parts depending on the whole. Therefore, while nature's lowest expressions of individuation are simple elements and metals, its highest is humankind.

However, in the human species, the power of individuation extends beyond merely the individual's potential. One's scope and power of individuation are greatly magnified through one's interdependent interactions with others. That is, there is an advantage to operating within a collectivity because each part is enhanced by the operation of the other parts for the benefit of the whole. In turn, the well-being of the whole profits the individual. This is where, I argue,

Coleridge's notion of "multeity in unity," discussed in the next section, serves the purpose of evolution, not just in nature's individuations, but also in humankind's development; it is the expression of the governing principle in all things achieving higher states of hierarchical totalization.

In organicism, the law of interdependence governs the operation of a healthy and sophisticated organism. The law of interdependence is itself directed by a seminal principle, the governing and executive idea that enforces hierarchical totalization.²⁴ The highest organization in nature, Coleridge argues, is the individuation comprised of and also constituting the "intensity" (i.e. the comprehensiveness and association) and the "extension" (i.e. quantity and multiplicity) of the constituent parts as well as their in-corporation into the whole. At the highest echelon is the human being in whom, Coleridge proclaims, "the whole force of organic power has attained an inward and centripetal direction. He has the whole world in counterpoint to him, but he contains an entire world within himself" (TL 550). He is the "one great end of Nature; [...the] ultimate production of the highest and most comprehensive individuality" (517). "In Man the centripetal and individualizing tendency of all Nature is itself centered and individualized—he is a Revelation of Nature" (551).²⁵ Coleridge refines his idea of the hierarchy of beings in relation to the concept of the great chain of being: "[Nature] does not ascend as links in a suspended chain, but as the steps in a ladder; or rather she at one and the same time *ascends* as by a climax, and expands as the concentric circles on the lake from the point to which the stone

²⁴ As I shall later elucidate, the actions and creations of individual instances of spirit profit others; this organic interdependency and symbiosis contributes to the development of universal spirit as a whole.

²⁵ Armstrong explains that in the individual as well as in nature's ecosystem,

Though all parts are equally dependent upon the whole, the whole is evenly dependent upon different parts. There is a hierarchy of parts, according to the extension of their power [...i.e. that is their power] of 'individuation.' The hierarchical system structured by different levels of individuation turns, on closer scrutiny, to be a new version of a familiar system, namely the Aristotelian chain of being. Mankind is both the highest link on this vertically extended chain, and the point at which it crosses over into its outside, transcending or overcoming itself (64).

in its fall had given the first impulse” (TL 509). The human being encompasses while he also transcends the lower rungs of individuation in nature. “In the lowest forms of the vegetable and animal world we perceive totality dawning into *individuation*, while in man, as the highest of the class, the individuality is not only perfected in its corporeal sense, but begins a new series beyond the appropriate limits of physiology” (516).

Just as the human being is “an entire world” unto himself, the world he has “in counterpoint to him” is also “whole” (TL 550).²⁶ Although humans, at the apex of creation, represent the highest manifestation of individuation, individuality is inseparable from unity with the rest of creation. Individuation is highest when it is combined with the greatest mutual dependence because it then simultaneously embodies both separateness and union for the benefit of itself and the rest. That is, individual humans belong to wholes that are themselves “individual” or “individuations,” such as the family unit, society, humankind, and the universal “one Life.” Coleridge asserts, “the unity will be more intense in proportion as it constitutes each particular thing a whole of itself; and yet more, again, in proportion to the number and interdependence of the parts which it unites as a whole.” Finally, “the living power will be most intense in that individual which, as a whole, has the greatest number of integral parts presupposed in it; when, moreover, these integral parts, together with a proportional increase of their interdependence, as *parts*, have themselves most the character of wholes in the sphere occupied by them” (TL 512-3). The parts that have the “most the character of wholes” are the individual humans who constitute and identify their existence with the greatest possible whole beyond themselves. To fully understand this idea as it applies to the individual’s organic interrelationship with universal spirit, I shall analyze Coleridge’s concepts of “multeity” and

²⁶ Schlegel also indicates, “God is everything that is utterly original and sublime, consequently the individual himself taken to the highest power. But aren’t nature and the world also individuals?” (*Lucinde and the Fragments* 245).

“unity.” Since humankind is the highest unity and individuation, individuals comprising humankind are a multitude that are each a unity and an individuation in themselves.

2.1 Multeity and Unity

Coleridge’s concept of “multeity in unity” describes how every individual is both a whole in himself and a part of the universal spirit. The individual contributes to the whole through his creativity and is in turn enriched by the constantly developing nature of the universal spirit. For Coleridge, God as Absolute remains unchanged in his unified perfection, yet the Absolute also encompasses within its infinite scope its own “spirit,” understood to be a developing expression of God as a multiplicity revealed in the created universe. “[The thing-in-itself is] not the *same* as the *absolute*; but as its Idea in *God*. In the mere Absolute (i.e. *Almight* [sic]) there is neither Division nor Distinction; but in *God*, *whose* is the *Almight* [sic], there is *each* as well as *all*, perfect unity, but yet *distinction*” (*M*, II, 995). God is Absolute, and God is also a unity in multitude of distinct entities that comprise but are not equal to or do not amount to the sum of God as Absolute. With his conception of the “infinite I AM,” Coleridge allows us to perceive in every particular a dual reality or a double life of the particular and the universal consisting of the finite-within-the-infinite and the infinite-within-the-finite. Coleridge retains a tension between his unique and separate individuality and his strong sense of belonging to a greater common universal identity; he describes it as a conscious state of “unity in multitude” where the innumerable manifestations of spirit—as God’s consciousness in creation—gradually and independently become aware of themselves as unique instances of the “one Life.” All these organic processes occur within the “one Life,” which is ever in the process of becoming a richer, more sophisticated “multeity in unity” and an increasingly higher divine individuation.

According to Coleridge, relations of dependence are comprised of complementary polar forces that form the basis for the theory of life. While the opposing forces of “intensity” and “extension” create individuation, Coleridge adds that the tendency to individuate is itself opposed by the tendency to connect. The first is “detachment from the universal life” and the second is “attachment” to the universal life (TL 515). Although stronger tendencies to individuation result in a greater detachment from the life of nature and a greater intensity of life, “this tendency to individuate [nevertheless] cannot be conceived without the opposite tendency to connect, even as the centrifugal power supposes the centripetal” (517). Hence, the greater the individuation, the greater the tendency to connect. In fact, Coleridge affirms, “in nature there is a continual antagonism going on between a universal life and each individual composing it [...] that there is a tendency throughout nature perpetually to individuate, that is, in each component part of nature to acquire individuality, but which is as *harmoniously* counteracted by an attempt of nature to recall it again to the common organization” (PL, II, 528). In all nature there is “as a ground of all reasoning, a perpetual tendency at once to individualize and yet to universalize, or to keep a balance even as we find in the solar system a perpetual tendency in each planet to preserve its own individual path with a counter tendency which of itself would lead it into a common solar center” (PL, II, 529).

Hence, for Coleridge, life consists in the balanced conflict of the two forces. This Coleridge designates “polarity, or the essential dualism of Nature” as the “productive unity” that reaffirms opposites “either as equilibrium, indifference, or identity.” Life is “the unity of thesis and antithesis [...] in the identity of the two counter-powers, Life *subsists*; in their strife it *consists*: and in their reconciliation it at once dies and is born again into a new form, either falling back into the life of the whole, or starting anew in the process of individuation” (TL 518-

20). Later Coleridge adds, “physiologically contemplated, Nature begins, proceeds, and ends in a contradiction; for the moment of absolute solution would be that in which Nature would cease to be Nature, *i.e.* a scheme of ever-varying relations” (520). Even a separate entity is a “thing” because it consists of a “synthesis of opposing energies. That a thing *is*, is owing to the co-inherence” or co-presence of opposing powers and the “proportions” in which they interact “as predominance or as reciprocal neutralization” (525). All becoming is possible through the “perpetual modification of the first by the opposite forces of the second” (536). The idea of progress in the individual based on the conflict of thesis and antithesis is analogous to the development of philosophical thought and human progress throughout history.

Binary opposites—one and many, whole and parts, identity and difference, particular and universal, unity and plurality, etc.—exist only in themselves because they are contrary to each other; the existence of each depends on the existence of the other. Each is defined by the other based on what the other is not and each is in a sense a unity consisting of dependent opposites. When two theses that function as antitheses to each other unite, a new thesis or synthesis emerges. In organicism, the new thesis is a whole that does not negate the two oppositions, but comprises both. The oppositions are not only preserved, but are maintained in stable and productive antithesis. Organicism is itself a system born from, while also encompassing, different opposing philosophical stances.

In Archie Bahm’s seminal and comprehensive study of the history and development of the theory of organicism, he states that “Monists see things as one. Pluralists see things as many. Organicists see things as both one and many. Organic unity is not mere unity but involves both unity and plurality” (Bahm 8).²⁷ Organicists contend that the “being” of each entity is

²⁷ Bahm explains, “Nothing can change completely because everything continues to be related to the ultimate one which never ceases to be one and never ceases to be. Differences derive their being from being in the one, and thus

simultaneously different and the same as other entities; its existence consists of both difference and identity. Each difference is its own identity, while simultaneously belonging to a larger identity of differences. Each entity changes and yet remains the same, and each exists for itself and for the whole. Additionally, an entity consists of different parts, each distinct from every other part and each having a distinct identity. Hence, “If any part of a whole becomes different, the whole becomes different in part. [...] each unit or whole is a unit partly because it is different from other units. Thus all identities entail difference and all differences entail identities” (8). In creation there are gradations of differences and identities, and each entity is a new version of “identity of differences” (8). This is significant because the generation of new forms occurs within the whole, and so continuous change contributes to and defines the identity of the whole.

These conceptions form the basis of a broader view for Schelling and Coleridge. They see universal spirit as a wholeness or that in which all things are united.²⁸ Evolution is a complex and dynamic process of interrelated forces within parts and the whole, working through oppositions and synergy. Beyond every whole is a greater whole, until one can behold the highest, all-inclusive spirit. There, there is but one whole, and every whole is part of it. Universal spirit is a whole of wholes precisely because of its constituent parts. Organic unity and organic plurality coexist in what Coleridge calls a “unity in multiteity” and “multiteity in unity.” Each whole consists of parts and functions also as itself a part of a larger whole to which it belongs. All individual representations and kinds of spirit are wholes within wholes, but which ultimately belong to one all-encompassing whole of spirit.

Similarly, Bahm explains, “each particular is in some sense unique, that is, unlike

can not be really different from each other” (9). They have no true identity even in their difference. (Unless stated otherwise, all quotations are from Archie J. Bahm’s *Organicism: Origin and Development*).

²⁸ Matter is that which distinguishes things into parts. The unity of spirit and matter produces particular instances of spirit that are wholes in themselves. Wholes within wholes are parts of the wholes to which they belong, and, therefore, parts are wholes and parts simultaneously.

everything else. But no particular can be completely unique, for it must be like all other particulars in sharing uniqueness,” which is the quality of the universal (25). The particular owes its existence to the universal absolute from which it derives its being, but, as the discussion of thesis and antithesis in Coleridge’s philosophy makes clear, the absolute is conceivable and can exist only in contradistinction with particulars. Bahm adds, “particulars participate in universals” and “universals participate in particulars. [...] each universal is a part of that particular” (25-6). Coleridge muses, “If we look at our hands, our limbs, they are marvelously composed [...]. Is not the whole power of the universe concerned in every atom that falls and takes its place as a living particle there?” (*PL*, I, 195-6). The absolute is, after all, a reality composed of all existing things. It must be that in which the collectivity of things have their existence, and so it must be a particular absolute with a particular identity based on the identity of the particulars in the collectivity.²⁹ As individuals and reality change, so too must the identity of the absolute in which these changes occur. Since the process of creation is endless, there is no ultimate universal, but a universal with a particular identity changing from moment to moment.³⁰

Thus, for Coleridge, in God’s creation, the human being, who embodies the “highest realization and reconciliation of both [...] tendencies, that of the most perfect detachment and greatest possible union” (TL 550), finds that his goal is to experience a sense of belonging to a greater whole whose importance surpasses that of the individual. Coleridge says that in his thinking, particularly in his meditations on nature, “I can contemplate nothing but parts, & parts are all little. My mind feels as if it ached to behold and know something great—something one

²⁹ So, in organic theory, the whole is just as dependent on its parts as its parts are dependent on the whole. “For a whole of parts cannot be a whole of parts without its parts; it depends on its parts for being a whole of its parts. The parts of a whole cannot be parts of that whole without the whole of which they are parts; they depend on the whole for being parts of that whole. Even though each part of a whole is different from every other part in being a part, it is also like every other part in being a part of that whole; its difference from other parts does not eliminate its being the same as they are in being of the same whole” (Bahm, “Organicism: A More Holistic Explanation,” 157-8).

³⁰ To Coleridge, however, God’s absolute perfection, which is beyond creation, is unaffected in any way by God as he is manifest in his creation. I shall later elaborate on how Coleridge reconciles this apparent paradox.

and indivisible” (*CL*, I, 349). Coleridge applies this vision of wholeness to all facets of human life, including politics, which, I argue, reveals how the laws of organicism describe God’s *modus operandi* repeated in all things and how all configurations of life are microcosmic arrangements of God’s grand organization of the universal “one Life” as the whole of all wholes. Every part is a fractal-like iteration of the master blueprint that orders the cosmos.³¹ Coleridge celebrates individualism and exceptionalism, but reminds his readers to remain humble before God, to whom all humans owe their life and actions. Individuals owe their exceptionalism to God’s own perfection, and each unique person must become free through conscious service to the whole, which is God. It is this “principle” “derived from within” that produces individuation, and is the governing, executive idea around which all parts are unified into the totality of spirit and by which all things are recognized as representatives of the whole. This “seminal principle” defines the organic interrelationship between the universal “one Life” and the individual who owes his being to the universal life and in whom the divine principle operates.

³¹ For instance, in his *Philosophical Lectures*, Coleridge describes the organic nature of a society’s structure by asserting that a “man is unworthy of being a citizen of a state who does not know the citizens are for the sake of the state, not state for the sake of the immediate flux of persons who form at that time the people.” For, in that which is “truly organic and living, the whole is prior to the parts” (*PL*, I, 240-1). “The final cause of the whole” of a society is its “obedient, free, useful, organizable subjects [...] living to the benefit of the state” (*CCS* 54). The final cause of the individual in this case is the state. The whole is greater than each of its parts, and each part has a life and individuality owing to the whole. “The unity of human nature” is “preserved from age to age through the godlike form of the state,” and all things are judged “in proportion as they partake of unity” (*PL*, I, 241). The concept and practice of democracy is that organic unifying principle in the whole, keeping the needs of all individual constituents compatible with those of the whole state. In “Theory of Life,” Coleridge declares, “In social and political life this acme is inter-dependence. Nor does the form of polarity, which has accompanied the law of individuation up its whole ascent, desert it here. As the height, so the depth. The intensities must be at once opposite and equal. As the liberty, so must be the reverence for law. As the independence, so must be the service and the submission to the Supreme Will!” (551). There is a thread of cohesion [...] binding all together making us look on our country at present as our very own [...]. It is this, the principle of unity derived from within, not from the objects of our senses, (which deprived of the interpreting power from within are but an alphabet run mad, are in reality only a tendency like matter itself to be divided and divided *ad infinitum*) that unity in which we have to thank our better nature that though we may perish without end, we cannot utterly cease to be. (*PL*, I, 196)

2.2 Life: Teleology and God's Blueprint in Nature

According to Coleridge, all actions, transformations, and individuations are possible because life is an “act” and “process” of an unfolding central ruling idea in all things. Just as one is able to better understand the human body by comprehending how the heart and circulatory system function, so too do we develop a better knowledge of God by understanding his operation in nature.³² Life is that “power from within” that constitutes organization, and organization is the “arrangement of parts together as means to an end” and also “an interdependence of parts, each of which in its turn being a means to an end, as arises from within” (*PL*, I, 354).

In addition to organicism's principle of hierarchical totalization, life also entails an evolutionary intention:

Organization is nothing but the consequence of life, nothing but the means by which and through which it displays itself. [...] organization has no other meaning than a power which instead of moving in a straight line as the mechanism does, moves round upon itself in a circle, and though it is an act of subsisting (being the act of self-production) is at each moment of our life the identical same act as that by which it was first established—if ever there was a first in reality. (*PL*, I, 358)

Kant's analytic of teleological judgment in his *Critique of Judgment* describes the concept of a “natural purpose” or “natural end” in “organized beings” in which the parts are justified only as they relate to the unfolding intention of the whole.³³ Parts in mechanical objects, such as in a clock, are fixed and defined, whereas organic beings maintain a constantly growing and evolving set of inter-related living components. In *Aids to Reflection*, Coleridge asserts,

³² The Romantics reconfigure the Newtonian model of the mechanistic universe created by a watchmaker into that of a large organism or “World-Soul” with diverse yet interrelated functions.

³³ According to Coleridge, this idea even dates back to Aristotle who states that organic beings differ from lifeless objects in that in the former there is a gradual development and expression of an inner principle, an internal source of propulsion, a maturation that manifests from within.

In the world we see every where evidences of a Unity, which the component parts are so far from explaining, that they necessarily pre-suppose it as the cause and condition of their existing as those parts [...] That the root, stem, leaves, petals, &c. [of this crocus] cohere to one plant, is owing to an antecedent Power or Principle in the Seed, which existed before a single particle of the matters that constitute the size and visibility of the Crocus, had been attracted from the surrounding Soil, Air, and Moisture. (75)

Nevertheless, later Coleridge describes how an organism, being formed or once individualized according to its inner principle, can be understood in relation to our comprehension of its diverse parts. Because organisms are not mechanical objects, their “production” cannot be explained in mechanical terms. An organism’s function in fact opposes the mechanical nature of a watch, whose function and shape are constant and unchanging. Rather, as Coleridge contends, organisms must be understood in the context of growth and teleology.

According to Coleridge, the combination of body and soul establishes the unity of the human being in whom the principle “life” is expressed through the body, and “reason” and “conscience” through the soul. However, life to Coleridge is not limited to the body’s actions, but it is a principle that is immanent throughout animate and seemingly inanimate nature. In fact, there is nothing that is lifeless, and there is no true opposition between the lifeless and the living because what is thought to be lifeless carries within it “life” as an immanent potential. Matter is “the Phantom of the Absolute Will” (CN, IV, 5448). Coleridge notes that life, as we see it, consists of assimilation and organization, which is discovered even in the action of crystals. Therefore, “*physical* or dead properties are themselves vital in essence” (TL 512). Coleridge explains that life is the tendency to individuation, the power that reveals itself from within while also assimilating and combining elements into one coherent individual entity through the synergy

of electricity, magnetism, and chemistry. Life is the “*power* which discloses itself from within as a principle of *unity* in the *many* [...] the principle of unity in *multeity*; [...] I define life as *the principle of individuation*, or the power which unites a given *all* into a *whole* that is presupposed by all its parts. The link that combines the two, and acts throughout both, will, of course, be defined by the *tendency to individuation*” (510-1). Individuation or difference arises first in self-arranging *inanimate* crystal deposits and increases in complexity by layers of organization through the combined actions of electricity, magnetism, and chemistry which form vegetable, insect, animal, and, ultimately, human existence. Individuation or life attains the “apex of the living pyramid” where reason and conscience can be finally expressed.

Coleridge describes how consciousness evolves from inanimate but “living” matter to the highest and most intricate organization, which is the creative human mind. Evolution in nature is a gradual development and “perfecting” of “an internal life” and “internal organization” from insects to fishes to birds to animals and finally to human beings, where the nervous system by which “reflection and memory is rendered a probability,” ultimately becomes capable of expressing the power of reason (*PL*, I, 275). He concludes that the definition of “life” cannot “account for that which more especially constitutes us Man” (*PL*, I, 359). In humankind, nature surpasses herself. The human being is nature, and yet he transcends the natural system from which he was created and cultivated into a goal. He is no longer an unwitting slave to instinct, but becomes nature’s “Lord” by understanding and consciously reining in his animal nature. As a microcosm of nature, the human being has “the power of conquering the whole” (*PL*, I, 275). Therefore, though mechanical explanations are to an extent useful in understanding the operation and physical laws of nature, living organisms ultimately need to be comprehended as they appeal to reasons beyond nature: to teleology, morals, and purposes.

Indeed, Coleridge asserts, “Man [is] a *progressive* animal” (*PL*, I, 321). It is evident to Kant that humans are the final purpose of nature, and so all teleology can be understood in relation to this assertion. If the “purposiveness” of nature is directed toward the life and development of rational and moral beings, it also allows Kant to conceive of a creator of the universe who is just, benevolent, omniscient, and omnipotent. That is, humans must take after and consciously emulate God’s attributes if they are to aspire to the “highest good.” Although natural teleology does not prove God’s existence, Kant proposes that it is a beneficial idea to maintain for its positive effect upon humankind’s moral growth. Echoing the idea that the whole, i.e. universal spirit, is greater than its parts, Schelling states that organic beings, namely humans and everything in the human realm, are transient, while the absolute, the divine, is not. Schelling attempts to resolve this problem of duality and sublimate human life. Armstrong explains,

If the given is given by the absolute, it must at the very least bear a trace of its origin.

[...] the universal and transcendental manifests itself in the particularity of the empirical realm...[in] organic, natural objects and products of art. [...There is] an identity between the absolute and its diverse manifestations [...] where all individual entities are posited as being actually identical to the absolute. (Armstrong 28)

Similarly, Schlegel declares, “‘we can see godliness everywhere’ [...]. God is everything that is purely original and sublime, consequently the individual himself taken to the highest power” (35). Though imperfect, humankind and nature are relative emanations of God and are therefore proportionately sublime. Coleridge, Schelling, and Schlegel take humankind’s teleological end beyond Kant’s vision of a society based on rational morality and freedom by proposing that humankind is ever in the process of progressing toward godhead or manifesting a divinely ordained intention. Coleridge concludes that the “great end” and “ultimate object” of nature is

the “production of the highest and most comprehensive individuality” that “bears to a final cause the same relation that Nature herself bears to the Supreme Intelligence” (TL 517-8). Hence, Coleridge argues that “each part of nature contains in itself a germ of the omnipresence,” and within this germ is a power that “strives to be the whole,” or attempts to establish the absolute. However, because each part of nature is a finite individuation, the power must strive for omnipresence indefinitely, “by a perpetual succession of development” (*PL*, I, 326).

Since creation is the developing work of a divine artist, in all things the intention of the creator gradually reveals itself, first as a will to establish an autonomous whole but also to perpetually develop beyond that whole to increasingly higher states of unity. This concept is crucial to my argument because it reveals that each individual, as nature’s highest individuation, evolves beyond nature along with other individuals who make up the whole of humankind. This evolution is guided by a “seminal,” organic principle in all things, which is the divine artist’s *modus operandi* infused in his creation.

2.3 Evolution: Biological and Spiritual

According to Coleridge, the gradations of life on the ladder of being manifest or express increasingly higher levels of spirit’s self-expression through “perpetual succession” (*PL*, I, 326). Coleridge’s conception of the unity of being is the combination of body and soul, and being’s purpose is to continually progress to increasingly higher states of unity. These ideas describe “Romantic organicism,” which is ultimately, according to Armstrong, the “desire for the solution of the dichotomy of form and matter, the dream of a perfect interfusion of these antagonists—or of a compromise formation which allows them both their roles in a hierarchically articulated whole” (146). Through the aspiration for a perfect interfusion in biological and spiritual

evolution the interaction between opposing and antagonistic forces generates the impetus for growth, progress, and transcendence.³⁴

In “Theory of Life,” Coleridge expands on the role of antagonistic forces. He proclaims that every individual has both centripetal and centrifugal principles—an urge towards individual autonomy and a pull towards unification with the whole. A balance between these two tendencies involves, ironically, the tension necessary for progress as life ascends to increasingly higher rungs on the ladder of being while incorporating in it the lower levels. Coleridge describes how Giordano Bruno perceives “an aptitude implanted” throughout nature “that all things may be related to each and to all, for everything that exists in some time strives to be always, everything that perceives anywhere strives to perceive everywhere, and to become that universally whatever it has as an individual.” That is, Coleridge adds, each part or individuation in the “one Life” contains “a germ of the omnipresence” that “strives to be the whole” to represent or re-establish itself for itself, and because it cannot achieve this totality in itself absolutely, it continues to evolve “by a perpetual succession of development” (*PL*, I, 326).³⁵ In each individuation, the divine artist’s intention begins to reveal itself through the divine principle

³⁴ Armstrong quotes from Murray Krieger’s *A Reopening of Closure: Organicism against Itself* (1989): “It is, then in the two-sidedness of this dialectic, with the opposition—especially, the opposition between the would-be autonomous pull and the would-be totalizing whole—being both indulged and overcome, that the aesthetics of organicism is made by Coleridge, and by those who follow him, to thrive” (8). Furthermore, Derrida explains that the idea of the whole is understood in terms of dichotomies, “binary oppositions such as inner-outer, intelligible-sensible, signified-signifier, subject-object” (quoted in Armstrong 171). While operating within the whole, these oppositions are collapsed, reversed, transcended, or are retained in antagonistic suspension.

³⁵ Ultimately, Fichte’s final transcendence of the subject-object relation in the absolute is “understood in terms of organic unity” just as Hegel’s “absolute is a negation or an appropriation of nature” (Armstrong 24). Similar, yet unique, is Schleiermacher’s description of the two opposing drives in humans, centripetal and centrifugal forces that are “the receptive and the spontaneous powers of the subject,” which are fused and reconciled in the absolute: “The one strives to draw into itself everything that surrounds it, ensnaring it in its own life and, wherever possible, fully absorbing it into its innermost being. The other longs to extend its inner self ever further, thereby permeating and imparting to everything from within, while never being exhausted itself” (*On Religion* 5). Importantly, Fichte’s “absolute I,” as a final synthesis, ends up being an “undifferentiated unity,” or a return to a primordial oneness. “‘Everything in it is one and the same ‘I,’ and belongs to one and the same ‘I,’ wherein there is neither anything to distinguish nor any diversity. The ‘I’ is everything,” but “‘for itself it is nothing and can neither distinguish any act or positing not anything posited in itself.’” There is no distinction between I and Not-I, subject and object because “the absolute is beyond all relations” (Armstrong 25).

or “germ” working in all things. This intention is perceived first as a will to establish an autonomous whole or totality, but also to perpetually develop beyond that whole to increasingly higher states of unity. Ultimately, the intention is to express divinity, the highest individuation. Part of my thesis is to demonstrate through Coleridge’s theory of organicism how the divine artist’s consciousness is implanted into his creation as a “germ” whose intention is to reveal itself to be the divine consciousness seeking to re-present itself to similarly self-revealing divine individuations and to ultimately re-establish the totality of the consciousness from which it is derived.³⁶ This argument will continue to gain support and greater clarity through this project.

These centripetal and centrifugal principles are to be found not just in individual organisms, but also in the very nature of the universe itself. According to Coleridge and the Idealists, space and time, as *a priori* conceptual categories and conditioners of all perception, experience, and knowledge, are necessary individuating devices: “*space* is the ideal organ by which the soul of man perceives the *omnipresence* of the Supreme Reality, as distinct from the works, which in him move, and live, and have their being; while the equal mystery of *Time* bears the same relation to his *Eternity*, or what is fully equivalent, his Unity” (TL 520). That is, space makes necessary the differentiation of organisms, which precludes a single, homogenous omnipresence, and time, in opposing a single, unvarying eternity, resists uniformity. Yet, simultaneously, there is always a greater unity to which all things and processes belong, and the unities of eternity and omnipresence could not be conceived without their individuated counterparts. Without time, there could be no conception of eternity, and without space, there

³⁶ Elucidating Coleridge’s notion of “perpetual succession of development” is Schlegel’s idea of “a plurality of routes to the absolute, [...] a manifold of forms, all representing divergent and singular approaches to the absolute are allowed to coexist” (Armstrong 35). In Schlegel’s conception of organicism there is “an infinite generation of higher-order instances” and “an infinite process of self-reflection” (136).

would be no conception of omnipresence.³⁷ Romantic organicism attempts to transcend the Idealist dichotomy of subject and object, while simultaneously realizing that such transcendence is not entirely achievable or even ultimately desirable. While the “absolute I” cannot posit itself as such, the distinct empirical “I” can nevertheless still posit this impossibility. The whole must encompass a conscious state of “unity in multiteity” and “multiteity in unity,” a coexistence of the particular and the universal, and maintain oppositions and contraries in a deliberate balance that exposes the need for difference in the construction of selfhood. While the collapse of differentiation in Fichte, for instance, entails a return to nothingness, Romantic organicism perceives life as consisting of hierarchies and dualisms that, while being transcended, are simultaneously maintained in new and ever more sophisticated syntheses.³⁸ For instance, the ideal state is an organic whole consisting of interdependent social institutions having a hierarchical arrangement around a central governing and organizing principle.³⁹

According to Coleridge, evolution consists in the simultaneous incorporation and transcendence through synthesis of lower states or contraries: “the whole *actual* life of Nature originates in the existence, and consists in the perpetual reconciliation, and as perpetual resurgency of the primary contradiction, of which universal polarity is the result and the exponent.” That is, the impulse that forms the “tranquil depositions of crystals” is also found in “each ensuing production” of nature, in vegetable and animal life, in nature’s increasing

³⁷ These opposing or, now, complementary concepts of time-eternity and space-omnipresence, like the centrifugal and centripetal forces, relate to the greater framework of wholes-parts, universals-particulars, and Spirit-individuals which reveal how differentiation makes possible unity.

³⁸ Derrida’s vision of a teleological end is an ideal democratic state that would, as Armstrong describes, “preserve a politics of friendship with difference at its heart (Armstrong 177)—a state of plurality within singularity—a multiteity of uniqueness—of parts that make up a whole while yet remaining parts.

³⁹ For Schelling, humankind progresses in self-knowledge and realizes the law of moral good, which culminates in the establishment of an ideal human unity: “The goal of history is the gradual realization of human freedom under a world-constitution. But progress toward such a moral world-order is assured only if man’s free actions are really the expression of a higher spirit, a Fate or Providence, that will necessarily bring to pass what should be” (Randall 259). Schelling envisions a unity of all humankind in a world state, under a world-constitution that guarantees the highest possible freedom for each individual. The proof of God’s existence is furnished when history completes its course, in the “absolute synthesis of all actions” in God’s universal body. (259).

tendency to greater individuation” (TL 537). Furthermore, Coleridge explains, “the vegetable and animal world are the thesis and antithesis, or the opposite poles of organic life.” They exist as “counterpoints” where “there is the same shape in them all, and a multitude of animals form, as it were, a common animal. And as the individuals run into each other, so do the different genera. They likewise pass into each other so indistinguishably, that the whole order forms a very network” (538-9). Each “intermediate link” between the vegetable and animal realms, such as the insect world, has “struggled itself loose and become emancipated from vegetation” (541). The same divine blueprint executed in the plant is seen unfolding in the life of the insect and in the animal as a higher, more complex, and more comprehensive process. Everywhere, “the intention of Nature is repeated” (545), expressed through the “germ of the omnipresence” in “each part of nature” (*PL*, I, 326). Furthermore, with each, “intenser” form of individuation, “Nature never loses what she has once learnt, though in the acquirement of each new power she intermits, or performs less energetically, the act immediately preceding. She often drops a faculty [...], but it is only to recollect herself with *additional*, as well as *recruited* vigour, in some after and higher state” (TL 548).

Again, Coleridge concludes that nature’s highest achievement, “both in the intensity of life and in the intenseness and extension of individuality,” is humankind, “the highest realization and reconciliation of both her tendencies, that of the most perfect detachment with the greatest possible union.” Coleridge asserts, in humankind nature arrives closest to God’s image where God beholds his own reflection, not only in the entire face of creation, but also in each unique individual human. He fashions the human being in his own image “by superadding self-consciousness with self-government, and breathed into him a living soul” (TL 550).

Now, for the first time at the apex of the living pyramid, it is Man and Nature, but Man

himself is a syllepsis, a compendium of Nature—the *Microcosm*! Naked and helpless cometh man into the world. Such has been the complaint from eldest time; but we complain of our chief privilege, our ornament, and the connate mark of our sovereignty. *Porphyrogeniti sumus*! In Man the centripetal and individualizing tendency of all Nature is itself centered and individualized—he is a revelation of Nature! Henceforward, he is referred to himself, delivered up to his own charge; and he who stands the most on himself, and stands the firmest, is the truest, because the most individual, Man. (550-1)

Humankind as “syllepsis” incorporates all nature’s syntheses and maintains in it all nature’s past configurations. Humankind is therefore the microcosm of nature. However, humankind has also transcended nature because the necessarily endless process of evolution persists, though no longer in the material realm, but now in a spiritual dimension beyond nature: in human self-consciousness and knowledge. Through history humankind incorporates and maintains in it all its past configurations and discoveries. Biological evolution leads up to humankind as the emerging image of God where God as spirit begins to behold itself as God manifest in creation.

2.4 Humankind as the Emerging Image of God

Coleridge’s understanding of humankind’s relationship with God involves a synthesis of various philosophical and spiritual traditions. Like Hegel, he attempts to embody the culmination and confluence of the greatest achievements of human wisdom. For instance, as I shall later discuss more thoroughly, in many ways Coleridge is a Spinozist. However, while he agrees with Spinoza that God is the “ground” of all reality and that all things are parts of God, Coleridge’s Christian belief compels him to add that God, in addition to being in nature, also retains a perfect and absolute *a priori* status beyond creation. Similarly, Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie* is seminal

to Coleridge's conception of nature, and Coleridge argues that although nature is God, God is more than just the sum total of nature's parts. As a Christian, he perceives God as an absolute *a priori* force beyond his creation who manifests himself and acts in the individuations of nature. Coleridge synthesizes a vitalist conception of nature with an Idealist conception of consciousness: God is active throughout the universe and is embodied in nature; he is One, absolute, perfect, and indivisible, yet he is also One-in-the-many, through the material universe in which all things are interconnected through a shared spiritual principle.

Coleridge seems to echo Shaftesbury's notion that the author of the universe is a single soul that is "diffusive, vital in all, inspiriting the whole" and from whose "original and eternally existent *thought* [...] we derive our own."⁴⁰ For Romantic organicists, the universe is perceived as manifesting a divine life. As Coleridge proclaims, "Every Thing has a Life of its own, and [...] we are all one Life" (*CL*, II, 864).⁴¹ The human soul is said to house the accumulated experiences of all humans. It is a living, developing element that, like all living organisms, "preserves itself by drawing into itself everything that is outside of it. Everything that is alive nourishes itself on what is alien to it" (Gadamer 253). The fundamental property of life is assimilation. Hence, assimilation is the character of the "one Life," and all entities in creation belonging to the "one Life" contain the principle of life and necessarily follow the same mode of operation. Likewise, the human soul, the mind, and the body assimilate the Not-I into the self, and it contributes to the growth and extension of the self. That is, just as an individual grows in knowledge, so does humankind develop its wisdom as a single mind by assimilating and incorporating the collective experiences of all past individual humans into itself. Hence, there

⁴⁰ Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, "The Moralists: A Philosophical Rhapsody," 308. The idea of a "World-Soul" replaces the purely mechanistic concept of the universe and refines Plato's and the Renaissance theory of the world as one massive animal with interconnected parts and functions.

⁴¹ Letter to William Sotheby, 10 September 1802.

are, at all levels of being within the “one Life,” the fundamental organic properties of assimilation, incorporation, and growth. Furthermore, these properties form the basis for the operation of the human mind, for the growth of each developing intellect, and for the evolution of human consciousness that results from the interrelation between the individual’s development and the collective wisdom in which all minds participate and into which all knowledge is fed.

Abrams notes, “the system of Romantic philosophy—in a fashion adumbrated by Fichte, developed by Schelling, and carried to its ultimate by Hegel—is itself represented as a *moving* system, a dynamic process which is driven *by an internal source and motion*” (NS 173). Similarly, I argue, each unique individual thinker’s conceptual system is driven by its own internal logic and evolves independently, though not in isolation from but in consonance with the developing collective human consciousness around him. Abrams observes that Fichte’s own thinking develops “by posing a thesis, opposing this by an antithesis, and resolving the opposition in a synthesis which becomes in turn the thesis which is opposed by a new antithesis” (174); it is the “moving principle of the Concept” (175) or dialectic manifest throughout history. This process occurs in the individual in a unique fashion and on a universal scale in which the individual himself operates. He is both unique and independent, and yet part of and contributor to the shared dynamic system of human wisdom.⁴² As I have discussed, according to Coleridge there is a shared organic principle of growth and movement within all things that expresses itself in conscious and unconscious processes of human thought and activity, in historical and natural phenomena, in biological life and evolution. The dynamic principle is fueled by “the creative power of contraries which are antithetic yet complementary, exhibit a tension of opposition and

⁴² Abrams briefly alludes to this idea when he states, “The same dialectic—of immanent movement and self-induced passage of each element into its own contraries and contradictions, which in turn press for reconciliation or synthesis—manifests itself in the phenomenal world of objects, of people, and of institutions, just as it does in the systematic thinking of the philosopher” (175).

attraction, and conjoin in a union that generates a new existence” (176). God’s creative breath and executive will moves through creation and in all things, working itself out from “inconscient” matter to the light of absolute knowledge and self-consciousness.

This organic principle of growth through assimilation and reconstitution, I argue, applies to the development of a plant, indeed to all biological life, to human thinking across history, and to each individual human’s developing consciousness in his finite lifespan. Throughout the history of philosophy, systems of thought have been progressing toward an implicit goal, each arising from those preceding it in a self-determining sequence, constituting an immanent teleology. The evolution of consciousness follows a plot that has a “phenomenal and temporal correlative in the process of the physical universe and in the course of all human experience and human history” (*NS* 178). Furthermore, I argue through Coleridge’s metaphysics that the conception of the gradual unfolding of an immanent design in nature, in the events of history, in the systematic thinking of Coleridge himself, in all human actions and expressions, *necessarily* reveal to the human mind the presence of a divine creator, whose signature lies in all these analogous operations. This commonality is perceived as evidence of an implicit intention.⁴³

Coleridge’s intellectual career and poetic and philosophical writings embody the process of organic development. Firstly, even before being exposed to the nourishing thoughts of the German Idealists, Coleridge assimilates into his thinking Plotinus, Giordano Bruno, Leibniz, Boehme, and others whose ideas form the basis for his later intellectual sympathy with German philosophers like Schelling and Schlegel who also draw from the same philosophical wellspring. In them, he discovers some of his own ideas already expressed. J. G. Herder describes this

⁴³ Abrams notes that according to Hegel, the world is “‘Objective Thought,’ or conversely, ‘Reason is in the world: which means that Reason is...its immanent principle, its most proper and inward nature, its universal.’ Hence the same self-evolving ‘spirit’ which realizes itself in the total system of philosophy also manifests itself as ‘nature,’ and in another aspect, when it is ‘spirit given over into time,’ it manifests itself as history” (178). This self-executing will and intention manifesting itself is what Hegel calls “the cunning of Reason.”

assimilative process in organic terms: “The deeper anyone descends into himself, into the construction and source of his noblest thoughts, the more will he cover his eyes and feet and say: ‘What I am, that have I become. Like a tree have I grown: the germ was there; but air, earth, and all the elements, which I did not myself provide, had to make their contribution to form the germ, the fruit, the tree’” (*ML* 184). However, in appropriating other philosophers’ ideas, Coleridge believes he is clarifying, improving, and refining their concepts while acknowledging that their ideas, in turn, symbiotically help shape his own theories. As I will discuss in the next chapter, Fichte’s “Transcendental Ego,” Hölderlin’s “Being,” and Schelling’s “Absolute Will,” all coalesce in meaning for Coleridge within a Christian frame. His fertile mind allows their great ideas to take root and grow within a fresh climate, simultaneously allowing his own consciousness to arrive at an awareness of himself as a manifestation of self-conscious spirit and experience something divine within himself “that already and forever exists” (*CN*, II, 2546). Coleridge “restated little that he did not improve, and he succeeded better than any of his predecessors in converting the organic concept of imagination into an inclusive and practicable method for specifically literary analysis and evaluation. [...] The life-cycle of an organism—birth, maturity, decay, death—had, of course, been one of the most ancient paradigms on which to model the conception of history” (*ML* 218). In organicism, human products and institutions are conceived as germinating, following an immanent will and design, assimilating into themselves the materials of their time and place, and realizing their destiny and potential. All being is becoming, and of all creation is an ongoing process of growth and progress.

Like a plant, the living mind develops its perception, understanding, and knowledge by assimilating and incorporating external elements into itself. Coleridge asserts that there is a “likeness between the education of man and the process of nature” (*PL*, I, 274). “I move,” he

adds, “in consequence of having a life” just as a “tree shoots out, the rivers flow” (*PL*, I, 92). There are “correspondences and symbols” between the growth of a plant and that of reason, which is why Coleridge experiences “awe” when he beholds the growth of a plant; in its operation he sees “the same power as that of reason” but “in a lower dignity” which is “therefore a symbol established in the truth of things” (*LS* 72). Ultimately, the plant becomes a symbol of and model for understanding the analogous operation of imagination, which is the essence and function of a higher, divine element in humans.⁴⁴ Just as a plant assimilates materials from the earth and air into its own substance, so does the synthetic power of imagination operate in the production of art while revealing itself “in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities” (*BL*, II, 16). Coleridge concludes that this is why “a poet’s heart and intellect should be combined, intimately combined and unified, with the great appearances of nature” (*CL*, II, 864).⁴⁵ Once “combined and unified with the great appearances of nature,” the poet’s works of art also follow the same organic properties as works of nature. For art, “creating autonomously like nature, both organized and organizing, must form *living* works, which are first set in motion, not by an outside mechanism like a pendulum, but *by an indwelling power* like the solar system, and which, when they are completed, turn back upon themselves” (*ML* 212).

3. The Artistry of Organicism

Abrams describes organicism as the “philosophy whose major categories are derived metaphorically from the attributes of living and growing things” (*ML* 168). For Coleridge, however, these principles are not merely metaphorical, but are very real laws of the divine

⁴⁴ Abrams refers to Alexander Gerard’s *Essay on Genius*: “When a vegetable draws in moisture from the earth, nature, by the same action by which it draws it in, and at the same time, converts it to the nourishment of the plant: it at once circulates through its vessels, and is assimilated to its several parts. In like manner, genius arranges its ideas by the same operation, and almost at the same time, that it collects them” (*ML* 167).

⁴⁵ Letter to William Sotheby, 10 September 1802.

essence working in all things. They apply to the creation of an autonomous literary work, which shares those laws governing the life of organic entities. Just as a seed contains the idea or intention of the plant, which according to Coleridge is spirit's will-to-self-revelation, analogously, a poem gathers shape around a central, unifying idea; the seed comes to fruition as a unique expression and character, as though it had been a poem composed by God, for indeed, according to Coleridge, God expresses himself through his creation, and all nature is God's language. It is the means by which God arranges and sets in motion all universal laws and events. As all languages have rules and an internal logic, "Nature, ever consistent with herself, presents us everywhere with harmonious and accordant symbols of her consistent doctrines" (TL 524). The word "doctrines" has a clear spiritual resonance and indeed, according to Coleridge, nature is a sacred utterance. The mind perceives nature as the symbolic language of God, and the key to deciphering God's doctrines lies in our own imaginative ability.

Works of art, like living, growing, organizing, and evolving organisms, have a being and a becoming. Indeed, art houses consciousness.⁴⁶ Schlegel conceives of the totality of texts of human literature—sacred and classical—as a great system manifesting the absolute. Despite their vast diversity, these works "form an organic whole, they constitute, properly viewed, only a single poem." All books of literature must be viewed "only as a single book, and in such an *eternally developing book*, the gospel of humanity and culture will be revealed" (*Lucinde and the Fragments* 250). Like a human being, a work of art or literature exists within a historical, social, and political context. While the complete literary canon can be taken as a whole, as a repository for the history of a developing cultural consciousness, similarly, the literature of Greek antiquity, for instance, produced in a specific period in history, can itself be considered a unified whole, as

⁴⁶ Armstrong points out that Coleridge and Schlegel "do not think of organic structure as a mode, or possible application, of language; rather, they think of language on the basis of organicism" (3).

can every authentic work of art within antiquity.⁴⁷ Furthermore, just as a historian studies the whole past while also analyzing the details of specific events within each period, a work of art can be analyzed and understood in terms of its parts, which are in turn wholes comprising of constituent elements in and of themselves. “Just as the organic seed fulfilled the circular course of its formational drive through constant evolution—grew happily, blossomed lushly, ripened quickly, and withered suddenly—so too every poetical mode, every age, every school of poetry” (Armstrong 37).⁴⁸ This is precisely the same attitude that Coleridge espoused with respect to philosophical thought discussed in the first section of this chapter.

Armstrong observes that Coleridge’s aphorisms in *Aids to Reflection* are “organically constructed” in that each is “a whole in itself.” Though they seem to elide mutual interrelationship, they are also systematically organized. Coleridge’s aphorisms are divided under three categories, each elevated to a higher status than the last: “Prudential Aphorisms,” “Moral and Religious Aphorisms,” and “Aphorisms on that which is indeed Spiritual Religion.” “Even if each aphorism is a whole in itself, the more general collection is nevertheless organized in a ladder-formation akin to the Aristotelian chain of being we found appropriated in the *Theory*

⁴⁷ In the resolution of great works of art, such as in Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, there is “‘a thoroughly undetermined and thus infinitely progressing expectation of sheer fullness.’ [...] ‘every incident is a member of an infinite series, the result of prior events and the seed of future ones.’ The originality of this scheme stems from its superimposing, in a manner equivalent to the view of history [...] a structure of immanence onto a structure of infinite progression” (Armstrong 39).

Homer’s epics are comprised of numerous parts that are independent, self-contained wholes, each having a separate life and an internal harmony like the whole epic to which they belong.

⁴⁸ Schlegel juxtaposes two views of history. He perceives the past as an organic unfolding and development of time while each era is an organic whole in itself. So, two different movements occur in history as organic systems: “on the one hand, there is ‘the system of the circular course’ and, on the other, ‘the system of the infinite progression’” (Armstrong 37). The art of Greek antiquity, for instance, reaches its full potential and then ends; while in the broad historical context, art continues to unfold linearly, following “Kant’s notion of infinite perfectibility” (38). The plot of history is an organic whole, yet it lacks a decisive ending because, though it has a purpose that governs its unfolding, time and evolution are open-ended processes, ripe with infinite possibility. Both Schlegel’s historical structures represent a development and growth in time and both are “different deployments of organic unity. One of these systems is rooted in a radical notion of interdependence, while the other is strictly hierarchical” (38). These ideas undergird some of Coleridge’s thinking and will become central to my later discussion of progress and the eternal recurrence.

of Life [as a ladder of being]. Thus *Aids to Reflection* must be deemed a hierarchical organization of aphorisms and detached comments, not a genuine collection of independent parts and mutually interdependent fragments” (Armstrong 79). This remark is noteworthy because Coleridge’s structuring of his aphorisms, his organic mode of writing, corresponds to his conception of God’s ordering of nature. I argue that given that his ruling theory consists in determining human expression as a repetition of God’s creativity, his own works must be a conscious project in illustrating this belief. The poet is like God in that he creates a second nature according to the same organic pattern that God used to fashion the universe. In fact, Coleridge describes his essays in *The Friend* as organic individuals: “Each Essay will [...] be found complete in itself, yet an organic part of the whole considered as one disquisition” (*F*, I, 150).

In his “Essays on the Principles of Genial Criticism” (1814), Coleridge describes how organicism is the foundation of a “well-constructed work of art” and how the aesthetic role of imagination is to create a beautiful and organic unity in which beauty is defined as “Mulleity in Unity” (372). Furthermore, we perceive beauty and derive a spontaneous pleasure from apprehending this mulleity because, while belonging to a whole, it still retains the character of a mulleity. “The sense of Beauty subsists in simultaneous intuition of the relation of parts, each to each, and of all to a whole: exciting an immediate and absolute complacency, without intervenience [sic] therefore of any interest sensual or intellectual” (378).⁴⁹ Analogous to the principle of individuation in humans, the greatest works of art are organized like organisms having the greatest individuation. Coleridge notes that a great work of art is “rich in proportion to the variety of parts which it holds in unity” (“On Poesy or Art” 255). That is, its greatness

⁴⁹ Here, Kant’s influence is evident in Coleridge’s emphasis on disinterestedness or “complacency” in the recognition of beauty. Also, the conception of organic unity in art dates back to Plato’s *Phaedrus* that describes how a great literary work must be organized, like “a living creature, having a body of its own and a head and feet; there should be a middle, beginning, and end, adapted to one another and to the whole” (Plato 1).

consists in the coincidence of the greatest individuality with the greatest universality.⁵⁰

Coleridge defines life as “the *power* which discloses itself from within as a principle of unity in the many” or “unity in multiteity.” This power “unites a given *all* into a *whole* that is presupposed by all its parts” (TL 510). In a plant, the “essential principle” provides the “law which all parts obey” (LL, I, 358) Following this master code, a poem’s parts mutually support and clarify each other, and every element is integral and essential. Coleridge develops his theory of organicism through the close study of Shakespeare’s plays, which he believes bring the multiteity of human nature and experiences into a unified whole. Shakespeare’s genius *is* the spirit of nature that “works from within by evolution and assimilation according to a Law” (LL, II, 147) and “the rules of the Imagination,” which are “the very powers of growth and production” (BL, II, 84); Shakespeare’s imagination synthesizes opposites and reconciles discrepancies and discordant elements.⁵¹ Abrams observes,

Shakespeare, Coleridge maintains, adheres ‘to the great law of nature that opposites tend to attract and temper each other,’ and he produces a whole ‘by the balance, counteraction, inter-modifications, and final harmony of different.’ And as against the perfectly finished classic models, we find to admire in him the infinite promise of the never completed. (ML 221)

In this respect, to Coleridge, Shakespeare embodies the highest achievement of human literary creativity and transcends his place in time and history.

⁵⁰ Coleridge designates the works of Shakespeare and Milton to be such examples of greatness. “In Shakespeare the play is a *syngenesia*, each has indeed a life of its own and is an individuum of itself, but yet an organ to the whole” (LL, II, 151). However, Coleridge had even more confidence in Wordsworth’s ability to produce the greatest philosophical poem. Just as humankind is nature’s greatest achievement, Wordsworth’s poetry would be humankind’s highest accomplishment, involving the greatest intensity of individuality with the greatest extension and range of vision.

⁵¹ Abrams notes, “From the standpoint of organic theory, the measure of Shakespeare’s greatness is precisely the diversity and seeming dissonance of the materials of his plays: the reconciliation into unity of tragedy and farce, laughter and tears, the trivial and sublime, kings and clowns, the high style and low, pathos and puns; and the delineation in high tragedy of man as at once the glory, jest, and riddle of the world” (ML 221).

Coleridge states that the organic principle “is innate, it shapes as it develops from within, and the fullness of its development is one and the same with the perfection of its outward Form” (*LL*, I, 495). The completed outward form is manifested from within. Hence, genius, which is free from prior precept, is, nevertheless, never free from the innate divine law of assimilation and evolution. The work of imagination springs up spontaneously, takes on an independent life, and by its own energy evolves its final form in the same way that a tree grows.⁵² A work is unique, yet it follows universal laws, which the poet unconsciously, and sometimes consciously, obeys, because his composition proceeds in accordance with the order of the living universe. So, each poem may be unique yet comes into existence according to universal laws.⁵³

Coleridge maintains that the artist repeats or follows nature’s operation and intention in his own creative activity, that in nature’s and the artist’s creativity there is a “co-instantaneity of the Plan and the Execution” (*LL*, II, 221). The artist’s creative process, in its unconscious purposefulness and secret intention as vegetal growth, follows this same “spirit of nature” (“On Poesy” 259). The poetic impetus, the act of composition, the elements that construct and develop a poem, all correspond to the workings of nature.⁵⁴ Art manifests nature’s secret laws, which, to Coleridge, are evidence of God’s organic artistry.⁵⁵ The artist’s process is seen to follow nature’s laws; his art involves the same divine element in the creation of nature. The artist himself is a

⁵² John Keats, too, claims that poetry must come “as naturally as the leaves to a tree” (Letter “To John Taylor” Hampstead, 27 February 1818).

⁵³ As I shall elaborate in the next chapter, the spontaneous adherence to divine law is, paradoxically, to operate and rejoice in the highest possible freedom, for the poet’s participation in God’s process is, correspondingly, his participation in God’s absolute freedom.

⁵⁴ All natural structures and forces, including what Kant called the categories of mind and perception, are subsumed in the operation of the law. For Coleridge, imagination assimilates and constructs new material while reason aids imagination’s operation by natural law.

⁵⁵ Goethe, too, notes that great art is produced “like the highest works of nature [...] according to true and natural laws” because the artist follows “the laws Nature herself follows” (*ML* 223). Newton argues that the laws that create order and beauty of the universe, of the “most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being... the execution of a design by a purposeful God” (*ML* 164). The concept of a divine architect or designer of nature became prevalent in 18th century philosophy. John Dryden argues that “No atoms, casually together hurled, / Could ever produce so beautiful a world” (“Epistle One: To my Honoured Friend Sir Robert Howard on his Excellent Poems” Vol. 1, pg. 32, ll. 31-2).

product of nature, and his art is nature taken to the highest level.⁵⁶ However, while the seed determines the growth of a plant and fulfills its inherent purpose without choice, the production of art, though often spontaneous, is not unwilled or without intention or plan; indeed it expresses the artist's unique spirit.⁵⁷ Through the expression of the artist's unique spirit, the universal shines through his work. The work of art, "once brought forth," now stands as its own entity, with its own "ideal reality," producing its own "permanent" and "highest effect" through its interaction with humankind. It, in turn, like God, breathes a spiritual life "into the human form" and spiritualizes humankind.⁵⁸ That is, I have been demonstrating, art not only houses consciousness and repeats God's act of creation, but it also becomes the medium through which God as spirit in the human mind communicates with other minds. Coleridge's challenge to the neoclassical concept of imposing strict predetermined rules to art is the idea that there is a spontaneous and inherent out-working of an "essential principle" that guides the production of art, which, as I have shown, is the same as that in nature, which produces individuation or the

⁵⁶ Goethe asserts that in the artist and in his art, nature achieves something higher than herself and surpasses herself because "as man finds himself placed at the highest point of nature, he again considers himself a whole nature and as such has again to produce a peak in himself. For this purpose he raises his own existence by penetrating himself with all perfections and virtues, produces choice, order, harmony and meaning, and finally lifts himself as far as to the production of the work of art. [...] Here is necessity; here is God" (*ML* 206).

⁵⁷ Rudolph Steiner, "Goethe As Founder of a New Science of Aesthetics."

⁵⁸ In a book on Winckelmann, Goethe states that the human being's task is to first recognize himself to be the acme of nature and to then

bring forth inwardly yet another pinnacle. For this purpose, he heightens his powers, imbuing himself with all perfections and virtues, calling on choice, order, harmony, and meaning, and finally rising to the production of the work of art, which takes a pre-eminent place by the side of his other actions and works. Once it is brought forth, once it stands before the world in its ideal reality, it produces a permanent effect—it produces the highest effect—for as it develops itself spiritually out of a unison of forces, it gathers into itself all that is glorious and worthy of devotion and love, and thus, breathing life into the human form, uplifts man above himself, completes the circle of his life and activity, *deifies him for the present*, in which the past and the future are included. [...] *The god had become man, in order to uplift man to a god.* (quoted in Steiner 1)

Indeed, Hume propounds that there is a controlling blueprint in the mind of the artist, but unlike the growth of a plant, "in all compositions of genius, therefore 'tis requisite that the writer have some plan or object...some aim or intention in his first setting out, if not in the composition of the whole work. [...] Events or actions in a narrative] 'must be related to each other in the imagination, and form a kind of Unity, which may bring them under a plan or view'" (*ML* 165). Nevertheless, Abrams notes, "the logic inherent in the organic view of composition could demonstrate that this choice between rules and lawlessness was a false dilemma. A plant grows independently of imposed controls, yet in strict obedience to natural laws. By parallel reasoning, in the imagination of genius the alternative to external rules is not lawlessness, but the inherent lawfulness of organic development" (223).

artist who creates art. Imagination in art is an echo of imagination in nature, i.e. God's principle in creation. This follows Kant's claim that "a work of art must be treated like a work of nature, a work of nature like a work of art" (207). German theorists held the operation of a plant as the archetype for the creative process of imagination.

Coleridge explains that while genius manifests a higher degree of individuation, it also "exists in a participation of a common spirit [...]. To have genius is to live in the universal, to know no self but that which is reflected not only from the faces of all around us, our fellow creatures, but reflected from the flowers, the tress, the beasts, yea from the very surface of the waters and the sands of the desert. A man of genius finds a reflex to himself" (*PL*, I, 220). More importantly, as Addison asserts, while natural genius is described in organic terms, it also exhibits "that divine impulse, which raises the mind above itself, and makes the sounds more than human" and beyond nature itself (*ML* 187). It takes humankind beyond nature, to divinity; it is the secret intention in creation, gradually manifesting itself in history. "Genius, is that God within.' [...] He is a double-man, compounded of knowable and unknowable elements, Godlike and venerable, as inscrutable to himself as to others, creative by processes which are vital and spontaneous like the self-effecting growth of a tree, whose greatest work springs unanticipated out of the darkness into the light of his consciousness" (*ML* 200). Coleridge draws from myriad sources to elucidate, through his own example, how the "God within" can become manifest through his own imperfect and complex dual nature. For, indeed, a human being can become godlike in his virtue, "morally," through the "imitation" of God's "goodness" (*PL*, I, 342).

As I will further substantiate in the next chapter, Coleridge, as an organic thinker, assimilates, incorporates, and synthesizes several intellectual traditions into his own unique

philosophy, which describes as it simultaneously substantiates the organic interrelationship between the individual's progress and the spiritual universe. According to Coleridge, philosophic thought follows an organic pattern of growth through history, and he sees himself belonging and contributing to that progression. All human expression constitutes a single metanarrative through which spirit comes to a greater awareness of itself; the individual achieves greater self-knowledge through his own expressions, and hence both processes are symbiotic. Coleridge's concept of "multeity in unity" explicates how individuals are both wholes in themselves and parts of the universal spirit. They contribute to the whole through their expressions and each in turn is enriched by the constantly developing nature of the universal spirit.

I have begun to establish another important portion of my thesis, namely that the organic properties of assimilation, growth, and evolution throughout nature are recognized as the *modus operandi* for the development of the individual's thinking, for the evolution of humankind's consciousness, and for fashioning works of art. These processes are guided by a divine blueprint "derived from within" all things and is the "intention" in nature "repeated" in all things. Coleridge discovers that the laws of organicism in all of God's creation are the same laws governing his mind, operating in the progression of philosophical thought, and shaping human creative expression. God's operational signature, creativity, and "intention" are "repeated" everywhere in nature, in all universal processes, and in the human mind's activity (TL 545). Every part of the "one Life" is a fractal-like iteration⁵⁹ of the master blueprint that orders and dictates the operations of the cosmos. "Each part of nature contains in itself a germ of the omnipresence," which guides the process of evolution (*PL*, I, 326). Each individual evolves along with other individuals who make up the whole of humankind.

⁵⁹ I use the term "fractal" in its general sense derived from geometry to describe how certain natural objects or phenomena exhibit in their parts a repeating, self-similar pattern at every scale or level of magnification (i.e. a pattern identical or similar to the whole).

I have demonstrated, through Coleridge's philosophy of organicism, that the divine artist's consciousness is implanted in creation as a "germ" whose intention is to reveal itself to be the divine consciousness seeking to re-present itself to similarly self-revealing divine individuations. Evolution has lead up to humankind as the emerging image of God where God as spirit begins to behold itself as God manifest in creation. That is, art becomes the medium through which God, as spirit in the human mind, communicates with other minds.

Hence, the fundamental organic properties of assimilation, incorporation, and growth are expressed at all levels of being within the "one Life." They form the basis for the operation of the human mind, for the evolution of human consciousness, and in the creation of art. The spirit of nature works in art "from within by evolution and assimilation according to a Law" (*LL*, II, 147). Just as the "idea" or form of the plant is contained within the seed, a poem analogously takes shape around a central idea, which is the same law of spirit working through nature. According to Coleridge, God expresses himself though his creation, and the artist repeats or follows nature's operation and intention in his own creative activity. This chapter introduces some of the foundational concepts and arguments that I will develop and substantiate gradually throughout this dissertation.

CHAPTER 2: SPIRIT IN THE MIND

In this chapter, I elucidate how Coleridge Christianizes Schelling's conception of being and Spinoza's pantheistic philosophy and synthesizes them, along with various other philosophical schools of thought, to arrive at his own "higher," more comprehensive understanding of the individual's relation to universal being. In Coleridge's conception, the human mind, at the pinnacle of evolution in God's creation, repeats in manner God's expression and participates in God's creativity by expressing its own consciousness. I illustrate how Coleridge realizes, along with some of his German contemporaries and influences, that the gradually developing understanding of God is the result of the operation of a divine intention. God as spirit in creation is the "germ" seeking for and coming to an awareness of itself as spirit through the human mind.

To demonstrate this point, I discuss Coleridge's Kantian assertion that reality is actually a representation and not reality as it is in-itself; the knowledge of reality depends on the nature and structure of the mind and, to Coleridge, there is an analogy between the mind's operation and nature's processes in producing a necessary knowledge. Coleridge discovers this truth through his "faith" both in God and in the constitution of the mind, specifically in the power of reason as "the attribute of the Deity" in humans (*PL*, II, 612). Nature, he asserts, is the "mirror" in which the mind beholds its own mode of operation and that the "one great Being whose eternal reason is the ground and absolute cause of all the correspondent realities in nature" is also reason in the finite human being (*PL*, II, 489). Furthermore, I discuss how, according to Coleridge, nature is the reification of God's thought, a "modification of intelligence" or "appearance" of a higher spiritual intelligence, which allows spirit to perceive itself, both in nature and in the human mind. Material reality is the communication of ideas that discloses divine consciousness to itself.

Therefore, Coleridge's metaphysics reveals that because human thinking is determined by the mind's constitution that is fashioned by God, and because human consciousness emerges through the interaction with material reality that is God's expression, there is a spiritual intention and necessity dictating our knowledge of reality. I argue, therefore, that, for Coleridge, the human faculties and the mind's structure have been molded precisely as they should be to achieve a particular and necessary kind of understanding of reality that conforms to God's requirements and for spirit's self-actualization. Indeed, the very impetus of humankind's search for meaning and thirst for knowledge are guided by an innate "intention" or "will" operating through the configuration of the mind and senses specifically to achieve this revelation

Finally, I discuss the philosophical role of artistic expression in Coleridge's conception of the mind, reality, and spirit. To Coleridge, the purpose of *Bildung* and *Logos* is to gradually cultivate and express "the Idea of God" through the human mind, and the theory and practice of "aesthetic education" serves this purpose of *Bildung*. Thus, I continue to demonstrate that in Coleridge's metaphysics the individual, as a finite individuation of spirit, repeats the creative activity of the "infinite I AM" from which he derives his being; the individual's growing self-awareness and knowledge of life and God reflects the stage at which universal spirit has achieved its purpose of self-actualization through humankind. Ultimately, spirit or God's living and growing power of consciousness implanted in creation is revealed to be gradually coming to behold itself as a "multeity in unity" through its myriad manifestations.

1. Spinoza and the Allure of Pantheism

As introduced in the previous chapter, Coleridge's thinking is understood in relation to his significant knowledge of German Romantic and Idealist philosophy, which he finds

juxtaposes well, and necessarily so, with his Christian beliefs. Coleridge thus arrives at a conception of God that draws from and builds upon these intellectual traditions, and this conception defines the complex relationship between God and the individual. Hamilton notes that Coleridge “Christianizes Schelling’s ontology, replacing its logic with doctrine” (8) not simply to make it conform with the demands of his Christian faith, but “when Coleridge was confident of imposing his own terminology on Schelling, he drew on the Christian pattern to which he believed Schelling’s thought, to be correct, must conform” (16). Moreover, Kant, Jacobi, and Schelling, according to Coleridge, “were articulating a sequence in the history of thought to which he [Coleridge himself] belonged; a moment in which he was embedded, an over-arching ‘Spirit’ [...] in which his own individuality needed to inhere” (16). Coleridge is keenly aware of himself as a contributor to the history of thought. Furthermore, he realizes that all creative activity is a repetition of the abundance of God’s creativity and that a truly self-conscious individual is one who is aware of himself as belonging to God’s “absolute grounding,” as one of its representations and representatives.

This idea can be traced to an early period in Coleridge’s career when he was engaged with Spinoza’s pantheistic philosophy.⁶⁰ Spinoza describes God not as a transcendent, independent being, but as one inbuilt in reality and the cause of all things; God is not the creator of all things, but *is* all things. Hence, an individual is a finite member of the collective substance of God. Coleridge’s conception that all life is an organic process of growth, a gradual revelation of spirit, and that there is “one Life within us and abroad”⁶¹ is the result of a deep-seated and spontaneous attraction to a pantheistic view of reality inspired by his early readings of Spinoza.

⁶⁰ In contradistinction to orthodox Christianity, Pantheism “is a theology whose god is entirely indwelling. No other-worldly personage, scenario or vague dimension needs to be postulated as a guarantee for our sense of the numinous” (Hamilton 136).

⁶¹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “The Eolian Harp,” ll. 26.

Nevertheless, Coleridge repeatedly resists his pantheist inclinations when reminded of his Christian faith.⁶² He admits his pantheist dilemma: “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” (*BL*, I, 201). While Coleridge’s great “I AM” is the ground of all existence, his Christian faith eventually allows him to disentangle himself from a purely pantheistic notion of the universe. His philosophy reveals and explicates the fundamental unity of the universe through the conception of the “one Life” that connects humankind, nature, and God. That is, he perceives humankind and nature unified in God’s omnipresence; furthermore, as a philosopher who incorporates and complements Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie*, he promotes the conception of an organic interrelatedness of all elements in the universe.⁶³

For all that is sublimely beautiful and appealing in Spinoza’s thought, there are some notions that are nevertheless irreconcilable with Coleridge’s thinking and the ideals of Romantic individualism. For instance, in Spinoza’s conception, the individual has little significance, an ephemeral “fleeting and insubstantial vagary of nature” (McFarland 69-70). Coleridge thus develops Schelling’s idealism and Spinoza’s pantheism and raises them, as he sees it, to a higher, more complex, and all-embracing Christian context.⁶⁴ As a Christian philosopher, he

⁶² Coleridge is described as being “on a form of tightrope strung between the poles of subject and object, continually trying to reconcile the two without falling into the abyss of Spinoza’s pantheism” (Wilson 2). Despite Coleridge’s deep sympathy with Spinoza’s thinking, his even deeper Christian faith allows him to resist Spinoza’s tremendous appeal. Nevertheless, although Coleridge is a critical and rational thinker in his philosophical enterprise and in his study of Christian doctrine, he is also drawn, with intense curiosity and fascination, to the belief in supernatural forces, to the inscrutable mysteries of nature, and to human folklore, which figure heavily in his works.

⁶³ Similarly, Lessing conceives of a personal God as a “World Soul” that subsists and functions as an organism. The World Soul is the universe as a single intellect in which every individual participates. Giordano Bruno perceives God as the sum of all particular things, whose life and substance constitutes all things, i.e. nature, nature’s laws, and the human soul. The soul is immortal because it is part of God, and God’s rules and laws determine creation; hence, there is no individual free will, but only God’s absolute will. Fichte links God with the universe and adds that the individual ego’s consciousness develops out of the knowledge of objects, which are its own products. All life and knowledge is a development toward the fulfillment of God’s moral order; the world is the arena in which the divine realizes its own moral purpose. These perspectives, to Coleridge, are important but offer only part of the picture.

⁶⁴ Spinoza does not attempt to prove God’s existence, but proclaims existence *is* God. All things, including individual humans, “are nothing but modifications of the attributes of God, or modes by which the attributes of God

acknowledges God as a “living and personal God, whose Power indeed is the *Ground* of all *Being*, even as his will is the efficient, his Wisdom the instrumental, and his Love the final, Cause of all *Existence*, but who may not without fearful error be identified with the universe” (*CL*, IV, 894).⁶⁵ As a comprehensive thinker, Coleridge draws wisdom from various philosophical traditions and shines a Christian light upon them so that they may be understood, as he deems it, in the highest possible context.

Coleridge’s conception of God as both the “Absolute” beyond creation and as spirit acting in creation resolves the tension caused by his pantheist notions and experiences of spiritual unity throughout nature; this synthesis reconciles his head, which “was with Spinoza,” with his heart, which is “with Paul and John.” Specifically, he conceives of a deity who is entirely independent from and beyond the universe and beyond our ability to fully grasp and, simultaneously, one who is immanent in nature in multiple forms, levels, or manifestations. Throughout nature and the universe, God manifests in infinite multiplicity as spirit whose highest expression is humankind. Coleridge is ultimately able to conceptually identify and distinguish between God as an “Absolute” and God as “Spirit” in nature and to perceive nature’s processes as part of divine creativity.

Ancient philosophy, from which the pantheist tradition emerges, also directly influences Coleridge’s conception of life as an emanation of God. Plotinus propounds that creation is the

are expressed in a fixed and definite manner” (*Ethics*, I). These modes have no existence in themselves. Humans, for Spinoza, have no free will or choice, but are determined by necessity. Secondly, God has neither mind nor soul, “neither intellect nor will”; thus “God does not act according to freedom of the will” (*Ethics*, I). “God does not love or hate anyone” (*Ethics*, V). “All things are conditioned to exist and operate in a particular manner by the necessity of the divine nature.” Coleridge asserts “that the theory which subjects all things to the will of an indifferent deity [...] is far from the truth” (*BL*, I, 247 footnote). Ultimately, there is no goal or meaning of life, no hope or promise in the future: “nature has no particular goal in view, and that final causes are mere human figments” (*Ethics*, I). McFarland notes that many great thinkers like Schelling, Hegel, and Schopenhauer started “from the logical elegance of a Kantian position” or the “Hegelian river,” but “progressed to the dreaded but inevitable [...] great monistic sea of Spinoza” (99). In fact, even Lessing claims that finally “there is no other philosophy than the philosophy of Spinoza” (79). Schelling, however, by way of Kant and Fichte, transforms Spinozism into an idealistic materialism and returns consciousness and will to God.

⁶⁵ Letter “To William Hart Coleridge,” 8 December 1818.

result of the overflow and outpouring of the essence of being or force of the One and that all resulting manifestations of being in creation are constituted and interconnected by a single immaterial and inscrutable force. The One, to which all things belong, Plotinus identifies with Parmenides's "One," as the ground of all existence, and with Plato's "Good," as the source of all values. Schelling, Coleridge's most prominent influence, echoes Plotinus and Spinoza by stating that everything flows out from the idea of God like a tree springs forth from a seed, that all things belong to the substance of God, and that by understanding the world of independent objects, one comes to understand God. Also, like Boehme, who considers nature as the manifestation of spirit, Schelling posits nature and the universe as expressions of spirit. Nature is a living organism whose growth is the working out of an unconscious immanent purpose. Individuals are finite manifestations of the universal spirit, which is the ground of all reality and source of all ideas. Similarly, Coleridge states,

Leibniz taught the system of Spinoza, namely that the deity, as the great Mind, not merely modified into thoughts as our minds do, but gave each thought a reality, and that the deity was really different from all creatures by that thing—the preconception of things conceived. His thoughts were more real than the effects of them, and therefore He gave a reality to those thoughts, and that whatever was possible became real not merely as thoughts, nor yet by a participation of the reality, but by a communication of this reality to that which was so thought by the deity. (*PL*, I, 580)

I argue that these are important considerations for understanding Coleridge's metaphysics, especially because they shed light on his understanding of the individual's relation to God. In God, thought precedes reality; reality exists because thought occurred in God. Furthermore, humans exist because God did think, and in human thinking, God's thinking is repeated.

However, in human thinking reality precedes thought and so reality, as God's thought, becomes the occasion for human thinking, which is God's thinking now proceeding from, as opposed to preceding, reality. In Coleridge's conception, then, the human mind, as a reality originating from God, repeats God's expression, thereby participating in God's creativity by expressing its own thoughts in language and art. The human mind is also the bridge, a thought of God given reality, which connects God's thinking preceding reality to God's thinking proceeding from reality.

Spinoza defines God as "a being absolutely infinite—that is, a substance consisting in infinite attributes, of which each expresses eternal and infinite essentiality" (*Ethics*, I). So, Coleridge extrapolates, particulars are in their essence unique and yet just as infinite and eternal as all other particulars. That is, the substance that constitutes a particular human who develops the conception of God in his mind is that essentiality of God as spirit, which is God as he is manifest and not as he is as absolute, reaching for and gradually coming to an awareness of itself. History's epochs are stages in the evolution of God's substance discovering its own eternal and infinite essentiality. Hence, the evolution of consciousness reveals God to God to be God.

According to Schelling, too, it is in this sense that the many find their identity in the one: "There is everywhere only One Being, only One true Essence, identity, or God [...]. God is unconditionally One, or there is only One absolute. For there is only One substance, which is God [...] affirmed by itself." God is the "absolute identity" of all.⁶⁶ For Coleridge, the individual "I am" is cast from and then swept back into the oneness and totality of being, like a wave generated on a vast ocean of the "infinite I AM"; like a wave, the individual's existence is contingent upon the generation and reintegration of its form into the ocean of being. Coleridge remarks that existence is but "a brief eddy from wind or concourse of currents in the over-

⁶⁶ Friedrich W. J. Schelling, "System of Philosophy in General and of the Philosophy of Nature in Particular," in *Idealism and the Endgame of Theory: Three Essays*, ed. and trans. Thomas Pfau (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994) 153.

flowing ocean of pure Activity” (*Anima Poetae* 184). The individual, as a finite ephemeral being or a momentary mode of existence, is created and then swept back into the totality and oneness of “Being,” just like each brief successive wave that the ocean casts loses its shape and returns incessantly, as substance, to its vast essentiality. Yet, without its waves, the ocean is no ocean at all; lifeless, still, and indifferent, it is no being at all. With its waves that recur ceaselessly at different times and places, no two exactly alike, it is the one, the many, the ever-changing face of “unity in multitude,” of “multitude in unity,” and of the living process of the eternal return and the infinite recurrence.⁶⁷ Hence, as discussed in the previous chapter, for Coleridge each individual is a manifestation of the substance of God as spirit. When the individual acknowledges that his uniqueness is an attribute of the infinite spirit, he begins to recognize his true being and purpose.

2. Faith, Reason, and the Christian Doctrine

Coleridge’s religious and philosophical writings illustrate that the reality of a triune God ultimately presents the solution to the tension caused by his pantheistic inclination; God is conceived as both immanent and transcendent, self and other. The Son is engendered as the act of the Father in the generation and contemplation of the Son. [...] But it is likewise and simultaneously, as it were, the act of the Son in referring himself and in him the plenitude of divine forms to the Father, and thus directed towards the Father. But what other term can we designate this act, but by affirming that it is *an eternal proceeding from the Father to the Son and from the Son to the Father, but such procession being in its nature circular, at once ever refluent and ever profluent*

⁶⁷ Refer to the Introduction for an explication and to Chapter Six for further elucidation of the concepts of “infinite recurrence” and “eternal return.”

*[... “circumincession”] or the primary, absolute, co-eternal intercirculation of Deity.
(OM 205-6)*

The Trinity or triad coexists eternally in a dynamic and equal relationship: the Father eternally begets the Son, and the Holy Spirit is eternally derived from both. Coleridge speaks of the Holy Spirit as an act, in which the Father and the Son are made one, united in force and effect. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct in their relations and expressions, but one in essence; each is wholly God. The movement of spirit, often depicted as the breath of God, spirit of life, or in natural terms, as the free play of the wind, is a circulatory action that proceeds from the Father to the Son and returns from the Son to the Father, constituting “the eternal unity in the eternal alterity and distinction, the life of Deity. This is truly the Breath of Life indeed” (OM 209). Coleridge Christianizes Schelling’s conception of the “Absolute” by describing the “One” as the Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the union of both through the action of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, the triad is also a monad, a “unity in multiteity” or, in this case, a unity in trinity. As with Schelling’s “Absolute,” the “primordial monad” or “original ground” becomes an “other” for itself at the moment of cosmic creation and yet remains all the while itself in its own otherness by and through the inter-relationship of its three characteristics. These characteristics are discussed in Schelling’s philosophy as the “ideal,” the “real,” and the union of both. For Coleridge, creation is the expression of the triune God. The “life of Deity” is precisely this highest abstraction of the “Idea in the Holy Spirit, that which proceedeth from the Father to the Son and that which is returned from the Son to the Father, and which in this circulation constitutes the eternal unity in the eternal alterity and distinction—the life of Deity” (OM 209).

The life of Deity, moreover, subsists according to a plan and intention derived from God, and Coleridge’s conception of “*Logos*” is a command for the pattern of creation, a developing

process in which humanity, which houses spirit, evolves to an awareness of its own divine nature and intrinsic kinship with the spiritual universe. The divine plan is for humanity to willingly seek reunion with God.⁶⁸ Therefore, society must progress toward a state of perfection through the moral education of feelings and affections of people based on the example and teachings of Christ. Christ, as the eternal “Word,” “*Logos*,” the Son and God incarnate, is the cause and agent of redemption. As the unity of both God and man, divine nature and human nature, Christ is the embodiment of the way, the representative and living presence in humans by which humans may come to consciously participate in the life of God. Coleridge refers to Jacob Behmen’s belief that in every individual resides “a higher being” who is “bedimmed under the luster of the immediate and sensual being which is as it were its husk and outward covering, but which in moments of tranquility most frequently appears in the voice of conscience, but often in high aspirations and in feelings of faith that remain afterwards as sentiments and thoughts of consolation” (*PL*, II, 484). Therefore, Coleridge writes, “Adam must be contemplated as a representative Man virtually containing all men—that he was not only Man but Mankind” and that Christ must be “considered not only as a spiritual divine Man but as the essential Divine humanity” (*CN*, V, 6010). It is in this “Mystic Body” (*CN*, V, 5727) that humankind is united as members of the church and body of Christ, and so the “final cause of all creation” is a “divine humanity” (*F*, I, 316n). Hence the divine essence in individuals is “*Logos*” as an act and directive from God; it is the spirit of God seeking and coming to an awareness of itself in creation through humankind.

J. R. Barth notes that Coleridge accepts “the notion of an ever-ascending manifestation of Nature in different forms, differing in kind” (137). In humankind, however, there is a different

⁶⁸ According to Coleridge, evil and vice, pain and suffering exist for humans to learn about and develop virtue. Humanity gradually discovers that happiness lies in virtue. Though one may freely choose to sin, the resulting pain and guilt serve to guide one back to moral action and experience the happiness associated with it because to act morally is to live in conformity with God’s will and, hence, to partake in God’s blissful state.

sort of evolution, no longer biological, but spiritual. Coleridge describes the evolution of the world where “nature in her ascent leaves nothing behind, but at each step subordinates and glorifies”⁶⁹ and that the “one great end of Nature [...] is] the ultimate production of the highest and most comprehensive individuality” (TL 517). Barth notes that one of Coleridge’s “most interesting rapports is with the French scientist and religious thinker Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. [...] both see Christ as the final cause and matrix of the created world; both focus on the evolutionary movement of the world as a progressive development toward ultimate perfection, culminating in union with God-man—for Teilhard the ‘Omega-point,’ for Coleridge the ‘divine humanity’” (197). The goal of human evolution is to reveal and express the divine element in creation.

In a letter to John Thelwall, Coleridge introduces the idea of God in all things: “there is an Omnipresent Father of infinite power, wisdom, and Goodness, in whom we all of us move, and have our being” (CL, I, 280). Elsewhere he speaks of “the indwelling Christ in the Soul” (CN, V, 6524) and of the path to a virtuous life being the dynamic union of one’s will with the indwelling Christ who acts in the soul. God as spirit resides within the human soul and in all things; hence, everything is interconnected through this shared essence. Coleridge states, “man possesses love, and Faith and the sense of the permanent [...] because he is] irradiated by a higher power: the power namely of seeking what it can no where behold, and finding that which itself has first transfused, the permanent; that which in the endless flux of sensible things can alone be known; which is indeed in all, but exists for the reason alone, for it is Reason” (OM 122). Coleridge calls “Reason” the “mind’s eye” and “the attribute of the Deity” in humans (PL, II, 612). Through his philosophical project and poetic musings, he sets out to discover through the

⁶⁹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “Notes on Baxter’s Life of Himself,” *Literary Remains, Complete Works* Vol. 5, Ed. W. G. T. Shedd and H. N. Coleridge (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1854) 326.

“endless flux of sensible things,” “the permanent” attribute within by investigating the processes by which the human faculties of reason, understanding, and imagination interact with the world and between themselves to produce meaning. The “permanent,” as it relates to God, is that element of deity within humans that seeks to express itself, and Coleridge’s growing awareness of his intellectual and spiritual powers is subsumed within this universal process of the permanent attribute of Deity in humankind seeking greater awareness through its interactions with the world and its creative expressions.

3. Mind Creates its Reality

Coleridge builds upon Kant’s and Schelling’s understanding of the relationship between the various human faculties and their contribution to forming a particular kind of knowledge of reality. Kant argues that we are trapped within representation and that our discriminations, classifications, and explanations of the world are shaped by the innate structures of the mind that determine the nature of experience and knowledge; hence, that which lies beyond representation or the world of appearances—the Absolute or reality-in-itself—cannot be known. Schelling circumvents or perhaps avoids this problem by stating that since all of creation is fashioned in God’s image and are parts proportionate to him, so should human faculties match up with God’s or conform to God’s requirement of them. This follows Schelling’s “God of becoming, one whose self-production in shapes *proportionate* to human faculties of apprehension is what renders him a personal God” (Hamilton 1). Since everything is Being, or God’s actualization, the absolute is “apprehended in a more fundamental manner than that permitted by the logic of reflection expounded by Kant and Fichte [...]. Schelling insisted that this primal identity did not cancel or transcend our world-making activities” (19) but rather, I contend, Schelling and

Coleridge maintain that our faculties and the structure of our minds, our perception of reality, conform to the requirements of God for spirit's actualization.

Coleridge refers to Aristotle's argument that all knowledge begins in experience, through the senses, and all notions of reality are consequently derived from the senses. Therefore, the objective, sensible world to Aristotle is a "true" reality in which there exists a power that has the "capability of producing all that *should* be derived from it" (*PL*, II, 707). That is, reversing Plato's process, Aristotle proceeds from the particular to the universal, from the concrete to the abstract. This power in reality allows universals to be abstracted from generalization. Coleridge concludes, "the form of the human mind, or that by which man is compelled to think universally, is a substance in nature [and] is an existential reality" (*PL*, I, 390-1). While discussing Kant and Lord Bacon, Coleridge explains that we perceive not things in themselves, but things as they relate to the senses and as they are apprehended by our own particular mental constitution, which "reflects the objects subjectively" and "substitutes for the inherent laws and properties of the objects the relations which the objects bear to its [the mind's] own particular constitution" (*F*, I, 491). Hence, Coleridge even justifies his belief in God by incorporating Kant's logic into his own argument:

The idea of the Supreme Being appeared to me as necessarily implied in all particular modes of being [...] but I was not wholly satisfied. I began then to ask myself, what proof I had of the outward existence of anything? Of this sheet of paper for instance, as a thing in itself, separate from the phenomenon or image in my perception. I saw, that in the nature of things such proof is impossible: and that of all modes of being, that are not the objects of the senses, the existence is *assumed by the constitution of the mind* itself—

by the absence of all motive to doubt it, not from any absolute contradiction in the supposition to the contrary. (*BL*, I, 200-1)

I point out that, like Descartes and Kant, Coleridge realizes that any knowledge of reality has its foundation in the structures of the mind. That is, the knowledge of nature as well as the nature of knowledge depend on the nature of the mind. Therefore, there is a predetermined relationship between the mind's operation and nature's processes in producing a necessary knowledge.

I argue that Coleridge's intuition of the sheet of paper tells him that the image of the sheet of paper in his mind only *implies* an object of perception. The reality of the *image* in his mind is more certain than the nature of the *physical object* he perceives. That is, he is more certain of the reality of the representation and what it means to him than the true nature of the physical object to which the representation corresponds. Furthermore, he adds, "all modes of being, that are not objects of the senses," such as "the idea of the Supreme Being" and the experience of any transcendental realities, must necessarily be supplied by the "constitution of the mind itself" (*BL*, I, 200) because they have none of the required "antecedents that must be presupposed in order to render [any] experience [of them] possible" in the first place (142). The knowledge of God is not empirically evident, but is already indwelling within the human mind and surfaces spontaneously. In fact, Coleridge contends, all knowledge, including what is perceived by the senses, is based upon "faith." The certainty of our perception of the empirical world is a belief. "All modes of being" are "assumed by [...] the constitution of the mind itself, by the absence of all motive to doubt it" (200). I therefore conclude that in Coleridge's philosophy, if we accept the validity of the belief in the empirical world of objects based on the constitution of our minds, we can logically admit the validity of our belief in God founded on that same constitution.

3.1 Reason and Faith

Just as all empirical knowledge presumes a reality correspondent to sensory data, I argue that for Coleridge this presumption has the same foundation and logical right as the presumption of God's existence. Coleridge claims that Kant's philosophy "took possession of me as with a giant's hand" (*BL*, I, 153). Influenced by Kant, Coleridge focuses on the nature and activity of the mind because of its decisive role in determining the limits and forms of our knowledge. However, Coleridge differs from Kant when he asserts that through "faith," both in the constitution of the mind and in God, in collaboration with the power of reason as "the attribute of the Deity" in humans (*PL*, II, 612), one can gain knowledge of transcendental truths and realities. Reason, Coleridge affirms, is "the Source and Substance of Truths above Sense" (*F*, I, 216) and the power that participates in "the eternal and the universal" (*PL*, II, 561). The certainty of any knowledge, sensory or transcendental, is "assumed by a logical necessity" (200) derived from the mind's nature and organization that is imbued with divine power and intention. Furthermore, the fact that there is a culture of belief in God, a community of like-minded believers, attests to a sort of universal validity of a shared experience that—as Kant argues is the basis for the verifiability of a universal intuition of the world—Coleridge claims is the same basis for the verifiability of the truth of God's existence.

Kant finds that through the "acts of the mind, or the forms which arise out of the mechanism of the mind itself" we are given the "substance of reality" that the sensations give to us (*PL*, II, 585). However, he also realizes that ideas of "God," of "free-will," and of "immortality" have no outward or real correspondents, and so they must arise from within the wellspring of the mind, from the faculty of "reason" which is the power of producing ideas. Coleridge praises Kant for being a Christian philosopher and notes that Kant himself admits that

the belief in God has a “moral necessity” (586) and that reason and faith are not in conflict but have a harmonious and synergetic relationship. Coleridge echoes Kant in *Biographia Literaria*:

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. [...Furthermore,] I became convinced, that religion, as both the cornerstone and the keystone of morality, must have a moral origin; so far at least, that the evidence of its doctrines could not, like the truths of abstract science, be wholly independent of the will. [...] It could not be intellectually more evident without becoming morally less effective; without counteracting its own end by sacrificing the *life* of faith to the cold mechanism of a worth less because compulsory assent. (*BL*, I, 201-3)⁷⁰

Reason’s ability to justify and perceive faith and morality as the *living* expression of a higher “will” is inherently purposeful and sacred. Even a purely rational explanation for the expression of faith and morality does not conflict or detract from their intrinsic worth. Instead of blind, “compulsory assent,” we willingly embrace faith when reason participates in its defense.

Coleridge remarks that all knowledge beyond that which can be known through the senses arises from an inherent “necessity” in the constitution of the mind that is free of motive and precept. He relates how Saint Anselm found that

the idea of God was the only idea of which man was capable which involved the necessity of his existence, not only because man was a *microcosm* and therefore implied an infinite Being as its cause, but principally from its being involved in the idea itself. For what do we mean by God but that which contains all perfectness without any negation.

⁷⁰ Coleridge uses the analogy of an astronomer and his telescope: “what a telescope is to the eye [...] faith (that is the energies of our moral feelings) is to reason. Reason is the eye, and faith (all the moral anticipation) the telescope” (*PL*, I, 377).

But essence is the perfection, therefore it must contain, of necessity, the existence, consequently the necessity implies the actuality” (*PL*, I, 388-9).

Hence, Coleridge adds, we “feel a distinction between essence and existence” (*PL*, I, 387). That is, essence is “perfect,” and although we can conceive of it, existence does not reflect it. Yet, the idea of perfection and feeling of essence exist.

Coleridge explains Lord Bacon’s idea that the reason humans seek answers to certain metaphysical questions is because those questions arise from the mind’s own constitution. There are no external determinants causing us to postulate certain ideas and that, therefore, it must be in the mind’s own nature to pose those questions:

Our perception can apprehend through the organs of sense, only the phenomena evoked by the experiment, but that the same power of mind, which out of its own laws has proposed the experiment, can judge whether in nature there is a law correspondent to the same. [...] There is a power which can give birth to the question; [it is] the pure and impersonal reason freed from all the personal idols, [...] from the passions, the prejudices, the peculiar habits of the human understanding, natural or acquired [...] from the delusions which lead men to take the forms and mechanism of their own mere reflective faculty as a measure of nature and the Deity. (*PL*. II, 487)

Hence, the nature of perception and the nature of our inquisitiveness correspond to the requirements of being; these structures of the mind are “appropriate” for God’s purpose (*PL*, II, 559). The impetus of our search for meaning and thirst for knowledge are guided by an internal intention operating through the mechanism of the mind and senses. Questions arise within the mind by reason, for a reason.

Ultimately, for Coleridge, Baconic philosophy consists of a “profound meditation on those laws which the pure reason in man reveals to him, with the confident anticipation and faith that to this will be found to correspond certain laws in nature” (*PL*, II, 488). The mind “looking abroad into nature finds that in its own nature it has been fathoming nature, and that nature itself is but the greater mirror” in which it beholds its own laws and that the “one great Being whose eternal reason is the ground and absolute cause of all the correspondent realities in nature” is also the reason in the finite human being (489). There is in every human being “the purest reason, the spirit of true light and intellectual intuition” which is the indispensable means for all scientific and spiritual research (488). As the attribute of God in humans, reason, Coleridge concludes, is that essence of God seeking and contemplating God. It is the executive intention within the divine essence in nature and in humankind. Coleridge states that “Practical Reason alone *is* Reason in the full and substantive sense” (*AR*, 413, footnote), and since the Absolute is itself practical in its will, therefore, Coleridge argues, as rational beings, we can discover its purposes.⁷¹ Coleridge claims that for Kant since all empirical data only presents an incomplete version of what things are in themselves, reason serves first to alert us to this incompleteness and presents us with conceptual ideals of wholeness and unity that can be contemplated though never fully reached or realized. Therefore, while “understanding” manages knowledge derived from

⁷¹ Coleridge further subdivides reason and distinguishes between “speculative reason” and “practical reason;” the latter refers to the higher human faculties of conscience and will and is identified with faith and the moral and spiritual nature of humans. Speculative reason is “the power by which we produce or aim to produce unity, necessity, and universality in all our knowledge by means of principles a priori.” Practical reason is “will” or “the faculty of choice [...] distinct both from the moral will and the choice” (*BL*, I, 293). Similarly, understanding has a prescribed role and mode of operation. Like Kant, Coleridge distinguishes between understanding and reason. Understanding organizes intelligibly sensory impressions; it is “the faculty judging according to sense” (*AR* 218) and “by which we generalize and arrange the phenomena of perception” (*F*, I, 156). Reason extends beyond sense impressions to grasp universal truths; it is “the Power of universal and *necessary* Convictions, the Source and Substance of Truths above Sense, having their evidence in themselves” (216), and “which are evidently not the effect of any Experience, but the *condition* of all Experience, and that indeed without which Experience itself would be inconceivable” (*CL*, II, 1198). It is “an organ of inward sense” with the “power of acquainting itself with *invisible* realities or spiritual objects” (*F*, I, 156). Reason is the power that, through its “participation of the eternal and the universal,” makes it possible for one to “question,” “challenge,” “contradict the irresistible impressions of his own senses” and even “disqualify them, as partial and incompetent” (*PL*, II, 561).

the senses, “reason” is concerned with truths derived from, but that ultimately lie beyond the senses, which Coleridge names “ideas.” Understanding depends on the senses to function whereas reason is the source of its own truths and maintains the impetus for its own operation. Coleridge concludes that we can unite our practical reason with that of God’s and live according to God’s will and follow his purposes. In this sense, God is not absolutely inscrutable, but, rather, he must be necessarily knowable to a certain *intended* extent.

3.2 Matter: The Modification of Intelligence

The individual’s knowing of God as spirit is made possible through “Reason,” God’s “attribute” in humans. Although God is absolute, according to Coleridge, every individual represents a particularized mode of thought or act of reason derived from God. He affirms that the human powers and faculties are “mere forms of human thinking” which give “not only a true reality as forms of the mind, but ever a personal reality” (*PL*, II, 757).⁷² Coleridge notes “Descartes was the first philosopher who introduced the absolute and essential heterogeneity of the soul as intelligence and of body as matter” (518). The soul is “gifted with a faculty of perceiving external objects through the medium of the body” (521). To Coleridge, however, the division of body and spirit is not so plain; rather, he suggests, one must “explain *thinking* as a material phenomenon” and matter as a phenomenon of thinking:

It is necessary to refine *matter into a mere modification of intelligence*, with the two-fold function of *appearing* and *perceiving*. Even so did Spinoza. Even so did Priestly [...]. He

⁷² Coleridge explains that Epistemology is “the analysis of the mind itself acted upon by the senses, and as again reacting upon them [...]. By Descartes it was carried to a great state of perfection as now it appeared to afford such a world of information. It appeared to bring us into such a world of intimacy with our nature that men considered all was known, with a few words of connection everything was discovered, everything was solved” (*PL*, I, 450-1). Coleridge adds, “the first philosophy was that of idealism, that which began with the courageous skepticism, which I think Descartes has beautifully stated [...] in what he called voluntary doubt, a self-determined indetermination expressing at the same time its utter difference from the skepticism of vanity or irreligion” (*PL*, II, 512).

stripped matter of all its material properties, substituted spiritual powers, and, when we expected to find a body, behold we had nothing but its ghost, the *apparition* of a defunct matter. [...] we can explain [the] supervention of the object to the sensation, by a *productive* faculty set in motion by an impulse; still the transition, into the percipient, of the object itself, from which the impulse proceeded, assumes a power that can permeate and wholly possess the soul, ‘And like a God by spiritual art, / Be all in all and all in every part.’ (*PL*, II, 523)

Matter is the “appearance” of intelligence (of Spirit) so that intelligence (of spirit in the human mind) can perceive it(self). As time and space were already discussed to be individuating devices, intelligence or spirit can perceive itself only through this “modification,” through the medium of time and space. Coleridge here suggests that matter *is* thought, not only as ideas reified, but also as ideas interpreted as having physical qualities whose perceived materiality is necessary for the possibility of this discovery. Indeed, all creation is an act of thinking conceived in God’s mind as the “intelligent first cause.” Coleridge adds that “the essence of matter is an act or power, which it possesses in common with spirit; and body and spirit are therefore no longer absolutely heterogeneous, but may without any absurdity be supposed to be different modes, or degrees in perfection, of a common substratum” (*BL*, I, 129-30).

Coleridge explains that whereas Plato is concerned with the permanent “ideas”—living laws as they manifest in the mind and its operation—Bacon, on the other hand, calls the material world and nature’s laws themselves “ideas.” Additionally, Coleridge notes, Pythagoras conceives of the human soul as belonging not to the individual but as being that which gives an individual his existence and which “must necessarily be of the same nature and kind with those laws of the universe” acting on him (*PL*, I, 77). To most people, the laws of the universe are “utterly beyond

the reach of the senses, utterly beyond the reach of the understanding,” and so Pythagoras supposes that there must be in the individual’s mind something beyond time and accident that originates from the inexhaustible “fountain of truth” and that recognizes these laws (77-8). Thus, Coleridge concludes that what in men are “ideas” are in the world “laws.” Ideas partake, in relation to the power of the individual, “of a constitutive character, in the same manner as the laws did in external nature” (77). This way, reason can uncover its co-relation with nature’s laws.

Coleridge nevertheless concedes that “self-consciousness may be itself something explicable into something, which must lie beyond the possibility of our knowledge, because the whole synthesis of our intelligence is first formed in and through the self-consciousness” (*BL*, I, 284-5). That is, if self-consciousness is its own foundation, then the possibility of knowing that which is anterior to knowing must be indeterminable. Therefore, Coleridge asserts, “a faith I must have in something, for [...] that which is the ground cannot have a ground under it; thus Pythagoras commenced philosophy in the faith of the human reason [...]. On this plan he founded the grand system of the Deity as the *Monas*” (*PL*, I, 78-9), the absolute beyond any conception of unity or plurality, who manifests itself through “will.”⁷³ Hence, for Coleridge the world is made to be perceived according to that will and according to those faculties whose “powers which in men reflect and contemplate, are in their essence the same as those powers which in nature produce the objects contemplated.” There is a “sameness” of the conceiver and the conception, “of the idea and the law corresponding to the idea” (112). According to Coleridge, Pythagoras deduces that subject and object in essence are united in one principle that produces the object of perception and also produces the study of that object. Sensation is the same as the physical object that occasions it.

⁷³ Will, here, is the attribute of the mind that denotes intention. It is “the power of originating a state” (*OM* 18)—the intentional creative power of God and that power repeated in the human mind. “Will is the Subject [...] causative of Reality [...] and] of its own reality, the essential might abiding unexhausted, indiminishable (*CN*, IV, 5256).

Conceive at once that that immense universe, those thousands of worlds with all their infinite varieties of action, forms of life, destinations, births, deaths, that these all should be subject to the power, as they originated in the will, of one Being; and that that Being who possesses in itself what was a reason and by the contemplation of which we alone know what reason can be [...] that as when it did seize hold of the mind of man, it possessed it with a species of inspiration. (128)

These are important concepts, for Coleridge concludes that mind must be conceived as “an act” and that “ideas,” as described by Plato, Pythagoras, and others, must be understood not as “acts of the Reason” but as “Reason itself in act” (114).

In *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge therefore defines self-consciousness as an “act” and, like Descartes, states that it is “the source and principle of all *our* possible knowledge” (*BL*, I, 284). Like Descartes who finds certainty only in that foundation of knowledge called the *cogito*, the “I think,” and all subsequent knowledge as an act and result of the *cogito* as thinking, similarly, Coleridge discovers that the mind is an act, the “I am,” as an act of knowing of God. This “act” is an execution of “will” that first distinguishes and then relates the finite “I am” to the “infinite I AM.” “Whether abstracted from us there exists any thing higher and beyond this primary self-knowing, which is for us the form of all our knowing must be decided by the result” (284). The concept of mind or self-consciousness as an “act” will be further explored in the next chapter that it relates to Coleridge’s concept of Primary and Secondary Imagination and to also cosmic creation as an act. Creation is an act of God. Coleridge describes self-consciousness likewise as an “act,” a repetition in the finite mind of the infinite creativity of God. In the finite mind, the “act” of creating the opposition of subject and object, necessary for the self to become an object for its own contemplation, is repeated. However, Coleridge adds that within the infinite

I AM, which is universal “spirit, self, and self-consciousness,” there is actually no distinction because “object and subject, being and knowing, are identical, each involving and supposing the other. In other words, it is a subject which becomes a subject by the *act* of constructing itself objectively to itself; but which never is an object except for itself” (*BL*, I, 270-9). Distinction allows there to be, only conceptually, a subject and an object, for a conception of “self” to be at all possible, and for the finite mind to make this discovery as spirit. The primary act of self-duplication occurs in the “I AM” so as to achieve self-consciousness and self-contemplation. This process is re-duplicated in the individual instances of spirit. Underlying this primary act and its iterations in creation is a “will” to self-knowledge. All acts (i.e. of the mind, of reason, self-consciousness, etc.) are expressions of this will because they are the result and act of the knowing of God through creation. To know, to think, to self-reflect, are all actions of the finite mind within the universal I AM, which is the only true self.

Following Pythagoras, Coleridge notes that Plato conceives of all phenomena and material objects as a “language” through which the supersensible and abstract intimates its existence.⁷⁴ As a finite, imperfect being, the human has not concrete examples of supersensible ideas, but the mind’s spiritual nature allows it to find its own language in what the material world communicates abstractly or symbolically. Without matter, there would be no communication. The material world exists so that mind may communicate with other minds while co-relating with “the Supreme Mind”: “As each individual has a will, there arises a necessity that there

⁷⁴ As Coleridge explains, Plato believes that “Ideas,” as absolutes beyond representation, are meant to be contemplated even though they cannot be realized; they serve to guide the human intellect to varying degrees of approximation to them, while allowing the mind to discover that only such approximation is possible. These ideas are the *reason* that such a “beyond” is at all possible to contemplate by a mind that has no representation of it. They are the reason mind, as act, can act. “[Plato] taught the idea, namely the possibility, and the duty of all who would arrive at the greatest perfection of the human mind, of striving to contemplate things not in the phenomenon, not in their accidents or in their superficialities, but in their essential powers, first as they exist in relation to other powers co-existing with them, but lastly and chiefly as they exist in the Supreme Mind, independent of all material division, distinct and yet indivisible” (*PL*, I, 194).

should be an intermedium by which one mind should be distinguished from another mind different from it [...] by which one thought communicates its existence to another thought in the same mind.” Coleridge asserts that for Plato the “power in the mind which thinks and images its thoughts” is the same power in nature that presents itself as images (*PL*, I, 230). “Words are things. They are the great mighty instruments by which thoughts are excited and by which alone they can be expressed in a *rememberable* form” (257). Ultimately, the communication of mind with other minds, and its relation with “the Supreme Mind,” is an act in the making of self-consciousness. These become important tenets of Coleridge’s philosophy. Coleridge deduces that although “self-consciousness may be the modification of a higher form of being, perhaps of a higher consciousness,” it is not, however, “a kind of being, but a kind of knowing,” as “an act” (*BL*, I, 284-5). That is, if the individual elevates his “conception to the absolute self, the great eternal I AM, then the principle of being, and of knowledge, of idea, and of reality; the ground of existence, and the ground of the knowledge of existence, are absolutely identical” (275). Hence, self-consciousness, or the finite “I am,” is an expression or “act” (of knowing) that participates in and contributes to, as a modification of, the infinite expression of the eternal I AM.

According to Coleridge, creation is the original “act,” the primal “I AM” or self-consciousness of God as spirit, which sets all other infinitely diverse acts in motion and on unique paths and makes all creation an act of knowing. Hamilton explains, “Schelling’s God evolves out of formless priority, one rotating obsessively upon itself. To escape this frustration, it contracts into existence (every pun intended) to gain identity in nature and history and so, as *Logos*, to render these categories legible at the same time” (Hamilton 92). “The contracting of God into the world has no timing.” Indeed, Hamilton adds, “‘Time begins perpetually,’ as Coleridge’s marginal note to Jacobi’s treatise on Spinoza has it. [...] We can never, that is, get at

the notion of God other than through material revelation [...]. Yet it is only as revelation that the world is intelligible” (93). Coleridge warns, however, that God’s “ideas are infinitely more substantial than the *things* which are the results” (*PL*, II, 535). The finite and imperfect world of objects intimates that which is infinite and sacred. That is, as demonstrated in my discussion of Coleridge’s separation from Spinoza, God as absolute—omniscient and perfect—must not be confused with God as spirit manifest in creation whose expression is an infinite act of knowing through life and the human mind. Coleridge explains that things exist “with an infinitely greater reality” in the human mind, a mind that is capable of thinking in terms of right and wrong and transforming the images from the material world of God’s revelation into symbols of God’s truth, intimating God’s ideas. The knowledge of God comes from God himself; “the will,” the “power of becoming,” the ability to be “worthy” of returning to God also come from God (*PL*, II, 535). The individual “I am” is a finite act corresponding to the action of the “great eternal I AM” (*BL*, I, 275), and so the act of knowing of the individual mind is a finite repetition or echo of God’s act of knowing as spirit.

Coleridge asserts that the individual’s highest consciousness of his own power of knowing is the awareness of the divine, not as the omniscient absolute, but as a finite manifestation of the “infinite I AM.” The individual “I am” is the self-consciousness of the spirit of the infinite I AM that, through the act of knowing itself, allows the individual to gain access to transcendental truths. Thus, I argue, through Coleridge’s philosophy of the “infinite I AM,” the individual’s process of growing self-awareness and understanding not only *mirrors* the same process in spirit, but also *reflects* the stage at which spirit has arrived in its self-understanding through human production and expression. This growing self-awareness and understanding involves the progressive emergence of God’s image in the individual’s mind. The individual is a

manifestation who represents the repetition of the creative act of the “infinite I AM” because, as Coleridge explains via Schelling, the creative act of spirit is to precisely realize the contraction of its infinite self within the finite realm.⁷⁵ Matter, therefore, is the perception of ideas or thoughts perceived as having physical qualities so that its materiality alerts the mind, whose divine mode of operation is to interpret reality through the medium of materiality. What the mind perceives as matter is really the communication of ideas. Material creation is the script that discloses divine consciousness. I have been demonstrating in Coleridge’s thought that all our descriptions of experience and our declarations concerning reality are constructed such that we ultimately arrive at the realization that spirit is God’s living and growing power of consciousness implanted in creation and that each finite individuation contributes to spirit’s self-expression and self-discovery in the phenomenal world. This, as discussed below, allows spirit to ultimately behold itself in its totality and oneness through its myriad self-reflections.

3.3 Subject and Object: Spiritual Unity in Multeity

In Coleridge’s metaphysics, then, spirit must be both many individuations and also its own totality; to perceive itself, it must be both the subject perceiving and the object of perception. This is not a new concept, but it is one that Coleridge draws from in his study of ancient and contemporary philosophy. “Mind,” “Spirit,” or, in Schelling’s later works, “Being,” intuits itself while intuiting objects. While Fichte states that the external world is the “Not-I” necessary for the “I” to act, Schelling goes further, claiming that “Spirit is only Spirit insofar as it becomes an Object for itself, insofar, that is, as it becomes finite.” This statement, Hamilton explains, “has two implications, taking Schelling well beyond Fichte”:

⁷⁵ This concept will be further substantiated through my analysis of Coleridge’s famous definition of primary and secondary imagination in the next chapter.

The first is the implication that the universal subject here determines itself both by adopting objective form and by *choosing* to do so, determining objects and determining to do so in a voluntary sense. The second implication is that we then encounter the performance of the *eternal becoming* as our knowledge or science of the world *repeats* and maps the drama of a spirit that constrains itself in *the endless act of producing itself*.⁷⁶ (Hamilton 82)

Behind the veil of the sensory world, the divine shines through; both the veil and the divine are co-present. “The Absolute [is] the identity of both subject and object: whatever continuum they shared in order to make their comparison, identification, or opposition possible” (15).⁷⁷

The split into I and Not-I is a temporary mode of perception that brings the I to an awareness of itself so as to ultimately affirm that the I and the Not-I are actually one in essence. Schelling describes an absolute identity behind the appearance of difference. Differentiation enables us to perceive and understand reality and, ultimately, reveals itself to be a necessary and intended mode of perception. The purpose of differentiation is, in a sense, to disqualify itself, not as being something illusory, but as something necessary for greater understanding. “Thus the true system of natural philosophy places the sole reality of things in an ABSOLUTE [...] the absolute identity of subject and object, which it calls nature, and which in its highest power is nothing else but self-conscious will or intelligence” (*BL*, I, 285). Hence, the absolute can only be construed and expressed through this necessary illusion or impression of differentiation. “As the

⁷⁶ Recall Chapter 1, Section 2, which discusses Coleridge’s organicism as it relates to a teleology in nature and a necessarily interrelated spiritual progress. Reason, as discussed in this section, is the divine attribute at the heart of that development and makes further progress possible and indeed organic.

⁷⁷ For Fichte, Hamilton notes, “what the self-conscious I simultaneously knows is an effect of its own activity. As long as that activity continues, the ‘not-I’ will never be conclusively understood” (14). For Schelling, however, external nature in some “final potency” comes to encompass subjectivity. As I shall explicate in the next section, when the distinction between subject and object is dissolved and then united, as in a product of art, the distinction between human and divine is both simultaneously upheld and effaced. In art, nature is negated and transformed to reflect to the developing spirit its own development.

repetition whereby an infinite, absolute activity took definition, our primary experiences nevertheless became philosophically significant only as they made us think this difference, impossible to grasp in any other terms. And it therefore required an additional philosophical effort, as Coleridge insists in *Biographia Literaria*, to focus on things this way” (Hamilton 26-7). I argue that, in Coleridge’s conception, we are able to focus on things this way (i.e. through the illusion of difference) precisely because our minds are fitted to the requirements for God’s own revelation. Our self-creation is proportionate to God’s becoming as spirit. We are able to perceive ourselves as being one with and part of God because we do so from the perspective of our individual, unique identities.

To highlight the importance of every individual (as an individuation of spirit) to the process of God’s self-disclosure, Coleridge reminds us not to confuse Kant’s “thing-in-itself” with Schelling’s “Absolute” when he remarks in one of his notes, “[The thing-in-itself is] not the *same* as the *absolute*; but as its Idea in *God*. In the mere Absolute (i.e. *Almighty* [sic]) there is neither Division nor Distinction; but in God, *whose* [sic] is the *Almighty* [sic], there is *each* as well as *all*, perfect unity, but yet *distinction*” (*M*, II, 995). God is Absolute and God is also a unity-in-multiple of distinct entities. Therefore, Coleridge, with his conception of the “infinite I AM,” allows us to perceive creation as a dual reality and in every entity a dual life consisting of the finite-within-the-infinite and the infinite-within-the-finite. Indeed, Coleridge’s philosophy is one of revelation; without the individual there would be no revelation. In fact, not only are self-reflective individuals dual beings, but their self-reflection also occurs as a repetition of the eternal spirit’s act and expression. That is, self-reflection is a microcosmic repetition that occurs within the individual human, who is himself a microcosmic representation of the infinite spirit. Spirit, therefore, can be viewed as a person growing and evolving in time, and yet remaining the

same individual; its past selves are subsumed in its present identity, which consists of the collectivity of unique, self-reflective individual instances of spirit.

Hamilton points out that in *Stuttgart Seminars* (1810), Schelling, “similarly to Coleridge, uses our complex emergence as persons from an unconscious state as a model for the self-disclosure of ‘God,’ or the ‘Absolute,’ or ‘Being.’ This equation humanizes theology” (122).⁷⁸ Schelling historicizes the activity of being, both as ontological “beingness” and as individual personhood, in order to understand the infinite productivity of universal being. Being’s contraction into nature and into individual objects is mirrored or repeated in miniature in the individual’s act of creation through the objectifying of consciousness in art and literature; the knowledge of self that results from that act is akin to and subsumed within spirit’s experience.

My central focus here has been to demonstrate how Coleridge echoes and expands Schelling’s idea that God becomes God by emerging from unconscious nature, a process that belongs to and occurs within the universal being of God himself. I argue that Coleridge’s philosophy reveals that our identities develop similarly, from an unconscious, unthinking state into an awareness of this reality, which is that God is the essence of the world, of each object, of each individual, and is the absolute identity of all things. The ability to even perceive this almighty unity-in-human-multhood is itself possible only because of the structure of our minds, precisely formatted, via the divine attribute of reason, to interpret the world and its material objects in the way required by God for his *own* (and, thus, our own) self-revelation. Our ultimate realization is that we are none other than God as spirit perceiving himself in his otherness, from differing, unique perspectives. It is as though God were standing in a room full of image-altering

⁷⁸ Hamilton adds that “Schelling uses ‘God,’ ‘Being,’ and ‘Absolute’ interchangeably, which he thinks makes him ultimately a philosopher and a theologian who ‘abstracts’ from philosophy” (122).

mirrors and each different image of himself were to become self-aware and conscious that its individuality is attributed to God, for it is God who is the true subject.

4. God's Will and Individual Free Will

God's specific structuring of the mind and reality raises the question concerning the possibility of human free will. Like the human mind, the human will, too, partakes of God's will. God's intentional creative power is repeated in the human mind and, to Coleridge, will, by its very nature, ultimately leads individuals to spirit's self-revelation. The "philosophy of participation" deals with the complex relationship between individual will and God's will. To Coleridge, the individual, "as a spirit," is a finite "intellectual Will" whose perfection consists in his being "perfectly concentered with the will of the great Being, Author and Lord of the Universe" (*PL*, I, 286).⁷⁹ I have been demonstrating through Coleridge's metaphysics that the individual derives his being from God, and his finite existence is fashioned according to God's ideas that are the eternal and absolute framework for all patterns in existence. Individual will, however, has a dynamic relationship with God's absolute will, which wills all things to exist as they do; therefore, it is the Divine will, too, which ordains into existence individual will that is distinct, independent, and free from God's absolute will.

Individual will, however, is not absolutely independent from God's will, for guiding this freedom is an element of yearning instilled in humans, nurtured through the functions of faith, conscience, and reason. This element is expressed as humankind's will to re-unite with God. The

⁷⁹ For instance, Coleridge's view of scriptural inspiration bridges two leading theories. First is Herder's belief that the Bible, like other literary works of art, is a product of a specific time, place, culture, and ethos in history and that the inspiration behind the Bible is a kind of exalted religious enthusiasm. Second is the belief that the authors are instruments inspired by the Holy Spirit, which does not merely dictate words to them, but works through their particular individual characters. To Coleridge, the inspired authors are individuals belonging to a specific time, place, and cultural ethos and, *simultaneously*, they are different instruments "as different Pens in the hand of one and the same Writer" ("Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit" 1148).

individual's conscience, reason, and will work in harmony. Practical reason, which Coleridge also equates with faith, is "the fountain of ideas and the light of the conscience." Coleridge explains that through conscience, individual will recognizes God's will, and through faith, the "fealty, fidelity, allegiance of the moral nature to God," individual will can represent and manifest God's will ("Essay on Faith" 843). Through conscience, will becomes the "Will of Reason" and the "*Spirit* of the regenerated man" (*AR* 217). Conscience accepts the higher truths of reason, and the will *chooses* to act according to the guidance of conscience. Hence, faith is where truth is recognized as that which conforms to God's will and intention.

Barth calls Coleridge a "Christian Platonist," for what concerns Coleridge is the "relationship of faith with the Author of faith, of reason to the Supreme Reason," which establishes the way for one's re-union with God (Barth 51). Reason and will properly make the human an image of God, and one's commitment to faith via these higher faculties allows one to achieve union with God. Coleridge proclaims, "Faith [is] the source and the Sum, the Energy and the Principle, of the fidelity of Man to God by the subordination of his human Will in all provinces of his Nature to his Reason, as the Sum of spiritual Truths, representing and manifesting the Will Divine" ("Essay on Faith" 844). As reason is the "mind's eye" and "the attribute of the Deity" in humans (*PL*, II, 612), humans progress, with God's guidance from within, from being an unconscious emanation of spirit to an active instrument and unique expression of God's absolute will.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Coleridge further explains that while absolute will and absolute reason are united in God, in humans "the analogous factors [reason and will] appear severally as Thesis and Antithesis" (*OM* 81), and it is up to humans to unite finite will and finite reason in a powerful synthesis by first subordinating the former to the latter. Coleridge describes faith as "the synthesis of the Will and the Reason" or "the Co-adunation of the individual Will and the universal Reason." Finite will, as "the representative of the Absolute Will," "by free-self-subordination to the Reason as Universal," must be co-adunated with speculative reason to become active, practical reason (*CN*, V, 6791).

Yet, Coleridge affirms, one can freely choose to accept or reject faith. The previous section discussed the role of oppositional elements contributing to self-revelation; it is the freedom to make this choice regarding faith that allows for God's self to become meaningfully "other" to itself. Coleridge adds, "there is no other than Self," but the perception of difference allows the Self to contemplate itself as something distinct from itself. However, what is distinct must remain in some sense the Self because it is the "Self wholly and adequately *repeated*, yet so that the very repetition contains *distinction* from the primary act, a Self which in both is self-subsistent, but which yet is not the same because, the One only is self-originated" (*OM* 199).⁸¹

To Coleridge, however, the individual's freedom of choice is not unconditional; it is a choice between aspiring to be free by uniting with God's absolute freedom and will, which is one's true self, or ignoring God's will and the voice of reason to be forever trapped and "enslaved" by one's corrupt, fallen nature: "Freedom expresses that highest perfection of a finite Will, which it attains by its perfect *self-determined* Subordination to Reason, whose service is perfect Freedom." Coleridge explains that a will that freely chooses evil or disobeys the voice of reason ceases to be free even if "its unfreedom has originated in its own act. A will cannot be *free* to choose evil—for in the very act it forfeits its freedom and so far becomes a corrupt Nature, self-enslaved. [...] a Will *can* choose evil, but in the moment of such choice ceases to be a *free* will" (*CN*, V, 5555 f31v). Coleridge adds that when one freely chooses that which is good, one remains free. Finite will becomes free will as it strives to conform to the absolute will of God and attain "that Freedom which is impossible except as it becomes one with the Will of God [...]" (*OM* 144). Finite will can choose to conform to absolute will because the latter is the

⁸¹ Here Coleridge's Christianizing of Schelling's conception of the absolute, the real, and the ideal is evident: in the conception of the Triune God, the Father is the Absolute or ground of all reality; the Son is the embodiment of the ideal in the real or the expression of the unity of the real and the ideal; and the Holy Ghost is the union of the Father and the Son. To know the Father or universal reason, the Son or individual will must exercise practical reason, and this agency is the Holy Ghost, in which Father and Son are united.

template for the former's existence; the nature of finite will impels it to conform to the absolute will. It is also, however, in the nature of finite will to assert its individuality; to be free, finite will must reconcile these seemingly contradictory demands. It must not assert its individuality merely for its own self-fulfillment and become solely a "separated finite," but it must also express its particularity "as the glory and presentation of the plenitude of the universal." Coleridge explains,

the affirmation of a Will, and of a particular will [...] must, therefore, contain the potentiality, that is, the power of *possibly not* affirming the identity of its reality with the reality of God, which is actual absolutely; or of willing to be, yet not willing to be only because God is, and in the being of God alone. In other words, if the essence of its being be Will, and this Will under a particular form, there must be a possibility of willing the universal or absolute under the predominance of the particular, instead of willing the particular *solely* as the glory and presentation of the plenitude of the universal. As long as this act remains wholly *potential*, i.e. *implied* in the holy Will as its opposite, necessarily possible because, being a holy Will, it is a Will, and a particular Will, so long is it comparable with God, and so long therefore, hath it an actual reality as one of the eternal, immutable ideas of God. (*OM* 225)

Although Coleridge clearly prizes the individual and the particular, he does not value them only for their own sake, but rather for their ability to choose to remain individual and willfully acknowledge their fundamental dependence on the Absolute Will of God. In his theory of inspiration, Coleridge believes that when God works through individuals, it is a matter of reconciling "distinctity with unity—ours, yet God's; God's, yet ours" (*M*, II, 300). Heaven is described as the union with God through the finite will's conformity with the Absolute Will. The dynamic interrelationship between individual will and universal will is an important

consideration because it reveals how, according to Coleridge, there is an intrinsic kinship between each unique individual and the universal spirit. Both are universal and particular, infinite and finite, because of each other. Nevertheless, there is only one true Self, one all-encompassing “Life.” Everywhere it is the “Self wholly and adequately *repeated*, yet so that the very repetition contains *distinction*” (OM 199). The essence of the individual’s being is the universal “Will under a particular form” (225).

5. *Bildung* and *Logos*

For Coleridge, the human mind and reason, the material world and the will, all conform in nature and structure to the purpose of God’s self-revelation. I argue that, in this conception, revelation takes place through the individual’s meaningful acts of seeking and creative self-expression. For Coleridge, art and poetry in particular provide the means for realizing this truth about the essence of the self and the universal spirit. While this argument will be further developed in the following chapter, here I emphasize the metaphysical implications underlying the link between artistic expression and this revelation. Art is the concrete expression of spirit or consciousness, which allows the individual to come to an awareness of his true self. This is due to the operation of both *Bildung* and *Logos* in evincing God’s language of self-revelation.

Derived from the word “Bild” in medieval mysticism meaning form, image, or picture, *Bildung* is self-formation, education, and cultivation, the unfolding of immanent potentialities within an organism to manifest its highest fulfillment. In humankind, this refers to its spiritual development toward rationality, which entails growth, progress, and even transcendence.⁸² In

⁸² In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer states, “*Bildung* evokes the ancient mystical tradition according to which man carries in his soul the image of God, after whom he is fashioned, and which man must cultivate in him” (10). This is represented in the Christian conception as the human being created in God’s image, which some eighteenth-century thinkers, including Coleridge, synthesized with the enlightenment’s mission to present the human as self-educating.

Coleridge, Schiller and Aesthetic Education, Michael J. Kooy describes how “both Coleridge and Schiller think of *Bildung* itself as functioning historically” (193).⁸³ *Bildung*, as it applies to history and to the individual, has obvious Hegelian resonances: both human history and the life of the individual follow an educative process that attains increasingly higher levels of fulfillment. Coleridge and Schiller conceive of history as a progressive evolution and development of human potential, “analogous to the aesthetic project of *Bildung*” (8). They use *Bildung* as a model to explain history and life as a “redemptive and rational series of events [...] realizing the inner potential of humanity through an applied process of self-development” (193). The concepts of *Bildung* and *Logos* as understood by Coleridge demonstrate how both the individual’s and humankind’s processes of growth and self-discovery are analogous and organically interdependent because they develop from the same unfolding potential and are driven by the same force and purpose.

Art and aesthetic experience have a crucial and defining role in this evolutionary process because the experience of art “as undetermined feeling” has an educative, cultivating, or *Bildung* effect, resulting indirectly in real “moral and social benefits” (Kooy 1). To Schiller and Coleridge, poetry does not convey factual knowledge of things, but rather “provides a symbolic expression of the ideal understanding of the natural Man which science, political theory, and religion all desire.” The freedom involved in artistic expression allows art to circumvent the old mistake of presenting a “reductive account of human experience; in the limitless variety of its formulations it offers [instead] a progressive” (98) and experience of knowledge through its

The self seeks to express and develop its individuality in relation to the world or in opposition to the shaping and determining forces of nature, culture, and society. The evolving individual ultimately aspires toward acting in a free, harmonious, and symbiotic relation with the world, and he is in turn enriched by its wealth and abundance.

⁸³ Kooy adds, “In terms of the individual, *Bildung* is seen as an emancipatory impulse that permits moral self-determination and signals the progressive recovery of psychic balance. In social terms, it is the stabilizing force, the ‘Aesthetic State’ mediating disinterestedly between opposing political interests in order to help shape a cultured and civilized nation” (193). *Bildung*, however, is a process driven by its own internal and inscrutable force and purpose. It cannot foretell its goal, but its participants realize along the way its emancipatory and enlightening effect.

abstractions from life. Art also occasions the experience of the sublime, which enables the self to confront its own boundless potential and possibilities; it is amazed by its own power of imagination, which it recognizes, according to Coleridge, as a divine and infinite power.⁸⁴

Logos is closely associated with and even lies at the heart of the concept of *Bildung*. *Logos* is God, or the word of God, the principle of divine reason, or that through which all things are made, and the creative principle in creation: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [...] Through him all things were made [...]. In him was life, and that life was the light of men” (John 1: 1-5).⁸⁵ Christ is *Logos* incarnate, a living word: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1: 14-5). Hence, Christ is God self-revealed and made intelligible to humankind. *Logos* is therefore God as he is acting in his creation. Coleridge attributes the inscrutable cultivating and educative process of *Bildung* to *Logos* and perceives this force at work in the individual as well as in humankind. It is perceived in the individual who seeks to continually enhance and discover the full extent and potential of the powers of his being, and it is recognized as well as in the history of humankind’s cultivation and evolution to increasingly higher stages of consciousness and moral refinement. Coleridge states that “the Logos is the substantial Idea...in whom all Ideas are contained and have Being: it is the Idea of God. The Divine Idea assumed the form of Man, and thus became the Idea of the Divine Humanity...The Word was incarnate, and became the Divine *Ideal* of Human Kind, in which alone God loved (or could love) the World” (*M*, III, 545). All human expression is a repetition of God’s creative process of *Bildung* and *Logos*. As a reduplication of

⁸⁴ As I will demonstrate in the next chapter, Coleridge perceives imaginative production as analogous to, or itself representative of, the activity of divine creation; the creative activity of imagination is the force and purpose that drives *Bildung* and operates as the agent of self-discovery, progress, and freedom.

⁸⁵ *The Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1973).

God's creativity, human ideas are incarnated and brought to life through words guided by the divine faculty of reason. Ultimately, according to Coleridge, the purpose of *Bildung* and *Logos* is to gradually cultivate and express "the Idea of God" through the human mind.

6. Aesthetic Education

Coleridge explains how the theory and practice of "aesthetic education" serves this purpose of *Bildung*. Schiller, in his essays on aesthetics, discusses how humanity can be raised "to the point where it can realize in practical life a higher idea of itself. The key here is freedom: the freedom enjoyed in aesthetic experience refers us in an analogous way to our moral freedom and thus conditions us to act in accordance with our highest ideals" (Kooy 107), an idea Coleridge later engages with in his own philosophical arguments. Coleridge and Schiller agree with Kant that aesthetic experience is determined by feeling alone, is necessarily subjective, and must be free from preconceived notions, laws, and rules about its role. More importantly, art must be fundamentally an expression and experience of freedom. Although Kant argues in his *Critique of the Power of Judgment* that art does not have a moral end, he does, however, hold "Beauty as a symbol of morality" (225), allowing there to be a causal relationship between art and morality. Coleridge, like Schiller, develops Kant's idea of the relationship between art, pleasure, freedom, and morality.

In his organic theory concerning the relationship between humans, nature, and art, Schiller introduces the concept of "semblance," which he defines as the "'truth [that] lives on in the illusion of art,' [...] a kind of deception, that [...] misleads us into attributing reality where it is not" (quoted in Kooy 109). This entails treating the object "as if it were real while all the while acknowledging that it is not. It is a kind of mock seriousness or mock earnestness that is not

really serious or earnest at all. [...] When art stresses the importance of the object and determines our judgment of it, we are robbed of our freedom to develop our independent thoughts.” We begin to judge by interest, rather than by a Kantian disinterest. On the other hand, “when art retains its autonomy, and pleasure in the semblance [...] is unaffected by any vestigial longing for reality on its own terms, then, according to Schiller, we experience freedom in its purest sense” (111). That is, when we begin to appreciate the abstract idea and not merely the material presence of the object, then we are released from the constraints of the physical medium and the pressure to moralize.⁸⁶ I argue that, through Coleridge’s philosophy, we discover a yet unacknowledged analogy in the relationship between individual will, universal will, and the production of art. I contend that, just as semblance in art is necessary for the individual to experience pure freedom, individual will itself is a necessary semblance of difference for the universal will to operate and achieve self-knowledge and freedom. Hence, we see in the individual’s creative activity the repetition and operation of a divine code seeking to reveal God to God.

This analogy is hinted at in Coleridge’s belief that the ideal of art “consists of the happy balance of the generic with the individual. The former makes the character representative and symbolical, therefore instructive [...]. The latter gives it its *living* interest, for nothing *lives* or is *real*, but as definite and individual” (*BL*, II, 214-5). Art combines, in equal proportion and importance, abstraction and specificity, the universal and the particular. This is similar to Schiller’s concept of semblance or beauty in living form: abstract principles are given life and experienced through the senses, what Coleridge chooses to call “imitation.” Imitation in art does

⁸⁶ Schiller explains that humans are, on the one hand, beings of sense and are therefore fitted with the laws that govern nature, which he calls “sense drive.” On the other hand, humans transcend nature in their capacity to reason, in the awareness of their freedom, and in their ability to cultivate and consciously conform to moral laws, which he designates “form drive.” The “play drive” reconciles both seemingly opposing sense and form drives and allows humans to be free from the constraints of the world of senses and preconceptions of morality.

not mean to meticulously copy nature, but rather to complement it. We quickly lose interest and pleasure in art that merely copies nature, and we are even offended by its attempt to delude us into believing we are seeing nature. Imitation, on the other hand, does not attempt to replicate nature, and we are, therefore, not deluded by its representations. Instead, imitation “admits its artificiality, admits its difference from nature, we are invited *voluntarily to pretend* it is like nature in spite of the difference, invited to entertain the ‘imitation’ by an act of the *will*. The result is not ‘delusion’ but ‘illusion’” (Kooy 114). Coleridge describes it as “that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith” (*BL*, II, 6).

“The willing suspension of disbelief” is a two-way process in which the poet *chooses* to create an illusion that the reader *chooses* to accept. Coleridge argues that the true aim of art, and specifically of poetry, is to convey pleasure because “the communication of pleasure is the introductory means by which alone the poet must expect to moralize his readers” (*BL*, II, 131). That is, the artist, by reconciling and unifying disparate forms into a cohesive whole and by making beauty and pleasure the goals of his art, provides an aesthetic experience that moves his readers to action and has an indirect effect on their moral lives. Instead of making direct claims to truth and morality, the expression of beauty and the resulting experience of pleasure awaken and inspire inherent virtue.⁸⁷

Since the controlling forces of their physical and moral natures limit humans, aesthetic judgment liberates them from these laws because art allows them to momentarily transcend the constraints of the physical and moral realms.⁸⁸ These limitations, however, are important as they occasion the possibility for freedom; thus, the objective of art is not to provide an escape from

⁸⁷ Schiller echoes this idea in his *Essays, Aesthetical and Philosophical*: “If the aim is moral, art loses that through which alone it is powerful, its freedom, and that through which it is universally effective, the appeal of pleasure. [...] Only when art fulfills its greatest aesthetic action, can it have a beneficial influence upon morality” (362).

⁸⁸ In his analysis of Coleridge’s poetics, Edward Kessler observes that the poet merges “his power with the power in nature to create a glorified phenomenon, a revelation of Being” (135).

the constraints of this world, but rather to offer a “momentary freedom from both physical and moral determination. It offers release from physical constraint without actually destroying life and it offers the experience of freedom without the obligation to obey the moral law” (Kooy 120). It presents us with the concept of freedom, a means to live rationally, sensuously, and with free will; the exercise of free will is, as argued above, an inherently necessary part of the individual’s (and therefore God’s) self-revelation. Hence, it is art that enables us to live to the fullest extent and truest sense of our fundamental nature. “Art, in other words, by virtue of its autonomy, gives an experience of absolute freedom, and this experience is transferable to the moral world.” In this experience of momentary absolute freedom “we recognize something of our divine nature and we are drawn to acknowledge that in obeying the moral law we are not acting in fear of some threatening force from outside, but rather acting [through free will] in accordance with the ‘holy will’ within” (120). Ultimately, however, Schiller explains that the purpose of genuine art is ““not merely to translate the human being into a momentary dream of freedom”” or provide him with a fleeting experience of it, but to actually ““*make him free [...]* by awakening a power within him, by using and developing the power to remove to a distance of objectivity the sensory world...to transform the sensory world into a free creation of our spirit, and to control the material world through ideas”” (quoted in Kooy 121).

Coleridge considers art and aesthetic experience to be the means for attaining this educative and self-revelatory end. The objective is to “transport the mind to a sense of its possible greatness, and to implant the germs of that greatness, during the temporary oblivion of the worthless ‘thing we are,’ and of the peculiar state in which each man *happens* to be, suspending our individual recollections and lulling them to sleep amid the music of nobler thoughts” (*BL*, II, 46n). Coleridge is describing the process by which aesthetic experience offers

a temporary dissociation from our beliefs, preconceptions, and sense of self, bringing us instead into a state of “temporary oblivion” in which we are released from moral and physical determinations to achieve an awareness of our freedom. Coleridge’s “willing suspension of disbelief” or “poetic faith” (*BL*, II, 6) is precisely the act by which one enters into an artistic world and attains an aesthetic consciousness in which one can temporarily encounter a range of experience and freedom beyond the scope of one’s own reality. Through this poetic faith, one willingly surrenders oneself to the circumstances and guidance of the artist and agrees instead to experience new realities on unfamiliar terms by ascribing temporary reality to an “illusion.” Rather than being a delusion, as the word “faith” might imply, it is an act of the will that maintains one’s conscious acceptance of the illusion. An aesthetic education emancipates the individual and allows him to experience greater freedom.

6.1 Love, Beauty, Freedom in Art

As I will further elaborate in the next chapter, Coleridge claims that art allows one to experience the underlying essence of the universe because it evinces a close association between the experience of freedom, love, beauty, truth, and virtue. First, like Schleiermacher and Hegel, Schlegel asserts in his essay “On the Limits of the Beautiful” (1794) that love is the highest form of aesthetic enjoyment, which can only be experienced in a state of freedom. Similarly, Shaftesbury claims there is in the universe an underlying spiritual harmony, which is perceived as beauty and experienced as love; in experiencing either truth, or virtue, or beauty, we come to experience all three. Also, the feeling of love resulting from the experience of beauty and harmony in art is the same feeling of love as in the experience of universal harmony. As part of the universal one Life, humankind’s natural and rightful state is love. Humans derive pleasure

when they are able to experience beauty and truth in art, and through this experience, they necessarily lead virtuous lives through love.

More influential to Coleridge is Schelling's description of how art reveals the nature of the absolute through its free play, which "combines both the sensible and the intelligible, the conscious and the unconscious, permits the ideal to the perceived within the real" (Kooy 124). What is perceived as beauty in art is our recognition of essence. True art encapsulates "essence, the universal, the vision and expression of the indwelling spirit of nature."⁸⁹ Coleridge himself states that "The Idea that puts the forms together, can not be itself form—It is above Form, it is Essence, the Universal in the Individual, Individuality itself—the Glance and the Exponent of the indwelling Power" (*LL*, II, 223).

Coleridge's focus on "essence" and "Idea" reveals how the artist and poet who discloses "essence" and "idea" through his art is himself essence, a combination of "both the sensible and the intelligible," himself an individual repetition of the "infinite I AM," the living paradox of a finite universal. His ephemeral "form" encapsulates the eternal spirit, which is the essence that creates essence in art. His is the form through which essence shines through when it breeds more forms that contain essence. He is both ideal and real, just as his creation is, and as Schelling points out, he is also the ideal within the real. His act of creation is a repetition of the divine act of creation from which he himself is fashioned. He is a repetition that itself repeats the creative activity of the "infinite I AM." He follows the legacy of the absolute, for he is himself spirit within the individual, finite, and transient form—just like the art he produces.

Humankind's identity, in which the individual's own identity is subsumed, is the image of *Logos*, the divine idea coming to fruition as consciousness evolves over time. "Humanity, which knows itself only as an image sundered from idea, regards *Logos* as its ideal self;

⁸⁹ F. W. J. Schelling, "Concerning the Relation of the Plastic Arts to Nature," 332.

identifying with it is the crucial moment in its passage to complete self-consciousness” (Kooy 203). In the next chapter, I will discuss how the role of imagination is key to this process of identification as it reconciles the split between image and idea. Humankind’s recognition of its ideal self in *Logos* is the first step towards true self-consciousness. “*Logos* is the necessary condition of humanity realizing its idea of itself and it cannot be represented at the level of human understanding except in contrary terms” (Kooy 204). Coleridge’s conception of the aesthetic education involves a repetitious, circular journey from unity between mind and nature, to separation, and finally a return to a higher unity. He learns that the way to reclaim this unity with nature is through art or aesthetic experience (i.e. the experience of love and freedom through beauty). “Art [...] is the mediatrix between, and reconciler of, nature and man. It is, therefore, the power of humanizing nature, of infusing the thoughts and passions of man into every thing which is the object of his contemplation” (“On Poesy or Art” 253). In this way, the external is made internal by transforming nature into thought, and the internal is made external by making thought into nature or a “second nature” (i.e. art or poetry).

I have discussed how Coleridge consciously Christianizes and synthesizes the ideas of several of his major influences into his own “higher,” more comprehensive philosophy that explains the individual’s organic relation to universal being. Distinguishing between God as absolute and God as he is manifest in infinite multiplicity as spirit in creation, Coleridge proclaims that humankind is spirit’s highest manifestation. According to Coleridge, human consciousness originates from God, and human creativity repeats in manner God’s expression; the mind participates in God’s creativity by expressing its own consciousness through language and art. I have illustrated how Coleridge realizes that, through the entire history of philosophy,

humankind's attempts to understand God and his creation have been the result of the operation of a divine intention within the "germ" of God as spirit seeking for and coming to an awareness of itself as spirit through the human mind. The individual who develops an understanding of God through his mind and in his creative activity is the result of that essentiality of God as spirit gradually coming to an awareness of itself. This divine essence is "*Logos*" as an act and directive from God, or the will and intention of that spirit of God seeking and coming to an awareness of itself in creation. Through the concepts of *Bildung* and *Logos*, as understood by Coleridge, I will continue to demonstrate how the individual's growing self-awareness *mirrors* the same process and stage at which spirit has arrived in its self-understanding through human creative expression. This growing self-awareness and understanding involves the progressive emergence of God's image in the individual's mind. I have illustrated this by showing how Coleridge affirms that the human faculties and the mind's structure have been fashioned precisely to arrive at this realization and to achieve a particular and necessary form of understanding of reality that conforms to God's requirements and to achieve spirit's self-actualization. Thus, I conclude, Coleridge's metaphysics reveals that the individual, as a finite individuation of spirit, repeats the creative activity of the "infinite I AM" from which he derives his being; his creative activity and growing knowledge of God are directed by spirit's purpose of self-actualization through humankind to manifest a "multeity in unity" through spirit's myriad manifestations.

CHAPTER 3: IMAGINATION AND THE “SELF”-CREATING “I AM”

In this chapter, I expand upon the reading of Coleridge’s philosophical writings to elucidate and lay the theoretical framework for demonstrating in chapters four and five that the *process* by which an individual artist, such as Coleridge himself, is able to achieve the goal of human existence is through creative expression. For Coleridge, the goal of existence is to become conscious of and participate in the oneness of God, as each individual is God’s agent and representative; it involves acquiring a mode of vision in which the multiplicity of creation is united harmoniously and intelligibly in each individual’s consciousness so that through humankind, God as spirit comprehends itself in its multiplicity. Coleridge perceives his creativity and existence as a finite repetition of the infinite expression of the “I AM.” The poet’s act of creating poetry is a repetition of God’s act of creation. Thus, I argue, through his creative activity, Coleridge comes to comprehend not only himself, but also his significance in the universal life and spirit of God.

I begin with a close study of Coleridge’s acclaimed theory of imagination. Coleridge observes that through the ages, philosophers have been gradually developing a greater, more comprehensive understanding of imagination and its operation, which, he determines, follows the laws of organicism.⁹⁰ That is, Coleridge discovers, the operation of imagination and the forces driving the progress of philosophical thought are based on the same organic laws, which are the *modus operandi* and expression of the divine germ or principle in all things as discussed in Chapter One. Coleridge then consciously sets out to lift all philosophical systems “to a higher

⁹⁰ Hamilton notes that from Kant to Hegel, in particular, “philosophy repeatedly strives in dialectical fashion to identify the ‘rules of the IMAGINATION’ with the ‘powers of growth and production’” (54). Hamilton suggests that the ultimate understanding of imagination is embodied in Coleridge, in whom the theories of Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel coalesce.

point of view” (*TT* 248-9) and unite them into his own all-encompassing project, which, as discussed in Chapter Two, includes reconciling them with his Christian faith. To Coleridge it is through the context of the Christian doctrine that all philosophical systems are meant to be interpreted and, ultimately, redeemed. He argues that it is the nature of the divine power of his own imagination to assimilate and synthesize “all knowledges” into his crowning comprehensive philosophical system. This chapter ties together several of the themes from previous chapters; it illustrates how Coleridge combines his theory of organicism with his totalizing Christian philosophical worldview, and how he draws organically and critically on the ideas of Schelling, Kant, Descartes, and others to explore and explain the process by which the individual can accomplish God’s purpose.

Coleridge’s theory of primary and secondary imagination illustrates how the mind creates reality and derives all forms of knowledge based on that creation. As the source of all knowledge, imagination shapes the individual’s subjectivity and consolidates his identity. It is the channel through which the outer world, intuited by the senses, is brought into the mind and shapes consciousness. It follows an organic process by which the physical world is assimilated and converted into nourishment for thought. It fashions images in the mind based on sensory data, gives content to thought, and determines how the mind perceives and, hence, actually *creates* reality. Finally, and most importantly, it interacts with the images it creates and produces knowledge of the world based on its own creation. Through all these actions—creating, shaping, assimilating, combining, consolidating, etc.—the mind is revealed to be one dynamic act of spirit’s self-seeking.

After addressing the role and functioning of imagination, I then lay out Coleridge’s views of the poetic imagination and the importance of the natural world in allowing the poet to access

universal truths. These, through the natural or organic workings of the mind, are articulated and formed into symbols, words and concepts pregnant with the ideal or “idea,” characterized as the universal-within-the-particular, which can then be contemplated by the self. This separation, between the poet and his creation, allows for the perception of his own evolving self-awareness and the self-revelation of spirit, completing the analogy between poet and God and affirming and fulfilling the individual’s role in the universe.

1. Coleridge’s Theory of Imagination in Context

For a number of enlightenment thinkers, imagination occupies a constantly ambivalent, precarious, and embattled status. Kant, for example, both distrusts imagination’s potentially deceptive operation and, on the other hand, acknowledges imagination’s essential role in converting basic intuitions into meaningful ideas. Thus, Coleridge’s assertion that imagination provides the foundation of self-consciousness and of all possible knowledge of God and the world sets him apart from some of the great thinkers of the preceding age. A brief introduction of a few key concepts from Coleridge’s predecessors, discussed in his own *Philosophical Lectures* and prose works, will establish the context and frame for understanding Coleridge’s own ideas and demonstrate his novel and elevated estimation of imagination.

René Descartes argues that what the mind perceives as reality in the external world is a product of imagination; that is, imagination creates a world for the mind based on its *mode* or *manner* of intuiting objects. Descartes’s *cogito*, the foundation of self-consciousness, is described as “the self alone, stripped of any connection to the physical world, a pure mode of reflection that sees itself as constantly bombarded by deceiving imagery and which can only

define itself as the mode of resistance against these images” (Schlutz 40, 42).⁹¹ Therefore, Descartes’s *cogito* has no connection to the physical world, the body, and, especially, the imagination; it is pure essence of self, separated from the possibility of error. It becomes the “point of certainty from which the self can finally secure its authentic identity,” which is that it exists because “it thinks itself as existing” (47). The act of thinking then is the self, the self as “pure disembodied thought” (Schlutz 47-8).

What he concludes, however, is that although knowledge based on material reality is uncertain, the “processes” by which the mind organizes experiences are not. If the content of thought is unreliable, the act of thinking itself is not unreal for, in fact, “the latter is the very precondition for the possibility of doubt and deceit” in the first place (Schlutz 48).⁹² Building from this foundation of the *cogito*, Descartes grants that although the products of imagination may be erroneous, imagination *is* a faculty that belongs to the self. Even if “none of the objects of imagination are real, the power of imagination is something which really exists and is part of my thinking” (Descartes 19).⁹³ Descartes further admits that the capacity to doubt imagination’s validity can only be conceived through the imagination in the first place. One must first imagine a reality before one can imagine that things might not be as they are perceived. However, unlike Descartes’s ambivalence regarding the importance of imagination, Coleridge is unequivocal in

⁹¹ René Descartes, the first major philosopher to attempt to explain reality based on the foundation of subjectivity, and an important influence on eighteenth-century philosophy, argues that one cannot be certain whether one’s mental representations of reality correspond to the world as it actually is. That is, as imagination is an image-creating faculty, the images one receives through imagination from one’s daily interactions with the world might be just as illusory as those one has in dreams when one is asleep. Hence, Descartes seeks that incontrovertibly “real” and authentic ground upon which he can discover principles that are always and necessarily true.

⁹² From this foundational position of certainty, “as a pure mode of thought [that] has been assured,” Descartes “proceeds to reincorporate the world” into the search for truth (48). Descartes, like Coleridge, asserts that there must be a divine spark or seed in the human mind, a demonstration of God’s benevolence, that allows us to think this way, to search for certainty and truth in a potentially illusory world.

⁹³ All mental faculties, the senses, and modes of interfacing with the world are re-appropriated by the *cogito* as traits belonging to it. Sense perceptions and feelings become particular “modes” of thought. The *cogito* had to be discovered first, as the ground of certainty, as a fundamental truth obscured by deceptive habits of thought, for any serious inquiry into the nature of the self to be possible.

his valuation of imagination. In fact, Coleridge neither excludes nor keeps imagination in the balance; rather, imagination *is* consciousness, a divine principle operating in creation and in the human mind. While Descartes proclaims, “I think, therefore I am,” Coleridge’s assertion regarding the foundation of consciousness would resemble, “I am, as imagination.”

Coleridge does, however, draw direct inspiration from some of the German Idealists, though as will be evident, he extends these notions much further. For example, Kant theorizes that cognition involves passive and active processes, and in his theory of primary and secondary imagination, Coleridge demonstrates how imagination functions both spontaneously and deliberately.⁹⁴ For Kant, there is also a synthetic or unifying principle within the individual that produces self-consciousness, a principle that Coleridge partially attributes to the assimilative and integrative power of imagination. Indeed, for Fichte and Novalis, imagination is the essential faculty for establishing unity of the mind, subjectivity, and self-consciousness.⁹⁵ These Idealists embrace imagination as a visionary power that enables the mind to enter a transcendent realm that the logical mind is unable to access. The German Idealists therefore inaugurate the movement that allows Coleridge to present an aesthetic conception of self-consciousness.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ According to Kant, intuitions are received passively through the senses to form mental representations while the faculty of “understanding” actively applies concepts to these representations. Like Descartes, Kant seeks to discover those representations that can be “applicable entirely *a priori*, and hence prior to and independent of any empirical experience”: Kant concludes that the transcendental subject cannot be posited since all cognition necessitates intuition, and since the transcendental subject precedes intuition, no cognition of it is possible. The transcendental self is always a representation. The cogito is proof of the transcendental self’s existence, but the self-in-itself cannot be abstracted from that proof.

All empirical consciousness, however, has a necessary relation to a transcendental consciousness (preceding all particular experience), namely the consciousness of myself, as original apperception. It is therefore absolutely necessary that in my cognition all consciousness belong to one consciousness (of myself)... The synthetic proposition that every different empirical consciousness must be combined into a single self-consciousness [i.e. self as a unity of consciousness] is the absolutely first and synthetic principle of our thinking in general. (Schlutz 82, 91)

⁹⁵ For Fichte, imagination creates the necessary illusion of the opposition “I” and “Not I” that allows for contemplation and self-consciousness to arise. The perception of separateness is really no more real than the images in dreams.

⁹⁶ Hence for Fichte, as for Coleridge, imagination is an indispensable and ruling faculty of the mind, “the productive source of all reality and the fundamental mechanism on which the human mind is based” (Schlutz 5). At the first stage of contemplation, the empirical “I” posits itself in opposition to the “not-I,” the reality exterior to it, and

“Fichte who arguably sets out to bring Descartes’s philosophical project to its completion, makes the very power that Descartes had decidedly excluded from the cogito the ultimate condition of its possibility” (Schlutz 158). Hence, rather than discrediting imagination, Coleridge instead investigates its undeniable role in establishing self-consciousness and knowledge, asserting its foundational place in achieving the spiritual purpose of human existence.

2. Primary Imagination and the Foundation of (Self-) Consciousness

Coleridge’s philosophy of imagination draws on his theory of organicism and Christian-metaphysical conception of the nature of God and humankind’s journey towards its spiritual goal and, thereby, God’s self-revelation. While Fichte brings Descartes’s project to fruition, Coleridge further develops and synthesizes the theories of Fichte and others in his all-encompassing philosophy. He joins the Idealists in celebrating imagination as the prime agent of all cognition. For him, imagination transforms sensory data into mental representations for thought. It mediates between the world and the mind and is therefore an indispensable faculty that engenders consciousness and reflection. It brings the world into the mind as images, it recalls images, distinguishes between diverse sensory information, and reassembles them into new forms and representations. It creates a unity from the various mental images and fuels the mind’s function.

perceives itself as a fixed, delimited entity. In the second stage, it reflects on this relation and realizes that it is both agent and agency of this differentiation: “Both are ultimately one and the same, claims Fichte, since the ‘I’ is nothing but an emanation of itself as the absolute subject, which in turn becomes the object of reflection and thus posits itself in its empirical form” (143). The empirical self begins by realizing that the subject can only become aware of itself as a subject in opposition to external objects. Self-consciousness arises when the subject delimits and posits itself as separate from nature so that it can then acquire the possibility of consciously conceiving of its fundamental unity, for without separation, its oneness with nature could not be contemplated at all. Then, the subject is able to posit itself as both a separate, empirical “I” and an absolute “I” simultaneously. Imagination allows the subject to inhabit two states that would ordinarily negate each other. It brings into existence the “I,” the “Not I,” and their unity. Nature is not truly external and opposed to the self, but the opposition is an illusion of the empirical individual consciousness produced by its imagination.

Coleridge distinguishes between the various mental faculties, including “Primary Imagination,” “Secondary Imagination,” “Fancy,”⁹⁷ “Understanding,” “Speculative Reason,” and “Practical Reason.” He defines “Primary Imagination” as the “living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception” and “a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM” (*BL*, I, 304). It is the means by which things are made to be apprehended based on God’s fashioning of all existence as the medium for his gradual self-revelation. Primary imagination is a repetition of God’s absolute self-consciousness in creation, and since it is universal, everything possesses it as a “living Power” derived from God. It is a power that itself *lives* and, therefore, it is also the power that imbues human minds with the quality “life.”

On a very basic level, primary imagination furnishes the mind with the ability to reflexively receive sense impressions from the external world. Because it operates on a “living,” mysterious, and “assumed” free will, it is the natural and spontaneous act of receiving information whereby the external world is internalized, brought into the mind as material for the construction of knowledge and consciousness. It is the creative *act* of perception. Primary imagination then is an act that dissolves identities, identifies opposites and discordant qualities, and hence makes perception and knowledge possible. On a higher level, the mind’s constitution and organization determine *how* impressions are ordered into coherent perceptions that form the

⁹⁷ Plotinus, one of Coleridge’s major influences, posits a higher and lower imagination and claims humans are caught between the demands of both powers. Lower imagination, somewhat akin to Coleridge’s definition of fancy, is a faculty that recalls images of sense perception from memory as representations from the sensory realm. Higher imagination, in its thirst to attain the higher world of ideal forms, contemplates images of this world as analogous representations. Coleridge draws a distinction between imagination and fancy. While imagination is a “shaping and modifying power,” fancy is an “aggregative and associative power” (*BL*, I, 293). It deals with “fixities and definites” and is “no other than a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space” that “must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association” (305). Imagination unifies the material it assimilates from the external world and produces original forms of beauty. Fancy, on the other hand, is not creative, but, rather, a form of memory that actively gathers and stores impressions and images, which imagination then forms into new wholes. In fancy, images are left separated, thus preserving their individual properties; imagination, on the other hand, synthesizes different images to create new wholes with entirely new properties in its attempt “to idealize and to unify” (304). Hence, “fancy” can be brought in service of imagination. It is a lesser faculty, operating through the fixed laws of association.

basis of knowledge, awareness, and self-reflection. Primary imagination then emerges as finite human self-consciousness, inherited from God's absolute consciousness, and becomes the foundation upon which self-reflection is developed into higher states of knowledge. It is "the sacred power of self-intuition"; it "manifests itself in the SUM or I AM; which I shall hereafter indiscriminately express by the words spirit, self, and self-consciousness" (*BL*, I, 241, 272-3).

Taking Fichte's theory further, Coleridge explains how primary imagination is the basis and source of self-consciousness:

Each thing is what it is in consequence of some other thing. [...] an object is inconceivable without a subject as its antithesis [...]. But neither can the principle be found in a subject as a subject, contra-distinguished from an object. [...] It is to be found therefore neither in object nor subject taken separately, [...but in] the identity of both. [...] Object and subject, being and knowing are identical, each involving, and supposing the other. In other words, it is a subject which becomes a subject by the act of constructing itself objectively to itself; but which never is an object except for itself, and only so far as by the very same act it becomes a subject. It may be described therefore as a perpetual self-duplication of one and the same power into object and subject, which presuppose each other, and can exist only as antitheses. [... Therefore,] spirit is that, which is its own object, yet not originally an object, but an absolute subject for which all, itself included, may become an object. It must therefore be an ACT; for every object is, as an object, dead, fixed, incapable in itself of any action, and necessarily finite. Again the spirit (originally the identity of object and subject) must in some sense dissolve this identity, in order to be conscious of it. (*BL*, I, 270-9)

The power of imagination in creation and in separate entities is the result of the separation of the primordial “absolute subject.” The “absolute subject’s” division into subject and object is *replicated* in the individual, and the foundation and principle of being is not an object, thing, or ethereal substance, but an *act* of imagination. It is an act by which the “absolute subject,” “originally the identity of subject and object,” becomes “spirit,” “self,” or “self-consciousness” in the dissolution of its oneness, so that it may ultimately achieve the simultaneous identity and coexistence of subject and object. However, originally it was only potentially an identity, and its division made this “potential” into an actual identity. This act of separation is replicated in the individual instances of spirit that are themselves the result of the primary separation of the absolute subject.

Therefore, as introduced in Chapter Two, just as creation is an act of God, self-consciousness is an “act,” a repetition in the finite mind, of the infinite creativity of God because in the finite mind the “act” of creating the opposition of subject and object, necessary for the self to become an object for its own contemplation, is repeated. That is, the construction of the self involves identifying the “self” in opposition to an object and also, therefore, ultimately allowing the self to become an object for itself, for self-contemplation in relation to what it is not. The concept of an “identity” is conceivable only because of this coming into antitheses. However, Coleridge adds that within the infinite I AM, which is universal “spirit, self, and self-consciousness,” there is actually no distinction because “object and subject, being and knowing, are identical, each involving and *supposing* the other. In other words, it is a subject which becomes a subject by *the act* of constructing itself objectively to itself; but which never is an object except for itself” (*BL*, I, 270-9). For within the universal spirit, everything is fundamentally the same self. The perception and experience of distinction allows there to be,

only conceptually, a subject and an object, for a conception of “self” to be at all possible, and for the finite mind to make this discovery as spirit. The primary act of self-duplication occurs in the “I AM” so as to achieve self-consciousness and self-contemplation. This process is re-duplicated in the individual instances of spirit. Primary imagination operates in creation due to the separation of the absolute subject, and the individual’s ability to perceive and contemplate separation, “distinctity,” and unity is made possible by primary imagination’s role in creating self-consciousness as the basis for contemplation.⁹⁸

Coleridge relates in *Biographia Literaria* and in his philosophical lectures how this process occurs within the “infinite I AM,” which is the “expression” of God’s absolute self-consciousness. God as Absolute remains a perfection beyond creation, and creation is an expression in which universal spirit, “the infinite I AM” as the expression of God’s consciousness, becomes the fountain of individual, finite spirit.⁹⁹ In true self-consciousness, therefore, the individual comes to see himself as both subject and object, as a microcosm of universal spirit. However, neither should be conceived “as infinite nor finite exclusively, but as the most original union of both” (*BL*, I, 280). That is, individual self-consciousness, because it carries the principle of God’s infinite consciousness is both finite and infinite. This is important because, as I will later elaborate, it is this same co-existence of the infinite within the finite and the universal within the particular that characterizes the symbolic language of poetry. The

⁹⁸ The absolute subject constructs an object *of itself for* itself while remaining a subject; it becomes its own object. The act involves dissolving its unity and preserving its identity in a balance of antitheses. In other words, for the absolute subject to become what it is as self-consciousness or spirit, it must first dissolve its identity to become aware of itself as having been potentially an identity in the first place. However, the original absolute subject was never truly an identity, but actually an undifferentiated oneness. The ability to perceive itself as an “identity” is a consequence of its division into subject and object. Original oneness becomes, through creation, a oneness of multiplicity; only then does it become a potential identity. This it achieves by first becoming object to itself and then arriving at the consciousness that it is a self as subject and a self as object simultaneously. Ultimately, spirit realizes that subject and object presuppose each other and that an original state of undifferentiated unity existed and that a future, more complex and evolved identity is conceivable because of this coming into antitheses.

⁹⁹ Recall from Chapter Two that the finite instance of spirit is a repetition of God’s consciousness as spirit and not as Absolute, for universal spirit is the image of the Absolute or Absolute in conceivable form. Universal spirit is an image of the Absolute, the only form by which the Absolute can be apprehended and not the Absolute in-itself.

individual who is a finite-infinite produces language of the same nature. Both the poet and his poetry are analogous expressions occurring within universal spirit for spirit's self-revelation. The same divine *modus operandi* is replicated in each iteration of spirit's expression. Similarly, God who is an absolute beyond creation and yet is finite in his individual emanations through spirit is both infinite and finite, though he is not diminished or enhanced by these qualities. "I AM" is therefore a statement and expression of the self-revealing God as a pronouncement of selfhood through difference. Hence, both God (as universal spirit or "infinite I AM") and the individual (as finite spirit incorporating the essence of the infinite "I AM") embody the co-existence of the universal and the particular, the infinite and the finite, the eternal and the ephemeral. While all creation exists within God's infinite being, God as spirit is both subject and object to himself like his self-contemplating finite emanations.¹⁰⁰ To Coleridge, God as Absolute exists even beyond such a conception as the absolute subject's identity as "subject and object;" universal spirit's evolution from a state of undifferentiated oneness, to difference, and then to identity-in-difference occurs within God's perfect and unaffected omniscience and omnipresence.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ However, this begs the question: as the omniscient Absolute beyond creation, how was God self-conscious before his creation of the absolute subject's division into subject and object for himself? Before creation, what was "object" to God's "subject" so that God became God in the first place?

Whatever in its origin is objective, is likewise as such necessarily finite. Therefore, since the spirit is not originally an object, and as the subject exists in antithesis to an object, the spirit cannot originally be finite. But neither can it be a subject without becoming an object, and, as it is originally the identity of both, it can be conceived neither as infinite nor finite exclusively, but as the most original union of both. In the existence, in the reconciling, and the recurrence of this contradiction [of reconciliation of finite and infinite] consists the process and mystery of production and life. (*BL*, I, 280-1)

Coleridge is content with, or rather, invigorated by the admission of his ignorance when confronted by God's secret wisdom. The origin and process of the production of life is a mystery in which God is the sole knower of his own wise process.

¹⁰¹ Plotinus, a major influence on Coleridge on this subject, presents a model of creation as an emanation of the "One" that helps shed light on Coleridge's conceptual distinction between God as absolute and God as spirit. In Plotinus's monistic view of the universe, the original principle of being is an absolute undifferentiated oneness, identical with the good and the perfect. Spirit or being emanates from the One, even though the One is itself beyond being, transcendent, unchanging, and indivisible. Like Coleridge's conception of God as absolute, the One is ineffable, perfect, and undiminished by spirit or being emanating from it. Spirit or being proceeds from the One and is the underlying substance of all "things" in creation. These "things" do not make up the One because the One is not something created, but just *is*, while it is the *source* of all creation. The One is beyond the categories of being or non-being, and everything in creation belongs to a universal being. Creation is infinite being or spirit flowing away

In Coleridge's model of life and creation, primary imagination is the essence of God's nature in humans, without which consciousness would not exist. This ground of existence and knowledge, which is the power that maintains subject and object in antithesis, is the principle and essence of all things. It is the act of knowing of God's infinite I AM and a microcosmic repetition in the human mind. Similar to Descartes's *cogito*, Coleridge's "I AM" is the most basic statement of self-consciousness. Furthermore, since "the infinite I AM" is simultaneously God's principle of being and God's creative power, human self-consciousness is itself a creative act. God's self-revelation and creative power is thus manifested in individual human self-consciousness and creativity; it is the creative power of God expressed through the individual "I am": "The absolute self, the great eternal I AM, then the principle of being, and of knowledge, of idea, and of reality; the ground of existence, and the ground of the knowledge of existence, are absolutely identical, Sum quia sum; I am, because I affirm myself to be; I affirm myself to be, because I am" (*BL*, I, 275).

Coleridge describes the division of the primordial absolute subject as an act of will. To Coleridge, the entire sophisticated system of emanations must necessarily be a deliberate act orchestrated by an omniscient and transcendent God. The essence of spirit is "that it is self-representative. [...] this implies an act, and it follows therefore that intelligence or self-consciousness is impossible, except by and in a *will*. The self-conscious spirit therefore is a will; and [its] freedom must be assumed" (*BL*, I, 278-80). This will expresses itself in the mind's search for meaning as an act of love, where God is the "the principle of being, and of knowledge,

from the One into division. Like Coleridge's "infinite I AM" as an expression of God's absolute consciousness, Plotinus's being or spirit is part of the emanation of the One. The sum of all things is universal being, not the One, since the One is prior to existence and is beyond the categories of existence and non-existence. The One's perfection and unity are not diminished or altered by its emanations; its emanations, however, contain the same essence and power, which is to self-engender or self-produce from out of themselves, as a repetition of the One's act of emanation. Everything has this essence: the act of going out of oneself. The emanations, which are eternally produced, eternally engender eternal being.

of idea, and of reality.”¹⁰² That is, Coleridge proclaims, “the ground of existence and the ground of the knowledge of existence, are absolutely identical” (275). God is the ground of being and so is the will-to-meaning; spirit is the function of its own knowledge of itself, which, according to Coleridge, is the power of imagination.

In Coleridge’s conception, then, the individual’s search for meaning and knowledge is based on the intrinsic nature of the power of imagination and this search is a finite act of creation that participates in the eternal life and creativity of the “infinite I AM.” “I AM” is God’s self-revelation and is the foundation of all self-consciousness. Human self-consciousness, therefore, contains the essence of this revelation and self-seeking; it is a creative act, a finite image and echo of God’s infinite self-consciousness.

3. Secondary Imagination and the Contemplation of Self-Consciousness

Primary imagination is active in that “the very act of perception requires at once a relatively passive faculty which becomes the object, and a relatively active faculty which as subject perceives the object. [...] Perception appears to be passive because its activity occurs at levels below the consciousness. Hence its objects *seem* ‘given,’ external, and independent of perception” (Wheeler 54). It is also an act because through the process of sensory intuition, it spontaneously dissolves identities, identifies difference, and reunites them to form the basis of all perception and knowledge. Akin to Kant’s “understanding,” it is an active agent that places its own structures and categories on experience and forms its uniquely human and subjective perception of reality. It then orders these into judgments. “Every human being, thus, is, so far as he perceives anything at all, a creator and an idealizing agent” (Brooks 393). Thus, primary

¹⁰² As I will elaborate in the next chapter, Coleridge defines this primal will as love.

imagination is a universal mode of perception common to all humans, derived from God, and is beyond our voluntary control.

Secondary imagination is a reduplication of primary imagination's process of dissolving and reuniting identities, but now as a conscious and willful act. It harmonizes discordant qualities into coherent thoughts, meaningful images, complex metaphors, and powerful symbols from information provided by primary imagination. "It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates in order to re-create; 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" (*BL*, I, 304). It is "poetic imagination," "identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation" (*BL*, I, 304).

Secondary imagination is simultaneously the instrument in the individual that re-repeats God's creativity. It is an "echo" of primary imagination "co-existing with the conscious will" and involves "superior voluntary control" (*BL*, I, 304, 125). Unlike primary imagination, which acts spontaneously according to an innate, living principle or divine will, secondary imagination functions by conscious *human* will, and is deployed deliberately and in a unique fashion in the individual's act of creation. That is, secondary imagination is an echo of a repetition—an echo of an echo, for primary imagination is itself an echo of God's primary act of creation. In the individual, primary imagination furnishes material for secondary imagination to construct new configurations and syntheses. In summary, then, primary imagination produces self-consciousness; secondary imagination contemplates it. Primary imagination is the universal mode of perception; secondary imagination is able to observe the process by which perception is possible. Finally, like primary imagination, secondary imagination creates new identities by reconciling oppositions; it dissolves, diffuses, and dissipates the synthesis of subject and object

so as to recreate their union in artistic expression. Through art, it “idealizes” reality. Together, primary and secondary imagination work in unison and are essentially complementary active powers, jointly given the term “imagination” and the combined activity of primary and secondary imagination then results in language, the concrete expression, a finite repetition, analogous but lesser in degree to God’s infinite, cosmic creativity.

4. The Organic Nature of Poetic Imagination

According to Coleridge, imagination’s assimilating, synthesizing, and productive properties make it an organic power that is inextricably linked to his own unique organic self. He states that, as a “living Power” in humans, imagination functions and develops like an organism (*BL*, I, 304). Its creative activity involves combining the artist’s various intellectual and vital faculties, specifically, the joint action of the will, reason, and understanding. Imagination brings the entire being into activity, thereby harmonizing the various human faculties—the senses, intellect, emotions, and memory—into a joint exercise and synergy. “The poet, described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity [...]. 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” (*BL*, II, 15-6). As the power that brings all intellectual powers into play, imagination therefore represents the collective *force* of all the faculties; it is the “soul of man.”

Analogous to the action of a plant, imagination’s creative activity also involves assimilating and combining various substances from the external world, feeding on the material from the senses, breaking down the identities of those absorbed materials, synthesizing different images, and producing new wholes, higher unities, and original forms of beauty and meaning in

its attempt “to idealize and to unify” (*BL*, I, 304). It is a “shaping and modifying power” that generates new formations so as to establish an evolving identity of its own. It is “essentially *vital*” (304), and its rules are “the very powers of growth and production” (*BL*, II, 84). Coleridge also states, “From the first, or initiative Idea, as from a seed, successive ideas germinate. [...] Events and images, the lively and spirit-stirring machinery of the external world, are like light and air and moisture to the seed of the mind [...]. In all processes of mental evolution the objects of the senses must stimulate the mind; and the mind must in turn assimilate and digest the food which it thus receives from without” (*TM* 7). The products of the mind themselves are fruits of creative expression and also contain the seeds that can sprout fresh shoots.¹⁰³

Analogously, I affirm, the development of Coleridge’s own mind follows this pattern of vegetal growth. As a precocious child and voracious reader even at the age of six, Coleridge assimilates into his consciousness many books: “At six years old I remember to have read *Belisarius*, *Robinson Crusoe*, & *Philip Quarle*—and then I found the *Arabian Nights*’ entertainments” (*CL*, I, 347).¹⁰⁴ The stories nourish his imagination, expand the scope of his musings, and form the foundation for his creativity. As a growing child absorbed in reading great works of imagination, his reality is shaped by the nourishment obtained through his own burgeoning imagination: “My mind had been habituated *to the Vast*—and I never regarded *my senses* in any way as the criteria of my belief” (*CL*, I, 354).¹⁰⁵ Later, through a higher imaginative vision, he begins to seek and uncover in the material world an analogous vastness. He aches “to behold & know something *great*—something *one & indivisible*—and it is only in

¹⁰³ Abrams remarks on this trait in Coleridge’s writing:

Coleridge’s critical writing is couched in terms that are metaphorical for art and literal for a plant. If Plato’s dialectic is a wilderness of mirrors, Coleridge’s is a very jungle of vegetation. Only let the vehicles of his metaphors come alive, and you see all the objects of criticism writhe surrealistically into plants or parts of plants, growing in tropical profusion. Authors, characters, poetic genres, poetic passages, words, meter, logic become seeds, trees, flowers, blossoms, fruit, bark, and sap. (ML 169)

¹⁰⁴ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “To Thomas Poole,” 9 Oct. 1797.

¹⁰⁵ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “To Thomas Poole,” 16 Oct. 1797.

the faith of this that rocks or waterfalls, mountains or caverns give me the sense of sublimity or majesty!” (*CL*, I, 349).¹⁰⁶ He finds the same fundamental divine element in nature and in his mind, and this discovery comes in the form of a recognition.

This realization is achieved precisely because Coleridge’s budding mind, following the organic pattern, assimilated and nourished itself on the many great works of imagination acting on his consciousness; by incorporating all these materials into his own being, his imagination ultimately synthesizes them to form his identity, self-consciousness, knowledge of the world, and poetic temperament. In Chapter One, I discussed Coleridge’s theory of organicism in which the laws of assimilation, synthesis, and growth form the spiritual blueprint for all processes in creation; in Chapter Two, I demonstrated Coleridge’s self-proclaimed project of synthesizing all schools of philosophy into his own all-encompassing Christian philosophical system. These projects acquire greater meaning in the context of divine imagination, for they are indeed, according to Coleridge, the result of a spiritual “intention” or “will” that finds expression through his imagination, which is the attribute of God in creation. The poetic imagination is part of the process through which Coleridge comes to these revelations and is both made possible by and is understood through his synthesizing organic *and* Christianized philosophical project.

5. Art, Nature, and Truth

Coleridge’s organicism maintains that nature is God’s expression, and thus the path to spiritual revelation requires that the individual, using his poetic imagination, cultivate a deep appreciation of the natural world. Indeed, an important premise of Romantic *Naturphilosophie* is the analogy between natural forces and the laws that make up human nature. There is a fundamental unity, kinship, and correlation between mind and nature and, therefore, the study

¹⁰⁶ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “To John Thelwall,” 14 Oct. 1797.

and understanding of nature is inextricably linked to the contemplation and understanding of human consciousness. Novalis proposes that the empirical laws of nature and the mind's cognitive functions are structured according to the same transcendental laws, which, as purposeful as they are, could only be conceived and implemented by a superior mind or higher intelligence. This analogy is by design purposeful, for the experience of nature's empirical laws leads to the realization that human faculties are fitted to God's requirements: the individual mind with all its processes of cognition is akin to the transcendental mind that gave it its structure. That is, finite consciousness discovers that the correlation of mind and nature is created so that it may perceive this analogy and ultimately realize its association with God's consciousness.

Coleridge himself asserts that all objects, shapes, and individual entities in nature comprise a form of readable language that, although not absolutely knowable, can nevertheless be gradually deciphered with the help of imagination through the mind's study of itself and nature. Hence, the key to understanding reality, according to Coleridge, lies in the intrinsic link between mind and nature, both of which are expressions of the same language. Through introspection, the individual attempts to discover the key to decoding the script of nature and the self. "Nature's code is the movements of thoughts triggered by the subject's perceptions within the realm of consciousness and the script of nature is thus written in the mind" (Schlutz 200). Therefore, the secret laws of nature are revealed by understanding the principles guiding human thought and expression. Through its interaction with the natural world, the self realizes that the nature within is the key to revealing the nature without. Nature exists "for the mind to understand and unlock its own powers, a script to which the self always already holds the key since it is writing it itself" (203).

The goal, then, is to discover the mind's intrinsic harmony with nature through the full,

unified, and coordinated action of all the human faculties under the guidance of reason and imagination. Coleridge learns that the way to reclaim unity with nature is through art, described as a “second nature,” which is nature now infused with greater meaning by the power of higher reason in art.¹⁰⁷ Like Schelling and Schiller, Coleridge views imaginative art as a “mediatress between, and reconciler of, nature and man” (“On Poesy or Art” 253). That is, through the integrative power of art, the human mind is able to find oneness with nature by reconciling “that which is nature with that which is exclusively human” (254-5). Art, therefore, reconciles and mediates between nature and humanity; it is “the power of humanizing nature, of infusing the thoughts and passions of man into every thing which is the object of his contemplation” (253). Art humanizes nature so that the mind may reclaim it, for nature is that which was alienated from the mind in the first place. It is the action of spirit seeking itself in the physical world of objects that are really objectifications of spirit. The individual mind seeks itself in objects because it is a finite representative of the infinite spirit performing, as a microcosmic repetition, its task of self-contemplation. Novalis asserts that in the study of the nature of reality and of the reality of nature one will inevitably be led to the study of the self and eventually to the common origin of mind and nature in the transcendental, absolute subject. Art mirrors the artist’s own personal spiritual quest and provides the artist with the sense of communion and unity for which he is searching.

5.1 The Symbol

According to Coleridge, the poet seeks something permanent and unifying in his contemplation of nature, a kind of “a symbolical language for something within [him] that already and forever exists” (*CN*, II, 2546). Nature and the poet’s consciousness manifest from

¹⁰⁷ “Second nature” is a Kantian phrase. Hamilton notes that Coleridge “almost always thinks of poetry in the way that Kant thinks of aesthetic experience” (in *Coleridge’s Poetics* pp. 61).

the same source in the infinite I AM; they are analogous and mirror each other. Working in harmony with reason, imagination thus grasps universal “Ideas” behind or inherent in the appearances of nature and the material world. In a remarkable statement, Coleridge asserts that matter is a phenomenon of thinking, a “modification of intelligence” or thought itself (*PL*, II, 523) and also that “words are things,” thoughts in a “*rememberable* form” (*PL*, I, 257).¹⁰⁸ Hence, Coleridge seeks a “pure” or “transcendental” philosophic consciousness and language through which “ideas”—“mysterious powers, living, seminal, formative, and exempt from time”—are to be expressed (*BL*, I, 97n). The power of imagination combines the action of reason (the faculty of the supersensuous) with the function of understanding (the faculty of sensible knowledge) to produce a “symbol”: a supersensuous idea made incarnate or embodied in an image of the sense. That is, imagination produces images and with the action of reason infuses them with universal truths; the symbol represents the synthesis of idea and image, form made pregnant with the ideal. In this process, primary imagination provides sensory material, and the joint action of secondary imagination and reason produces symbols of truth and essence. Coleridge therefore concludes that the artist consciously articulates what nature unconsciously embodies as an expression. He presents nature and reality as symbols of truth and essence and, therefore, “idealizes” reality. This allows reason’s ideas to be contemplated and interpreted. Hence, reason, by way of imagination, “gives birth to a system of symbols, harmonious in themselves, and consubstantial with the truths, of which they are the *conductors*” (*SM* 29).¹⁰⁹

Coleridge explains that spirit is expressed in the form of such symbols or, specifically,

¹⁰⁸ Coleridge affirms, however, that the true nature of reality cannot be defined because descriptions are subject to the limitations of semantics and context and are therefore inadequate; nevertheless, descriptions of reality should be considered so far as they are useful in dealing with what we *perceive* reality to be in our daily activities.

¹⁰⁹ Coleridge explains that while imagination uses “reason” and “understanding” to produce the symbol, imagination is all the while in the service of reason; that is, reason acts for itself through imagination’s power to combine reason with understanding. Ultimately for Coleridge, reason, “without being either sense, the understanding, or the imagination, contains all three within itself” (*SM* 69). Imagination, under the control of reason, mediates between understanding and reason to produce a synthesis from seemingly incompatible elements: sensory images and ideas.

spirit's consciousness is embodied in nature, and the consciousness of the poet is expressed in the symbolic language of his art. Symbolic representation seeks to transcend the limits of language, yet even so, symbols themselves do not express the whole truth. Symbols can only be contemplated and require an effort of the mind and the involvement of higher reason to recognize the truth they seek to represent. Therefore, unlike thoughts, a symbol does not directly communicate, but needs to be interpreted, just as it was fashioned, through an act of imagination and reason, that is by the same divine powers that created it. A symbol contains "in its nature something progressive, that [goes] beyond it" (*PL*, I, 78). Schelling and Coleridge then affirm that a symbol does not express literal truth, but rather it is a conduit through which the mind can contemplate the ideal. In *The Philosophy of Art*, Schelling states that one can contemplate the ideal in concrete artistic expression not as a particular thing in itself, but as the universal, infinite, and eternal in finite artistic form. In art, the eternal is made present and the "Idea" is intimated through a symbolic image, which can then be contemplated. Hence, one contemplates art not as a particular thing in itself, "but rather the universe in the form of art" or the "representation of the infinite [...] as the particular." Just as philosophy "manifests the absolute in the archetype, so also does art present the absolute in a reflex or reflected image," as a copy of it (*PA* 16). Art manifests the "Form," "Ideal," or "Idea" in concrete terms for the mind to contemplate.

According to Coleridge, the poet, in particular, expresses through the symbolic language of poetry ineffable truths that can only be contemplated as symbols. Following Kant, Coleridge states, "an IDEA, in the highest sense of that word, cannot be conveyed but by a *symbol*" (*BL*, I, 156) using a language that appeals to a source of knowledge "far higher" and "far inward" than the symbols themselves can express (*BL*, I, 239). Hence, Coleridge adds, "all symbols of necessity involve an apparent contradiction" in their attempt to synthesize the eternal idea with

form (*BL*, I, 156). The supersensible truths presented and contemplated by reason are given sensible form or a body (i.e. embodied) in the symbol. Consciousness is embodied in symbolic expression just like the individual poet who produces poetry is an embodiment of consciousness or spirit. Both the temporal and the eternal, Schelling's real and ideal, the world of senses and the supersensible world of ideas coexist in symbols: "[The symbol is] characterized by a translucence of the Special in the Individual, or of the General in the Especial, or of the Universal in the General. Above all by the translucence of the Eternal through and in the Temporal. It always partakes of the Reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that Unity of which it is the representative" (*SM* 30).¹¹⁰

Coleridge delves deeper into the paradox of the symbol's attempt to convey the infinite within the finite. To resolve this apparent contradiction, he begins by asserting that examples of the coexistence of contradictions lie everywhere in creation. Just as there are "two opposite and counteracting forces" or "centrifugal and centripetal forces" in nature, "the one of which tends to expand infinitely, while the other strives to apprehend or find itself in this infinity" (*BL*, I, 286, 297), similarly and necessarily, a contradiction lies at the very foundation of thought and language, which attempts to express the ineffable and the ideal in concrete and limiting terms:

The counteraction then of the two assumed forces does not depend on their meeting forces from opposite directions; the power which acts in them is indestructible; it is therefore inexhaustibly re-ebullient; and as something must be the result of these two forces, both alike infinite, and both alike indestructible; and as rest or neutralization

¹¹⁰ This "apparent contradiction" points to the limitations of language: symbols that seek to express "Ideas" are after all expressed "through words which are but the shadows of notions; even as the notional understanding itself is but the shadowy abstraction of living and actual truth" (*BL*, I, 243). The poet's or the transcendental philosopher's symbolic language only partially conveys the reality it attempts to represent. That is, the symbol itself expresses truth only partially. Truth is then revealed or extracted when the mind (i.e. reason) contemplates the symbol. Symbols are produced by the mind for other minds to contemplate.

cannot be this result; no other conception is possible, but that the product must be a *tertium aliquid*, or finite generation. Consequently this conception is necessary. Now this *tertium aliquid* can be no other than an interpenetration of the counteracting powers, partaking of both. (300)

As the power that reconciles and balances opposites or discordant qualities, imagination arranges and maintains a balance between the two forces in symbols or “finite generation.” “All genuine creation [...] derives from the generative tension of opponent forces, which are synthesized, without exclusion, in a new whole” (*ML* 119).

While the poet interprets nature, in interpreting art, an individual’s secondary imagination also contemplates and extracts truth and essence from manmade symbols. It thus again dissolves the synthesis of subject and object: “In order to know one’s own mind—to become a ‘self-conscious spirit’—it is necessary to dissolve this union [of self-as-subject and self-as-object]. This dissolving is an encounter with pure knowing,” “with pure spirit,” “with *will* itself, as the power and act of knowing, distinct from things known” (Wallace 26). Hence, secondary imagination, with the material from primary imagination, contemplates self-consciousness and produces individual expressions of meaning in its search for truth, first through nature, then more clearly through art as a second nature. These acts are analogous to and correspond in essence with the principle of the creative “I AM” as a self-reflexive act. The self perceives itself as an act, a finite repetition of the infinite act and expression of the infinite I AM; through its creations, it becomes conscious of “the pure spirit, the pure power of knowing, the manifestation of the absolute I AM who is God. And so the ‘recreated’ thing-known is different: translucent in it is the divine” (Wallace 26-7).

5.2 Organicism of Art

Thus the operation of imagination is organic, and the artistic process of the conversion, articulation, and contemplation of these symbols, impregnated with ineffable spiritual truths made evident in the poetic imagination, is similarly inherently and purposefully organic. While the mind is the instrument that produces symbols, Coleridge explains that the human being is actually gifted with “a threefold mind.” The first aspect belongs to him specifically and arises, “necessarily, out of the peculiar mechanism of his nature and by which he beholds all things perspectively from his relative position” as a member of the human species. The second modifies the views of the first by his “particular constitution and position as this or that particular individual” *within* that species belonging to a particular time, place, and setting. The third requires an “effort from within” by which the individual “places himself on the same point as Nature, and contemplates all objects, himself included, in their permanent and universal being and relations” (*PL*, II, 461). Coleridge concludes that when humans achieve the consciousness of reality through the threefold mind, “Then too shall we be in a state to which science in all its forms is gradually leading us; then will the other great Bible of God, the book of nature, become transparent to us, when we regard the forms of matter as words, as symbols, valuable only as being the expression, an unrolled but yet glorious fragment, of the wisdom of the supreme Being” (541).

As demonstrated in Chapter One, Coleridge states that the mind and its creativity follow the laws organicism. The creation and experience of art allows the human mind to achieve the highest possible awareness of the multitude in unity of spirit in creation. According to Hegel and the idealists, art aids spirit to regain possession of itself; in art, it recognizes itself as an objectification of consciousness, first seeing the work as something external perceived by the

senses that it then reconstitutes as thought through its contemplation of it as an object. That is, like all objects, art is assimilated and incorporated into the self as thought; it is recognized as being none other than objectified spirit. In this way, through art, the external is made internal by transforming nature into thought, and the internal is made external by making thought into nature. It is spirit's method of acquiring self-knowledge. Therefore, the process of creating art and the effect of art on the mind are analogous. That is, the manner by which the mind and self-consciousness develop, the process of creating art or poetry, and the method by which art nourishes other minds, all follow the pattern of organic growth and production; they are the result of the operation of the divine element of imagination in all things.

Furthermore, as demonstrated in Chapter One, Coleridge illustrates not only how a work of art or a poem is organically created, but how it is itself like a living organism in which every part, like organs of a body, is integral, necessary, intimately related, and non-arbitrary. All parts unite around a governing idea, and the work as a whole grows organically from this innate principle. He contends that the greatest poetry comprises of a whole consisting of the greatest number of parts that are themselves wholes that “delight” independently and interdependently: “Grand portions are produced: we have limbs of giant growth; but the production, as a whole, in which each part gives delight for itself, and the whole, consisting of these delightful parts, communicates the highest intellectual pleasure and satisfaction” (*LL*, I, 303). In *Philosophical Lectures*, Coleridge states that a true organic unity consists in “a connection without combination.” Each constituent part is “belinked together, but no part would lose its integrity and individuality” (*PL*, I, 421).¹¹¹ Each poem has “a beginning, a middle, and an end, and in which all the parts are means to some great end [...] to one purpose,” each part “having a wholeness of

¹¹¹ Coleridge observes that this same principle of organicism is seen in human social structures: “Each house was to be a man's castle. Each town owed indeed its duties and its audiences to some noble or prince from whom it held land, but still it was a whole, of itself, with its own rights” (*PL*, I, 421)

itself” (421). The description of a poem as a living entity is significant because, as I will elaborate in the next section, the creation of the poem is analogous to, or a “repetition” of, that same separation of spirit from itself and that same informing of spirit in creation. Just as the poet is the highest individuation of spirit in nature, the poem is the expression, as the separation or objectification of the poet’s consciousness, now informed in the concrete pages of a manuscript.

This poetic expression, however, is unlike a purely natural organic growth because it involves the attribute of *human* will.¹¹² That is, unlike plants, Coleridge contends that humans have the power of free will and moral choice. As discussed in Chapter Two, one achieves the highest moral freedom through aesthetic experience, but the idea of an organic force, as the *modus operandi* of all things, seems at first to conflict with the ideal of achieving the highest freedom and, therefore, the highest possible consciousness of the self and God, through art. Secondary imagination operates through the will of the individual artist; yet, his creations follow a determined pattern. Abrams notes that there is a fatalistic element to organicism:

If the growth of a plant seems inherently purposeful, it is a purpose without an alternative, fated in the seed, and evolving into its final form without the supervision of consciousness. [...] in some German critics, recourse to vegetable life as a model for the coming-into-being of a work of art had, in fact, engendered the fateful concept that artistic creation is primarily an unwilled and unconscious process of mind. Coleridge, however, though admitting an unconscious component in invention, was determined to demonstrate that a poet like Shakespeare ‘never wrote anything without design.’ (*ML* 173)

¹¹² It is important to note that the individual will is, in fact, a manifestation of the divine Will and is an attribute of God in humans.

It is evident to Coleridge that although their natures are fallible and biased, humans may achieve freedom when they consciously recognize their creativity as an extension of the absolute creative freedom of God. Anterior to that recognition is an unconscious, and therefore delusionary, sense of freedom. As noted in Chapter Two, absolute freedom can be asymptotically approached through aesthetic experience, whose source and occasion lie in imagination's unique ability to unite all the mind's faculties, including reason and understanding, into a powerful synergy.

It is therefore the separation of mind and nature made possible by the working of individual imagination that allows for individual autonomy and freedom while their conceptual union allows for freedom itself to be nature's organic, evolutionary goal. In the Romantic conception, the artist not only completes nature's teleological goal, as Aristotle proposed, but also surpasses nature and finds in his art his own autonomy and freedom. That is, through human imagination, nature not only actualizes herself, but also aims to create the conditions for humankind to surpass nature and become a nature unto itself. The artist's creativity is thought to be an instrument of nature's productive energy,¹¹³ a concept the Romantics develop and establish as the foundation for their own aesthetic theories.

Thus, a true artist does not attempt to reproduce objective reality, but creates what nature ought to have produced herself through her immanent evolutionary process. That is, imagination brings into existence what nature could not herself create; human imagination therefore actualizes nature's plan. Coleridge proclaims, "at once the most complex and the most individual of creatures, man, taken in the ideal of his humanity, has been not inaptly called the microcosm of the world in compendium, as the point to which all the lines converge from the circumference of nature. This applies to his sum of being, to his powers collectively" (*PL*, II, 461). However,

¹¹³ This theory of organicism dates back to some of the Stoics, including Zeno, Chrysippus, and Posidonius, who conceive of human creativity as an extension of nature's productive force.

since humankind and nature are not spiritually distinct, but part of the same divine agency, human imagination is an individuation of nature herself, perceived as being distinct from nature. Through the power of imagination, an artist creates a “second nature” out of the materials provided by the intuitions and their representations from the empirical world. He does not merely reproduce nature, but imbues it with new meaning in his art. In Coleridge’s philosophy, imagination reifies reason’s abstract ideas and is the mediating power that unites all faculties under reason’s guidance. Coleridge affirms that the poet’s imagination unifies and, with reason, idealizes. It dissolves the illusion of difference between mind and nature and reproduces an ideal unity in the work of art.

The final stage in this evolution, and indeed the objective of *Naturphilosophie*, according to Schelling, is to achieve the identity of mind and nature. To Coleridge, whose philosophy I have been demonstrating encompasses organicism and ultimately Christianizes these Romantic naturalist worldviews, this identity would confirm and reveal the presence of God.

The theory of natural philosophy would then be completed, when all nature was demonstrated to be identical in essence with that which in its highest known power exists in man as intelligence and self-consciousness; when the heavens and the earth shall declare not only the power of their Maker, but the glory and the presence of their God. [...] philosophy would pass into religion, and religion become inclusive of philosophy. We begin with the I KNOW MYSELF, in order to end with the absolute I AM. We proceed from the SELF, in order to lose and find all self in GOD. (*BL*, I, 256)

In the evolution of humankind towards this realization, imagination is the key to achieving this identity of self with God; artistic creativity, as the higher synthesis of philosophy and religion, is divinely sanctioned and is ultimately the channel through which imagination can attain its goal.

6. Analogy Between Poet and God

Coleridge finds that the activity of the poet—his contemplation and self-reflection, his creativity as an expression of truth-seeking, and his awareness of his own ties to the divine—is the result of the activity of spirit in creation. Coleridge’s theories of imagination and art provide the solution to how he can not only approach but truly *achieve* his spiritual self-actualization, repeating through poetic creation the action of universal spirit, and reconciling his own finiteness with the infinite and the Absolute.

Coleridge establishes an analogy between the imaginative capability of the poet and the creativity of the “infinite I AM”; Coleridge contends that God’s creativity is a conscious, deliberate, and willful act. It is expressed and reproduced as individual self-consciousness; the individual therefore partakes in God’s creativity and his conscious and willed artistic production is a propagation and extension of God’s imagination. That is, if primary imagination forms the perception and self-consciousness of each individual mind, then God as spirit perceives and experiences all existence through his finite creations. God’s creative action in primary imagination, which feeds a corresponding creative action and impulse in the individual as secondary imagination, is also therefore an action of spirit as a unique repetition that contributes to God’s infinite qualities. “The mind is an act, and this act is knowing [...] represented by the words, “I am” [...]. The power of knowing, then, is ‘an echo in the finite of the infinite I AM;’ consciousness of this power (i.e. of the spirit itself) is, then, consciousness of the absolute in its pure but relative form, of the divine in its human form” (Wallace 27). That is, the absolute in its “relative form” is God as spirit apprehended, *relatively*, through the finite mind.

To illustrate how the individual grows in awareness as he participates in spirit’s self-revelation, I focus on Coleridge’s discussion of the role of art and poetry. The symbolic language

of poetry “repeats” the infinite I AM’s expression, of interfusing the universal with the particular, the infinite essence with the finite body. Poetry is a symbolic expression of divine imagination: it is therefore spiritual. The poet’s process of creation and self-reflection is a microcosmic repetition of the infinite I AM’s process of separation by embodying consciousness in external form. Hence, I argue, the poem is to the poet as nature and the cosmos are to God. Through his poetry, the poet attempts “to realize the full potential of a complete I, as the aesthetic unity of mind and nature.” The poet works to establish the “I” “as the unifying sphere that emerges through the infinite connection of parts within a whole” and the “I” both becomes and indeed is, a “product of *poesis*, which emerges in the performance of the poetic text” (Schlutz 192). Therefore, it is imagination that guides the self-effectuating process of subjectivity, which is manifested in the work of art as a unity of the ideal and the real; that is, art becomes the material objectification of imagination’s subjectifying process.¹¹⁴ “The subject thus constitutes itself not only by means of imagination, but as an aesthetic product of imagination; it can only grasp itself poetically in the reflection of a work of art” (18). Poetry presents the self’s consciousness as a concrete artistic object, as *self reflected for self-reflection*, as, I argue, Coleridge’s poetry and poetic process exhibit.¹¹⁵

Abrams explains, “The imagination, in creating poetry, therefore echoes the creative principle underlying the universe. Conversely, the whole universe, both in its continuous

¹¹⁴ On the necessity of this separation, see again fn. 7 above.

¹¹⁵ In describing poetic genius, Coleridge draws an analogy to Shakespeare as an artist, comparing him to a divine creator who creates an entirely new reality out of his imagination, inhabits his creations, and yet remains himself: “Shakespeare becomes all things, yet forever remaining himself” (*BL*, II, 27-8). He is undiminished by his creation and, in fact, is enriched by it through the experiences of the characters he creates. Similarly, William Hazlitt describes how Shakespeare is able to annul his individual identity to momentarily become the character he creates and contemplates. “His genius consisted in the faculty of transforming himself at will into whatever he chose: his originality was the power of seeing every object from the exact point of view in which others would see it” (“On Genius and Common Sense,” 42). Thus, as a repetition of the creative action of God as spirit, Shakespeare embodies the characters he creates; he is able, “for the time, to identify himself with the character he wishes to represent, and to pass from one to another, like the same soul successively animating different bodies” (“Shakespeare and Milton,” 114). As emanations of God and as participants in God’s infinite creativity, the greatest poets most closely replicate God’s creative process and richness of “unity in multitude.”

generation ‘in the infinite I AM’ and in the repetition of that act in the process of perception by individual human minds [i.e. primary imagination], may be said to consist, just as a great poem does, in the productive resolution of contraries and disparates [i.e. secondary imagination]” (*ML* 119). The infinite and the finite are united in art and coexist, each for and because of the other; the infinite can only be conceived in relation to the finite and the finite only exists because it manifests from the infinite. Essence is brought into matter in God’s creation, and matter is fashioned into form and is raised to the level of essence in human creation.¹¹⁶

Coleridge states that although we cannot behold God, we see his “real” attributes in beauty, truth, and love. Despite the imperfections and limitations in creation, we can derive God’s properties and perfection with increasingly greater degree. Here, Plato’s influence on Coleridge is evident. Also, according to Coleridge, the symbol is a representation of the “One,” an “actual” part of the whole that it represents. Through Plotinus’s doctrine of participation by which all entities in creation, although distinct, derive their existence from the One, are emanated by degrees from the One, and participate in the One, it is possible to conceive of and retrace the way, “in knowledge and in action, back through the hierarchical degrees of emanated created being, to reunion with the One” (Barth 20). Thus, the “One” is known in some measure by its attributes in creation, and the material world is then eternal truth embodied, needing to be interpreted. According to Coleridge, imagination mimics the action of the One, the eternal and “infinite I AM,” as a microcosmic repetition within a finite emanation of the One itself; similarly, the individual expresses the supersensible in terms of the sensible, through symbolic language from which “ideas” are then extracted and contemplated.

¹¹⁶ In *The Creative Imagination*, James Engell explains, “the idea of form, and form’s concretion as matter, become indivisibly one and exist in and through one another. In the imaginative act two unities are formed, each of which is really the other. Form becomes being and being becomes form” (305). Form and content are, therefore, interdependent.

These symbols, as Coleridge ultimately articulates, are products of the divine act of creation replicated in the artist, as an echo of the original and eternal act of creation, and still the divine spirit acting through the human mind. Symbolic language belongs to the realm of “representation,” just as the material world is the representation of God’s expression. The phenomenal world then provides the material for God’s living agent, the individual human, to gain self-consciousness and to produce, in turn, his own representations in a second nature, through symbolic language. The cycle, in which God as spirit contemplates himself, is complete and also self-perpetuating.

Hence, to succinctly recapitulate, perception is the initial act of imagination, which allows the mind to discover meaning in a reality that is actively made objective in relation to a perceiving subject. Art is a secondary act, a repetition of the act of creation both of God and of human perception, which is God’s imaginative principle in creation. The reconciling act of imagination, its “esemplastic power” (*BL*, I, 303) that does “shape into one” (168), entails a synthesizing of contraries into a symbol that maintains oppositions in a balance “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; a more than usual state of emotion, with more than usual order” (*BL*, II, 16-7). It is a repetition of the absolute subject’s act of dividing and maintaining itself in the antitheses of “I” and “Not-I” as humankind and nature. Every piece of art consists in the union of the universal and the particular, of form and matter, and embodies as an individual manifestation the union of the infinite and the finite, just as each individual human who creates art is an individual manifestation of the infinite in the finite resulting from “the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM” (*BL*, I, 304). Art is a fresh echo and image itself generated from an echo and image of God’s primal act of creation.

Hence, art or a poem, as an expression of consciousness and in its ability to communicate truth through symbols, is an individuation analogous to the artist who is an individuation and expression of consciousness or spirit. Both poet and poem are manifestations of spirit.

According to Schelling and Coleridge, art or poetry is a repetition, as an imaginative act, of “*the same in-forming*” of the ideal into the real of God’s original act of creation, the in-forming of God’s “*infinite ideality*” into reality (*PA* 31). Since the infinite and various emanations of God consist of in-forming his “infinite ideality” into reality, each emanation has “the power of individuation,” which is a “creative power” (32). This power is manifested and expressed, according to Coleridge, as the esemplastic force of secondary imagination, which produces poetry. Poetry, and art in general, as symbolic representation, is finite and infinite, abstract and concrete, just as creation is an in-forming of the ideal into the real. Ideally, Schelling concludes, “Art has been designated as the *real* representation of the forms of things as they are in themselves, and hence of the forms of the archetypes” (32). By contemplating art and the process of poetic imagination behind it, one returns to the infinite and eternal absolute through the medium of the real and the finite. The universe is a work of art and the individual artist’s creativity is a repetition of that process as well as a contributor to and participant in God’s creativity. God creates nature; the poet or artist as a “second maker” produces a “second nature.”

Furthermore, the mind’s creation of a second nature is a union of art with philosophy, and “there the mighty spirit still coming from within” transforms matter into “a symbol of the inward and imaginable beauty” (*PL*, I, 237). This is why, Coleridge remarks, one continues to gaze admiringly at a painting, even after one has “long satisfied all curiosity concerning the mere outline” because one feels “these are but symbols” (238). One contemplates art long after the eye has been satiated because one discovers that “there is a divine something corresponding to

something within, which no image can exhaust but which we are reminded of when in the South of Europe we look at the deep blue sky.” One continues to muse on art “sinking deeper and deeper, and therein offering homage to the infinity of our souls which no mere form can satisfy” (238). The point Coleridge makes is that one “must look into the living soul which God has made His image, in order to learn, even in fragments, what that power is by which we are to execute the delegated power entrusted to us by Him” (239). True philosophy allows the individual to constantly strive for, and approach asymptotically, the absolute truth of God: “True philosophy [. . .is] that wisdom which no man has but by earnest aspirations [attempts] to be united with the Only Wise, in that moment when the Father shall be all in all” (287). However, Coleridge notes, one can find and experience intimations of truth also “in the quiet of the soul.” To see truth more clearly, one must “perfect himself in all his duties,” “do the best in his power to develop and exercise all his natural faculties, strengthen his understanding, make all that good which nature has given for this world,” and “in that best quiet of a good conscience,” with faith and lofty aspirations, he will find “his reward” (325).¹¹⁷ Ultimately, religion and philosophy reveal that the human being “can become like his Maker only by imitation of his goodness, only morally” (342), that is by first contemplating what virtue is and then by actively embodying it. Art plays a crucial role in cultivating the human being’s moral and spiritual nature.

¹¹⁷ Coleridge’s theological and philosophical projects are united; reason and faith are not opposing faculties, but complementary instruments. Coleridge asserts, “True religion will necessarily lead to a just philosophy” (*PL*, I, 360). Simultaneously, the “final cause of philosophy” is “to prepare the way to religion” and to reveal that the intrinsic, natural, and spontaneous religious impulse which is the fundamental and “proper characteristic of humanity” is also the primary cause of philosophical investigation in the first place (*PL*, I, 339). Hence, the philosophical impulse throughout history has been the product an instrument of humankind’s religious principle. That is, philosophy, like a plant, springs from an innate religious principle; the religious principle is the cause of the seed contained in the fruit that philosophy produces. Therefore, history reveals divine providence and intention. Indeed, Coleridge asserts, the history of Christianity consists of events that are real symbols of great truths. It expresses, like a buried seed that grows, the gradual progression and unfolding of the idea of God as no longer a mere abstraction or blind power, but as “a living God” (*PL*, II, 766). This evolution of the idea of God is traced from the texts of ancient thinkers to the conclusive writings of the saints, and, ultimately, revitalized by the illuminating wisdom of modern philosophers. One discovers that philosophy, which is the search for “the origin of things and the fundamental laws of the world” is the instrument for “the honorable yearnings of the human being” to re-unite with God (*PL*, I, 339).

Coleridge asserts that it is specifically the power of secondary imagination, which the artist deploys consciously and deliberately in the production of art, that enables him to become aware of his underlying connection with God; subsequently, he discovers the fundamental underlying divine element of the infinite I AM in all things, including the mind and nature, which Coleridge calls primary imagination. In art, as in philosophy, imagination creates an aesthetic unity that allows the self to connect with nature, the spirit in the mind with spirit in creation, human reason with divine truth, and thus brings the mind in tune with divine law, morality, and reason. Artistic creativity is the expression of freedom that reestablishes the self's connection with God as "a life within Life, & constituting a part of the Life [...]. A consciousness within a Consciousness, yet mutually penetrated, each possessing both itself & the other—distinct tho' indivisible" (CN, II, 2999).

The *Biographia Literaria's* project is to reify this abstract process and to re-present it on the physical pages of a book so that the readers' minds, including Coleridge's own, can observe and reflect upon this entire process. The act of contemplation itself requires the participation of imagination, for it is imagination that provides the mind with a representation of its own process. "Imagination, in self-reflexive fashion, thus imagines itself and its own process of movement in the language of Coleridge's text. It is first imagined and thus understood by Coleridge as a pendulum, imbued with its own consciousness and force of animation, a veritable *perpetuum mobile* of the mind, powered by the anticipation of the divine, or rather the feeling of the divine, which it can only anticipate but never reach" (Schlutz 244).

Thus the mind, and in particular imagination, as Coleridge conceives of it, reveals humankind's potential, and is the instrument that allows humans to transcend to higher states of consciousness and knowledge. It is the evolutionary principle. In Coleridge's own words, "The

imagination is the distinguishing characteristic of man as a progressive being; and I repeat that it ought to be carefully guided and strengthened as the indispensable means and instrument of continued amelioration and refinement” (*LL*, II, 193). The poet’s attunement with the universe allows him to perceive an order throughout the cosmos; as we shall see in his poetry, Coleridge perceives the same order in the mind of the poet and in the structure of a poem. Furthermore, the operation of the poet’s imagination is to create order, for, indeed, imagination is a repetition of God’s creativity. As an “esemplastic power,” imagination allows the poet to perceive all things as wholes and as belonging to a whole; more importantly, it creates new worlds of its own through poetry. Humans, as the “Divine Image,” express divinity through their creativity. By expressing their imagination, in exercising their creativity, and in producing art, humans not only fulfill their existential and spiritual *raison d’être*, but also pay homage to God and repeat his creative act in infinite reiterations or reduplications.

CHAPTER 4: INTIMATIONS OF DIVINITY

Coleridge affirms that life's mission is to become aware of and consciously participate in the One Life and spirit of God in creation, so that through the multiplicity of individuals comprising the whole of spirit, spirit comprehends itself through the consciousness of each individual. I have focused on Coleridge's understanding of the requirements and possibility for achieving this form of self-awareness, especially as it relates to the individual artist's act of creation. I have argued that not only is there a complex, reciprocal, and organic interrelationship between the individual and universal spirit, but that this interrelationship is analogous to that of the poet and his poem as a repetition of God's act of creative self-revelation occurring at all levels and stages of spirit's manifestation. Using concrete examples from Coleridge's poetic works in the following chapters, I illustrate how through the combined powers of imagination, reason, and love in the soul's activity, which are crucially important themes in his poems, Coleridge becomes conscious of his kinship with God and organic interrelationship with the One Life. He reveals how the condition of "being" is truly a "becoming" and spirit a "perpetual act" in which, I argue, his own search for meaning through art is a finite iteration that participates in God's infinite creativity.

This chapter focuses more closely on how, according to Coleridge, the divine element of love, like those of reason and imagination discussed in the previous chapters, contributes to revealing spirit's operation in creation. The power of love allows Coleridge to experience kinship and unity with spirit. In terms of the global argument, I continue to demonstrate, using Coleridge's own works as an example and his writings as confirmation, that each individual's growing self-awareness through creative expression mirrors and contributes to spirit's self-seeking. The "I" returns from its illusory "empirical" state to a fleeting intimation of itself as the

collective universal self through the process of self-reflection. Coleridge's poetry reveals that the process by which nature and humankind have been evolving is mirrored in the individual "taken in the ideal of his humanity" (*PL*, II, 461); both macrocosmic and microcosmic processes, I have been arguing, are analogous and interdependent. The individual's poetic expression is a finite repetition of God's infinite creativity; that is, spirit's *Bildungsroman* is mirrored in the individual's coming to a greater awareness of himself through his interactions with the world and with his poetic articulations. As I will illustrate in this chapter, which focuses on Coleridge's metaphysical conception of love as it is presented in "The Eolian Harp," Coleridge's act of composing a poem is simultaneously an act of self-reflection upon his profound and defining life experiences and, therefore, the poem relates his developing self-awareness through the very process of composing it.

Many of the theoretical, philosophical, and religious ideas in Coleridge's prose works that were examined in earlier chapters find expression in and are developed through his poems, and will be discussed in the next three chapters. The poems, however, are finite articulations expressing Coleridge's personal journey in discovering the nature of his relationship with God and by no means represent a complete demonstration of all the concepts discussed previously. Rather, the poems express and even substantiate several of those important concepts and, therefore, occasion a discussion of not one but various subjects, because the poem, after all, "embodies" Coleridge's developing consciousness on these issues. This chapter, specifically, examines Coleridge's "The Eolian Harp," which prompts a discussion of his early struggle with reconciling his spontaneous pantheistic experience of spirit in nature with his Christian beliefs. The issue of Coleridge's pantheistic inclination is discussed in the context of the poem and as it also relates to his life's work. It also naturally leads to a close examination of Coleridge's very

important metaphysical conception of love and its relationship to imagination and reason, a major underlying theme in the remaining chapters. The experience of love begins to indicate the path for Coleridge to reconcile his pantheistic experiences with his Christian belief because if, according to Coleridge, love is God, the experience of love must therefore be spiritually meaningful. This insight allows him to ultimately, in his later works, posit that God must be both immanent and transcendent simultaneously: immanent as spirit or consciousness and transcendent as the perfect, unchanging Absolute.

1. “The Eolian Harp”

As discussed in Chapter Two, an important preoccupation in Coleridge’s philosophy is the attempt to reconcile a pantheistic conception of the universe with a Christian belief in an absolute, transcendent God. “The Eolian Harp” illustrates Coleridge’s recognition of the inherent tensions of the pantheistic and indeed organicist tones of his reflections, which will, later in his career, set him on a personal quest for such a philosophical reconciliation. Crabb Robinson relates how Coleridge “kissed Spinoza’s face in the title page” of a book and announced ““this book is gospel to me.”” But hardly a minute elapses when Coleridge adds, ““his philosophy is nevertheless false”” (McFarland 107). Coleridge’s Christian beliefs prevent him from accepting what he is reflexively drawn to as a poet and artist, despite the fact that pantheistic thought is pervasive in his writings. As a philosopher-poet on the one hand and a Christian on the other, Coleridge’s mind is often at odds with his heart, and his experiences frequently conflict with his beliefs: “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” (*BL*, I, 201). Through his meditations upon his creative process, Coleridge gradually finds a way to reconcile

his heart with his mind, his faith with his spiritual experiences in nature. An early example of such a mind-heart conflict arises in “The Eolian Harp” where Coleridge describes this spiritual tussle, not so much to discredit his experience of oneness with all things, but to draw attention to the discrepancy between his orthodox Christian beliefs and the philosophical thoughts that arise spontaneously as a result of his experiences in nature.

The poem begins with a scene of repose and contentment as Coleridge describes lounging beside his fiancée, Sara, next to their country cottage. His love for her and feelings of anticipation for their impending nuptials make him reflexively more receptive and attuned to the sensuous beauty of nature around him. His heightened sensitivity to the surrounding beauty is spontaneous because, as I will later illustrate, to Coleridge there is an intrinsic association between love, beauty, and truth. In fact, according to Coleridge, what is perceived as beauty is our recognition of essence.¹¹⁸ Surrounded by beautiful sights, sounds, and smells and experiencing strong feelings of love, Coleridge is hence artfully poised to experience some attending truth. In fact, he describes the cabin cloaked in “white-flowered jasmin, and the broad-leaved myrtle, / (Meet emblems they of Innocence and Love!)” (4-5); already he sees the beautiful forms of nature as “emblems” expressing, in a symbolic language, the essence of innocence and love.¹¹⁹

When Coleridge hears the enchanting melody issuing from the Aeolian harp on his window, his imagination begins to make associations. The Aeolian harp is a stringed instrument that produces music as the wind blows through it, and, so, nature, acting here through the power

¹¹⁸ This follows the Platonic conception in which the perception of beauty is described as an intimation or subtle recognition of the perfect Ideas or Forms. Similarly, Schlegel’s asserts, love is the highest form of aesthetic enjoyment experienced in a state of freedom, and Shaftesbury claims there is an underlying spiritual harmony in the universe, which is perceived as beauty and experienced as love. Schelling argues that beauty then becomes a beacon in humankind’s quest for truth and essence.

¹¹⁹ The capitalized “I,” “L,” and “W” of the words “Innocence,” “Love,” and “Wisdom” suggest that in his heightened state of receptiveness, he recognizes the Platonic “Ideas” that the beautiful forms in nature intimate.

of the wind, is the unseen musician creating the music. Coleridge notes how like the wind that blows through the harp, “As wild and various as the random gales / That swell and flutter on this subject lute,” thoughts “traverse” his “passive brain” (41-2); his thoughts seem *to enter into* his mind as opposed to arising from within it. Hence, he perceives an analogy between his mind and the harp and between the ideas that flow through his indolent mind (that ultimately produce this poem) and the melody emanating from the passive harp. In composing this poem, Coleridge illustrates that inspiration, which is instrumental to his creativity, comes from without. Like the action of the wind on the harp, inspiration plays upon the mind and produces this lyric. As Coleridge listens to the “floating witchery of sound,” he compares it to enchanting “Elfin” music, and his imagination transports him to a “Fairy-Land” (20-2). Consequently, in this meditative state, his awareness rises above time and space, beyond the present, and he has a spiritual experience wherein he acknowledges the spirit of life and creation animating all things: “O! the one Life within us and abroad, / Which meets all motion and becomes its soul” (26-7). His imagination allows him to perceive and “love all things in a world so filled” by the “one Life” which animates while connecting the souls of all entities in nature into one “soul” (26-31).¹²⁰

Coleridge contends that the phenomenal world reflects the divine stamp for “the other great Bible of God [is] the Book of Nature.” “The forms of matter” are understood “as words, as symbols” expressing “the wisdom of the Supreme Being” (*PL*, II, 541). In “The Eolian Harp,” the wind becomes the symbol that evokes the Idea or truth that accompanies the experience of beauty and love, namely that there is a “one Life within us and abroad / Which meets all motion” and which unites the soul in man with nature. As part of God’s symbolic language of self-revelation, nature’s wind becomes the medium by which an analogous spiritual reality is

¹²⁰ This is reminiscent of Wordsworth’s experience of perceiving the “presence” of a unifying “spirit” that “impels” and “rolls through all things” (“Tintern Abbey” 94-102).

accessed.¹²¹ Coleridge describes how when once experiencing “the Intensity of the feeling of Life,” which is the “universal spirit” or God who is “every where,” he felt an analogous power within him, “a sort of bottom-wind, that blows to no point of the compass, & comes from I know not whence, but agitates the whole of me; my whole Being is filled with waves, as it were, that roll & stumble, one this way, & one that way, like things that have no common master” (*CL*, II, 916).¹²² In his heightened state of awareness, all Coleridge’s bodily senses are muddled, and he experiences “A light in sound, a sound-like power in light” (“The Eolian Harp” 28).¹²³ Coleridge’s description of the “Rhythm in all thought, and joyance everywhere” (29) denotes his recognition of a form of artistry and intention in the cadences of his own thoughts and in the harp’s seemingly desultory melody. Nature, as a creative power, produces these “rhythms” or melody and, analogously, so does his mind produce this poem or lyric.

From being a passive observer of the cadences of his own thoughts, Coleridge begins to actively engage the thoughts that enter his mind with his power of higher reason. This is an act of “conscious will” operating in conjunction with secondary imagination, which was earlier shown to be a necessary step in poetic creation. At this point in the poem, he contemplates whether all living entities in nature, including himself, are like “organic harps diversely framed” (45). He wonders whether “all animated nature” and not just human minds “tremble into thought” as the “one” “plastic and vast” “intellectual breeze,” itself conscious and intelligent, endows living nature with consciousness (“thought”):

¹²¹ In the Romantic tradition, the wind is in fact a recurring metaphor for the action of the spirit in nature and in the human soul. Similarly, Abrams notes that the Aeolian wind harp is “a persistent Romantic analogue of the poetic mind, the figurative mediator between outer motion and inner emotion” (*CB* 26).

¹²² Letter to Thomas Wedgwood, 14 January 1803. Likewise, Wordsworth describes how “Nature’s self is the breath of God / For I, methought, while the sweet breath of Heaven / Was blowing on my body, felt within / A corresponding mild creative breeze, / A vital breeze which travell’d gently on / O’er things which it had made” (*The Prelude*, Book 1, ll. 33).

¹²³ This is reminiscent of many descriptions of the experience of synesthesia resulting from the powerful experience of beauty in nature. For instance, in his “Ode to a Nightingale” Keats describes “Tasting of Flora and the country-green” (13) and how “I cannot see [...] what soft incense hangs upon the boughs” (41-2).

And what if all of animated nature
 Be but organic Harps diversely framed,
 That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps
 Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
 At once the Soul of each, and God of all? (44-8)

Coleridge surmises whether all human beings and “all of animated nature” are therefore really part a single, all-encompassing “one Life,” all instruments united by the same underlying spiritual power. If all beings of nature are “organic Harps diversely framed,” then all are instruments of the same “intellectual breeze.”

The image of the “Cot o’ergrown / With white-flowered jasmine, and the broad leav’d myrtle” evokes the idea of the fundamental connection and harmony between nature and humans; humankind and its creations are enveloped by or subsumed within a greater, all-encompassing reality. The universal spirit, world soul, or Coleridge’s “one Life,” comprised of the souls of all living entities, is the “God of All,” but it also bestows to each creature its unique, individuating soul. The phrase “Soul of *each*” highlights the unique individuality of every entity and “God of all” underscores how all distinct individualities are subsumed within God. Each being owes its uniqueness to God just as each harp expresses itself or does “tremble into thought” differently due to the action of the breeze sweeping through its particular design. Poetic inspiration is therefore an instrument of nature, and each poet is a unique “organic harp” among others in a grand cosmic symphony. Yet, while each creature has its own soul, all souls form part of the “God of all” or—as Coleridge in his later writings distinguishes and defines as—the spirit of God in creation. It is by not yet distinguishing God as absolute *beyond* creation and God as

spirit *within* creation, but instead equating God with the sum of his creation, that Coleridge is confronted with a metaphysical quandary in this poem.

Coleridge draws an analogy between the Aeolian harp with its music and the human mind with its poetic expressions; however, it is the wind that creates the conditions for this analogy to be made and for Coleridge to arrive at this remarkable realization. That is, the poem's philosophical musings arise and develop from the activity of the wind playing through the Aeolian harp, which the mind reads as a symbol for the process of divine inspiration and poetic creation. Coleridge suggests that there is a purpose and intention working through nature. Through its affecting ambient *beauty*, nature seems to conspire in inducing Coleridge's mental passivity, allowing fresh ideas to enter his mind unimpeded and unfiltered; the thoughts, however, seem to be guided by an intelligent power. Indeed, as the breeze blows, the strings of the harp vibrate and produce a "floating witchery of sound" (20) that inspires Coleridge's philosophical reflections. He realizes that his passive mind is analogous to the harp; an external force animates both instruments. While the literal breeze produces music through the harp, it also inspires Coleridge's thoughts and musings, which are inspired by the sound that the wind creates. Therefore, the Aeolian harp's music and the thoughts and musings that produce this poem are not only analogous, but have the same precipitating agent. The resulting poetry, which is the "music" produced from the Coleridge's mental "harp" occurs from the joint action of nature and his mind.

In fact, the poem's form itself reflects how the poet's act of *constructing* the poem is akin to the music produced by the harp in this poem. The irregular stanza structure mimics the irregular gusts of inspiration that blow through his mind like the "desultory breeze" that produces the various cadences of music. The effect of the repeated "l" and "s" sounds in lines such as "The stilly murmur of the distant Sea / Tells us of Silence" (11-12) and "its strings / Boldlier

swept, the long sequacious notes / Over delicious surges sink and rise, / Such a soft floating witchery of sound” (17-19) creates the impression of the gentle, flowing sounds that Coleridge describes emanating from the harp. The effect of this alliteration and of the poem’s structure exemplifies the analogy between the sounds of the poem and that of the harp. Hence, the intelligent power that guides his thoughts awakens the corresponding inner powers of reason and imagination in him. As the wind creates music, Coleridge discovers an analogy between the divine power of creation and the creative power of his own mind; he further finds that both creative processes have the same origin.

Poetry then is the rhythm and melody resulting from the interaction between the external power of inspiration and the structures of the mind that are so fashioned as to produce its own lyric. That is, like the harp and the particular tension of its strings, according to Coleridge, the mind is intentionally fine-tuned so as to be able to produce music from the effect of inspiration coming from without. This harkens back to Coleridge’s notion, developed from Novalis and Schiller, that there is an analogy between the natural forces and the laws that govern human nature; that is, the forces in nature that shape the sensible world are like those that affect human consciousness. Coleridge argues that that human faculties are fitted to God’s purposes and that the individual mind with all its processes of cognition is akin to the transcendental mind that gave it its structure.

Furthermore, Coleridge, as an individual, finite expression of consciousness, discovers that the correlation between his mind and nature is such that he naturally, spontaneously, and purposefully perceives this analogy, which, ultimately in his life, allows him to understand the true association between his consciousness and God’s. Human consciousness, “the I am,” is a finite echo of God’s “infinite I AM.” As elaborated in the previous chapter, Coleridge adds that

just as human perception is as it should be in God's plan, so is the poet's creativity a divine power. Unlike the lyre, which is always passive, the human mind is also able to consciously and deliberately create art.¹²⁴ As Coleridge illustrates through the act of composing this poem, there is a correspondence between outer inspiration—God's imagination acting in creation—and an inner creative impulse—the individual's imagination working in conjunction with reason, or “the whole soul of man [brought] into activity,” which makes it possible to achieve one's highest spiritual calling or “ideal perfection” (*BL*, II, 15). Both forces combine to produce “harmony,” the full breath and scope of his poetic utterance, and it is a unique expression conveyed only in Coleridge's distinctive voice.

Coleridge remarks, “Never could the eye have beheld the sun, had not its own essence been soliform, (i.e. *pre-configured* to light by a similarity of essence with that of light) ‘neither can a soul not beautiful attain to an intuition of beauty’” (*BL*, I, 115). According to Coleridge, the soul, which is the individual's true being or divine spirit, represents that which is beautiful within humans that impels them to seek a corresponding beauty in nature because it is in the soul's nature to do so. It represents a truth-seeking power guided by its recognition of a common essence in beauty that discloses truth. As Coleridge would assert, following his own application of Schiller's theory of “Aesthetic Education,” this poem's philosophical speculations are appealing and convincing because they arise from the experience of beauty. As previously discussed, Coleridge proclaims an intrinsic relation between beauty and truth. Indeed, Coleridge's theory of aesthetics can be verified by our own response to the poem; as readers, our

¹²⁴ Similarly, Shelley exclaims, “there is a principle within the human being, and perhaps within all sentient beings, which acts otherwise than in the lyre, and produces not melody alone, but harmony, by an internal adjustment of the sounds or motions thus excited to the impressions which excite them. It is as if the lyre could accommodate its chords to the motions of that which strikes them analogous internal imaginative power” (“A Defence of Poetry” 511). William Hazlitt also describes poetry as “the music of language, answering to the music of the mind” (“On Poetry in General” 12). Hazlitt explains how a poet while reflecting the world in poetry also cloaks it in his unique emotions and temperament.

attraction to Coleridge's idea of our fundamental unity with all things and spiritual wholeness is justified by our own sense of trusting the beauty of the poem as a marker of truth. The beauty he experiences in the scene, which leads to his beautiful speculations, excites him.

This very excitement, however, is why Coleridge's change in stance at the very end of "The Eolian Harp" seems abrupt and stifled. Coleridge's alluring Spinozism is offset by an admonishing Christian voice:

But thy more serious eye a mild reproof
 Darts, O beloved Woman! nor such thoughts
 Dim and unhallowed dost thou not reject,
 And biddest me walk humbly with my God.

Meek Daughter in the family of Christ! (50-4)

His wife's reproof represents the arresting voice of Christian authority, and Coleridge submits to her rebuke because he realizes his thoughts involve the heresy of pantheism. Sara's presence brings him down from the heights of his metaphysical speculations and back to a reality in which there is a mysterious and unbridgeable gulf between God and his creation.¹²⁵ Abrams observes that Coleridge "represents his hypothetical speculation as having been spoken aloud, so that Sara—the voice of domestic Christian piety, a dramatized aspect of Coleridge's own divided mind—may dispraise such philosophy" (*CB* 162). Coleridge concedes that his thoughts are mere "dim and unhallowed" "shapings of the unregenerate mind" (51, 55). While he experiences feelings of love and deep spiritual connectedness through nature, he is nevertheless summoned back to the dictates of his Christian faith. McFarland states that Coleridge experienced this tension "from first to last. Hence through all transformations of his 'it is'/pantheist interests on

¹²⁵ Nicholas Reid remarks that the poem exhibits the "tension between Coleridge's speculations and his sense of Sara (Fricker)'s orthodoxy [...].He] ventures his heresies under the indulgent eye of his beloved, gently testing the limits of her tolerance before coming back to heel under the 'mild reproof' of her 'more serious eye'" (68).

the one hand, and of his ‘I am’/moral interests on the other, he remained true to the ineradicable fact of their tragic opposition—longing for their reconciliation (254). However, the last stanza marks such a stark shift in tone, from a sense of pure felicity and communion with God through nature to a fearful and penitent relationship with the Divine, that it seems, I argue, to intentionally elicit more questions in its attempt to resolve one.

Coleridge achieves a mystical awareness of reality, but ends his poem with a comparatively pedestrian image of “Peace, and this Cot, and Thee, heart-honour’d Maid.” This sudden fall to reality is reminiscent of, for instance, the speaker’s abrupt return to his “sole self” at the end of Keats’s “Ode to a Nightingale”; the vividness and poignancy of Coleridge’s experience serves to emphasize rather than disqualify the validity of both mystical and material worlds; it ratifies how one realm leads to, informs, and affords the experience of the other. After fifty exquisite lines of verse describing dazzling beauty, lofty philosophical thoughts, and a profound mystical experience, the sudden change in tone in “The Eolian Harp” draws a great deal of attention to itself; it betrays Coleridge’s fundamental dilemma concerning his inability to reconcile his mind, which he claims is with Spinoza, with his heart, which is with John and Paul.¹²⁶ However, I argue that it is precisely the ambivalence resulting from such compelling experiences in nature, whose poignancy he is ultimately convinced attests to their intrinsic validity and meaningfulness, that impels him to find a way to reconcile those experiences with his arbitrating Christian faith. In fact, he later realizes, as discussed in relation to his critical and philosophical prose works in previous chapters, that there is a *reason* for this apparent conflict to

¹²⁶ McFarland observes,

[Coleridge’s] heart never wavered in his *emotional* acceptance of the efficacy and primacy of Christian commitment; but his early conception of a unitary God led his *mind* to necessitarian and Spinozistic contradictions [...]. Coleridge’s theological development, therefore, can be seen as a continuing attempt, effectuated by the movement from a Unitarian to a Trinitarian conception of deity, to remove the internal contradictions of his heart’s convictions. (222)

arise, and the reason serves God's purpose. Coleridge ultimately discovers that his desire to find meaning in life's discrepancies is itself sanctioned and fueled by his faith. In seeking to understand the tension between the seemingly meaningful spiritual experiences he has in nature and his core belief in an absolute, "incomprehensible" God, Coleridge comes to see not only God's love and divine blueprint in nature, but to embrace his own role in God's self-revelation.¹²⁷

In the next section, I demonstrate how Coleridge reconciles his experience of oneness with God through nature by identifying, in a Christian context, the unifying power of *love* to be the *expression* and *will* of the Supreme Being in creation. The experience and expression of love, in close association with those of beauty, is an important factor in effectuating Coleridge's mystical awareness.

2. LOVE: Will to Separation and Oneness

Like the element of beauty in nature, the underlying current of love is a crucial catalyst for manifesting Coleridge's mystical experience of universal oneness and for illuminating the

¹²⁷ Another similar spiritual conflicts arises when Coleridge wonders whether he should baptize his son or allow his son to remain in the purity of his wonderful pantheistic communion with nature:

At times I dwell on Man with such reverence, resolve all his follies and superstitions into such grand primary laws of intellect, and in such wise so contemplate them as ever-varying incarnations of the eternal Life [...]. In that mood I exclaim, my boys shall be christened! -- But then another fit of moody philosophy attacks me—I look at my doted-on Hartley—he moves, he lives, he finds impulses from within & from without—he is the darling of the Sun and of the Breeze! Nature seems to bless him as a thing of her own. He looks at the clouds, the mountains, the living Beings of the Earth, & vaults & jubilates. Solemn Looks & solemn Words have been hitherto connected in his mind with great & magnificent objects only—with lightning, with thunder, with the waterfall blazing in the Sunset—/—then I say, Shall I suffer the Toad of Priesthood to spurt out his foul juice in this Babe's Face? Shall I suffer him to see grave countenances & hear grave accents, while his face is sprinkled, & while the fat paw of a Parson crosses his Forehead? (*CL*, I, 624-5) Letter to John Prior Estlin, 7 December 1802.

From the mighty Spinozist temple and the conception of the "One God," "the Eternal and Omnipresent, in whom we live, and move, and have our Being" (*CL*, II, 893), Coleridge seems, nevertheless, to inevitably return to his sanctuary in the church and Christian faith. Coleridge, however, defends Spinoza as ultimately a religious thinker whose pantheism is "the most religious form in which it could appear." He adds that even if Spinoza "did not think as a Christian, he felt and acted like one" (*PL*, II, 578).

path to and easing the tension between his competing philosophical allegiances. Coleridge seeks to reconcile his metaphysical experiences of the interconnectedness of nature and humankind through his faith in a Christian God. “Love” in addition to imagination and reason are key attributes of God in creation and in the “soul of man” that fuel and guide the process by which humankind discovers its fundamental oneness with God.

To Coleridge, and indeed to all the Romantics, love is a vital force in the universe. Just as imagination is a “living,” “esemplastic power” derived from God and “a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM” (*BL*, I, 303-4), love is likewise equated with God, and everything in the universe is an emanation of love: “There is one Mind, one Omnipresent Mind, / Omnific. His most holy name is Love” (“Religious Musings” 114-5). Since God is love and all things manifest from love, the essence of all things is also love. The human is a “progressive being,” and love is the evolutionary force propelling him toward “continued amelioration and refinement” (*LL*, II, 193). To Coleridge, the impetus for union with God is the “powerful current of love, or cohesive and sustaining supernatural energy, which flows ceaselessly from God down through the successive levels of ever remoter being and circles back to God.” Love is the cohesive “force that holds the universe together and manifests itself to human awareness as the yearning to return to an undivided state” (*NS* 152). As a Christian philosopher, Coleridge acknowledges God as a “living and personal God, whose Power indeed is the *Ground* of all *Being*, even as his will is the efficient, his Wisdom the instrumental, and his Love the final, Cause of all *Existence*, but who may not without fearful error be identified with the universe, or the universe to be considered an attribute of his Deity” (*CL*, IV, 894).¹²⁸ Yet, the first and last intention is love. In *Opus Maximum*, Coleridge distinguishes between spirit and God: spirit is a spirit of love where God, “Himself being all, he *communicated* himself to another

¹²⁸ Letter to William Hart Coleridge, 8 December 1818.

as to a Self. But such communication is Love, and in what is the re-attribution of that Self to the Communicator but Love? [...] Love is the Spirit of God, and God is Love” (OM 210). Like beauty, love has a close association with truth. In fact, as demonstrated in Chapter Two, there is a close correlation between love, beauty, and truth in Coleridge’s theory of aesthetics. As Coleridge’s poetry elucidates, there is in the universe an underlying spiritual harmony, which is perceived as beauty and experienced as love; love is the experience of beauty and harmony in art and nature, which is the same love in the experience of universal harmony.¹²⁹

2.1 Love as Will and Intention in Creation

While imagination is a mental and visionary power, love is a force of will, and will, after all, fuels artistic expression. Coleridge explains that imagination is “spirit, self, and self-consciousness” (BL, I, 272-3); the essence of spirit is “that it is self-representative. [...] this implies an act, and it follows therefore that intelligence or self-consciousness is impossible, except by and in a *will*. The self-conscious spirit therefore is a will” (278-80). This will expresses itself in the search for meaning, where God is the essence of meaning, “the principle of being,” “the ground of existence,” and “knowledge of existence” (275); therefore, the ground of being is God, who is *imagination* and “*Love*” expressed through the will-to-meaning. Coleridge contends that God’s creativity is a conscious, deliberate, and willful act, reproduced as individual self-consciousness and expressed in human creativity. The individual therefore partakes in God’s creativity and his conscious and willed artistic production is a propagation and extension of God’s imagination. When spirit’s self-seeking and search for meaning occurs through human expression, it becomes an *expression* of love. Everything is linked by a spiritual current or

¹²⁹ Abrams notes that according to Herder, “the ‘aim of our earthly existence’ is ‘the education of humanity,’ the course of which ‘our capacity for reason will be formed into reason, our finer senses into art, our instincts into genuine freedom and beauty, our natural impulses into love of mankind’” (NS 203).

energy of love that flows directly from God, which manifests as a will-to-union and oneness.

Love is the answer to his arrogant thoughts, Coleridge seems to deduce at the end of the poem: love of nature, Sara, and God. Each love-circuit reveals a connectedness and teaches a lesson.

Hence, when Coleridge remarks, “I am *blessed* in *worshipping* the Loveliness of Fields, Lakes, Streams, ancient Trees, mountains, and Skies” he is acknowledging that admiring nature’s loveliness is its own benediction (*CN*, II, 2647); or, when he exclaims, “O that Sky, that soft blue mighty Arch, resting on the mountains or solid Sea-like plain / what an awful adorable omneity in unity” (*CN*, II, 2346), his admiration of each natural object’s beauty simultaneously awakens in him the feeling of love (“adorable”), which, in turn, occasions his experience of an all-encompassing unity in nature. The particular beauty that distinguishes each natural entity also unites them all in their expression of the “Idea” or “Form” of Beauty. For Coleridge, the “beautiful” is “the harmonizing principle of Nature which reflects the synthetic power of the imagination. The Beautiful is accordingly that in which the many, still seen as the many, becomes one.”¹³⁰ Hence, the experience of love and beauty combine to elicit the vision of truth, of the indwelling spirit of God in the multiplicity of nature.

Coleridge’s defensive attitude at the end of the poem, then, does not reflect his unequivocal rejection of his spontaneous spiritual experience and insight—for indeed he makes Sara the spokesperson for his doubting mind—but rather, it reflects his inability to immediately reconcile the truth of Christian doctrine with the “truth” he experiences in nature. This revelation, he repeatedly acknowledges, must be truth because it is experienced in God’s creation for a reason. In fact, the experience of nature as an expression of beauty and love inspires a “dim Awakening of a forgotten or hidden Truth of [his] inner Nature” (*CN*, II, 2546) that also allows him

¹³⁰ Maureen B. Roberts, “Beautiful Circuiting: The Alchemical Imagination in English Romanticism,” *The Diamond Path: Individuation as Soul-making in the Works of John Keats*, <<http://www.jungcircle.com/beautiful.html>>

to ultimately recognize the lovely “Fields, Lakes, Streams, ancient Trees, mountains, and Skies” to be the symbolic language of God (*CN*, II, 2647).¹³¹

2.2 Individuality in and through Multeity

Coleridge’s method consists in finding in Christianity the strong moral guaranty for the integrity of his individuality and also establishing through his faith a concrete, lasting relationship with nature by recognizing it as the creation and expression of God. Coleridge finds “the promise of the resolution of his most agonizing conflict” in Schelling’s philosophy of subject “I am” and object “it is” and their absolute identity, “or the reconciliation of Spinoza and Kant into a single system by means of Fichte’s fundamental principle—the law of identity” (McFarland 151, 148). Additionally, in Leibniz, Coleridge discovers perhaps the best illustration for his ideas expressed in “The Eolian Harp.” Leibniz states that

Certain ancient and more recent thinkers have asserted...that God is a spirit diffused throughout the whole universe, which animates organic bodies wherever it meet them, just as wind produces music in organ pipes. [...] Spinoza tends towards the same view. For him there is one substance, God. Creatures are his modifications, like figures in wax [...] there is only one single spirit, which is universal, and which animates all the universe in all its parts, each according to its structure, following the organs that it finds, as the same wind makes various pipes of an organ produce different sounds. [...] and when the organs are destroyed, [...] the soul returns [...] to the ocean of universal spirit. [...] The doctrine of a universal spirit is good in itself, for all those who profess it admit

¹³¹ This notion is best illustrated in his philosophical poem “Frost at Midnight” that I will later discuss in which Coleridge describes a secret correspondence between the instances of spirit in the various forms of nature seeking “everywhere / Echo or mirror” of themselves (Frost at Midnight, 21-2).

in effect the existence of deity, be it that they hold that this universal spirit is supreme, in which case they hold that it is God himself. (Quoted in McFarland, 167-8)

It is this conflation of God with the universal spirit that Coleridge finds problematic; it is the co-existence of both realities that he comes to celebrate. The problem with pantheism is that it makes “no essential distinctions between God and his creation” between “the manifested and the manifestation” (*PL*, I, 435). It makes “the world have the same relation to God as a watch has to a watchmaker, in truth, giving all up to secondary causes” rather than “rendering the omnipresence of the great Being, the ground of all things *as well as* their Creator.” It makes God “a mere word of honor and of pomp in the state-room of the intellect” or it carries the “omnipresence into a condition of nature-in-God” (*PL*, II, 485).

Again, in “Religious Musings,” Coleridge proclaims that “There is one Mind, one omnipresent Mind, / Omnific” and that it is “the sublime in man, / Our noontide Majesty, to know ourselves / Parts and proportions of one wondrous whole!” (105-6, 126-8), and in a letter to Thomas Wedgwood, Coleridge even speaks of the immortality of the soul and of the un-Christian, Platonic idea of the reincarnation of his soul:

In simple earnest, I never find myself alone within the embracement of rocks & hills, a traveller up an alpine road, but my spirit courses, drives, and eddies, like a Leaf in Autumn: a wild activity, of thoughts, imaginations, feelings, and impulses of motion, rises up from within me—a sort of bottom-wind, that blows to no point of the compass, & comes from I know not whence, but agitates the whole of me; my whole Being is filled with waves, as it were, that roll & stumble, one this way, & one that way, like things that have no common master. I think, that my soul must have pre-existed in the body of a Chamois-chaser; the simple image of the old object has been obliterated—but the

feelings, & impulsive habits, & incipient actions, are in me, & the old scenery awakens them. The farther I ascend from animated Nature, from men, and cattle, & the common birds of the woods, & fields, the greater becomes in me the Intensity of the feeling of Life; Life seems to me then a universal spirit, that neither has, nor can have, an opposite.
(*CL*, II, 916)¹³²

Along with his deep and spontaneous pantheistic feelings of oneness is a pull towards the preservation of his identity as a distinct, individual “I am.” He concludes that fundamental oneness must coexist with individuality. Hence, while Coleridge expresses how his mind “ached to behold and know something *great*—something *one and indivisible*” (186), he also asserts that “nothing *lives* or is *real*, but as definite and individual” (*BL*, II, 214-5). Coleridge describes a mutuality in which “the Integer consents to become a Part in order to preserve itself as an Integer” (TL 802-3).

In “Theory of Life,” Coleridge explains that at the highest echelon of entities in creation is the human being in whom the “one great end of Nature, [...the] ultimate production of the highest and most comprehensive individuality” (517) is attained. Although greater the tendency to individuation results in a greater intensity of life and greater detachment from nature, “this tendency to individuate cannot be conceived without the opposite tendency to connect, even as the centrifugal power supposes the centripetal” (517). Hence, greater the individuation, greater becomes the capacity to connect. In fact, Coleridge supposes, “with Newton, that in nature there is a continual antagonism going on between a universal life and each individual composing it [...] that there is a tendency throughout nature perpetually to individuate, that is in each component part of nature to acquire individuality, by which is as *harmoniously* counteracted by an attempt of nature to recall it again to the common

¹³² Letter to Thomas Wedgwood, 14 January 1803.

organization” (*PL*, II, 528). This is important because, to Coleridge, the universe manifests a divine life and every individual being is both a separate entity and also related to each other as parts of a common life: “Every Thing has a Life of its own, and [...] we are all One Life,” Coleridge proclaims (*CL*, II, 864).¹³³ He concludes, life is “the principle of unity in *multeity*; [...] *the principle of individuation*” (TL 510-1). He realizes that all creation is a repetition of the abundance of God and that a truly self-conscious individual is one who is aware of himself as belonging to God’s “absolute grounding,” as one of its representations and representatives. Individuals are able to perceive themselves as being one with and part of God because they do so from the perspective of their individual, unique identities. Indeed, as we have seen, subjectivity is formed through a process that allows the self to perceive itself though otherness. Spirit seeks itself through its otherness in its myriad manifestations, each emanation seeking itself as a unique instance of spirit while each is also a mirror and part of a single all-encompassing universal spirit. For Coleridge, humans can arrive at the ultimate realization that they are none other than God as spirit perceiving himself in his otherness, but from unique perspectives. What Coleridge envisions as the highest awareness involves a state of plurality within singularity, a *multeity* of uniqueness comprising a common “one Life.”

When an individual believes he is solely a whole in himself, this narrow perspective causes him to feel alienated and remain in conflict with the world. Schiller describes his age as consisting of the “fracture of individuals, activities, and institutions into isolated and conflicting fragments”; Hölderlin portrays his compatriots as “disjecta membra of integral men”; Hegel speaks of the “self-alienated spirit” to describe the cultural and intellectual conditions of the century (*NS* 293). Similarly, Coleridge characterizes his age as “an Anarchy of Spirits!...disherited [sic] of soul,” and lacking a “common center” (“Religious Musings” ll. 160-

¹³³ Letter to William Sotheby, 10 September 1802.

3). For him, the way to reclaim individual and cultural harmony is through the attracting, binding, and integrating power of love. It is through love and sympathy for all things that he “might make / The whole ONE SELF! SELF, that no alien knows” (ll. 167-8).

2.3 Oppositions and Dichotomies: Centripetal and Centrifugal Forces of Love

Coleridge ultimately sees that love is the underlying intention and will in cosmic creation. Focusing closer on the laws of attraction and repulsion in nature, and indeed the impulses behind his responses to nature and the inspiration for his poetry, he further argues that since creation entails differentiation and antagonistic forces, oppositions must represent opposing kinds of love. He states, “Throughout the long history of this way of thinking, the antithesis and opponent of unitive love had been self-love, selfhood, egocentrism—the condition of Plotinus’ ‘self-centered’ soul, which transfers the center of reference from the whole to its individual and acquisitive self” (NS 295). While love is an integrative force, it is also a dividing and isolating tendency when it is expressed as self-love. Self-love is itself the expression of an integrative force in opposition to other integrative forces. When love is directed inward, toward the self, it manifests as an exclusionary force where difference and oppositions are created, maintained, and pitted against each other to emphasize distinction. What is termed “evil,” then, is the impulse that impels things apart and causes them to seek to remain separate and antagonistic.¹³⁴ The centripetal force of self-love and egocentrism in the individual is a separative force in opposition to the universal spirit’s own centripetal tendency of unification and all-encompassing harmony.

While love for all things is seen as an outgoing expression of energy, a centrifugal force, it is really the expression of the same form of centripetal energy that seeks unity with all things.

¹³⁴ Coleridge indicates that the reality of evil and suffering need to be explained in this context. As I will demonstrate in my analysis of “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison” and “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” pain and adversity have a place in creation for the development of consciousness and knowledge.

That is, through the expression of centrifugal energy, two opposing centripetal movements manifest: one in the individual and the other in the universal spirit. However, the universal's centrifugal force allows for a centripetal force to manifest in the individual, which, in turn, creates individuality and selfhood necessary for the possibility of love to express itself as a force to re-unification with universal spirit. Love is the cause for separation and "evil." Nevertheless, self-love, in turn, is the occasion for re-union and conscious expression of love through knowledge and wisdom in which difference and oppositions are created, reconciled, and maintained in harmonious co-existence.¹³⁵

The essence of all things is love, and self-love becomes a means for spirit to perceive and effectuate itself. The manifestation of self-love is significant because it constructs and consolidates an "other"; without it, there would be no self other than spirit without personality, as one infinite, uniform essence. Without the other, there would be no occasion for the expression of a love-to-reunification, and, therefore, God as spirit would no longer be "real" nor could God as spirit be conceived as a power such as love. Coleridge defines being as becoming, and all becoming occurs within God as spirit, for God and as God; it is an endless process of self-emanation and return, which in its constant activity, prevents a complete reintegration of

¹³⁵ In Hegel's view, love drives the spirit's development in an upward spiral movement from disunity and opposition to increasingly higher unities. It is the evolutionary principle in creation driving spirit forward and upward. Underpinning Coleridge's ideas about love and creation is the concept of love as the underlying force driving the giant wheel of eternal creation and return. This concept dates back to the Renaissance theologian and mystic Jakob Boehme who interprets the Biblical story of creation as beginning with an act of desire and love. The source of all things was a primal unity, an eternal, uniform essence without change, movement, or distinctions, which was, therefore, literally a nothingness. However, Boehme adds, it could not have been an absolute nothingness, for in its essence there must have been an inherent, latent desire, a will-to-self-realization, which generated out of this essence an opposing force: self-love. Through its manifestation, self-love established oppositions, created motion and distinctions within the infinite unity of this primal essence, and brought something out of nothing as an act of creation. "The primal source [is] an eternal unity which, in its absolute lack of determinateness or distinctions, is literally a Nothing [...] which] possesses an inner *nisus* [...] which in its striving for self-realization effects within itself an opposing force, *den Willen*, thus establishing the contraries of impulsion and opposition which set the otherwise static unity into motion" (NS 161). The conception of God, as the executive force of love, also emerges as a "something" out of nothing. He is one, absolutely; he is the unity of all existence, containing all oppositions and distinctions.

spirit with itself because self-love frustrates and thwarts the principle to re-union. Nevertheless, it creates the necessary opposition and tension for the possibility of action, desire, passion, striving, and movement toward a richer form of reconciliation.¹³⁶ Within humankind, individuals become separate entities through their self-exclusion, self-differentiation, and personal self-consciousness. Self-love, which manifests from absolute, all-embracing love, is also the reason for the tendency to selfhood, self-centeredness, and self-sufficiency that allows for the possibility of reintegration. Like being, love only *appears* to become other to itself through self-love.

The expression of self-love and the tendency to individuation within the primordial absolute is what leads to cosmic creation. Through extreme alienation from God, fragmented humanity learns that its alienation is the necessary condition for the knowledge of its redemption and conscious unity with God.¹³⁷ The individual must be a complete whole himself, a complete union and harmony of parts, before he can feel united with other similarly complete individuals to be a member of the greater whole.¹³⁸ Ultimately, the goal for the individual is to no longer think of himself as an isolated whole, but a whole that entails kinship with all things.¹³⁹ The

¹³⁶ Fichte also speaks of the absolute as an act, which manifests out of itself individual consciousnesses that are, as a collective, the non-ego in opposition to the absolute. Individual consciousnesses exist as a ground of resistance where the absolute may act dynamically in relation to the forces of non-ego. The non-ego is never vanquished, for it would entail the disappearance of the absolute as subject. Rather, the subject strives to achieve absolute freedom by approximating its mastery over the non-ego *ad infinitum*. This activity is replicated and maintained in each individual's consciousness as the activity of non-ego. To effectuate itself as such, the non-ego, like the absolute, becomes ego or subject in relation to the world and other individuals' consciousnesses as independently acting egos. Hence, humankind's "fall" in the Christian conception corresponds, for Fichte, to its fragmentation from its primal unity with the absolute and, later, from its oneness with nature (i.e. the separation of "I" and "Not-I" of the absolute).

¹³⁷ The Renaissance humanist Vives asserts, "We must return to [God] by the same way we came forth from him. Love was the cause of our being created.... From that love we have been separated, forsooth by the love of ourselves.... By love, i.e. by our love to God, we are to return to our source, which is also our end; for nothing else is able to bind together spiritual things, nothing is able to make one out of many, except love; but knowledge must precede love" (*NS* 295).

¹³⁸ For instance, Plato's *The Republic* argues that an individual must have an inner state of justice before he can lead a communal life of justice. He must have individual integrity before he can become an integral part of society and also, thereby, can create the necessary conditions and possibility for the integrity of the whole.

¹³⁹ The individual who attains this consciousness leads the process of humankind's redemption and return to a higher unity. However, before the individual may achieve this comprehensive awareness, his initial self-centeredness make him egotistical and narcissistic, which often conflicts with his ability to empathize with his fellow citizens. Society's

beauty and gift of separation and self-love is the chance at an individualized experience of life, which also forms part of and affords a greater and infinitely diverse collection of experiences to the life of universal spirit. As Coleridge and other Romantics illustrate in their poetry, while the individual delights in the experience of his intrinsic oneness with the universe, it is his separation that allows him to experience oneness in the first place. Hence, his experience of this separateness and, subsequently, of his essential oneness afford their own distinct pleasures, which can also be experienced simultaneously. Therefore, to the Romantics, love is the principle and power of re-union, and for that goal, one must express love of the kind that is not limited to self-love. One must recognize that the self is part of what unites all other selves in their essence, and, therefore, love for all is truly another form of self-love, a love of one's *true* all-encompassing universal self.

The idea that the multitude of creation consists of entities that are separate yet linked by a spiritual essence which unites them in one all-encompassing life, is, as noted, expressed in Coleridge's concept of "multeity in unity." In a letter to John Thelwall, Coleridge introduces the idea of God as the all-encompassing life: "there is an Omnipresent Father of infinite power, wisdom, and Goodness, in whom we all of us move, and have our being" (*CL*, I, 280). According to Schelling, the perception of nature as having a consciousness of her own results from "the attraction of inner love and relationship between your own spirit and that which lives in nature." Finally, love is extended "beyond the human realm to all modes of cosmic connectivity, including the natural forces of gravitation and electromagnetism" (*NS* 297). Love expresses itself

ills stem from individuals' desires to fulfill their self-serving interests as fragmented entities at the expense of others: "The root of our civilized ills is our desperate clinging to the principle of self, which frustrates the redemptive principle of integration" (*NS* 324). To the Romantics, love is the principle and power of re-integration, but the "individual cannot love' because 'to yield entirely to love [...] would be to be absorbed, which is the death of the individual' [...] But neither can we escape our indefeasible yearning for a resurrection which will be a return to total unity with ourselves, with other men, and with the natural world" (*NS* 324).

throughout the universe, from the ubiquitous gravitational force of celestial bodies to the mutual attraction of atoms.

3. Creation, Freedom, and the Ascent of Being

3.1 Reunion and the Synthesizing Power of Imagination

Since all life is an expression of God's boundless creative energy, to express that force and energy is the criterion and meaning of life. To be a purposeful expression of imagination is to live according to one's *raison d'être*. Hence, humans participate in God's activity through their creative expressions, and artists who exercise their imaginations, express their divinity. In Coleridge's metaphysical conception, just as arms, legs, and eyes are parts of the body that do not have life or individual functions beyond the body, all individuals, as parts of the universal "body" of God, continue to perceive, imagine, and create because it is in their nature to do so.¹⁴⁰ Imagination allows humans to act, progress, and, ultimately, seek to consciously reintegrate the essence of their beings with the common essence of all things.

For Coleridge, there is an indwelling divinity that lies in the human soul, and the soul houses God's attributes of imagination, reason, and love. Just as imagination and love are God's powers in creation that have specific roles in spirit's self-revelation, "reason" Coleridge calls the "mind's eye," "the attribute of the Deity" in humans (*PL*, II, 612); it is the "organ of inward sense" and "conscious self-knowledge" with the "power of acquainting itself with invisible realities or spiritual objects" (*F*, I, 156). Coleridge states, "man possesses love, and Faith and the sense of the permanent [...because he is] irradiated by a higher power: the power namely of

¹⁴⁰ Humankind's "fall" and loss of Edenic felicity, was the act that created the oppositions of human with nature and human with other humans through each individual's limited perception or finite perspective; in the beginning, the individual considers his sensuous perception complete and does not imagine a reality beyond what he senses. However, though the individual is finite, divine imagination is the essence of his being, and it provides glimpses of his true kinship with all things.

seeking what it can no where behold, and finding that which itself has first transfused, the permanent; that which in the endless flux of sensible things can alone be known; which is indeed in all, but exists for the reason alone, for it is Reason” (*OM* 122). As discussed in chapters two and three, the senses and the faculties of understanding and reason contribute to shaping one’s knowledge of the world. Imagination, as the “prime agent of all perception” is the means by which reality is perceived, assimilated, and interpreted by the mind whose structures and various faculties are harmonized in powerful synergy by imagination; love is the *will* that expresses itself through the pleasurable acts of imaginative creation. Like imagination and reason, love is an attribute of God; it helps create a reality and the resulting knowledge derived from that creation. Coleridge concludes that mind itself must be conceived as “an act” of the “whole soul of man.” God’s powers comprise “the indwelling Christ in the Soul” (*CN*, V, 6524) and the path to a virtuous life and communion with God is to unite one’s will with the indwelling Christ who acts in the soul; this act of will is indeed an act of love.

Furthermore, Coleridge explains, since humans are “irradiated by a higher power” of God’s love, “Love is the Spirit of God” and love is the expression of spirit’s self-seeking. Spirit is a spirit of love where God, “Himself being all, he communicated himself to another as to a Self. But such communication is Love” (*OM* 210). Through conscience, an individual’s will recognizes God’s will, which the individual can then manifest. Coleridge describes faith as “the synthesis of the Will and the Reason” or “the Co-adunation of the individual Will and the universal Reason.” Finite will, as “the representative of the Absolute Will,” “by free-self-subordination to the Reason as Universal,” must be co-adunated with speculative reason to become active, practical reason (*CN*, V, 6791). Hence, as discussed in chapters two and three,

the will, as it is manifested in the individual, is not entirely independent from God's will.¹⁴¹ The individual's natural thirst and yearning for greater knowledge and truth as well as his innate faith and conscience are expressions of higher reason and an intrinsic expression of love which seeks to re-unite the individual's existence with spirit's all-encompassing life. Like imagination, love is the universal will-to-reunion and thirst for communion. That is, there is a pull within the individual to seek, through knowledge and experience, communion with God's spirit, which is his home. This seeking translates into the individual's, and indeed into collective humankind's, quest and journey, to re-establish unity of being. The collective experiences of all humans that have ever lived are the experiences of universal spirit. Through conscience, the individual's will becomes the "Will of Reason" and the "Spirit of the regenerated man" (*AR* 217). In Blake's words, "God becomes as we are, that we may be as he is" ("There is no Natural Religion" 7).

Each human life is a fall into self-division and a journey toward self-reintegration. Each individual is thus capable of redemption through the exercise of the imagination, which allows him to transcend his self-isolating tendency and even reclaim the seemingly alien physical world as part of his true self through imaginative vision.¹⁴² It entails a progression to a higher and more felicitous state, and, finally, to a state in which the individual retains his individuality while simultaneously experiencing, through his unique perspective, his oneness with God's infinite being. The impetus to reunion, or the force which impels individuals toward the goal, is

¹⁴¹ Although free will allows the individual to choose to accept or reject faith, it is this choice that allows for God as spirit to become "other" to itself in the first place. However, as Coleridge notes, really "there is no other than Self." The perception of difference allows the self, the original absolute identity, to contemplate its being as something distinct from itself. However, what is distinct must remain in some sense the self because it is the "Self wholly and adequately repeated, yet so that the very repetition contains distinction from the primary act, [...] a Self which in both is self-subsistent, but which is not yet the same because, the one only is self-originated" (*OM* 199).

¹⁴² It is crucial to remember, however, that imagination is not the power of adding or altering something that is absent from reality, but it is a higher mode of perception that allows humans to behold a more complete reality beyond what their limited senses perceive. Human redemption is "figured as a circling back of divided man to his original wholeness [...] the cyclical recurrences of pagan history—into a 'Resurrection to Unity' which is the full and final closure of the Christian design of history" (*NS* 260).

generated through their inherent desire to transcend the oppositions and conflicts that arise, as discussed above, as a necessary result of creation.¹⁴³ Indeed, according to Coleridge, love and revulsion, attraction and repulsion are necessary forces not only for creation, but also for human progress. These oppositions are imbued with a magnetic force that stimulates action.¹⁴⁴ However, the goal is not a place of permanent rest and ease; rather, as Schiller and the German Romantics contend, it must entail a state of active creativity fueled by imaginative energy, a stage for the infinite expression of the boundless imagination.

Even before his immersion into German metaphysics, Coleridge speaks of a primal unity, and describes creation as the fragmentation of this primordial oneness, and discusses the possibility and process of reclaiming that unity. Humankind's goal is to achieve a state in which all individuals participate in the oneness of God while each individual retains his uniqueness as God's representative: "Tis the sublime of man, / Our noontide Majesty, to know ourselves / Parts and proportions of one wondrous whole! / [...] 'tis God / Diffused through all, that doth make all one whole" ("Religious Musings" 135-40). Our tendency to self-assertion and self-sufficiency makes humankind into

An Anarchy of Spirits! Toy-bewitched,
 Made blind by lusts, disherited of soul,
 No common centre Man, no common sire
 Knoweth! A sordid solitary thing,

¹⁴³ Blake also states that "without Contraries [there] is no progression" (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* 69).

¹⁴⁴ Abrams clarifies, "it is only by an extreme historical injustice that Romanticism has been identified with the cult of the noble savage and the cultural idea of a return to an early stage of simple and easeful 'nature' which lacks conflict because it lacks differentiation and complexity. On the contrary, all the major Romantic writers," both British and European in general, set humankind's destiny as "the reachivement of a unity which has been earned by unceasing effort [...] an 'organized' unity, an equilibrium of opponent forces which preserves all the products and powers of intellection and culture" (NS 260). The nostalgia for a former state of peace, for childhood innocence, and harmony with nature is really a secret longing for a future state of conscious unity and equilibrium of seemingly contradictory forces.

Mid countless brethren with a lonely heart
 Thro' courts and cities the smooth Savage roams
 Feeling himself, his own low Self the whole. (160-6)

Coleridge “feels as if [his mind] ached to behold and know something *great*—something *one and indivisible*” (*CL*, I, 349). The sense of separation he feels from other individuals, from nature, and from God, is the condition he seeks to actively transcend. He realizes that his alienation is the result of a limited state of mind and perception: “[we] think of ourselves as separated beings, and place nature in antithesis to the mind, as object to subject, thing to thought, death to life” (*F*, I, 520). Every individual believes he is a whole in himself, and this once useful deception causes him to feel alienated and remain in conflict with the world; consequently, he experiences pain and suffering. It is through love and sympathy for all things that he “might make / The whole ONE SELF! SELF, that no alien knows” (“Religious Musings” ll. 167-8). Coleridge recognizes that separation, and the resulting pain and suffering, is the necessary condition for progress and redemption. Ultimately, it is not a primal unity that is to be achieved; rather, because spirit is no longer what it was before creation, the kind of reunion that is possible is one that is ultimately more desirable, a “*re-union* of the all in one” (*F*, I, 522).

Coleridge identifies imagination as the necessary instrument that allows individuals to attain higher states of existence so as to ultimately effectuate humankind’s process of reunion with God. Coleridge explains that the goal is achieved through strife and conscious effort. Oppositions, contraries, dichotomies, dualisms, and polarities manifest in nature as expressions of the tendencies to “individuate” and to “connect,” so that “thesis and antithesis, position and counterposition [...may] unite in a synthesis. [...] In the identity of the counter-powers, Life *subsists*; in their strife it *consists*: and in their reconciliation it at once dies and is born again into

a new form” (TL 519-20). In the synthesis of contraries, a new and higher entity or condition is generated. Imagination, as a living, creative faculty that reconciles and synthesizes opposites, generates the necessary energy for growth; by uniting conflicting forces and stances, it yields greater states of being and increasingly higher, completer, and more comprehensive visions of existence. Coleridge envisions the highest state to be one in which all things, including each individual, are perceived to be united in a whole as a “multeity in unity.” The original unity of being is reconfigured into a unity of infinite qualities and states and, therefore, it no longer simply remains infinite potentiality, but becomes infinite actuality, infinite multiplicity, and infinite personality.

3.2 Creation and Evolution

According to the German idealists, within the grand circle of life, all organic processes, including the progression of human consciousness, follow a circular and ascending progression. This progression to increasingly higher and more joyous states of existence leads to spirit’s self-revelation through human consciousness. This is made possible because, Coleridge explains, all life progresses due to the energy generated from the interaction of counter-forces in it, which causes it to move “round upon itself in a circle” (*PL*, II, 530).¹⁴⁵ Coleridge describes the evolution of human perception and consciousness as a spiral process that preserves and incorporates the values of the former stages of youth with the powers and wisdom of adulthood: “In the union of the old and new,” “the feelings of childhood” both in the individual and in humankind are carried “into the powers of manhood” (*F*, I, 109). “The *evolution of the human mind*,” both in terms of the individual and humankind, progresses “from its simplest state of

¹⁴⁵ The implications of this journey are further explored in Chapter Six, which focuses on the concept of eternal recurrence as it relates to Coleridge’s “Rime of the Ancient Mariner.”

information to the highest extent its faculties will reach” (*PL*, I, 321). Distinctions are important because they prepare us to “distinguish without dividing” and, thence, to “prepare for the intellectual re-union of the all in one” (*F*, I, 522). “Polarity, or the essential dualism in Nature,” is the “most general law,” that generates both the tendency “at once to individuate and to connect, to detach” or “unite in a synthesis” (TL 517-8). Counter-powers are integrated into a new unity in which both powers continue to survive but in a more sophisticated organization: “the two component counter-powers actually interpenetrate each other, and generate a higher third, including both the former” (*SM* 89).

The German Idealists, Romantics, and indeed Coleridge envision the highest unity in humans to be a mode of vision in which the multiplicity of creation is gathered up and united harmoniously and intelligibly in one’s consciousness. This ultimate science of knowledge encompasses the entire range of human experience as a process that begins with spirit positing itself in the manifold of its own otherness and ends with spirit returning to itself by comprehending itself through the multiplicity of its being. The entire process occurs within the absolute of spirit as the whole, which contains both the division and unity of spirit and the interaction of those states. Humans embody that dynamic synthesis, for when they discover their fundamental unity with all things, they realize their true being in spirit as an emanation of the absolute. Schelling states, “So long as I myself am identical with nature, I understand what a living nature is as well as I understand my own life” (*Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* 36). Hence, the developing consciousness first creates a division between mind and nature, a necessary “evil” that provides the impetus for consciousness to act in opposition to nature and develop into self-consciousness. Furthermore, this division creates the evolutionary drive for self-consciousness to move beyond nature and, ultimately, beyond distinctions where all

oppositions are reconciled in unity in multiteity. Without division, there would be neither multiplicity nor unity to contemplate.¹⁴⁶

As I have been demonstrating, for Coleridge, each individual participates in and contributes to humankind's progress; while his experiences are uniquely his own, they also become part of the experience of humankind. Simultaneously, the development of humankind through history is mirrored in the growth of the individual. There is an analogy between microcosmic and macrocosmic processes, which allows for a meaningful, individualized spiritual existence and a gradual, all-encompassing elevation of humankind's consciousness through its fundamental spiritual unity. Abrams concludes,

This retention of the traditional Christian concepts and the traditional Christian plot, but demythologized, conceptualized, and with all-controlling Providence converted into a 'logic' or dialectic that controls all the interactions between subject and object, gives its distinctive character and design to what we call 'Romantic philosophy.' In this grandiose enterprise, however, it is the subject, mind, or spirit which is the primary and takes over the initiative and the functions which had once been the prerogatives of deity; that is why we can justifiably call Romantic philosophy, in its diverse forms, by the generic term 'Idealism.' (NS 91)

¹⁴⁶ This notion resounds with Hegel's conception of the goal of spirit achieved through the long course of human thinking, which is "finally and completely to reclaim for consciousness the world from which it had been alienated by the initial act in which it became conscious" (NS 183). Hence, the circuitous journey involves spirit, both universal and individual, becoming other to and for itself in objects and ideas, becoming estranged from itself, and then operating along with its otherness to finally return to itself from this self-estrangement. The Romantics reconfigure the Neoplatonic design of the return to source as a goal to be achieved not in some otherworldly Platonic realm of forms, but in this material world. In *Hyperion*, Hölderlin speaks in organic terms of a change in the "foundations" of all things whence "from the root of humanity a new world shall spring" and a "rejuvenated people" will enjoy "one Beauty; and man and Nature will be united in one all-embracing divinity" (73-4); "Heaven" and the "the life divine" is the condition of being "one with all" (3). He argues that since "sacred nature" is "the same within me and without," he can "unite what is outside" with the "divine within" and "plant and cultivate what is needful" (73). Hence, an inner paradise must be first realized so that the paradise everywhere can be unveiled (*Hyperion*, Trans. Willard R. Trask). The recovered unity is not a simple and undifferentiated unity, but a unity that is a higher and more sophisticated condition because it encompasses all states of differentiation and all stages of growth. Therefore, the "return" to unity entails a transformation and enhancement of the primordial simple unity.

According to Coleridge uniquely, “the mystery of perception” (*BL*, I, lxxxv) is that it is not only an imaginative construct (i.e. primary imagination), but also a finite repetition of God’s inscrutable act of creation. The very act of perception “repeats,” as a finite instance, the “eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM.” Synthesizing Platonic thought and Christian doctrine with his philosophical concept of the imagination as the power of the “I AM,” Coleridge notes that the quality of beauty in things serves as a beacon for the imagination to recognize in those objects the individuating element and “Life” of the “I AM,” which is God’s power of imagination acting in creation. Coleridge asserts that the essence that permeates nature is imagination or the consciousness of God as spirit, “the living power” of God in creation that manifests “as a repetition in the finite mind.” It is because he has the sense of his individual “I am” that Coleridge’s imagination recognizes itself reflected, as a presence, in things whose beauty corresponds to and is in tune with the beauty of his own living soul. Yet, because of this dual reality of the individual “I am” within the infinite “I AM,” Coleridge achieves a state of awareness wherein he experiences his existence as disembodied, living thought or breathing spirit; he is no longer tied to the physical world of “things,” but transcends the world of objects and differences into a state where he knows himself to be a spiritual entity communicating everywhere with echoes of itself:

I seem to exist, as it were, almost wholly within myself, in *thoughts* rather than in *things*, in a particular warmth felt all over me, but chiefly felt about my heart & breast; & am connected with things without me by the pleasurable sense of their immediate Beauty or Loveliness, and not at all by my knowledge of their average value in the minds of people in general; & with persons without me by no ambition of their esteem, or of having rank & consequence in their minds, but with people in general by general kindness of feeling,

& with my especial friends, by an intense delight in fellow-feeling, by an intense perception of the Necessity of LIKE to LIKE. (*CL*, II, 881-2)¹⁴⁷

In another notebook entry he writes,

In looking at objects of Nature while I am thinking, as at yonder moon dim-glimmering thro' the dewy window-pane, I seem rather to be seeking, as it were *asking*, a symbolical language for something within me that already and forever exists, than observing any thing new. Even when that latter is the case, yet still I have always an obscure feeling as if that new phænomenon were the dim Awakening of a forgotten or hidden Truth of my inner Nature. (*CN*, II, 2546)

Coleridge notes, “Descartes was the first man who made nature utterly lifeless and godless, considered it as the subject of merely mechanical laws” (*PL*, II, 565). He himself, however, could not conceive the objects of nature as mere lifeless matter. He argues that the phenomenal word embodies a formal principle and through his experiences in nature discovers that his intimations of nature’s spiritual potency result from the fact that nature’s creative power is analogous to his mind’s creativity. While spontaneously seeking a “symbolical language” in outer nature for a corresponding truth in his “inner nature,” Coleridge discovers that “the wonderful works of God in the sensible world are a perpetual discourse, reminding me of his existence, and showing out to me his perfections,”¹⁴⁸ an observation that reveals why he would never entirely abandon Spinoza. “The theory of natural philosophy would be then completed, when all nature was demonstrated to be identical *in essence* with that, which in its highest known power exists in man as intelligence and self-consciousness” (*BL*, I, 256). Coleridge’s genuine dedication to multiple philosophical systems has inspired his own all-encompassing and indeed

¹⁴⁷ Letter to Mrs. S. T. Coleridge, 13 November 1802.

¹⁴⁸ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “Confessio Fidei,” *Literary Remains, Complete Works Of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, Vol. 5. Ed. W. G. T. Shedd and H. N. Coleridge (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1854) pp. 15.

organic understanding of spirit's operation in creation. He apprehends the divine attribute and unifying nature of love, even at the heart of the antagonistic forces involved in creation and identification. Through artistic creation conceived with the poet's imagination, these opposing forces and philosophical viewpoints become reconciled, and the individual poet achieves what was all along his ultimate, spiritual purpose: that perfect and divine state of "unity in multeity."

This divine and perfect state is suffused with joy, and it is, at the same time, according to Coleridge, the most absolutely right and moral state of existence. That joy and divine morality should coincide is certainly no surprise to Coleridge. As discussed in Chapter Two, to Coleridge the aim of poetry is to please, and the resulting joy excites the imagination, which unifies and reconciles oppositions and transcends conflicts. Hence joy, resulting from the experience of art as the expression of imagination, subsequently leads to love, sympathy, and moral actions. Imagination, therefore, strengthens the bonds of love and inspires moral rectitude. Ultimately, Coleridge describes "joy" as a necessary condition for transcending the experience of division between mind and nature, self and the universe; it fuels creativity and promotes love:

All genius exists in a participation of a common spirit. In joy individuality is lost and it therefore is liveliest in youth [...before] the circumstances that have forced a man in upon his little unthinking contemptible self, have lessened his power of existing universally. [...] To have a genius is to live in the universal, to know no self but that which is reflected not only from the faces of all around us, our fellow creatures, but reflected from the flowers, the trees, the beasts, yea from the very surface of the waters and the sands of the desert. A man of genius finds a reflex to himself, were it only in the mystery of being. (*PL*, I, 220).

Thus, it is Coleridge's joy in listening to the music of the harp in his poem, and his reflections on nature, that lead him naturally to consider the relation between the love in such a scene and the purest love of all—the love of God. Beauty, joy, and love occasion these contemplations for Coleridge, leading to his philosophical conclusions and, ultimately, to the understanding of his kinship with the universal "one Life." Love, as an attribute of the divine, fuels his seeking and, ultimately, his desire to reconcile the tension between pantheistic thought and his Christian beliefs, between the essential role of the individual and the ultimate goal of spiritual reunion.

CHAPTER 5:
CORRESPONDENCES OF THE SELF-SEEKING SPIRIT

This chapter continues to illustrate Coleridge's metaphysical conceptualization of the relationship between the self, nature, and God, as explicated in the first three chapters, and as it is embodied in and apply to Coleridge's poetry. The two poems discussed in this chapter, "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" and "Frost at Midnight," demonstrate how Coleridge's powers of recollection and imagination, interacting with his experiences in nature, lead to revelations about God, spirit, and the purpose of his poetry—the very revelations that both inform and grow from his Christian philosophical worldview.

As discussed in chapters three and four, according to Coleridge the power of secondary imagination enables the artist to become aware of the underlying connection between nature, mind, and God. Namely, it reveals that the underlying divine element of the infinite I AM in all things, including the mind and nature, is the power and action of primary imagination, the same power that fuels and enables the action of secondary imagination in the first place. That is, it bears repeating, primary imagination is the channel through which the outer world intuited by the senses is brought into the mind and realm of consciousness; it follows an organic process by which the physical world is assimilated and converted into nourishment for thought. Secondary imagination fashions images based on sensory data and interacts with them to produce fresh symbols, a process that ultimately sheds light on the underlying collaboration between mind and nature in producing consciousness. Hence, there is a fundamental correlation between mind and nature and, Coleridge asserts that the study and understanding of nature reveals its inextricable link to human consciousness.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ Similarly, Novalis explains that the empirical laws of nature and the mind's cognitive functions are structured according to the same transcendental laws of the superior mind that created them. This analogy is itself intentionally

I shall demonstrate how Coleridge discovers through his study of nature that all forms and entities comprise a readable language that can be gradually deciphered. Hence, like Novalis, Coleridge realizes that the key to understanding reality lies in the intrinsic link between mind and nature, both of which are expressions of the same divine language. Conversely, through introspection and through his interactions with the natural world, he realizes that the mind's contemplation of its own nature is the key to revealing the nature without. The mind becomes its own object of study, and the poem becomes an expression of that study. It represents a unified whole created in the mind of the poet in which time, space, memories, and states of being are all interconnected. Consequently, "in inescapable narcissism, the self everywhere only encounters itself, while nature is nothing but the blueprint for the mind to understand and unlock its own powers, a script to which the self always already holds the key since it is writing it itself" (Schlutz 203). Hence, the individual realizes through the divine power of imagination that the true self is the "Almighty Spirit" which "makes / [individual] Spirits perceive his presence" ("This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" 42-3). Furthermore, Coleridge discovers that the process of poetic creation and self-reflection, as exemplified in his poems, is a microcosmic repetition of God's infinite act of creation in which God's expression, as consciousness or spirit, is reified in material form. The poem is to the poet as nature and the cosmos are to God; the poem, therefore, is a repetition in the finite world of God's infinite creativity and it is just as sacred as the natural world. Furthermore, through his poetry, Coleridge attempts "to realize the full potential of a

fashioned to serve the faculties of human cognition precisely so that all its experiences are conceived as following nature's empirical laws; this recognition in turn leads to the realization that human faculties are fitted to God's purposes and that the individual mind, with all its processes of cognition, is akin to the transcendental mind that gave it its structure. Novalis affirms that the forces in nature that shape the sensible world are analogous to those that govern human consciousness. That is, finite consciousness discovers that the correlation of its mind and nature is created so that it may perceive this analogy and ultimately realize its association with God's consciousness. Novalis therefore concludes that by studying nature one will inevitably be led to the study of the self and eventually to the common origin of mind and nature in the transcendental absolute on which mind and nature are modeled.

complete I, as the aesthetic unity of mind and nature” (Schlutz 192). Coleridge makes these realizations through his recognition and study of the metaphors of mind in nature.¹⁵⁰

1. “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison”

In “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison,” Coleridge beholds, through the power of imagination and the experience of love and beauty, the “Almighty Spirit” that unites all things. This insight leads to the even greater revelation about his role and the significance of his poetic expression in God’s creation. As in “The Eolian Harp,” Coleridge is resting amidst nature’s beauty and experiencing feelings of love, in this case for his friends William Wordsworth, Charles Lamb, and Dorothy Wordsworth. He again beholds the “Almighty Spirit” behind the forms in nature that connects all spirits and “makes / Spirits perceive his presence” (42-3). The powers of imagination, recollection, and love are central to his discovery.

At the poem’s opening, Coleridge sits, incapacitated, in the shade of a lime-tree while his friends take a late afternoon stroll through the countryside.¹⁵¹ Coleridge is not indolent, nor is his mind passive as it was in the detached and peaceful setting of “The Eolian Harp.” Rather, he is restless and pained by his inability to accompany his friends on a long-anticipated excursion. He feels imprisoned in his lime-tree bower and laments how he has “lost” the opportunity to share

¹⁵⁰ Indeed, according to Schelling, the goal of philosophical inquiry is to achieve the identity of mind and nature. To Coleridge this identity confirms and reveals the presence of God, as best illustrated in his poem “Frost at Midnight.”

¹⁵¹ Although Coleridge is expressing his affection for his friends in this poem, his wife Sara’s actions again have a determining effect on his experience. Coleridge explains in the “advertisement” to the poem, “In the June of 1797 some long-expected friends paid a visit to the author’s cottage; and on the morning of their arrival, he met with an accident, which disabled him from walking during the whole of their stay. One evening, when they had left him for a few hours, he composed the following lines in the garden-bower” (*Coleridge’s Poetry and Prose* 136). In a letter to Robert Southey, dated 17 July 1797, he describes more intimately that “The second day after Wordsworth came to me, dear Sara accidentally emptied a skillet of boiling milk on my foot, which confined me during the whole time of C. Lamb’s stay, and still prevents me from all walks longer than a furlong. While Wordsworth, his sister, and Charles Lamb were out one evening, sitting in the arbour of T. Poole’s garden, which communicates with mine, I composed these lines, with which I am pleased” (*CL*, I, 334). As expressed in the poem, Coleridge admits that although initially painful and frustrating, the ordeal occasions a profoundly enlightening experience in which he experiences beauty, love, profound joy, and the vision of a spiritual reality.

with them the experience of “Beauties and feelings” “most sweet” (2-3). Coleridge begins to imagine wistfully his friends’ journey through the rolling landscape by drawing from his memory the beautiful sights and sounds he had experienced on his own previous walks along that route.

He recreates the beautiful scenes in his mind through recollection and accompanies his friends in his imagination. Here too, as in “The Eolian Harp,” the presence of the wind is conspicuous; even if it does not directly prompt the vision of the “one Life,” its action contributes to the beauty of the experience, which ultimately occasions Coleridge’s perception of the “Almighty Spirit.” The wind blows across the “springy heath” and “roaring dell” (7-9). Even the “unsunned” ash tree and “lank weeds” protected from the gale by the cliff are “fanned” by a wind created from the force of cascading water. The “few poor yellow leaves” on “that branchless ash” “tremble still” and the reeds that run down the cliff face along the waterfall are “fanned” and catch the mist from the shower; the weeds “nod and drip” creating their own secondary, trickling waterfall, a repetition and product of the primary force (14-19). Hence, the wind, which is blocked by the cliff, finds a secondary expression in the breeze created by the crashing water; the secondary breeze, in turn, carries the spray that causes a secondary waterfall, which is an analogous repetition of the former power of falling water. In the images of the primary and secondary wind and the primary and secondary waterfall, we find apt metaphors for the divine power of primary imagination that prompts the action of the analogous power of secondary imagination. As I shall later elaborate, Coleridge continues to find in nature analogies for the mind’s actions. Both God’s creations—nature and mind—follow God’s *modus operandi* of “echo or mirror seeking of itself” through analogous creations.¹⁵²

Continuing to follow his friends on their walk in his imagination, Coleridge emerges

¹⁵² Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “Frost at Midnight,” ll. 22.

from the “roaring dell” (10) and beholds the “wide wide Heaven,” the “magnificent,” open landscape with rolling fields and meadows, and the expansive and glistening ocean stretching to the horizon (22-4). The word “Heaven” has a clear spiritual resonance, which sets the stage for the ensuing mystical experience. Coleridge envisions his friend Charles Lamb “struck by deep joy” as he observes nature’s beauty, and Coleridge describes how “A delight / Comes sudden on my heart” while he experiences his friend’s own pleasure (43-4). “So my friend / Struck with deep joy may stand, as I have stood, / Silent with swimming sense” (37-9). Again, as in Coleridge’s past experience of this scene’s beauty—and as in his experience of nature’s beauty in “The Eolian Harp”—the vivid sights, sounds, and feelings become muddled, and his experience of beauty is so powerful that it has an intoxicating effect as he imagines, and therefore experiences vicariously through his friend, Charles standing “Silent with swimming sense” (39). In this experience of heightened sensuous beauty, Coleridge further imagines Charles beholding, as did Coleridge, the vision of the “Almighty Spirit” (42-4). Through the joint action of the powers of memory and imagination, Coleridge again experiences the vision he had before of the “Almighty Spirit,” this time vicariously through Charles’s experience, which, appreciably, is occurring in Coleridge’s own mind. Through his vivid memory of nature’s beauty and his strong feelings of love for his friends, the experience of *beauty* and *love* again, as in “The Eolian Harp,” lifts the veil from his ordinary sight and all things in nature “doth seem / Less gross than bodily” (40-1).

Coleridge’s imagined pilgrimage soothes and alleviates his feelings of annoyance and frustration, and he begins to notice the beauty and solace in his own surroundings. That is, his experience of nature’s beauty in his mind sensitizes and alerts him to the beauty in the lime-tree bower. He no longer feels imprisoned, but, rather, he seems enveloped by beauty. Hence,

Coleridge experiences freedom through the purity of his feelings of love: “Awake to Love and Beauty [...] we may lift the Soul” (64-7). No longer is the lime-tree bower a prison, but instead, he finds there “Much that has soothed me” (47). Hence, the poem is not about escaping the confines of his physical limitations through the powers of imagination and memory; rather, the poem reveals how these powers are a means of connecting with a greater reality. In fact, the limitations occasion the action of imagination, which yields the realization that the physical limitations themselves have a purposeful role for they create the necessary conditions in impelling the mind to transcend apparent impediments and discover a greater freedom. Coleridge realizes that he is not limited at all, but part of an almighty spirit that is, as he describes in “The Eolian Harp,” “at once the Soul of each, and God of all” (“The Eolian Harp” 48). Not only is his mental journey “real” in the sense of the concrete result and change that it affects, but the realization that this journey yields also attests to the formidable power of imagination to create or re-create reality. Upon his return to his physical location in the bower after the imagined sojourn through the countryside with his friends, Coleridge discovers much recompense in his present situation. The exercise of imagination has a restorative effect. He notices beauty in his surroundings and concludes by announcing that “Henceforth I shall know / That Nature ne'er deserts the wise and pure” (“This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison” 59-60).

Therefore, his imaginative journey allows him to transcend his physical constraints. It is an episode of growth and maturation within the larger, lifelong journey of maturation; what plays out in the course of a day is a microcosmic repetition of life's journey from immaturity to philosophic consciousness. Indeed, Coleridge evolves from a state of puerile self-pity and petulance to a greater perception of and connectedness with a spiritual reality beyond his finite

self.¹⁵³ He begins by sulking childishly, but by the end of the experience he attains an ecstatic sense of wellbeing and a mature, philosophic consciousness. In fact, with each stanza, there is an elevation of thought and mellowing of mood, and Coleridge's self-centeredness is gradually effaced until he experiences unselfish delight in his friends' pleasure.

In this poem, love is elicited through the bond of friendship, and it is, in its essence, as powerful and meaningful as his love for Sara in "The Eolian Harp." Indeed, as in "The Eolian Harp," Coleridge is "Awake to Love and Beauty" (64) and is referring to "Beauty" and "Love" in their absolute Forms. They are, as discussed in the previous chapter, the catalyst for his ultimate realization that love and beauty are actually rightful states of his inner being, which is the spirit that connects all things. He experiences a profound and unselfish joy in knowing Charles has escaped his own prison, the city, and now revels in the beauty and solace of nature.¹⁵⁴ Coleridge relates how "My gentle-hearted Charles [...] pined / And hunger'd after Nature, many a year, / In the great City pent" (28-30). Coleridge realizes that through his experience of "Love" and "Beauty," he too is freed from his prison. In Coleridge's "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" there is a progression from crisis to epiphany, from dissonance to resolution. Coleridge realizes with a calm maturity that "'Tis well to be bereft of promised good, / That we may lift the soul, and contemplate / With lively joy, the joys we cannot share" (65-7). The deprivation of a much-anticipated joy impels him to transcend that state of loss.

After perceiving the "Almighty Spirit" that connects and encompasses all spirits in creation, Coleridge recognizes the sanctity of his own spirit and blesses "the last rook" flying

¹⁵³ This is similar to Wordsworth's experience in "Intimations of Immortality" where he begins by lamenting the loss of his ability to perceive a "celestial light" in nature (4) but goes on to appreciate the greater gift of acquiring a "philosophic mind" through his experiences of nature in his own mind (191).

¹⁵⁴ The experience of selfless joy, according to Kant, results from the experience of true beauty. That is, the experience of true beauty is confirmed through the experience of detached, unselfish pleasure; joy is indeed always present in Coleridge's genuine love of Charles.

overhead, which is also sacred because of its own “indwelling spirit” (*CN*, II, 3231 f14v). There is a kinship and a shared “life” between Coleridge and the rook—they are distinct entities yet part of the “one Life”—and through their spiritual bond he is able to send with the bird a charm for Charles. Charles, whom Coleridge imagines also experiences a total harmony in nature where “No sound is dissonant” even the rook’s “creeking” (74-6), is therefore able to receive the benediction because of Charles’s own shared, sacred connection with all things including the rook and Coleridge. The homebound rook’s cawing is not discordant because it is an utterance which expresses or “tells of Life” (76), and, more significantly, it also communicates or is telling of the spiritual interconnectedness between Coleridge, Charles, nature, and indeed all “Life.” That is, all entities carry the divine essence and attribute called “Life,” and nothing is dissonant or out of place that is part of the harmonious whole that is the “one Life,” and Coleridge’s poem demonstrates and encapsulates this profound revelation.

2. “Frost at Midnight”

As in “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison,” the element of vexation in “Frost at Midnight” is crucial in instigating Coleridge’s search for meaning in his solitary and troubled state. The elements of love, imagination, memory, and answer-seeking through reason once again collaborate powerfully and meaningfully to yield a startling spiritual revelation. Memory, and its link to “fancy,”¹⁵⁵ is portrayed as a rudimentary form of association-making and connection-seeking action that also serves as a means of “othering” for the self. Additionally, it functions as a canvas for the action of imagination, for the recollected features of the natural setting form the basis for Coleridge’s imaginative musings and self-reflection. Thus, in “Frost at

¹⁵⁵ Fancy is an “aggregative and associative power” (*BL*, I, 293) that recalls images of sense perception from memory as representations from the sensory realm. It is “no other than a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space” that “must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association” (305).

Midnight,” Coleridge moves beyond the appreciation of the “one Life” and the nature of God achieved in “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison” and comes, through more complex philosophical musings, to truly understand the implications of the “one Life” in nature and across time and to grasp more fully his own role in the spiritual universe.

The poem begins on a still, quiet night. A pervasive silence engulfs the world as Coleridge peers out of his cottage window at the landscape covered in snow. The frost is personified as a conscious, living force that “performs its secret ministry” (1); it is “secret” because its action is imperceptible and inscrutable. It seems to possess a conscious will, as it acts on its own accord without the aid of any other force; that is, it seems to self-activate and crystallize “unhelped by any wind” (2). Unlike in “The Eolian Harp,” the wind does not participate or cause any action; instead, in this setting, there is an undetectable power at work. The noted absence of the breeze at the beginning of the poem is significant because it contributes to the vexing stillness and adds to Coleridge’s disturbed state, which sets him seeking a “companionable form” (19). His search, in turn, allows him to reinstate the full force of the wind in his mind later in the poem by first detecting its slightest presence flowing through his child and then describing a gale in his vision of the child’s future.¹⁵⁶ The discovery of the wind later in the poem coincides with Coleridge’s perception of a divine intention in nature’s processes, which allows him to identify the wind with the spiritual force in nature that performs a sacred and secret ministry. This is reminiscent of Coleridge’s description of the wind as spirit flowing through all things in “The Eolian Harp”; indeed, there, the harp serves as a companionable form, which allows Coleridge to discover how all forms in nature, though “diversely framed” (45), are analogous and companionable. The word “ministry” in “Frost at Midnight” therefore has a clear

¹⁵⁶ Indeed, as the poem progresses, the wind’s presence is gradually reintroduced. First it is noticed in the gentle flux and reflux of the infant’s breathing, then through the comparison of Coleridge’s son to the wandering “breeze” (54), and finally in the distinct sound of the “blast” in whose “trances” the falling “eave-drops” can be heard (70-1).

religious connotation, for the poem reveals how Coleridge uses his powers of imagination and memory to seek, interpret, and identify with the signs and forms of the external world to discover the presence of God in all things where God “doth teach / Himself in all” (61-2).

The process that leads to this revelation begins with the frost’s “secret ministry” and the perplexing effect it has on Coleridge’s mind. Also, Coleridge spontaneously begins to seek reconciliation for his vexed state, which is caused by the extreme calmness around him. First, his awareness of the wind’s conspicuous absence intensifies the stillness and contributes to his annoyance. Suddenly, the silence is disrupted by the “owlet’s cry” (2). The cry is “loud” in relation to the quietness as it pierces through the stillness of the night (3). Not only does the extreme silence make the cry seem loud, but also the cry itself serves as an intensifier and measure of the silence. In other words, it is only when the silence is broken and restored again, that Coleridge realizes the extent of the calm.¹⁵⁷

In “Frost at Midnight,” Coleridge turns his attention from the silent world outside to the “calm” world inside his cottage. He realizes that both worlds are just as still and quiet. All the “inmates” are asleep, and he now becomes aware of his isolation. The words “left me” and “solitude” emphasize the sense of loneliness and separation he experiences between himself and the inmates of the cottage: “all at rest, / Have left me to that solitude, which suits / Abstruser musings” (4-6). The child sleeping by his side is the only inmate who seems at first to have not deserted the poet. However, the infant is so calm that he too participates in the stillness of the cottage. Through the process of association, Coleridge’s mind draws a connection between the quietness of the still landscape, the lonely cottage, and the sleeping child. As a result, he realizes that the scene is even calmer than he first thought, “so calm, that it disturbs / And vexes

¹⁵⁷ Similarly in “The Eolian Harp,” the audible murmur of the sea emphasizes the quietness because it is so silent that Coleridge can hear the distant ocean, and it is because he can hear the ocean that he realizes how quiet it is.

meditation with its strange / And extreme silentness” (8-10). The words “disturbs” (8), “vexes,” “strange” (9), and “extreme” (10) indicate that the silence is so acute that it is unsettling. It is so quiet that the silence calls attention to itself and distracts Coleridge from his “abstruser musings”; his inability to concentrate further annoys him. Unlike in “The Eolian Harp,” the quietness does not allow him to “muse upon tranquility.” Here, it serves to emphasize his division from the world because he feels utterly alone in his activity. Hence, the frost’s imperceptible action, the absence of the wind, the owlet’s cry, and the calmness pervading the cottage all conspire to intensify the silence and, consequently, Coleridge’s vexation, which is, in turn, the very impetus for Coleridge’s seeking to resolve his state of annoyance (19). Therefore, the extreme silence causes and determines Coleridge’s response to it.

Distracted by the silence, his thoughts turn to imagining the “populous village,” “sea, and hill, and wood” and “all the numberless goings-on of life,” and he remarks that they too are silent, “inaudible as dreams” (11-3). However, he realizes in his solitude and in the silence that engulfs him that his mind is the only active, unquiet thing. That is, the “extreme silentness” of his solitude, *allows* Coleridge to become aware of his active and restless mind. As will become apparent, there is a secret intention even in nature’s quietness. The phrase “abstruser musings,” indicates that his thoughts are recondite and, like the “secret ministry” of the frost outside, they seem mysterious. Yet, the fact that he is able to describe his thoughts as being abstruse indicates that he is consciously observing his consciousness. Therefore, the perception and acknowledgement of the silence become the means for the mind’s own self-awareness. Coleridge thereby draws a connection between three spaces by observing the quiet natural world outside, the silent world inside the cottage, and the distinctly active realm of his mind. His silent

environment and the agents that orchestrate the extreme quietness also occasion his self-consciousness and self-reflection.

As he sits reflecting, Coleridge notices the flutter of a film “on the grate,” “the sole unquiet thing”; it is the only object around that is active (15-6). He watches the fluttering film on the grate and realizes that the wavering of the flame mirrors the sporadic action of his brain “whose puny flaps and freaks the idling Spirit / By its own moods interprets [...]” (20-1). Therefore, the poet finds a connection between his mind with its intermittent thoughts and the fluttering film with its “puny flaps.” Like his mind, the film’s activity contrasts the silence of the scene, and, therefore, it becomes a “companionable form” with which he is able to sympathize (19). This connection-making activity is significant because, as the poem will later disclose, it is in the mind’s constitution to seek “echo or mirror” of itself as part of God’s process of self-seeking and self-revelation. In fact, Coleridge has already drawn a connection between the still landscape, the lonely cottage, and the sleeping child, between the outer world, the space in the cottage, and the inner realm of his mind.

Unlike the frost, the “idling Spirit” is visibly active, but seems to have no specific purpose or aim; it is analogous to Coleridge’s free, unfocused musings. He is therefore able to readily identify with it. It is worth noting, however, he is as yet unable to perceive the similarity between his mind’s abstruse musings and the frost’s secret ministry, whose actions he later discovers are also analogous and have a common source; he will realize that just as his thoughts are recondite, so is the frost’s “secret ministry.” As I shall illustrate, Coleridge’s attempt to find a “companionable form” to relate to his unquiet mind will result, in the end, with the realization that the frost itself, which he does not identify with at first, reflects in its activity his own mind’s mysterious processes. Both are analogous due to their common animating spirit. At this stage,

however, it is the action of the film itself that becomes a toy of thought. In focusing on the film, his abstruser musings are replaced by more serious and focused reflections upon the process by which his mind seems to spontaneously seek a companionable form. That is, there is a *reason* for the mind's seeking, and he begins to contemplate that predisposition. Finally, in seeking a "companionable form" and by following a string of images consisting of objects and their reflections, Coleridge will come full circle at the end of the poem to realize that everything in the universe is interconnected by a spirit that seeks itself everywhere through echoes and mirrors of itself.

The phrase "By its own mood interprets, everywhere / Echo or mirror seeking of itself" refers to how the "idling Spirit," like Coleridge's mind, seems to seek in surrounding objects metaphors of its own self-seeking nature (20-2). Like Coleridge's mind, it too seems to "interpret" objects as having life and actions, which reflect back to the spirit its own "mood." However, the film is a "companionable form" only because its activity is analogous to Coleridge's self-seeking and interpreting mind and because Coleridge's mind establishes that analogy to begin with; in interpreting the film as a companionable form, Coleridge finds an echo or mirror of his own mind. That is, the film, like Coleridge's mind, seems to make itself an object for self-reflection ("a toy of Thought") and to observe its own process by which it "interprets" itself by finding its own mood echoed or reflected in "companionable form." Hence, in endowing the film with life and through his "sympathies" with the film (18), he becomes to the film what the film becomes to him—each other's "echo or mirror." The act of making a "toy of Thought" characterizes the function of Coleridge's mind, which is to interpret and assign meanings to objects based on the mind's constitution or "mood." The mind provides its own meaning by projecting its inner state on to the outer world which reflects back its own

disposition. Therefore, the act of observing the flame turns into an act by which Coleridge gazes once again into his own mind. Just as he studies his “abstruser musings,” so does he interpret the film as itself seeking to interpret its own “flaps and freaks.” While all these acts of seeking and interpreting originate in Coleridge’s mind, his own mind’s actions, in turn, Coleridge will illustrate, occurs in God’s mind. By the end of the stanza, Coleridge isolates the film, and in interpreting its action, interprets his own imaginative experience. In other words, he converts his consciousness of the external world into an awareness of himself. By focusing on a physical object, he recognizes it as a corresponding representation of his own mind, so that the act of observation becomes an act of introspection.

Hence, in the second stanza the focus shifts from the fluttering film on the grate to its reflection, the poet’s mind. Coleridge has a vision of a scene from his past which mirrors the present scene: “How oft, at school, with most believing mind, / Presageful, have I gazed upon the bars, / To watch that fluttering stranger! (25-27). The poet finds, in gazing into his mind, the memory of a matching experience from his childhood. Not only is the past situation mirrored in the present scene, but past and present as periods are also mirrored in each other through their analogous situations. The vision of the past becomes, contemporaneously, an echo or mirror of the present scene because the past is being replayed in Coleridge’s mind in the present. The restless activity of the mind has again turned into a specific operation, the act of recollection, and a specific memory becomes the new “toy of Thought.” Even the schoolboy’s state of mind and sense of anticipation in the past is analogous to Coleridge’s present mode of seeking. Not only does Coleridge draw a link between the past and the present, and between the states of the schoolboy and his own, but in relation to the structure of the poem itself, he also connects the first stanza to the second by making the second mirror and echo the first; specifically, the second

stanza is an exposition of the mental acts described in the first stanza. That is, the image of the schoolboy watching the fluttering flame mirrors the situation of the adult sitting alone in his cottage in winter observing the flitting film.

Furthermore, the “film, which fluttered” in the first stanza becomes the “fluttering stranger” in the second stanza, illustrating the process by which Coleridge’s mind bridges the present with the past through association or through its seeking echo or mirror of itself even across time. In the second stanza, the poet’s mind rather than the external world provides the “companionable forms” or corresponding reflections; it is the medium through which Coleridge interprets objects in the present. The schoolboy, who sits alone dreaming about his birthplace, remembers the music that “once stirred and haunted [him] / With wild pleasure” (31-2). As he observes the flame, he anticipates the arrival of the “stranger” (41). Just as the poet is led to think of the past when he observes the film, so does the child remember his past while observing the flame:

[...] and as oft
 With unclosed lids, already had I dreamt
 Of my sweet birth-place, and the old church-tower,
 Whose bells, the poor man's only music, rang
 From morn to evening, all the hot Fair-day,
 So sweetly, that they stirred and haunted me
 With a wild pleasure, falling on mine ear
 Most like articulate sounds of things to come! (26-33)

Both scenes reflect each other across time and through the memory of the past. Not only are the scenes similar, but also the schoolboy’s act of remembering becomes to the adult an experience

of a memory that involves an act of remembering. In other words, the poet's memory is that of the experience of remembering.

As in "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison," the act of recollecting allows Coleridge to dissociate from his present state to reflect on his past self and experiences as though they belonged to an "other" self, separate from his present state. This temporal "space," created across the gap in time, allows Coleridge to reflect upon this "other" self, which is none other than himself. Hence, it is truly an act of self-reflection, and his meditations allow him to ultimately discover the unity of his being across time and also with the world around him. His past self and experiences make up who he is in the present just as the world he interacts with is part of a larger, unified spiritual reality. So, the "I" and the "Not-I" of Coleridge's present and past selves are really part of a single self. Hence, the distinction is only notional, just as the distinction between individuations of spirit are perceived as distinct so that this distinction is revealed to be only a necessary mode of perception that enables the discovery of spirit's fundamental and universal unity in multitude.

The phrase, his "believing mind, / Presageful," indicates that the child anticipates a future event, namely the visitation of a stranger (24-25).¹⁵⁸ This sense of expectancy is reiterated when he remarks how the church bells are haunting and "most like articulate sounds of things to come" (33). The schoolboy's "presageful" mind that associates the film with the stranger also shows that the child is reading omens in images of the world. This anticipates how the adult in the present and his son in the future will ultimately learn to read God's symbolic language in the forms of nature. In performing this act of interpretation, the schoolboy's mind moves beyond the present to "things to come." As the child continues to daydream of "soothing things" (34), his

¹⁵⁸ Coleridge's note: "In all parts of the kingdom these films are called strangers and supposed to portend the arrival of some absent friend."

thoughts lull him to sleep and he dreams of the future, of what will transpire, and who will visit him. Hence, again, Coleridge illustrates how his consciousness is always actively seeking connections. The connection here is the idea of the continuance of an evolving selfhood across time (past, present, and even future): the individual is an individuation of spirit in his finite lifespan and an evolving selfhood occurring within or as part of universal spirit's own progress through history. The individual who realizes the continuance of his being across time is a microcosmic representation of the single continuance, growth, and evolution of universal spirit across history. His son's future is an extrapolation of Coleridge's own self as spirit persisting through time, even after his own physical death. In the next stanza, the adult, like the child, extrapolates his consciousness into the future; the adult's vision of his child's growth and education in nature mirrors the activity of the schoolboy in the past anticipating the future visitor. Both analogous scenes are occurring in the continuous present within the same mind that is responsible for establishing this analogy and connection.

In the following lines, "[...] my heart leaped up, / For still I hoped to see the stranger's face, / Townsman, or aunt, or sister more beloved, / My play-mate when we both were clothed alike!" the stranger is first associated with a recognizable figure, the "townsman," then with a relative in his family, the child's aunt, and finally, with a very close friend and "play-mate," his sister (40-43). Coleridge blurs the distinction between his sister and himself by stating that they were both "clothed alike" (43). The poet, therefore, starts by associating the stranger to the "townsman" and gradually narrows the distinction between himself and the stranger by referring it to his sister who looked just like him, so that, in the end, the child finds a direct link between himself and the stranger through a series of reflections. Through the medium of the film on the grate, Coleridge's memories of childhood produce another echo or mirror of himself in his sister

who, clothed alike, appears as a twin or reflection of himself. By extension, since the “stranger” is a reflection of the schoolboy, it also becomes a mirror for the adult. The companionable form consoles the schoolboy, and it becomes an “echo or mirror” of himself, much like the fluttering film in the previous stanza comforted and mirrored the adult’s wandering mind. Therefore, the poem, which begins with the poet in his cottage at midnight, moves into the past in the second stanza where the poet is reminded of his youth. The past scene is manifested through an act of association, wherein the film provides the necessary link to the poet’s past, which the adult sees is analogous to the “fluttering stranger” he saw as a boy. The memory involves Coleridge as a child remembering his home village and the music of the church bells that fills him with a hopeful anticipation. The present separation the adult feels from the village and from nature mirrors the separation he felt from his hometown in his childhood. Both scenes reflect the same disturbed state, and the poet seems to be seeking an explanation from the past for his present vexation.

In the third stanza, the memory of himself as a child reminds Coleridge of the infant sleeping by his side; thus, to the adult in the present, the infant represents a reflection of himself as a child from his past. Therefore, through the process of association and seeking echo or mirror of himself, and with the hopeful anticipation of the future, Coleridge identifies with the sleeping infant through the memory of his own infancy and discovers in his son another companionable form—an association he was unable to make at the beginning of the poem. Just as he represents the continuance of his own past self recollected and “othered” within his mind, Coleridge’s son is another iteration of that evolving selfhood across time. Furthermore, the schoolboy’s sense of expectancy for the “stranger” mirrors the adult’s anticipation for his child’s future experience of

God in nature.¹⁵⁹ The third stanza begins with him addressing the sleeping infant: “Dear Babe, that sleepest cradled by my side, / Whose gentle breathings, heard in this deep calm, / Fill up the interspersed vacancies / And momentary pauses of the thought!” (44-48). Because of the “deep calm,” Coleridge is able to hear the “gentle breathings” of his child. The sound of the child’s breathing, which pauses between the fluxes and refluxes of breaths, mirrors the sporadic fluttering of the film and the action of his mind with the ebb and flow of its thoughts. The long-awaited stranger, whom the poet as the schoolboy had already identified with in the previous stanza, is now manifested as the sleeping child in stanza three. Hence, the underlying theme of the search for a “companionable form” is expressed once more. Through the process of association, Coleridge is able to identify with the sleeping child by linking the series of images and reflections that are representations of himself. In his connection-making process and self-seeking activity, he establishes an association between himself, the film, and his sleeping child.

Hence, the third stanza begins with the poet returning from the past with the desire for future felicity, which he projects onto the sleeping child. In expressing his hopeful expectations for his son’s future, Coleridge turns his past hope into present anticipation. As a result, he not only connects the past with the present, but in doing so, also makes the present serve as a medium to connect the past with the future. The third stanza reveals, through concrete examples, just what are the unknown “things to come” alluded to in the second stanza; it elaborates upon that which is only mentioned in the second stanza as a hope and expectation. As Coleridge will illustrate, his child’s future will involve enjoying a state of identification and oneness with

¹⁵⁹ Because Coleridge identifies with his son through the process of seeking and making associations, Coleridge’s experience of spirit in the present will carry on in the future in his son as an extension of himself. Also, because Coleridge will make nature, and not a stern preceptor, his child’s tutor, his child will not have the poor education Coleridge had, but rather, learn from nature as Coleridge is doing as an adult. The child will attain an awareness of spirit in nature not only because he is Coleridge’s son and because Coleridge will ensure his child’s proper upbringing, but also because he will learn to appreciate nature and its significance much earlier than Coleridge did and hence continue to make discoveries even after Coleridge’s death.

nature. Coleridge is certain that this sense of participation with nature will be devoid of the doubts and uncertainties that he feels at present.

Coleridge is excited by the thought that his son will experience “other scenes,” different and lovelier than those he experienced as a child: “[...] it thrills my heart / With tender gladness, thus to look at thee, / And think that thou shall learn far other lore, / And in far other scenes!” (48-51). This feeling of expectation and joy echoes that of the schoolboy’s anticipation for the stranger’s arrival and the hope that it will alleviate his gloom. From the child of the past wishing for a future visitation in the previous stanza, in the third stanza Coleridge reiterates this feeling of expectancy by wishing a felicitous future for his son. Coleridge rejoices at the thought that his son will “wander” about in nature, free as the “breeze,” on “sandy shores,” along lakes, and beneath “mountain crags” (54-58). Having identified with the sleeping child by associating him to himself as a child, Coleridge in his imagination is no longer a prisoner of the cottage. In fact, he becomes a reveler in the beauty of divine nature by extrapolating his thoughts into his son’s future. He goes on a visionary journey through beautiful scenes and imagines his son possessing a mystical perception of the world wherein the beautiful forms of the landscape—“lakes,” “sandy shores,” and “mountain crags”—find their companionable forms and reflections in the shapes of the clouds: The clouds “which image in their bulk both lakes and shores / And mountain crags” (55-58). Again, this alludes to the theme of “echo or mirror seeking of itself” in which all forms in creation seem to seek reflections of themselves and become the medium through which spirit seeks itself. The clouds “image” the landscape beneath. With the ethereal clouds reflecting and adopting the physical forms of nature, earth and heaven are bridged through each other’s seeking for “companionable forms.” This act of bridging through imaging relates to how the mind itself images and reflects the scenes of the present with those of the past in the second stanza; the mind

too becomes a landscape of memories as forms of nature are internalized and imaged in the mind for imagination to interpret. Coleridge's childhood memories provide the medium in which the mind can seek "mirror or echo" of objects and experiences to be made into toys of thought.

In "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" Coleridge describes how he was filled with excitement and anticipation for his friend Charles who (like young Coleridge "reared / In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim" ("Frost at Midnight" 51-2)) lived "In the great city pent" ("This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" 30). As in "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison," here too Coleridge feels stifled, this time by silence and loneliness, both in the present scene as well as in his memory of childhood confinement at school. However, as in "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison," he again finds freedom through his identification with the object of his love, his son. Indeed, as we have seen in the previous chapter, love is expressed as the will to unification. Coleridge announces "There is one Mind, one Omnipresent Mind, / Omnific. His most holy name is Love" ("Religious Musings" 114-5). Therefore, since God is love and all things manifest from love, everything carries that essence; our experience of love is also an experience of essence or spirit: "Love is the Spirit of God, and God is Love" (*OM* 210). To Coleridge, the impetus for reintegration of the individual with universal spirit is the "powerful current of love, or cohesive and sustaining supernatural energy, which flows ceaselessly from God down through the successive levels of ever remoter being and circles back to God" (*NS* 152).¹⁶⁰ As discussed earlier, self-love, which manifests from God's absolute, all-embracing love, is also the reason for the tendency to selfhood that allows for the possibility of reintegration. The process of

¹⁶⁰ It is the force of reunification with God, the essence within all things loving or yearning for the essence in everything else because all are manifestations of the same expression. Abrams explains that love is the cohesive "force that holds the universe together and manifests itself to human awareness as the yearning to return to an undivided state" (*NS* 152).

reunification with God involves identifying with the spirit in all things as expressions of God and reading in the forms of nature God's symbolic language of self-revelation.

Just as Charles did “wander / In gladness” through the beautiful landscape (“This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison” 8), Coleridge's son will “wander like the breeze” (“Frost at Midnight” 54). Like Charles, the child will witness in the forms of nature, the indwelling spirit who seeks itself. More significantly, Coleridge explains that his son will grow up to perceive nature as a symbolic language. The “lovely shapes and sounds” that the child will “see and hear” in nature will be to him expressions of the “eternal language of God” (“Frost at Midnight” 58-60). Hence, the act of interpretation that Coleridge's mind performs in the first and second stanzas is again exemplified in the third stanza. In the first stanza, “the idling Spirit / By its own moods interprets, every where / Echo or mirror seeking of itself” (20-22). In the second stanza, the “presageful” mind of the schoolboy interprets the flame and identifies it with the stranger he wishes to meet. In the third stanza, “the lovely shapes and sounds” in nature become the vocabulary of God's “eternal language.” Coleridge illustrates that God as spirit has shaped himself in the world as lakes, crags, and clouds, and it is through this language of “shapes and sounds intelligible” that God expresses himself and will become the child's teacher. Nature, therefore, is recognized as the symbolic expression of God, through which God communicates his wisdom to the child.

Following the Platonic tradition, Coleridge contends that the phenomenal world reflects the divine stamp for “the other great Bible of God [is] the Book of Nature.” “The forms of matter” are understood “as words, as symbols” expressing “the wisdom of the Supreme Being” (*PL*, II, 541). “Nature is visible spirit” (McNiece 34).¹⁶¹ So, the seeking of “companionable

¹⁶¹ Coleridge agreed with Schelling that nature was unconscious spirit and praised Schelling's “description of nature as ‘petrified intelligence’ as a dramatic realization of the insight that nature was indeed a system of unconscious

forms,” which Coleridge imagines will also be his son’s actions in the future, hence becomes an extension of his own effort to achieve oneness with the natural world. By contrasting his own upbringing with that of his son’s, replacing his “stern preceptor” with a loving God, Coleridge finds comfort and solace in his own experience of the child’s future played out in his mind. His son will from the start have the benefits of nature’s instruction because of his father’s own lessons learned in nature. Thus, through this imaginative exercise, Coleridge is able to transcend the limitations of his own past and deficient schooling through his son’s ideal future.

Coleridge demonstrates that the mind’s seeking and interpreting nature is therefore a fundamental and necessary predisposition. The “idling Spirit” interprets itself through its reflections in nature, and in attempting to decipher the language of nature, attempts to make sense of itself. The “idling Spirit” in nature seeks itself in the forms of nature because nature reveals to it the hidden motion of spirit in all things. Also, since God speaks through the forms in nature, the seeking for “echo or mirror” becomes God’s way of mirroring himself in nature. That is, since these mirrorings lead to Coleridge’s self-awareness and self knowledge, so does God as spirit “teach” and learn of himself through his images in nature: “God / Utters, who from eternity doth teach / Himself in all, and all things in himself” (“Frost at Midnight” 60-62). This establishes yet another connection: that of Coleridge and the spirit of God. Since all things in nature are God’s creations through which God as spirit discovers himself in a series of mirrorings, these reflections, including Coleridge’s musings and identifications, represent the way in which God’s creations communicate with each other to discover God and his “secret ministry.” Hence, not only are the actions of Coleridge’s seeking and interpreting mind analogous to the actions of spirit in all things seeking “echo or mirror” of itself, but Coleridge’s

thought. A complete theory of nature, Schelling concluded, will resolve nature into intelligence and articulate a program for investigating the pre-established harmony between spirit and nature. Coleridge commented approvingly, ‘The finite is the Wisdom of the infinite Intelligence’” (McNiece 35).

self-reflective actions are also subsumed within and are therefore modeled after God's self-revelatory actions as spirit.

In the final stanza, Coleridge's reflections shift from his ruminations upon the present and memories of the past to his imagination of the natural setting in the future, which is the result and destination of his mental journey. Coleridge paints a new and very different landscape from that of the first stanza, one in which the sun slowly melts the snow and "the general earth" is clothed "with greenness." "The redbreast sit[s] and sing[s] / Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch / Of mossy apple-tree, while the night thatch / Smokes in the sun-thaw" (66-70). It is the beginning of spring, the season of renewal and hope, and the poet assures the infant that "all seasons shall be sweet to thee" (65). In the confidence of his son's idyllic future, Coleridge is reassured and consoled and has thus succeeded in overcoming his initial vexed state. The wonderful sights and sounds of the future contrast those of the present scene. For instance, the cries of the owlet that pierce the numbing silence contrast the joyful singing of the "redbreast." However, though the scenes seem to contrast each other, the present scene has its corresponding echoes and reflections in the future; the present scene also occasions the joyful vision of the future. In other words, the promising world of the future is not entirely different from the gloomy world of the present once Coleridge begins to perceive the echoes and reflections that connect all shapes, sounds, and states of being. The stark cries of the owlet, which contrast the sweet song of the redbreast, are heard like the falling "eave-drops," audible only in the "trances of the blast" (70-71). In both cases, the sound is heard when there is no wind blowing. This also echoes the situation in the third stanza where the poet hears the "gentle breathings" of the sleeping child mid the interspersed vacancies / And momentary pauses of the thought!" (45-47). Here, the activity of poet's mind is reflected in his child's breathing. By associating the "gentle breathings" to the

falling “eave-drops,” a connection is established between the poet’s thoughts and the melting snow. The cries of the owlet, the song of the redbreast, the sound of the falling eave-drops, the child’s breathing, and, finally, the action of the poet’s mind find their echoes in each other.

Furthermore, the child’s breathing, which mirrors the ebb and flow of Coleridge’s thoughts, reinstates the metaphor of the breeze, which, as noted earlier, is described as a spiritual power flowing through nature. The wind’s presence is introduced through the infant’s breathing, through the comparison of Coleridge’s son to the wandering “breeze,” and through the sound of the “blast” in whose “trances” the falling “eave-drops” can be heard. Hence, the presence and movement of spirit is sensed first as it seems to flow in and out of the child through his gentle breathing; it is then perceived in the carefree wanderings of the child who is compared to the breeze. Therefore, as the breeze is both a metaphor for the child and, traditionally, the spirit, the child becomes an embodiment of spirit seeking in the forms of nature “echo or mirror” of itself.¹⁶² The poet becomes one among the myriad entities in nature seeking and interpreting himself through reflections. The theme of “echo or mirror seeking of itself” is reflected in how time, nature, situations, states of being, shapes, and sounds are expressed in corresponding

¹⁶² Coleridge’s analogies between nature’s breeze and human breathing, between the power of the wind and the power of poetic inspiration, the effect of the wind and the soul’s action, as well as the animation of nature and the life of spirit are not only particular to Romanticism, but, as Abrams notes, they “are widely current in myth and folklore, and make up some of the great commonplaces of our religious traditions” (CB 33-4). For instance, the Bible describes how in the beginning God’s spirit and breath moved upon the waters and God breathed life into Adam. Abrams observes that Wordsworth compares “the revival of poetic inspiration” to “the inspiration of the prophets when touched by the Holy Spirit.” There is an analogy between poetic creation and “the prototypal creation by divine utterance—for ‘Nature’s self,’ as Wordsworth says later, ‘is the breath of God’” (CB 28). In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth summons poetic inspiration by calling on the wind to “Stir gently, breezes and soft airs that breathe / The breath of Paradise, and find your way / To the recesses of the soul” (Book 11, 10-2) and in *The Excursion* Wordsworth describes “the breeze of nature stirring in his soul” (Book 4, 600). Shelley, too, remarks that “the breath whose might I have invoked in song / Descends on me; my spirit’s bark is driven, / Far from the shore” (“Adonais” 487-9). In “Ode to the West Wind,” Shelley describes the breeze as a “spirit,” the “breath of Autumn’s being” (1), that also blows through him and becomes his breath and spirit heralding a new age. Wordsworth speaks of “visionary power” that “attends the motions of the viewless winds” whose power and expression are “embodied in the mystery of words” (*The Prelude*, 1850 text, V, 595-7). The sacred influence of the breeze is converted into haloed words through the poet who serves as an instrument of the Holy Spirit acting through nature. As I shall discuss, the poet’s words, like nature’s forms, therefore become part of the symbolic expression of God’s self-revelation.

reflections; in their seeking, all forms interpret themselves through their shared “eternal language.” Spirit’s *modus operandi* is thus expressed at all levels of its manifestation and in all states and circumstances of being.

Another example of how the seemingly contrasting scenes between the first and fourth stanzas seem also to mirror each other and occasion the joyful vision of the future lies in the image of the frost. The phrase “secret ministry” in the fourth stanza, which is echoed from the first stanza, is contrasted with a different season and emotional response to it; the cold, white, frozen world that surrounds the cottage in the first stanza is unlike the warm and pleasant world where summer clothes “the general earth / With greenness” (66-7). However, the frost’s “secret ministry” of the first stanza is now interpreted—like the other lovely shapes, sounds, and actions in nature—as a silent expression of God. In stanza four, the falling eave-drops become frozen into icicles through the secret action of the frost, and the icicles are firmer and more enduring than the snow. In taking on the form of solid structures, the eave-drops then become capable of emitting light; that is, the icicles reflect the moonlight back to its source. Interestingly, however, the moon actually does not itself emit light, but reflects the sun’s light; it is in turn a mirror of another object. The icicles “quietly shining to the quiet moon” (74) not only reflect the moonlight, which reflects the sun’s light, but in doing so, become a new source of light. In re-emitting the light towards the moon, both the moon and the icicles become analogous or “companionable forms” seeking “echo or mirror” in each other, and thus seem to interpret themselves in each other. As expressions of God’s eternal, symbolic language, their act of reflecting and seeking in each other companionable forms becomes a mode of correspondence. The images go back and forth, the icicles seeking their image in the moon and reflecting the image or light of the moon back on the moon itself, creating a correspondence between two

objects of nature through God's "secret" and "eternal language." The mirrored image becomes an answer in the form of an echo of God's expression and, hence, the exchange of reflections becomes a dialogue in God's eternal language. The "silent" icicles and "quiet" moon hence become analogous or corresponding images of the silent observer dreaming of "things to come" (33) because they too, like the poet, seek "echo or mirror" of themselves.

In Chapter Two, I demonstrated that to Coleridge, nature, which is constructed by and infused with divine imagination, is God's emblematic language. In his poetry, this notion is best illustrated in the secret correspondence between the instances of spirit in the various forms of nature seeking "everywhere / Echo or mirror" of themselves. In interpreting objects in nature to be symbols of God's "eternal language," Coleridge therefore perceives, through this symbolic expression, the objects in nature seeking companionable forms in each other. Their activity, he realizes also corresponds to his own search for echo or mirror of himself. That is, by remembering the previously internalized images from the outer world and by interpreting and interacting with the various forms of nature imaginatively, his seeking is also an act of deciphering the language of God within his mind. The act of seeking is simultaneously an act of introspection and interpreting. Furthermore, being a silent observer in a silent scene, the sound heard in silence, like the infant's "gentle breathings," not only serves to emphasize the silence, but also shows how silence, too, is an integral and important function of the language of God. One might say then that the silence of the frost is a form of language in suspension.

Silence is an integral function of God's language, and the image of the "silent icicles / Quietly shining to the quiet moon" exemplifies the inaudible interchange between companionable forms; through the echo and mirror of light's energy, the moon and the icicles serve as each other's mirror. The stillness in "Frost at Midnight" contrasts the action of the

wind in “The Eolian Harp” that Coleridge identifies with the spirit moving through and connecting all things. In “Frost at Midnight,” however, the stillness highlights spirit’s movement through reflecting light and echoing sound. In fact, the idea of objects in nature shining opposite is a recurring theme in Coleridge’s poetry. For instance, in “The Eolian Harp,” when Coleridge remarks how the “star of eve / Serenely brilliant [...] / Shine[s] opposite!” the clouds in the west “rich with light” of the setting sun (6-9), he introduces an image that echoes one from “Frost at Midnight,” of the “silent icicles, / Shining to the quiet Moon” (73-4). The evening star shines opposite the brilliant clouds which shine opposite the setting sun; each emits light, and the clouds reflect back its light to the sun. As nature is a “symbolical language” expressing the spirit of God seeking and interpreting itself, like Coleridge’s own inner nature, the objects seem to be communicating and seeking mirrors of themselves through their common radiance. The theme of seeking echo or mirror is itself reflected in several of Coleridge’s poems.

Similarly, in “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison,” Coleridge juxtaposes dark and light versions of the colors purple, blue, yellow, and green, which exemplifies another process by which the forms of nature “shine opposite” and seem to “echo or mirror” themselves in a symbolical correspondence. The “two Isles / Of *purple* shadows” (25-6) and the shining “*purple* heath-flowers” (35) are different appearances of the color purple; the former is caused by the lack of direct light as the sun sets in the horizon leaving the visible eastern sides of the islands in shade¹⁶³ while the latter is produced by the sun’s rays falling directly upon the flowers, causing them to shine. The solemn and brilliant expressions of purple are analogous and shine opposite in

¹⁶³ “At sunrise and sunset, the light is passing through the atmosphere at a lower angle, and traveling a greater distance through a larger volume of air. Much of the green and blue is scattered away, and more red light comes to your eye, creating the colors of the sunrise and sunset and making the mountains look purple” (World Public Library < [http://www.worldlibrary.org/articles/purple_\(color\)>](http://www.worldlibrary.org/articles/purple_(color)>)).

the same view of the landscape, yet they have distinct evocations in nature's symbolical language of light and color. One is shined upon and, as a result, emits the color purple while the other emits purple solely because of its own inherent purpleness. Both possess the same color, but each emanates it in its own way. Similarly, as the ramblers emerge from the "roaring dell" (10), they pass the "*blue* clay stone" in the shade (20) and are immediately met by the "smooth clear *blue*" ocean glistening under the setting sun (25). After noting the "*yellow* leaves" of the "unsunned" ash tree in the dell (14) now they behold the "distant groves" bathed in "*yellow* light" (36). Also, to Coleridge, the "dark *green*" (17) weeds in the shade of the waterfall are counterpart to the "transparent foliage" around him (48). Like the purple forms, the lustrous and softer expressions of the colors blue, yellow, and green are each noticeably juxtaposed. In the bower the playful communication of light and shadow are most noticeable. Coleridge remarks that he "lov'd" to observe the sun's light reflect off the "broad and sunny leaf" and cast a "shadow of the leaf and stem" "dappling its sunshine" (49-51). The leaves are translucent, and they also reflect the sunlight and cast their own light and shadows. In emitting light, the leaves mirror the action of the sun, while owing their agency to the sun. Like the action of imagination, theirs is a secondary repetition and expression of a primary power. As in "Frost at Midnight," the moon also radiates light, but it owes its milder radiance to the sun and, hence, the moon's brilliance is a repetition of the sun's powerful action. Once again, the mind's and imagination's operation is reflected and symbolized in nature's processes.

This concept, however, does not occur immediately to Coleridge, but rather it takes the form of a revelation, resulting from a particular set of mental and spiritual processes, including the action of imagination, self-contemplation, and the experience of the opposing feelings of vexation and love. "Frost at Midnight," like "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison," begins with

feelings of loneliness and vexation that provoke and propel Coleridge into a mode of seeking. Through contemplation of his vexed state and desire to surmount it, he achieves a sense of unity and communion with all things. His “abstruser musings,” which at first isolate him from nature and humankind, are replaced by a vision of an intimate interchange between mind and nature and the spirit in all things. The sense of separation and division (i.e. individuation), therefore, is the necessary condition for his experience of all-encompassing unity and interconnectedness between mind and nature, between himself and his child, between past, present, and future, between his spirit and universal spirit. Hence, the poem begins with a silent gloom, but the mood shifts from vexation to elation as Coleridge’s imagination allows him to perceive a spiritual reality in nature and experience a profound and powerful sense of communion with God through the “one Life.” The psychic connection-making and reflection-seeking that link the various elements of the poem are also continuously occurring throughout nature, across space, and across time, in different modes of thought and states of being. Through spirit’s seeking echo or mirror of itself, they also maintain the access to and link between the underlying essence in all things. That is, God, as spirit innate in nature, is ever seeking reflections of himself, and in seeking, finds echoes of himself in everything and everything in himself.¹⁶⁴

Coleridge’s sublime realization is not only that the landscape expresses God’s symbolic language, but also that the mind’s particular constitution allows it to decipher God’s expression and discover God as spirit seeking to communicate with himself. The lovely shapes and sounds in nature reflect God’s eternal language and “teach” God “Himself in all, and all in himself” (61-

¹⁶⁴ As discussed, this is illustrated especially well by the image of the “silent icicles, / Quietly shining to the quiet Moon” (73-74). Coleridge thus here refines the medieval and Renaissance concept of the “paysage moralisé,” which holds that God has fashioned the objects of nature to carry “‘in Stenography and short Characters, Something of Divinity’ and show forth the attributes and providence of their Author [...] that the divine Architect has designed the universe analogically, relating the physical, moral, and spiritual realms by an elaborate system of correspondences. A landscape, accordingly, consists of *verba visibilia*” (CB 85).

2); their act of seeking companionable forms is expressed through echoes or mirrors of themselves, and their correspondence is instructional (“teach”). Therefore, the image of the “silent icicles / Quietly shining to the quiet moon” exemplifies the inaudible interchange between companionable forms. God as spirit speaks to himself through the forms of nature and learns about himself through his myriad manifestations; he, too, is a companionable form that seeks to interpret himself through the act of mirroring. In fact, Coleridge concludes, all such acts of seeking and interpreting are, essentially, processes by which God as spirit teaches “Himself in all, and in all things himself.”¹⁶⁵

Hence, the frost’s secret action provides the setting and circumstance that prompts Coleridge’s musing and seeking, his various identifications, and his recognition of a silent conversation between natural objects; it creates the conditions that ultimately produce this poem. “Frost at Midnight,” therefore, in its description of this entire process, itself becomes a concrete and permanent echo or mirror of this past action as it expresses this self-seeking through the record of the interchange between Coleridge’s mind and nature; it becomes an expression of the language of God that describes how God as spirit, immersed in nature and through Coleridge, is ever seeking reflections of himself, and in seeking, finds echoes of himself in everything. The poem itself becomes an expression of God’s language and is therefore sacred.

The mirroring back and forth of the moon and the icicles, like the poem’s content and structure, forms a cycle. Like the cycle of seasons, the poem ends where it began with the frost

¹⁶⁵ With spirit acting through the human mind, the “truths” and “themes” represented by the objects of the natural world can be deciphered and reconfigured into a corresponding symbolic language of poetry. Baudelaire states that there is an analogy between the physical world and the spiritual realm: “tout, forme, mouvement, nombre, couleur, parfum, dans le *spirituel* comme dans le *naturel*, est significatif, réciproque, converse, *correspondant*.” The poet renders the “hieroglyphs of this world,” he is “un traducteur un déchiffreur,” and “repeats the act which produced the original world of correspondences, by decomposing the world in order to create it anew.”

[L’imagination] a créé au commencement du monde, l’analogie et la métaphore. Elle décompose toute la création, et, avec les matériaux amassés et disposés suivant des règles dont on ne peut trouver l’origine que dans le plus profond de l’âme, elle crée un monde nouveau, elle produit la sensation du neuf. (CB 115).

performing its “secret ministry.” However, there has been a forward movement; that is, although the perpetual seeking for companionable forms has led consciousness back to itself, the journey away and back has nevertheless yielded a new consciousness, which now understands the frost’s “secret ministry” to be an expression of a divine language. The circuitous journey from present, past, future, and back to the present ends with an epiphany, with greater knowledge. Unlike the disturbing silence at the beginning of the poem, the silence at the end is pregnant with action and communication; it involves a quiet correspondence between the various forms of God’s creation. The disturbing stillness at the beginning of the poem is important in that it creates the necessary condition for the poet’s mystical vision and realization.

Furthermore, the poet understands that all seasons are important as they follow one another as parts of the yearly cycle. Indeed, the frost plays a crucially different role as the season changes from winter to spring. Hence, the first three stanzas introduce time in relation to the experiences of the present, past, and future respectively. However, in the fourth stanza, the poet transcends the notion of time introduced by each of the preceding stanzas by noticing how the landscape reflects the changing seasons; the seasons, in turn, are metaphors for the various stages of the development of human consciousness, expressed here through Coleridge’s life, his son’s growth, and, by extension, the universal spirit’s development. That is, the fourth stanza invokes the larger cycle of continuous time in eternity through the perpetual repetition of the cycle of seasons, and since Coleridge is able to identify with eternity through his conscious participation in the “eternal language” of God, he is able to transcend the finite scope of his life in time. Also, since the poem is circuitous, the cycle of seasons and the language circuits that are all expressed in the poem are microcosmic reiterations of the poem’s design. However, while the fourth stanza returns to the beginning by invoking the image of the frost, it nevertheless prevents the poem’s

circularity from merely revolving upon itself. That is, the end returns to the beginning, but on a higher level; from this vantage, the beginning and all its circumstances can be reviewed in the light of the knowledge accrued over the course of the poem and are understood to be the necessary foundation for greater knowledge. The stillness of the landscape and the vexation it causes are the conditions of their own transcendence; the poet's state at the beginning is understood to be pregnant with meaningful ignorance.

In conclusion, "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" and "Frost at Midnight" demonstrate and indeed embody the process by which an individual artist can achieve spiritual revelation necessary for his, and spirit's, self-discovery. Coleridge's troubled, vexed state, occasions the seeking and contemplation of nature and the spirit of God in creation through imagination, memory, and self-reflection. Thus the poet's mind, through the powers of imagination and memory, observes and interprets itself, and this journey is played out through the course of the poem, which, ultimately, is permanently recorded for other minds to see and interpret in the symbolic language of poetry. In seeking echoes and reflections of itself, the poet's mind interprets the external world as well as itself, thereby establishing unity between itself and the outer world. Hence, there is a movement of consciousness that is self-observing and in seeking its own reflections gets attuned to the all-consciousness of the "one Life." The images of the world, as symbols of God's eternal language, are assimilated, contemplated, and interpreted in the mind, which then leads Coleridge's self-observing mind to study the process by which the mind assimilates, contemplates, and interprets the world and itself. The mind becomes its own object of study, and the poem becomes an expression of that study. It represents a unified whole in the mind of the poet in which time, space, memories, and states of being are all

interconnected. The vision of the future, which is inspired by the poet's past childhood broodings, provides consolation and reassurance in the present.

Coleridge is comforted by his experience of belonging to an all-encompassing unity and that his mind's seeking of a companionable form is part of a shared reality in which all forms in nature are seeking echo and mirror of themselves. His new awareness enables him to understand how the disturbing quietness was in fact the precondition for his discovery and how his process of gradually arriving at this realization participates in nature's grand activity of teaching God in all things. Thus, along with his experience of the interconnectedness of all life is an understanding for the need of division and separation for God to teach himself in his multiplicity. The mind that seeks and interprets everywhere echo or mirror of itself is part of spirit's action in nature. Therefore, the poem exemplifies Coleridge's argument that it is in the mind's constitution, following God's fashioning of the mind, to read God's symbolic language in nature. That is, the mind seeks God because it is, in its essence, a self-seeking instrument. The phrase "by its own moods interprets" indicates that the idle, imaginative spirit acts to "interpret" the symbolic language of God according to its own laws and constitution. Coleridge asserts, "The mind may be defined, a Subject which is its own Object." (*PL*, II, 594). By seeking echo or mirror of itself, the mind as individualized spirit posits itself as object to itself to be interpreted by identifying everywhere reflections of itself for its own contemplation and edification.

Coleridge affirms that all reality is really God or God's action on finite minds and the material world, which are "animated" as a result of God's actions "even as the tune between the wind and the Eolian harp" (*PL*, II, 557). Coleridge notes that as long as subject and object are opposed, as long as the finite mind could become "an immediate object to itself," the subject's "thoughts are known only to God and himself." On the other hand,

when not only the mind's self-consciousness, but all other things perceived by it, are regarded as modifications of it, as disguised but actual modes of self-perception, then the whole ground of the difference between subject and object appears gone. All that remains is subject perceiving itself through different modes and perspectives as subject. All is subject, and the sole distinction is, first, between that which not only is, but is thought of by us as being such, and [second] that which indeed truly *is* so no less than the former, but which we think of as being the contrary. (558)

Coleridge also uses the example of a person remembering the image of his friend and who regards both the memory and perception of his friend as being equally "as much in the mind." "His recollection of his friend is in his mind" and "when his friend is present [...] the impression is as much in the mind as the former, and yet he considers it to be external and independent of himself." Similarly, the remembered self and the remembering self, as in "Frost at Midnight," appear distinct, and yet they are truly the same self. Coleridge adds, what "all men, by the common necessity [...] are compelled to see," "objects which all others see," it speaks to "the universality of the perception arising out of the inherent laws of human nature" (559). The inherent laws of human nature, which contains the divine essence of self-seeking, is fashioned according to the universal template of the infinite I AM so that the individual "I am" is a finite repetition in the infinite I AM. It is in human nature to seek mirror or echo of itself because it contains divine nature. All human actions, interactions, and circumstances are such that the mind will discover what it is predisposed to discover through its divinely sanctioned and orchestrated activity.

Furthermore, Coleridge adds that it is also in the inherent laws of human nature to create art. Coleridge contends that God is like an artist whose will is expressed in the objects and their

operations in nature.¹⁶⁶ In humans, who are made in God's image, God has created the unique capacity to discover and learn from nature this truth, namely that humans are God's creations and are created with the ability to understand God's secret operation through himself in nature. Furthermore, Schelling affirms, art, like nature, encapsulates something that is greater than itself, which is "essence, the universal, the vision and expression of the indwelling spirit of nature."¹⁶⁷ Humans derive pleasure when they are able to experience beauty and truth, and, therefore, aesthetic experience reproduces and allows us to feel the underlying essence of the universe. Like the action of primary imagination, the frost's "secret ministry" in the poem is spontaneous, following an inherent, natural law; the act of seeking echo and mirror is a conscious act, akin to the mind's power of secondary imagination, which also works according to a divine law. Hence, God's self-seeking in nature is shown to occur as a conscious repetition in Coleridge's mind. "The circular form of the poem, whose end is a meaningful return to its beginning, mirrors the imagination's own motion which 'seeks of itself'" (Kessler 20).

Abrams notes that according to Coleridge, nature and the autonomous work of art "owe both their form and their persuasive force to [...the] only one Being" that possesses the "attributes of absolute self-sufficiency" (CB 134). Since Coleridge claims to devote himself "in poetry, to elevate the imagination and set the affections in right tune by the beauty of the inanimate impregnated, as with a living soul, by the presence of Life" (CL, I, 397),¹⁶⁸ "Frost at Midnight" itself becomes the "silent ministry" and self-seeking expression of the language of God.¹⁶⁹ Creative expression then is the repetition and operation of a divine code seeking to reveal

¹⁶⁶ Similarly, Schopenhauer describes art as the objectification of will, and "the visible world [...] has meaning and borrows reality only through the thing that expresses itself in it" (*The World as Will and Representation* 172).

¹⁶⁷ F. W. J. Schelling, "Concerning the Relation of the Plastic Arts to Nature," pp. 332.

¹⁶⁸ To George Coleridge, 10 Mar. 1798.

¹⁶⁹ As discussed in Chapter Two in relation to Coleridge's conception of "Aesthetic Education," God's self-revelation occurs through the operation of *bildung* (one's self-formation to his highest fulfillment) and *logos* (which is God, or the word of God, or the expression of the creative principle in creation). Coleridge perceives the force of

God to God. Since the poet owes his being to God and is, like all animated nature, an expression of God's eternal language of self-seeking, the goal of existence then is the life aesthetic. While art attempts to emulate the attributes of God's perfection in its own symbolic expression, the individual must seek to emulate God by devoting himself to the supreme endeavor of cultivating the idea and expression of beauty in himself as a living work of art. Both the poet and the poem become conscious expressions of God's manifestation.

bildung at work in the individual who seeks to continually enhance and discover the full extent of his consciousness and moral refinement. This is fueled by a vision and aspiration of what he ought to become. Coleridge states that *logos* "is the Idea of God. The Divine Idea assumed the form of Man, and thus became the Idea of the Divine Humanity...The Word was incarnate, and became the Divine *Ideal* of Human Kind, in which alone God loved (or could love) the World" (*M*, III, 545).

CHAPTER 6:

BEING AND THE “CO-ETERNAL INTER-CIRCULATION OF DEITY”

In the first three chapters, I outlined the sources of Coleridge’s philosophy and demonstrated the presence of common threads and conceptions in his intellectual influences. In chapters four and five, I revealed how these ideas are substantiated through concrete examples from his poetry. I discussed how Coleridge perceives his existence as an act, a finite repetition of the eternal act and expression of the “infinite I AM.” Imagination is the foundation for awareness of both the self and the infinite I AM. From this awareness comes the possibility of creation, love, and the knowledge of the self as a unique expression of spirit’s unity in multiteity.

Through an analysis of Coleridge’s “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” in this chapter, I demonstrate that the individual’s awareness of his unity in multiteity is theoretically realizable if the concept of *repetition*, so important in Coleridge’s “infinite I AM,” is understood in the broader, more cosmic context of an eternal and infinite recurrence. I use the phrase “eternal and infinite recurrence” uniquely in this study to refer to Coleridge’s idea of the process by which the eternal fountain of spirit incessantly pours out ephemeral echoes or mirrors of itself into creation, repeating eternally the act of producing individual manifestations of spirit, who repeat the journey of consciousness, but at higher and greater levels of awareness as past knowledge is incorporated and developed. While the progress of spirit in each individual contributes to humankind’s growth, Coleridge refers to Schiller and other German Romantics who conclude that humankind’s progress must necessarily follow an endless upward spiral trajectory toward infinitely higher stages of awareness, along which particularized emanations of spirit grow to ever-increasing levels of consciousness of themselves as unique individuals in their finite lifespans. As parts of the collective of humankind, each finite journey mirrors, while it is

subsumed by and contributes to, the collective voyage. The individual who comes to an increasing awareness of himself during his finite lifespan mirrors the process of the universal spirit coming to an awareness of itself through time and history. Spirit's journey ultimately arrives at a stage where individuals realize they are none other than spirit coming to an awareness of itself in and through their unique lives. This simultaneous being and becoming, of an eternal process taking place within the confines of time, is central to the individual's search for meaning through art, which is a finite act that participates in God's infinite creativity.

I relate this theory to the traditional concept of "eternal return" which is defined as "an idea which posits that the universe has been recurring, and will continue to recur, in a self-similar form an infinite number of times across time or space."¹⁷⁰ I also juxtapose this theory of the "eternal return of the same" or eternally repeating creation of the cosmos with my description of the eternal and infinite recurrence of spirit in Coleridge's great I AM. I illustrate these ideas in the context of the recurrence of natural cycles, the repetition of human actions, and the enactment of rituals in Coleridge's metaphysical poetry and prose; these sacred acts of repetition allow individuals to temporarily reconnect with the eternal and infinite realm of the absolute. These cyclical actions and processes re-enact the infinite recurrence and eternal return of the emanation of spirit in the "co-eternal inter-circulation of Deity" (*OM* 206), and, ultimately, support the idea that the creation of the universe itself is eternally repeating.

This chapter's central focus is on Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," which I discuss in the context of the traditional concept of eternal return juxtaposed with Coleridge's

¹⁷⁰ Nietzsche explains, "All configurations that have previously existed on this earth must yet meet" (Annotated in the glossary of Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Antichrist*), and thus, "maintaining that the kinds of things that have happened before will happen again, [...] that each individual being will recur and each particular event will in due course be reenacted" (*NS* 34). Abrams notes, "every historical cycle will end in an *ekpyrosis*, or total conflagration, followed by a renewal, and 'again there will exist a Socrates and Plato and every single man, with the same friends and fellow citizens, and will suffer the same fate and will meet with the same experiences and undertake the same deeds.... And there will be a complete restoration of the whole ... and the same things will be restored without end.'" (34)

depiction of the eternal and infinite recurrence of spirit's self-seeking in creation. In addition to further illustrating Coleridge's conception on love, nature, self-seeking, and his overarching philosophical reconciliation of pantheism and Christianity, the poem places these in the structure of a circuitous journey. The poem ultimately reveals the vital role of ritual and redemption in spirit's journey and explores the spiritual cost of transgressing the laws and rituals of love in that journey. As the analysis below will reveal, the ancient mariner is trapped in the cycle of his own story, an idea which seems at first to contradict Coleridge's conception of the progressive nature of the individual's, and indeed all humankind's, spiritual journey. However, an examination of ideas about being and becoming, time and eternity, and the role of ritual and archetypes in the traditional notion of the "eternal return" as well as in my description of an "eternal and infinite recurrence" of spirit in Coleridge's metaphysics of the infinite I AM, sheds light on the meaning of mariner's cruel and unforgiving fate. Both cosmic cycles of repetition co-exist in the world of the "Rime" and in the *form* of the poem as a work of art.

Unlike the speaker in the poems analyzed in previous chapters, the mariner is not Coleridge himself, but rather he comes to represent a symbolic, archetypal entity whose failed journey creates an eternal return of its own in which his listeners can, like the emanations of spirit on the cosmic scale, progress on their own journeys by momentarily coming into the sphere of the mariner's repetitious act of storytelling. The poem encapsulates this eternal return—still and finite in its form, yet containing, while it simultaneously evinces, the moving image of unmoving eternity. The mariner's place and actions in the eternal recurrence of these changing individual auditors, as himself an embodiment of the traditional concept of "eternal return of the same," illustrates the notion of spirit's progressive journey towards that spiritual unity and self-revelation that Coleridge's philosophy envisions.

1. “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”

Through my analysis of the poem, I elucidate the role of repetition in Coleridge’s conception of creation and spirit’s emanations into life as well as its relation to the individual’s and humankind’s spiritual journey. The nature of several components of the journey, such as love, self-reflection, and the revelation of God’s blueprint in nature, find expression and meaning in light of the cyclical nature of spirit’s journey. Though the mariner learns some of these lessons through his voyage, he is ultimately cursed and trapped within the confines of his own story, in a circuitous existence without apparent hope of transcendence and ultimate reunion with God. In this section of the chapter, I examine the poem in terms of Coleridge’s conception of spirit’s action in nature. The final two sections explore the conflict invoked by the mariner’s fate with respect to Coleridge’s own view of the necessarily progressive nature of spirit’s journey.

Unlike the autobiographical conversation poems, “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” is about a sailor narrating his supernatural tale to a wedding guest so he may assuage his burning compulsion to impart his life’s lesson. Yet, the poem allows Coleridge to express allegorically some of his metaphysical realizations about creation and the role of love in spirit’s journey. The ancient mariner detains one of three “gallants bidden to a wedding feast” (1), specifically the groom’s “next of kin” (6). As he later admits, “That moment that his face I see, / I know the man that must hear me” (589-90); the mariner’s choice to speak to this specific wedding guest is not arbitrary for, as we shall see, it follows a spiritual mandate. The groomsman nevertheless protests and wishes to join the wedding merriment, which is already underway. The idea of celebration cues the mariner to his tale; he remarks that he too “cheer’d” and celebrated “merrily” as his ship set sail on its voyage (21-2). The ancient mariner’s past jubilation mirrors that of the wedding guest in the present, which begins to establish the guest as a reflection of the

mariner as he once was, a young, innocent, and pleasure-seeking fellow too. This mirroring and reflection is reminiscent of the theme of spirit seeking echo or mirror of itself in “Frost at Midnight.” The act of spiritual self-seeking, however, has been replaced here by pleasure-seeking and, therefore, as the mariner’s tale advises, this aberration is in need of remediation; impetuosity must be substituted for quiet deliberation, unthinking indulgence for contemplation of divine love, and desire for earthly pleasures for an aspiration for spiritual unity.

The mariner relates how he and his merry crew of “four times fifty” men (216) set sail “down into the sea,” “Below the kirk, below the hill, / Below the lighthouse top,” “southward with a good wind and fair weather” till they reached “the Line” (the equator) (23-8). His ship is then caught in a “tyrannous” storm and is “drawn” to the “South Pole” (41-2). Although the ship is marooned in the lifeless land of ice, through the desolate icescape an Albatross appears “through the snowy fog” (63). It did “cross” them, and everyone “hail’d it in God’s name” “as if it had been a Christian soul” (63-6). The words “cross” and “hail” and the phrases “God’s name” and “Christian soul” are conspicuously Christological; the sailors view the bird as a “good omen” for after feeding it—in a clearly symbolic gesture of ceremonial and devotional offering—“the ice did split” and “a good south wind sprung” and steered the ship northward (69-71). The Albatross, with a capitalized “A,” indeed seems at first to represent their savior, the spirit of God sent to rescue the mariners, not in the conventional image of the dove, but in the more apt form of a seafaring bird. Or, like Christ who directs his flock along the path of righteousness, the Albatross guides the devoted sailors through the icy rime. “The Albatross did follow / And every day for food or play” returned to the ship (72-3), and every day the ritual is repeated: the bird circles above their ship and is offered food, and every day the ship steadily “returned northward through fog and floating ice” (71). Yet, the mariner inexplicably shoots and

kills the albatross with his crossbow. The word “cross” in this context evokes Christ’s crucifixion after Judas betrays him. The mariner not only betrays the bird, but also betrays his fellow sailors. Above all, he violates the ritual, which, as I shall discuss, will have severe, irreversible, and enduring consequences for him and his crew.

At this point in the narration, the attention shifts briefly, and notably, to the wedding guest. While the promise of worldly pleasures still tempts and beckons him, he is now also drawn to the mariner’s supernatural tale. The mariner’s magical hold on the chosen guest begins to establish the underlying theme of the poem: there is a supernatural reality that has a power and influence over the phenomenal world, a point that will become increasingly evident as the story progresses. In fact, even before the poem begins, Coleridge states in the epigraph, “there are more invisible than visible Natures in the universe” and that “the human mind has always sought the knowledge of these things.” There is something in the nature of the inquiring mind that compels it to seek “a greater and better world,” a greater reality beyond the immediate “petty things” and “trivial thoughts” “of daily life.”¹⁷¹ By prefacing “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” with this declaration, Coleridge proposes that the poem should be read as an example illustrating not only the coexistence of an “invisible” spiritual world with the “visible” physical nature, but also how the latter provides access to the former. Finally, in showing how the wedding guest’s mind is captivated by the mariner’s intriguing tale, for he continues to listen to the mariner at the expense of partaking in worldly pleasures, Coleridge illustrates what I have demonstrated before, that it is in the mind’s “nature” and constitution to seek a greater and profounder reality that encompasses both spiritual and phenomenal realms. As the poem describes, there is a common divine element in creation that connects the nature of the mind with the physical nature that it

¹⁷¹ From the Latin epigraph to “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” adapted by Coleridge from Thomas Burnet’s *Archaeologiae Philosophicae* (1692).

perceives and interprets.

The spiritual world does seem to exact punishment on the sailors through the natural world, illustrating that there are spiritual and physical consequences for cruel, capricious, and immoral acts.¹⁷² The sailors are wracked by thirst and blistering heat, and the mariner is further punished by having to bear the weight of the Albatross around his neck. Everyone suffers physically for their moral transgression and the physical world begins to be depicted as the medium for their moral and spiritual education—a point that will become increasingly significant as Coleridge continues to depict within a Christian frame how nature and its seemingly pagan spirits contribute to humankind's education.

In part three, a “skeleton ship” (185) carrying Death and “the Nightmare Life-in-Death” arrives to decide the sailors' fate (193). In a dice game of chance, Death wins the lives of the sailors and Life-in-Death wins the life of the mariner. The sailors' souls are released from their bodies, but not before the sailors glare at the mariner and curse him with their eyes. Their bodies drop dead and their spirits swish past him like the arrow that killed the Albatross, reminding him of his crime and driving home the fact that shooting the Albatross was tantamount to shooting each sailor: “every soul, it pass'd me by, / Like the whizz of my crossbow!” (223-4). At least in death the sailors' souls are liberated from bodily suffering; the mariner however must continue to endure the torture of life-in-death. He remains trapped on an unmoving ship in the middle of a vast and still ocean, imprisoned in a suffering and decaying body, indefinitely confined to a

¹⁷² When the sun comes out, the fog clears, and the wind continues to blow, the sailors proclaim that killing the bird may have actually proved favorable for them now conclude it was the bird “that brought the fog and mist” and that it was not the cause of the wind that saved them after all (100). Thus, in justifying the mariner's action, the sailors “make themselves accomplices in the crime” (97); the unsuspecting sailors do not yet realize their own offense. However, once the ship reaches the equator, the wind ceases to blow, the “bloody Sun” scorches the sailors (112), “and the Albatross begins to be avenged” (119). The sailors had called the “glorious Sun” “God's own head” (97-8), but now invoke “Christ” (123) as they lament their imprisonment in “that silent sea” (106) under the punishing sun. They are trapped, helpless, and seem to have been at the mercy of nature all along. Yet, the sailors “in their sore distress [...] throw the whole guilt” once again onto the ancient mariner and hang the dead Albatross around his neck (139).

death-like existence, constrained to endure the piercing stares of his dead shipmates, afflicted by unbearable thirst, and fettered to his guilt. Through his physical and temporal imprisonment and stillness, the mariner becomes the finite embodiment or symbol of the eternal within the sphere of time and change.

Alone, wracked by thirst and heat, the mariner remarks how the “thousand slimy things” in “the rotting sea” “lived on; and so did I” (239-40). The mariner recognizes his own physical and moral degradation reflected in their appearance. He is like them, for he sees his inner corruption and decay reflected in their ugliness; his own rotting nature is reflected in the rotting sea. However, it is in fact his inner nature that is reflected in his *perception* of outer nature. Coleridge explains that we perceive things as they relate to and as they are apprehended by our own particular mental constitution, which “reflects the objects subjectively” (*F*, I, 491). The mind “looking abroad into nature finds that in its own nature it has been fathoming nature, and that nature itself is but the greater mirror” in which it beholds its own being (*PL*, II, 489). However, the recognition of his inner depravity is the first step toward the mariner’s redemption. He begins to repent, even though he is unsuccessful in his attempt to pray “to heaven” (245).

Also, despite his initial perception of nature’s ugliness, his penitence puts him in a state of being that affords him a fresh perspective; he starts to perceive a new beauty in nature, which reflects the beginning of his inner purification and liberation from suffering: he “watch’d the water-snakes” move “in tracks of shining white” with “their rich attire: Blue, glossy green, and velvet black” and as they “coiled and swam [...] every track / Was a flash of golden fire” (274-82). By admiring “their beauty and their happiness,” “a spring of love gush’d through my heart, / And I bless’d them unaware” and in “the selfsame moment I could pray” (283-9). Again, the experience of beauty and love, as in “The Eolian Harp,” “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison,”

and “Frost at Midnight,” is the channel to a mystical awareness. He “bless’d them unaware” and rather than perceiving the snakes as ugly, “slimy things,” he sees them as luminescent, “happy living” creatures of supernatural “elfish light” (283, 276). He is momentarily freed from his agony as he is uplifted by the experience of their loveliness and quickened by the feeling of love in his heart. The word “unaware” describes his spontaneous and selfless response, which contrasts his conscious and unsuccessful attempt to pray to heaven. Again, as in the other poems, the experience of beauty and love offer freedom and solace. The mariner then naturally begins to pray, and at that moment, “from my neck so free / The Albatross fell off, and sank / Like lead into the sea” (290-3).

The mariner invokes the “holy Mother” and thanks her for the gift of “sleep from Heaven / That slid into my soul” (294-6). It begins to rain, and finally his thirst is quenched. The wind begins to blow, and although the “wind never reach’d the ship, / Yet now the ship moved on!” (328-9) by the force of the “lonesome Spirit from the South Pole” who “carries on the ship” “from beneath” (377-8). The sailors’ corpses “are inspired” (328) and animated by a “blessed troop of angelic spirits” (346), and “they all uprose” (332) and steer the ship in silence. At dawn the dead sailors “cluster’d round the mast” and begin to sing (352). The line “Sweet sounds rose slowly through their mouths, / And from their bodies pass’d” (353-4) is reminiscent of Coleridge’s description of the Aeolian harp that “pours such sweet upbraidings” and through which passed “a soft floating witchery of sound / As twilight Elfins make” (“The Eolian Harp” 17, 21-2). The dead sailors, like the inanimate harp, are brought to life and become instruments of an unseen force when the wind begins to blow. Even when the sailors stop their singing, the sails that picked up their song begin to produce a music of their own, a secondary product of the primary song. Theirs is a secondary repetition and expression of a primary creative act. Once

again, as with the examples in “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison” and “Frost at Midnight,” we find an apt metaphor for the divine power of primary imagination that prompts the action of the analogous power of secondary imagination.

The ship continues to sail mysteriously in the absence of any wind, moving instead by the force of a “Spirit” (377-8).¹⁷³ The re-emergence of the wind is highly symbolic, especially, as already noted, in conjunction with the reanimation of the sailors and music seeming to flow “through” and “passe’d” their bodies. In part six, for the first time since the murder of the Albatross, the mariner feels a wind blowing through his hair and on his cheek, which confirms to him that he is indeed alive. The line “there breathed a wind on me,” is especially significant as the movement of spirit is often depicted as the breath of God or the feeling of life or, in natural terms, as the free play of the wind.¹⁷⁴ The mariner remarks, however, that “the breeze - / On me *alone* did blew” (463-4) and yet the ship continues to move, as though now an extension of him on whom the breeze solely acts. The return of the wind, especially as it is now blowing on his skin and flowing through his hair, signals the agency of spirit, which is acting only on him. The ship sails and the wind continues to blow until he discerns the “lighthouse top,” “the hill,” “the kirk” on the shores of his “native country” (465-7).¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ At this point, the mariner’s ship, with its seared sails, warped boards, and mysterious mode of propulsion, itself becomes a representation of the skeleton ghost ship carrying Death, represented in this instance by the dead sailors, and Life-in-Death, represented by the mariner himself. Also, as I will elaborate in the next section, the rain, the invocation of the Holy Mother, and the breath of wind are important Christian elements in a conspicuously Paganistic poem.

¹⁷⁴ This is again reminiscent of Coleridge’s description of the wind as the agency of the spirit of God in creation flowing through the Aeolian harp and through all things in nature.

¹⁷⁵ Abrams notes that a physical “rising wind” is often “correlated with a complex subjective process: the return to a sense of community after isolation, the renewal of life and emotional vigor after apathy and a deathlike torpor” (*CB* 26). In Coleridge’s own life, experiencing “the Intensity of the feeling of Life,” which is the “universal spirit” or God who is “every where,” he describes an analogous power within him: “a sort of bottom-wind, that blows to no point of the compass, & comes from I know not whence, but agitates the whole of me; my whole Being is filled with waves, as it were, that roll & stumble, one this way, & one that way, like things that have no common master” (*CL*, II, 916). The “bottom-wind” seems to manifest earlier in the poem as the power of spirit that “comes from I know not whence” and steers the ship that has no “master” but that nevertheless seems to be an extension of the mariner. The water imagery, with the “waves” that “roll & stumble” within him, seems to be mirrored in the mariner’s outer

When he reaches “firm land,” “and now, all in my own countree,” the mariner beseeches the “holy man” to “shrieve” him (571-5). The mariner suddenly feels compelled (“forced”) to recount his incredible tale, and his telling takes the form of a confession; he experiences a sense of catharsis and is left feeling “free” after the account (581-2). That is, the act of storytelling becomes a form of penance. Moreover, he notes that from that moment on, “throughout his future life an agony constraineth him to travel from land to land” (583) and confess his ghastly tale to assuage his burning heart and body that are “wrench’d / With a woful agony” (579-80).

This, ultimately, is his new punishment and curse: to pass “from land to land” (587) to recount his tale, a circuitous and repetitious reliving of his own journey. He is reminiscent of the mythical figure of the wandering Jew, cursed to roam the earth eternally without rest. The mariner himself becomes a mythical character condemned to drift through the world in a state of life-in-death and to feel compelled to relate his tale to those chosen people suited and destined to be enlightened by the moral of his story. Although, the mariner is wiser from his experience, he must eternally relive his ordeal by repeating his tale to others. He must “teach” his fellow men “by his own example” to “love,” show “reverence to,” and be humble before nature and God’s creations (“all things that God made and loveth”).

1.1 Lessons of Love

Like the other poems examined, here the mariner’s tale entreats us to experience and understand the significance of love. He must “teach” his fellow men, as he is teaching the wedding guest, “by his own example” to “love,” show “reverence to,” and be humble before nature and God’s creations (“all things that God made and loveth”) for, as his tale demonstrates,

environment. The natural world, the entire ordeal of the journey, and the ship itself seem to be extensions of the “whole Being” to which all things belong, including the mariner.

humans are in nature's hands (611). It is only through his expression of love for God's creatures that the mariner discovers that the channel to God is through communion with nature:

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. (613-8)

While the wedding is an apt setting for the mariner to teach the guest about love, the mariner himself learns his lesson of love on the "wide, wide sea" (234); through love, the mariner experiences the kind of kinship and unity Coleridge also describes in his poem "A Letter to—": "To thee would all things live from pole to pole, / Their Life the Eddying of thy living Soul" (335-6).¹⁷⁶ Hence, "for of all we see, hear, feel, and touch," ultimately brings us to the realization that "the life which is in us is in them likewise" ("On Poesy or Art" 259).

Kessler suggests, "If the Mariner had never gone to sea, he might never have comprehended his Duty to Love" (147). In order to truly know love, evil and suffering must also be known, and must also manifest in creation. The mariner acquires the knowledge of the shared element of life in all things "from pole to pole" and that "their life" is the same power in his own "living Soul." Indeed, "Love is supreme knowledge, an intimate union of subject and object," explains McNiece. "It is love, said Novalis, which makes knowledge possible. Love is the most 'intense form of knowing.' [...] To see the life in things, Schelling said, requires the power of love, the ability to project our spirit into the kindred life in nature. According to Solger, God lives in the world and in our consciousness as love" (158). The mariner, having learned this

¹⁷⁶ In *Poetical Works*, pp. 691.

lesson, then proclaims that all God's creatures are loved equally by their creator. Indeed, the mariner is only assuaged and able to pray when he appreciates the beauty in God's creation, when he acknowledges God's creatures as fellow living beings, and when he discovers that he is akin to the "thousand slimy things" that "lived on." As himself "a Christian soul," he should have loved the Albatross as a fellow living creature of God.

In *Religious Musings*, Coleridge proclaims that humankind's goal is to ultimately become conscious of and participate in the oneness of God, as each individual is God's agent and representative: "Tis the sublime of man, / Our noontide Majesty, to know ourselves / Parts and proportions of one wondrous whole! / [...] 'tis God / Diffused through all, that doth make all one whole" (ll. 135-40).¹⁷⁷ The human individual, too, is an organic whole of parts united around the divine germ or soul. People's tendency to self-assertion and self-sufficiency makes humankind into "An Anarchy of Spirits!" (160), and, consequently, humans experience pain and suffering. It is through love and sympathy for all things that one "might make / The whole ONE SELF! SELF, that no alien knows!" (167-8). The mariner asserts his power and sense of superiority over nature by challenging nature's connection to his destiny and autonomy. It is only through his spontaneous sympathy for God's creatures as fellow beings that his suffering begins to abate.

However, the lesson of love in this particular case does not permanently release the mariner from the burden of suffering. As I shall later elaborate, the mariner's act of aggression and defiance repeats the original archetypal action of cosmic creation described by Boehme (whose ideas Coleridge engages with in his works, including in his *Marginalia*) in which the primal unity of essence is rent by an inherent and latent will-to-self-assertion within essence—or in Plotinus and Schelling as the will-to-separation from the One—desiring to be other than itself.

¹⁷⁷ This description evokes Coleridge's conception of the relationship between God, the individual, nature, and poetry. Just as a poem is composed around a central unifying idea and whose parts are also wholes in themselves, similarly, all individuations in nature are organic entities.

The mariner's hubris emphasizes this separation from essence to its extreme. That is, in killing the Albatross, the mariner expresses his "prideful self-sufficiency, his readiness to cut himself off from the universal community of life and love. His punishment is to experience the full measure of his elected isolation, in a world in which all his companions have died and nature has become alien and inimical to him" (*NS* 273). The lines "Alone, alone, all, all alone, / Alone on a wide wide sea" (233-4) marks his utter isolation and fragmentation from love and companionship, his estrangement from essence. So, the act that brings the universe into existence is echoed on a microcosmic scale in the mariner's action that sets him on a circuitous journey from unity to extreme isolation and back to unity.

In this context, Plotinus describes creation as the "passage of the nonmanifest to the manifest," from "chaos to cosmos" (Eliade 18), and it is also a progress of re-uniting with the One. The road is "arduous and, fraught with perils, because it is, in fact, a rite of passage from the profane to the sacred, from the ephemeral and illusory to reality and eternity, from death to life, from man to divinity" (18). All manifestations of spirit are therefore sacred, a truth the mariner discovers through his perilous and arduous journey from "the profane to the sacred." Plotinus describes the process of the return of the individual soul to its source as a journey of essence back to itself. The process is not without hardship and struggle, for it is precisely the experience of strife that generates the aspiration and action necessary for progress. The voyage entails a conscious struggle to transcend the desires and sensuous distractions of the outer world and to instead turn inward and seek one's true home in the unity of all souls. As discussed, in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," this truth is discovered through the mariner's journey in which he learns the true significance and value of love; it is also learned through the mariner's

tale by which the wedding guest, having followed and experienced the mariner's journey in his consciousness, turns from the promise of worldly, sensuous pleasures and leaves a wiser man.

Eliade states that humans, in their aspiration to participate in the One, wish to perceive themselves not just in their historical context, but also as participants in a cosmic plan in which history has cosmic significance.¹⁷⁸ The concept of eternal salvation represents the Christian's desire to transcend and escape once and for all the cycle of birth into a life of suffering. It seeks closure and release from the torturing, never-ending, and inescapable cycle of Promethean suffering that is human life, which is repeated through history and in each individual's journey from birth to death. Human redemption is "figured as a circling back of divided man to his original wholeness; he breaks out of his ceaseless round of wandering in what Blake calls 'the circle of Destiny'—the cyclical recurrences of pagan history—into a 'Resurrection to Unity' which is the full and final closure of the Christian design of history" (*NS* 260). The mariner's journey is every man's journey, a finite repetition of man's birth into creation, and of the eternal act of creation itself. However, the mariner's fate challenges that promise of wholeness. The mariner repeats the journey of "divided man" "circling back" "to his original wholeness," but he does not break out of the "ceaseless round of wandering" or his "circle of Destiny"; even as he experiences a "resurrection to Unity" after blessing the snakes as fellow creatures of God and awakening with a new awareness following the baptismal rain, he is made to re-relive his life of sin and suffering indefinitely without any hope for a final transcendence.

¹⁷⁸ The great historical events—wars, revolutions, catastrophes, etc.—come to represent, on a microcosmic scale, the incineration and disintegration that periodically puts "an end to the universe in order to permit its regeneration"; they mark "the transition from one age to another" (Eliade 136). This destruction and regeneration of time happens also as a microcosmic repetition within finite human lives, during times of extreme suffering and renewal. The decisive transformations occurring in each human life and through the grand revolutions of history mirror each other and are recognized as repetitions of a cosmic archetype.

1.2 Pagan-Christian Synthesis

When the ship reaches the bay, a pilot's tugboat arrives to steer the mariner's ship through the narrow channel leading into the bay. Accompanying the pilot is the pilot's boy and, to the mariner's cheer, a "Hermit good" who "singeth loud his godly hymns" (510-1). The mariner is cheered because he hopes the holy man will "wash away" the still wearisome burden of his sin (513). The hermit, who lives alone and in harmony with nature, is nature's priest; he prays "morn, and noon, and eve" in the woods and makes the natural world his temple (520). However, the hermit also "cross'd his brow" later when the mariner speaks to him (576). He is not only a worshiper of nature, but he is also a Christian. Additionally, the hermit "loves to talk with mariners / from a far countree," indicating his intellectual curiosity and openness to new knowledge, which makes him a sort of philosopher or lover of wisdom as well. The hermit thereby seems to embody Coleridge's ideal synthesis of the Pantheist and Christian, a synthesis that this section of the poem reveals is at the heart of poem itself.

Coleridge intentionally writes in an archaic language, beginning with a Latin epigraph and including marginal prose narration for modern readers, to suggest that the poem was written in a distant, ancient era or that the events therein occurred in mythic times. He evokes an age when humans were thought to commune with the supernatural world, when the interaction between the spiritual and the physical realms was believed to be a common occurrence. The ancient mariner's world is indeed a medium for the action of supernatural forces. Also, the word "ancient" that describes the mariner throughout the poem evokes the sense of a time before recorded history, and his ghostly appearance suggests his timelessness.

While the poem is written in an archaic language to represent an ancient, pagan era, it is nevertheless replete with Christological imagery and references to God, Christ, Virgin Mary,

crucifixion, baptism, original sin, confession, redemption, resurrection, and penance. At first, the world of the rime seems entirely controlled by pagan forces acting through the forces of nature.¹⁷⁹ However, one of the spirits swears by Christ in his conversation (“By Him who died on cross” (400)). In fact, the word “cross” is repeated six times in the poem,¹⁸⁰ and twice the mariner exclaims “O, Christ,” once when he observes the revolting sight of the slimy sea creatures (123) and again when he witnesses the luminous spirits hovering over the corpses (488). Similarly, the reference to a singular “God” occurs eight times. The mariner is also compared to Christ’s betrayer for murdering the “Christian soul” and savior; he is first made to bear the weight of his sin around his neck and, later, cursed to wander the world indefinitely seeking salvation that remains always out of reach. The baptismal rain eases some of his suffering, and the mariner is reanimated after collapsing into unconsciousness, clear allusions to the holy sacrament and resurrection that await the repentant sinner. Although the mariner begins to pray, he must nevertheless continue to seek absolution for his sin.

Invoking God, Christ, and the spirits of the natural world, Coleridge demonstrates how a Pantheist worldview can be reconciled with and understood within a Christian frame. The poem does not express the ambivalence of Coleridge’s Spinozistic inclinations voiced in “The Eolian Harp”; instead it openly describes a world where both pagan and Christian beliefs coexist and where pantheistic notions are subsumed within a Trinitarian conception of God and creation. For

¹⁷⁹ The spirit of the rime presents the sailors with a saving grace in the form of the Albatross and the mariner’s sin in killing the bird angers the supernatural “Spirit” who “loved the bird” (403-5). The mariner is punished physically and psychically through natural phenomena. The sun scorches him, the wind ceases to blow, and he is wracked by thirst while tantalized by the sight of “Water, water, everywhere, / Nor any drop to drink” (121-2). The sea and the ship deck are “rotting” (241, 3) and “slimy” sea creatures that “did crawl with legs” are revolting (“[I] drew my eyes away” (242)). At no point do the sailors seem to navigate the ship on their own; rather, they seem to be transported to the rime and back by the supernatural powers operating through nature. The sailors’ corpses are possessed and animated by spirits, and do not rot. Finally, invisible talking spirits discuss the mariner’s actions and fate.

¹⁸⁰ The sailors “cross an Albatross” (63) that is described as a “Christian soul” (65), the mariner shoots the bird with his “crossbow” (81), “instead of the cross” the dead Albatross hangs around his neck (141), the spirits of the dead sailor pass him like the “whizz of my crossbow” (224), the spirits speak of “Him who died on the cross” (400), and “the Hermit cross’d his brow” (576).

instance, the rain is symbolic of nature's involvement in Christian ritual; also, as illustrated in "Frost at Midnight," here too the forces and entities of the natural world are shown to be symbols of God's expression teaching the mariner his life's lesson. As discussed, the mariner preaches his moral, which calls for developing a sincere veneration for the objects and creatures in nature, for, he proclaims, to truly worship God one must respect his creations: he preaches "by his own example, love and reverence to all things that God made and loveth" (611). More precisely, by appreciating the beauty of God's creatures and by communing with them through the love that results from the spontaneous appreciation of their beauty, humans can commune directly with God. The hermit is the embodiment of this act. Living in harmony with nature, he prays to God, is humble before God, and loves God's creation. The mariner, too, becomes a sort of tortured prophet, seemingly immortal and never completely at rest.¹⁸¹

In his punishment of eternally retelling his tale, the mariner is suddenly endowed with extraordinary eloquence ("I have a strange power of speech"), and he is also gifted with the ability to detect in the faces of people he meets, those who must hear his story: "That moment that his face I see, / I know the man that must hear me" (588-90). His gift entails the ability to recognize in them, presumably, a reflection of his own former self, and he becomes a sort of preacher who must educate these men, through his cautionary tale. He becomes the embodiment of that roving or "idling spirit" described in "Frost at Midnight" who is the "echo or mirror seeking of itself" (20-2).

In Idealist terms, the mariner's journey mirrors that of the spirit in each individual and the spirit in humankind. His journey is not a circumnavigation of the globe, but a descent from

¹⁸¹ His suffering begins to abate when he spontaneously experiences love for the water snakes. The baptismal rain quenches his thirst and revives him; it symbolizes his partial spiritual renewal. However, although the physical burden of his sin falls away, he is compelled to continue atoning for his sin in other ways: having "penance done," "penance more" will need to do for his redemption (409-10).

zenith to nadir and a re-ascent back to origin. From a Christian perspective, the mariner also re-enacts humankind's fall from paradise. Like Adam and Eve, the mariner falls from his home country into a world of strife and suffering; through sin, he too is cut off and driven farthest away from his home. The poem is therefore an allegory, analogous to the story of humankind's fall from Eden, which is itself an allegory of the spirit's separation from source and unity (zenith), to alienation, separateness, and extreme self-centeredness (nadir), and its return to source with greater knowledge and an all-embracing self-awareness. Like Schiller, Schelling, Hölderlin, and the German Romantics, Coleridge interprets the "theological doctrine of the fall, in metaphysical terms, as a falling away, a fragmentation, of man from his primal unity with uncorrupted nature," and humankind's redemption entails a "reconciliation from his Enmity with Nature" (*CB* 125). The mariner's extreme isolation teaches him to value the condition of love and camaraderie he once took for granted. His love and reverence for all things great and small in God's creation cancels his "Enmity with Nature," and it becomes the expression of that principle of re-union and reintegration that ensures his successful "passage from the profane to the sacred." He is then carried forward and back home to his "native country." If it were not for his act of self-assertion, he may not have had the occasion to perform the sacred act of love. The mariner does return to his home country, indeed resurrected and with greater wisdom.

Though the ancient mariner does not ultimately regain a paradise within "happier far,"¹⁸² he finally realizes that each individual spirit is part of the universal spirit and that each grows closer to God by developing sympathy and a sense of oneness with all living things as fellow creatures of God ("He prayeth best who loveth best / All things both great and small / [...God] made and loveth all"). Spirit's journey back home, which is symbolically represented in the mariner's physical return to the place of origin, entails an inner voyage of spiritual growth and a

¹⁸² John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book XII, 587.

process of establishing communion with the diverse manifestations of spirit. In the eternal act of creation, spirit having descended into division, learns that it is love for “man and bird and beast” (614) that powers its return ascent back home, to reunion with universal spirit. Indeed, the line “He prayeth best who loveth best,” not only affirms that loving is identical to praying, but also that loving is the best form of prayer, which is the way to establish union with God. The mariner remarks that the love that “gushed from my heart” manifests as a gush of lifesaving rain from heaven and a gush of wind in his ship’s sails that drives him homeward. In “The Destiny of Nations,” Coleridge very closely echoes this description:

When Love rose glittering, and his gorgeous wings
 Over the abyss fluttered with such glad noise,
 As what time after long and pestful calms,
 With slimy shapes and miscreated life
 Poisoning the vast Pacific, the fresh breeze
 Wakens the merchant-sail uprising. (276-81)¹⁸³

Fueling spirit’s circuitous journey homeward is the other, concurrent circuitous voyage of spirit’s eternal process of emanation into creation and return to the infinite I AM; through the latter process, finite individuations of spirit contribute to the collective spirit’s progressive voyage through their unique experiences and growth through knowledge.

2. Spirit’s Journey

According to Coleridge, it is through his conception of eternal and infinite recurrence, of the endlessly recurring process of emanation and return, that God as spirit in creation comes to a greater awareness of itself. The process of division and reunification of emanated spirit with the

¹⁸³ In *Poetical Works*, 292.

“one Life,” which is “the eternal act of creation,” is repeated in the finite mind. The mind’s own activity then, through the divine model of imagination, finds its own conscious union with all things by first separating and then uniting through love, knowledge, and sympathy for all things. As the image of the circle represents eternity and perfection, it is thus fitting that the process of realizing the “one Life” should be a cyclical journey.

Indeed, in the Romantic tradition, the circuitous journey is often allegorized as a quest in which the protagonist achieves increasing self-knowledge and freedom through his experience of the interconnectedness of all things. The mariner’s voyage repeats in miniature humankind’s historical progress and follows, as Abrams describes in general terms, “a circuitous journey from self-unity,” signified by his dwelling in his native country, “through multiplex self-consciousness back to self-unity” to the place of the journey’s origin (*NS* 215). As the poem illustrates emphatically, the separation of mind and nature entails harsh suffering. However, Abrams explains that the goal “will justify the sufferings”:

The movement toward this goal is a circuitous journey and quest, ending in the attainment of self-knowledge, wisdom, and power. This educational process is a fall from primal unity into self-division, self-contradiction, and self-conflict, but the fall is in turn regarded as an indispensable first step along the way toward a higher unity which will justify the sufferings undergone on route. [...] The beginning and end of the journey is man’s ancestral home, [...]. The goal of this inner quest is to be reached by a gradual ascent, [until his return home] upon which man finds himself thoroughly at home with himself, his milieu, and his family of fellow men. (*NS* 255)

While each circuitous journey is portrayed as a closed loop, the end nevertheless entails a new existence with fresh possibilities. Each individual may undergo many different quests in his

lifetime, each microcosmic reiterations of the larger journey of the individual's life and the still larger one of human history.

The idea of the progressive circular journey features notably in Coleridge's totalizing philosophy. "The circuitous quest candidly reverts to its ancient prototype in the Christian pilgrimage through exile back home" (*NS* 252). One returns home not the same as when one left, but one arrives with greater knowledge, enriched by life's experiences and with profound appreciation for life. In Coleridge's conception of spirit's maturation through nature and aesthetic education, the individual moves from unity between mind and nature to separation and then returns to a higher unity. Along the educational journey, the individual acquires increasing knowledge when he "sallies forth into nature" and discovers in the various forms of nature "the originals of the forms presented to him in his own intellect," and realizes that "what he seeks he has left behind, and but lengthens the distance as he prolongs the search" (*F*, I, 509).

In Christological terms, Coleridge likewise describes how the Son is engendered through the Father's act of attributing his self to another: "It has been stated as the act of the Father in the generation and contemplation of the Son. [...] But it is likewise and simultaneously, as it were, the act of the Son in referring himself and in him the plenitude of divine forms to the Father, and thus directed towards the Father." This cyclical emanation and return is "an eternal proceeding from the Father to the Son and from the Son to the Father, but such procession being in its nature circular, at once ever refluent and ever profluent [... "circumincession"] or the primary, absolute, co-eternal intercirculation of Deity" (*OM* 205-6).

Kessler notes, "Nature may appear to move in circles, but behind the phenomenal world is an invisible power, providing a direction for everything" (23). Indeed, the mariner's ship is driven by an invisible, supernatural power, while nature all around the mariner moves in circles.

The combined images of the circular trajectory of natural entities and the forward movement of the ship yields the image of a spiral, the representation of the coincidence of time and eternity: “The progressive circle becomes the metaphor that satisfies Coleridge’s hunger for an ideal permanence within a mutable world” (30). Coleridge states, “the whole process is cyclical tho’ progressive, and the Man separates from Nature only that Nature may be found again in a higher dignity in the Man (*CL*, IV, 769). Evolution follows a spiral movement since the impetus, Coleridge asserts, is one that “in every instant goes out of itself, and in the same instant retracts,” so that the product is necessarily an ascending “curve line” (*CCS* 179-80).¹⁸⁴ In the Romantic tradition, “all development—whether in history, the individual life, intellection, or the realm of morality, culture, art”—follows a spiral course. “All process departs from an undifferentiated unity into sequential self-divisions, to close in an organized unity, which has a much higher status than the original unity because it incorporates all the intervening divisions and oppositions” (*CB* 232).

However, while Coleridge argues that such progress towards ultimate unity is the natural course of humankind’s development, yet it is clearly not represented by the mariner’s fate. That is, humankind may escape the trials of cyclical repetition when it grows with knowledge, achieving Coleridge’s ideal; the mariner, however, has learnt his lesson, but his life continues to be a series of repeated self-fulfilling prophecies. He is cursed to relive the same journey indefinitely through the perpetual retelling of his tale. In the Christian tradition, the return to paradise consists of arriving at a higher place than the point of departure, at a better paradise than the one lost, but the mariner, though wiser, is yet wracked with suffering. His return home does not signify a decisive, final transcendence; rather, he seems trapped in a sort of purgatory

¹⁸⁴ In the Neoplatonic paradigm of the emanation of spirit (its division from and return to the absolute), the circuitous journey is a temporal process that occurs through humankind’s history and as an analogous manifestation in the finite life of each individual.

between life and salvation while having neither. This anomaly will be later explained in the context of rituals and archetypes.

2.1 Synthesis of Linear and Circular Time

The notion of the “upward spiral” also represents Coleridge’s synthesis of the notions of time and progress as they appear in both mainstream philosophy and Christianity. Along with conceptions of repetition, Coleridge finds in Christian theology an important framework for his ideas of time and eternity. As reflected in his poetry, Coleridge embraces key aspects of time from Christian thinkers while simultaneously incorporating Plotinus’s cyclical interpretations of time and eternity and the eternal return of the same.¹⁸⁵ To the Christian theologians, time has meaning in the context of humankind’s salvation. Pain and suffering have a justification and a cause only in this context, for they become instruments of “purification and spiritual ascent” (Eliade 96) and “can be fitted into a system and explained” (98).¹⁸⁶ Likewise, the modern thinker justifies the value of time by assigning meaning to history as progress. Coleridge complicates these conceptions through the mariner’s timelessness and eternally recurring torture.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ While the ancients have “a negative attitude toward history,” the modern thinker “consciously and voluntarily creates history” (Eliade 143). The former devalues and attempts to abolish history periodically through rituals that repeat the cosmogony and the regeneration of time.

¹⁸⁶ In “La Gnose et le Temps,” Puech states, “a straight line traces the course of humanity from initial Fall to final Redemption. And the meaning of this history is unique, because the Incarnation is a unique fact. [...] Christ died for our sins once only, once for all; it is not an event subject to repetition, which can be reproduced several times. The development of history is thus governed and oriented by [this] unique fact, a fact that stands entirely alone” (Quoted in Eliade 143). To say that humankind’s salvation would need to be periodically reclaimed through the eternal return of time is to contradict this fact, and to diminish Christ’s suffering and redemptive power; he would become a Promethean figure needing to be endlessly reincarnated, loved and tortured, praised and vilified, killed and resurrected. Therefore, according to Christian theologians, humankind’s destiny, and the destiny of each individual, is played out only once, once and for all, in finite time, forming life and history respectively.

¹⁸⁷ To early Christian thinkers, the eternal circulation conceived by Plotinus and Proclus is made into a single closed circle having unity and perfection in its beginning and at its end where the process stops. Humankind follows the design of the long circuitous journey in which the fall consists of the first half of the circle and redemption consists of the second half. The circuitous journey is perceived as a closed circuit, a circle whose end is its beginning. The movement is from unity to division, from bliss to suffering, back to unity and felicity. Its plot is non-repeating. In the beginning a heaven and an earth are created; in the end a new heaven and earth are anticipated. Humankind’s story begins with a fall from paradise and ends with its return to “an equivalent paradise.” It “constitutes ‘one great

By synthesizing Christian thought with ancient philosophy, Coleridge, and indeed the Romantics, reconfigure the Biblical Fall as a separation of the created universe from the One; evil and sin are identified as the necessary tendency to selfhood, self-centeredness, and self-sufficiency for the journey back toward a richer and more dynamic union. Redemption is the conscious and willed process of reintegration with being. To Coleridge, the impetus for reintegration, as discussed, is the “powerful current of love” that “flows ceaselessly from God down through the successive levels of ever remoter being and circles back to God” (*NS* 152). As a “progressive being” (*LL*, II, 193) who is evolving “the process of eternal good” (“The Destiny of Nations” 259), the human being’s circuitous journey back to God, is one of “continued amelioration and refinement” (*LL*, II, 193).

2.2 Humankind’s Destiny

The promise of such a progress allows Coleridge to conceive that human beings may ultimately achieve an increasingly richer form of reintegration that embraces difference and involves “continued amelioration and refinement.”¹⁸⁸ In the Christian tradition, the return to paradise consists of arriving at a higher place than the point of departure, at a better paradise than the one lost.¹⁸⁹ For Coleridge, the journey of each individual may consist of many quests, as microcosmic reiterations of the larger one, each contributing to the store of knowledge.

detour to reach in the end the beginning.’ [...] It’s entire providential plan [...] gives man hope. [...] Despite its emphasis on a lost paradise in the distant past, [...] the persistent pressure of the Christian view of history is not retrospective but strongly prospective; for always the best is yet to be” (*NS* 37).

¹⁸⁸ Centuries after Plotinus and Proclus, Renaissance thinker Paracelsus interprets the Christian conception of the cosmic design and the fall as a separation of the unity of the first, unknowable, and yet simple first principle into a multiplicity of manifestations. The return to unity is a journey of transformation of the physical nature into a spiritual one; this is to be achieved not by relinquishing physical nature in favor of the psychic, but, rather, by allowing the divine to shine through the material realm.

¹⁸⁹ In Romantic literature, this journey is often allegorized as a quest in which a hero’s progress is measured along the way by his increasing self-knowledge and awareness of the integrity of his emerging identity; he achieves greater freedom through his experiences of unity with all things. An intense yearning for one’s lover, or longing for one’s family, or nostalgia for one’s home, motivates the traveler along his voyage.

Moreover, as much as the journey is an individual and personal quest, it is also part of a collective human endeavor; both universal and individual processes are interdependent.¹⁹⁰

According to the German Romantics, humankind could develop its powers *ad infinitum* by striving to identify with the absolute, but it would never achieve union with it because individual existence and the absolute's reality depend on difference. Hence, for the Romantics, the circuitous journey home does not have as its destination the point of departure; rather, there is no final destination. The return to the point of origin is really a transitional stage in an unending journey that consists of achieving increasingly higher levels of knowledge, awareness, and freedom along an ascending spiral trajectory. The spiral is a circle that rotates over itself and ascends indefinitely; it is a revolving helix, like that of our DNA. The very building blocks and blueprint of life are in the form representing life's journey.

The highest awareness humans may so far achieve, according to Coleridge, is a state of "multeity in unity" in which the individual is able to straddle both states simultaneously, of being one with universal spirit and also distinct from it, like the actor, now truly self-aware, who knows he is playing all the parts of the play and is also observing himself as the audience. As individualized and self-aware spirit, he is the many-faced actor, the audience, and play director as well as the observer who sees himself, from an even higher perspective, as being simultaneously and consciously all these roles without losing, negating, or canceling his being in the process. In Plotinus's philosophy, the individual soul contemplates itself as an emanation of the One and of the Mind in its plurality, and realizes that Mind in its infinite diversity is akin to

¹⁹⁰ More importantly, to some of the German Romantics, the character and significance of the journey itself become more important than the achievement of the goal; the seeking occasions the journey, and the more passionate the seeking, the more intensely rewarding the journey of life becomes. Hence, life no longer is about reaching a goal, but it is about the journey itself and experiences that the pursuit of the goal occasions. Lessing believes, "It is not the possession of truth, at which no man can arrive or believe he can arrive, it is his sincere effort to attain it, that constitutes his worth; for it is not by the possession, but by the search after truth that his energies are developed" (Randall 101). The means and not the end, the journey and not the destination, the effort, the striving, the insatiable curiosity, and not the goal, characterize the Romantic spirit.

the nature of the One with its infinite potentiality. The individual soul, being itself one and also infinite plurality through its psychic union with all souls, can contemplate the nature of the One. According to Coleridge, since the soul is described as an inner divinity, this whole process is considered the most virtuous or all pursuits, which is to unite the god within with the God that is all. Coleridge exclaims, “What this strong music in the soul may be! / What, and wherein it doth exist, / This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist, / This beautiful and beauty-making power” (“Dejection: An Ode” 60-3). The soul is the individual’s true being, according to Coleridge, and it represents the joint action and force of all the divine faculties in him. Hence, when the poet is reflexively drawn to forms of beauty and experiences joy and love in their presence, he begins to commune with the soul within and without, and he experiences the spirit in all things. There is a power in that which is beautiful within the human being, the divine spirit or essence, which impels him to find a corresponding beauty in the world, and when Coleridge expresses beauty in the “form” of his art, he becomes an agent of spirit’s self-seeking.¹⁹¹

Returning to the poem, the mariner’s existence seems at first to resemble the kind of circuitous journey described by the German Romantics, which entails striving toward a goal that keeps receding like the horizon and involves a passionate desire that, once satiated, is continually renewed, so that a new, distant goal is again sought with unrelenting thirst. Yet, the mariner’s goal never changes, and his journey is the same one repeated over and over again: He sets sail from his native country with two hundred shipmates, gets mired in ice, is saved by a blessed Albatross, impulsively murders the bird, is punished for his sin by a “Spirit” “who loved the bird,” is cursed to suffer agonizingly at sea, and is forever compelled to relate his tale. The

¹⁹¹ In *Phaedrus*, Plato speaks of a highest beauty as the intimation of the One. Heidegger concludes that the perception and pursuit of beauty “most draws us on and liberates us.” What radiates beauty in this world “betokens a radiance infinitely brighter in the realm of thought” (28), which allows us to move beyond appearance and interact closer with essence. Beauty then becomes a guiding beacon along humankind’s quest for truth and essence.

mariner receives at the end of his tale not reward but renewed torment, returning time and time again to the act in his story that binds him to his fate, his wisdom never growing to inform the start of the new or different cycle. Nor in his curse is there seemingly any hope of salvation and redemption along strictly Christological lines. Instead, despite the lessons he has learned, the mariner was won by Life-in-Death, and his existence consists of an eternally recurring cycle of experiencing agony and relief, of telling and retelling his story. Interestingly, the fact that he must retell his story is also part of his narration. By eternally repeating the act of storytelling, the mariner is forced to relive again and again his journey from ignorance and conceitedness to enlightenment and humility, with neither further spiritual gain nor final release.

In “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” Coleridge seems then to depart dramatically from his more progressive conception of the journey of the spirit as suggested by his overarching philosophy. After all, Coleridge in his own conversation poems returns from each of his imaginative and reflective journeys in a more elevated place than he started, more aware of God in nature and closer to spiritual unity and self-revelation. For all that he has learned about the nature of spirit on his journey, the mariner’s everlasting life-in-death, both by the poem’s narrative design and the mariner’s directive to retell his tale, is a repetitious and wholly self-revolving cycle. Yet, I argue that the mariner, as an individual emanation in the eternal and infinite recurrence of spirit, becomes transformed into a spiritual instrument and symbol of the “eternal return of the same,” and does have a vital place in Coleridge’s philosophical worldview. The meaning of this image of an eternal repetition within the sphere of time can be better grasped through Coleridge’s own explanation of the relation of time and eternity.

3. Being and Becoming in the Eternal Recurrence of Time in Eternity

3.1 Time and Eternity

As discussed in Chapter Two, all life in Coleridge's conception is an expression of the infinite I AM and all things in their essence convey the will of the I AM (i.e. its self-seeking). The individual, as an expression of and portion of the I AM, is therefore both eternal and transient, infinite and finite, and he is an act of becoming and creating, the embodiment of the gradual self-revelation of spirit. Coleridge also posits that since God is infinite, God's consciousness as universal spirit, which is an all-encompassing substance, still remains part of God's infinite scope, and yet God himself remains absolute and perfect. Thus, creation and time are conceived in relation to, and coexisting with, eternal God. There is therefore a kind of paradox between an eternal God and individual emanations of spirit, the latter of which occur in the realm of time. It is precisely the eternal return and infinite recurrence of spirit that allows the realm of human time to coexist and commune with the eternal plane.¹⁹²

Schelling and Plotinus, who were among Coleridge's major influences, describe the "birth" of time and suggest that there must have been some unknown, latent "will" that "chose" and "stirred" within the eternal One or primordial absolute. Schelling, for instance, states that the "strife" of the eternal "will" within itself produces time, and then eternity is "impelled to seek itself." "A self-sufficient will produces itself in eternity" (*The Ages of the World* 137).¹⁹³ Plotinus

¹⁹² Time is traditionally described as a modification of eternity, and it has no effect on eternity. Time is born from eternity, and yet it exists in eternity.

¹⁹³ In Schelling's conception, will impels itself into time and into the world of becoming and forms the foundation for an eternally recurring sphere of time or an eternally recurring expression of time-bound will in eternity, where time-will is a will expressed through time and becoming. However, as with Parmenides's theory of time, change, and becoming in relation to the always permanent and unchanging oneness of being, eternity seems to swallow up all possibilities and actualities into its awful permanence. All change is insignificant and impermanent in relation to it. Schopenhauer explains that just as being and becoming are understood in relation to each other, "time" is not something real but is only "transcendentally real, in other words, that it has its origin not in things, but in the knowing subject" (Lukacher 96). It is a *perceived* reality, a mental representation, as is all perceived phenomena; all that truly exists are "will" and the "'eternal now' in which, as instances of the will, 'we ourselves stand'" (96). In

speaks of a paradoxical motionless “first stirring” of an “active principle” that, through its activity, becomes the World Soul.¹⁹⁴ Within the One there must have existed an element with a cryptic desire to be something other than what was its permanent, motionless state. Plotinus describes the universe as a grand but ineffable dramatic production and the “eternal return of the same” as its enactment. This principle—the desire and will of the One—then disguised itself as something other than the One, and through difference, the One became a single actor, so to speak, who dons myriad costumes and plays diverse parts while also remaining the audience of his own fantastic cosmic drama.

Plotinus’s active principle is the very precondition and possibility of duality, creation, and life. It is the principle that breaks the status quo, and as I will continue to illustrate in the context of rituals in the next two sections, it is enacted on a microcosmic scale in the mariner’s act of defiance against the Albatross and becomes an extremely significant factor in determining the mariner’s fate. Participation in the eternal return through rituals enables the passage of created time to fit inside or co-exist with the absolute. That is, the cycles are themselves endless, but because there is the movement of time *within* each cycle, time and eternity can co-exist. The

The King’s Two Bodies, Ernst Kantorowicz remarks, “Eternity, of course, was God’s timeless and motionless Now-and-Ever, knowing neither past nor future. *Aevum*, however, was a kind of infiniteness and duration which had motion and therefore past and future, a sempiternity which according to all authorities was endless” (Quoted in Lukacher 69). However, this sempiternity had to have been “created,” and he refers to Plato’s distinction between Being and beings, where *Aevum* bridges the notional abyss between eternity and finite time. Drawing from the same tradition, Hegel states, “Time is the Notion itself that is *there* and which presents itself to consciousness as empty intuition; for this reason, Spirit necessarily appears in Time, and it appears in Time just so long as it has not *grasped* its pure Notion, i.e. has not annulled Time” (*Phenomenology* 487). Hegel conceives of infinite time as a circle: “The image of true infinity, bent back into itself, becomes the circle, the line which has reached itself, which is closed and wholly present, without beginning and end” (quoted in Lukacher 97). Lukacher explains, “the infinite is ‘the consummated return into self,’ the endless negativity of an eternally impossible return that keeps returning eternally, endlessly ‘turning back on itself’” (97). Since time is the “moving image of eternity,” while eternity itself is the unmoving paradigm of time, each allows the other to be an image or concept. “Because all of this must be projected against the temporal horizon of eternal return, this enigmatic, unsayable difference is precisely what must have happened an infinite number of times already” (24). Similarly, for Schelling, Lukacher notes, “eternity is not a modality of time; it is rather time itself that is a specific mode (or rather modification) of eternity” (103).

¹⁹⁴ “There was an active participle there, one set on governing itself and realizing itself (= the All-Soul), and it *chose* to aim at something more than its present: it *stirred* from the rest, and the Cosmos stirred with it” (as stated in Lukacher 23).

mariner's torture involves re-living his painful journey through the act of storytelling, which offers temporary relief from his suffering, but is an act which he is seemingly cursed to endlessly repeat. Furthermore, his journey and repetitive act of storytelling are themselves captured and made eternally recursive in Coleridge's work of art that does not offer the mariner an alternative to repeating his life and tale in exactly the same terms and "to relive it and each of its precise parts endlessly over and over again."¹⁹⁵

However, through a clearer understanding of the traditional notion of the "eternal return of the same," it is possible to explain how the mariner's tale follows an archetype in which he lives out the very same repetitious and indeed ritualistic mode of existence. The mariner's violation of one ritual—his and his fellow sailor's early ritualistic relationship with and devotional acts toward the Albatross—dooms him to his own eternal act of ritualized repetition, moving him from the realm of mortal individual to eternal archetype. The following sections outline the notion of an archetype and the role of rituals in allowing mortals to experience and re-connect with the eternal realm; these, in turn, provide the foundation for explaining the mariner's unique fate. The final section brings these notions into Coleridge's conception of the eternal and infinite recurrence of spirit and his totalizing spiritual worldview.

3.2 Cycles and Repetitions of the Primal Hierophany

The mariner's inescapable fate can be understood in light of the classic models of the eternal return and spirit's progressive spiral journey. In the traditional notion of the eternal return

¹⁹⁵ We are invited to conceive the relation between eternity, life, and time in the context of art. Nietzsche, for example, affirms that the realization of the supreme will to power is confirmed "if and when the fifth act of the earth's drama ended, the whole play every time begins again from the beginning, if it was certain that the same complex of motives, the same *deus ex machina*, the same catastrophe were repeated at definite intervals" (128). Not only is the expression of the supreme will to power realized in the desire to relive life as a work of art, as a five act play, but also it is confirmed in the desire to relive it and each of its precise parts endlessly over and over again. Nietzsche recognizes that the doctrine of eternal recurrence can "only make the promise of eternity credible if it could turn it [the doctrine of return] into a work of art" (150). Coleridge's work of art seems to realize this promise.

of time in eternity, the inter-circulation of being is a circuit. Although the journey forms a closed loop, there is no beginning or end, but a continuously travelled, self-revolving, and endlessly self-repeating track.¹⁹⁶ Eliade defines the concept of eternal return as “the cyclical recurrence of what has been before” (88), and he explains that this recurrence is enacted on a microcosmic scale through natural and man-made rituals and is necessary for the preservation of any form, including the natural, the human, and the aesthetic. Periodically, a form “must be reabsorbed into the formless if only for an instant; it must be restored to the primordial unity from which it issued” (88). The human, natural, or aesthetic form becomes “real” only insofar as it imitates or repeats an archetype—the mythical or first model of a sacred act; its reality is acquired through emulating, repeating, or participating in this archetype.

“The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” illustrates the numerous instances of natural and man-made rituals signifying the cyclical return and infinite recurrence in humankind’s trajectory away from and back to the “one Life” or God. For instance, the image of the circle, which continuously returns to itself, which everywhere begins where it ends, a singular self-contained whole that is yet comprised of infinite points, where each point is both a place of departure and arrival, symbolically represents infinity, eternity, and the concept of the eternal return. The sun and the moon, themselves spherical objects, follow circular trajectories, which recur daily. Every day, they enact the natural ritual of eternal renewal; they rise and set, just as they did the previous day and countless days before. Their circular journey symbolically re-enacts the

¹⁹⁶ Lukacher explains, “The great year is only a marker, a formal notation of the still unthought essence of the meaning of time as the total cycle of the absolute cosmos” (5). The “fall” occasions eternal becoming, which occurs within eternal being. If time is indeed eternally beginning and ending, then creation may consist of an infinite series of universes coming and passing out of existence eternally in a repeating cycle. Therefore, if time and space are considered infinite, then an infinite number of identical parallel universes with identical actions must logically exist simultaneously alongside an infinite number of similar and also differing universes. So, not only what was once will again be repeated in creation eternally, but simultaneously, what is happening now is also happening an infinite number of times in perfectly identical universes and is also happening in infinitely varying degrees, forms, and times in infinitely diverse universes.

mariner's trajectory from and back to his home country and spirit's emanation and return to its source. Also, the Albatross flies "round and round" the ship, repeatedly forming circles in the sky. In the ocean, too, the water-snakes "coiled" and intertwined evoking the image of the ouroboros, a symbol of infinity, eternity, and the divine process of ceaseless creation.

Traditionally, the serpent "symbolizes chaos, the formless and nonmanifested" (Eliade 19). The circular objects performing circular rites are the symbols of the juxtaposition of time and eternity. The sea represents the primordial and immeasurable oneness from which all things come into existence and to which everything returns. Therefore, in blessing the snakes, the mariner unconsciously and symbolically acknowledges the all-encompassing oneness and shared destiny of all things, including himself; all of God's creations emanate from God as spirit and must return to their source, and, therefore, all are equally deserving of respect. Coleridge affirms that one must remain humble before the infinite "co-eternal intercirculation of Deity" (*OM* 206). The mariner's unconscious intimation of this truth signals the beginning of his return home.

This cyclical course of emanation and return in nature and in human life is precisely the ritualistic repetition of spirit's journey occurring in all things and at all levels of its manifestation. That is, in Coleridge's eternal and infinite recurrence of spirit in the great I AM, God's process of self-emanation as spirit in creation, as the original master act, is replicated in nature's processes and in human life as rituals connecting them to the timeless and the absolute. The signature of all things is therefore spirit's self-seeking through its enactment of rituals. In "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," the "painful journey into self-division and inner conflict" and "the discontents of the journeyer readily evoke the figures of exile and homesickness" (*NS* 214). The mariner embodies that state of immature impulsiveness Schiller alludes to in his description of the journeyer at the beginning of his circuitous journey; in this case, it is the

mariner who “impetuously fled abroad in the arrogance of [his] freedom” and impetuously killed the Albatross (*Naïve and Sentimental Poetry* 100). However, Coleridge explains, the individual acquires increasing knowledge when he “sallies forth into nature” and discovers in the various forms of nature “the originals of the forms presented to him in his own intellect” (*F*, I, 509).

His intellect recognizes that there is not only an analogy, but also a correspondence between inner and outer natures. As discussed earlier, in beholding first the ugliness and then the beauty in his surroundings, the mariner beholds his own changing inner nature. The outer, physical journey corresponds to an inner, spiritual progress, for the mariner’s inner experience transforms his *perception* of the outer world. That is, his inner condition determines his perception of the outer world. Yet, his deteriorated physical appearance and demeanor reflect the agonizing inner turmoil he has endured. The physical hell he experiences and the supernatural events he cannot explain but must reckon with are manifested in his tortured and otherworldly countenance. Both realms reflect and affect the other; both inner and outer realities are inextricably linked by their common origin in God or Spirit. It is because of this connection that the finite, individual mind can absorb and assimilate the outer world into its inner realm through perception in the first place. Furthermore, because Coleridge sees nature and mind as being, in essence, a fundamental unity, the mariner’s self-assertion and division between his mind and the natural world forms a necessary part of his circular journey. The mariner must experience the stark separation between mind and nature and the suffering it entails, before he can return home with the awareness of his kinship with God and intrinsic unity of his own mind or inner nature and the natural world.

3.3 Archetypes and Rituals of the Eternal Return

In both “Frost at Midnight” and “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” rituals, expressions of repetition, and various forms of cycles, both natural and man-made, echo and partake of the eternal and infinite activity of spirit. By enacting and witnessing these rituals, the mariner becomes not only a participant in eternity, but in fact the embodiment of timelessness itself. Relating to the Plotinus’s doctrine of participation, in which all distinct entities are thought to derive their essence, existence, and relative value from the One, Eliade notes that in ancient traditions “an object or an act becomes real only insofar as it imitates or repeats an archetype. Thus, reality is acquired only through repetition or participation” (34).¹⁹⁷ Humans who seek to participate in a cosmic reality beyond their transient and finite existence repeat or enact through rituals the eternal archetypes and, consequently, experience transcending time, partaking in an eternal and infinite reality, even experiencing immortality. That is, in repeating the archetypal gestures through rituals and ceremonies, they succeed in “annulling time” and living “in harmony with the cosmic rhythms” (95). These actions are the expression of their “seeking” to become relevant and meaningful agents of the creator. In effect, they become, through rituals of repetition, an example of the master archetype itself.¹⁹⁸ This mode of seeking re-union with the absolute involves seeking to abolish time and making it irrelevant. “The fallen individual believed he must live [...] in conformity with archetypes,” for “there is nothing truly real except the archetypes. Living in conformity with the archetypes amounted to respecting the ‘law,’ since the law was only a primordial hierophany, the revelation in *illo tempore* of the norms of

¹⁹⁷ “Archetype” here refers to mythical or first models of sacred actions as well as to the pure and timeless “Forms” in Platonic philosophy that represent the absolute and perfect characteristics of all objects in the phenomenal world. Reality comprises of constantly recurring patterns of expression, actions, symbols, etc. that emulate or are varying versions of the archetypes from which they draw their meaning and existence.

¹⁹⁸ Furthermore, they attempted to escape the force of history through rituals that connected them with the timeless archetypes. They sought timelessness by repeating the archetypal gestures that would make them archetypal beings.

existence, a disclosure by a divinity or a mystical being” (95). As I shall continue to elaborate, the mariner’s tale illustrates how a transgression against the “law” divorces the individual from essence, which has severe and lasting consequences.

Firstly, nature itself, as an emanation of Plotinus’s One, is comprised of a yearly cycle of seasons that begins with spring and, through the passage of time, ends in winter. As seen in “Frost at Midnight,” each new spring signals the end of old time and the beginning of new time. Spring ushers in new creation. Here, the cycle begins again and here life begins again, repeating the original archetype of the act of cosmic creation. In this sense, with the passage of the yearly cycle of seasons, all life participates in the eternal repetition of time. We are born and re-born again, so to speak, at the dawn of every new spring, until we are swept away into history and eternity. We are released from finite linear time, and history is abolished through its re-assimilation into eternity. Hence, even natural cycles, like human rituals, reset time. Eliade notes, “Everything is but the repetition of the same primordial archetypes. [...] Time but makes possible the appearance and existence of things. It has no final influence upon their existence, since it is itself constantly regenerated” (90). All entities and events have intrinsic meaning only in the context of this repetition.¹⁹⁹

The poet who writes about the great myths and stories of history not only preserves the exemplary ideas and archetypes in finite form, but also repeats them in his artistic creation, which becomes an act of participation with the One; he becomes the “imitator of the archetype and reproducer of archetypal gestures” (44). That is, Eliade explains, although this repetition

¹⁹⁹ Because all things repeat themselves as imitations of archetypes or of the single, absolute archetype of the self-emanating and self-returning spirit, hence, repetitive time cycles in nature are themselves rituals, microcosmic repetitions of the eternal archetype of the recurrence of time in cosmic creation through finite human lifespans. Hegel begins to echo this idea when he proclaims that all things in nature repeat themselves forever since there is “nothing new under the sun,” but adds that history, on the other hand, is “free,” “open,” “always new,” and “does not repeat itself” (Eliade 90). Nevertheless, since history does follow a plan, it therefore has an archetype or ideal toward which it moves in a necessarily dialectic pattern and in an upward spiral trajectory.

takes place in finite time, yet, it “does not bear the burden of time, does not record time’s irreversibility [...and] completely ignores what is especially characteristic and decisive in a consciousness of time” (86); the storyteller exists in an enduring present. Transformed into somebody different by his experience, the mariner repeats, as it were, the gestures of another, his former self, and through this repetition, he lives always in an atemporal, permanent present. In continuously retelling his story, he repeats the cyclical regeneration of time in which everything is but the repetition of the same original archetypal tale.

The mariner’s story of unrelenting suffering itself imitates and acquires greater meaning in relation to the myths of Prometheus and Sisyphus, which are themselves allegorical models of the regeneration of time and the ordeals that accompany the acquisition of knowledge or the unveiling of falsehood. The mariner is cursed to repeatedly endure the agonizing compulsion to relate his tale so he may experience a temporary respite from his suffering only to have to repeat his tale again to assuage his constantly renewed agony. Yet, his fate makes him a sort of prophet, who must endure his trials through eternity, therefore himself becoming a paradigm for the renewal of time and the suffering that befalls humans on the path to enlightenment. He becomes akin to, “The journeying Moon, and the stars that still sojourn, yet still move onward” (“The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” 264), eternally repeating the story of their journey through the sky.²⁰⁰ The mariner experiences the changeless cycle of the stars, of day and night, of life and death. Even as the days pass, the past repeats itself in nature, in the ritual tasks performed by the sailors in death as in life. The mariner witnesses this eternal return, and he himself enacts, like

²⁰⁰ In *The Flame of Eternity*, Michalski echoes Coleridge’s image:

The regular movement of the stars, always the same [...]. The changeless cycle of life, day and night, birth and death, and again from the beginning, day and night, birth—nature seems to lack time, or at least to lack irreversible time: after the future (night), the past (day) comes back to us, now the past, now the future, night and day, day and night, undeviating. [... Nature] is always the same, infinitely repeated gestures, forms, and figures, a *ritual* dance in which nothing new can happen. ‘In nature there is nothing new under the sun,’ Hegel writes. ‘Changes in the world of nature—infinately varied as these might be—reflect nothing more than an eternally repeated cycle. (151-2)

the celestial entities, the repetition of time in eternity through his endless retelling of these acts of repetition within his repeating narration. He himself becomes the paradigm that ensures their continuance.

“Every ritual has a divine model” (21), and thus the enactment of rituals becomes a way of emulating what was done for the first time by a god, ancestor, or hero and which humankind repeats “again and again and again” (Eliade 22). The marriage ceremony is one such example as it “reproduces the hierogamy” or the divine “union of heaven and earth” (23). The marriage setting of the poem is significant as it enacts through human ritual precisely this attempt “whose end is the restoration of integral wholeness” (24). “The coming of the new heaven and new earth is signaled by the marriage between Christ and the heavenly city, his bride. [...] The longing of mankind for apocalypse is appropriately expressed as an urgent invitation to the wedding” (NS 42). The mariner disrupts the earthly wedding to draw attention to the need for a spiritual one, or to allow for the physical one to be rightly a symbolic ritual for a holy union, for the soul’s connection with God, for the mind’s union with nature. In “Dejection: An Ode,” Coleridge expresses how the union of mind and nature will yield a new heaven and a new earth: “From the soul itself must issue forth / A light, a glory” [...] / “Which wedding Nature to us gives in dower / A new Earth and new Heaven” (53-4, 68-9). Kessler explains, “True Being appears when God’s light, shining in and through nature, *marries* the light that comes from within man” (94). This is the hope Coleridge imagines for his child’s future in “Frost at Midnight”; this is the true marriage the wedding guest must seek in “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.”²⁰¹

²⁰¹ Francis Bacon, another of Coleridge’s intellectual and spiritual influences, also describes the fall as a divorce between mind and nature and the goal of existence as the re-union of “the mind and the universe, the divine goodness assisting, out of which marriage let us hope (and be this the prayer of the bridal song) there may spring helps to man, and a line and race of inventions that may in some degree subdue and overcome the necessities and miseries of humanity” (Bacon 22-3). Similarly, Schelling describes humankind’s fall as a breaking away from nature and its redemption as a conscious reconciliation of mind with nature.

The mariner thereby also awakens in the *reader's mind* the true meaning of the earthly wedding ritual. The circular wedding ring is another symbol of unity and eternity, and through the ritual of marriage, the symbol is exchanged and passed on, repeated from one generation to the next, as a symbolic preservation of the eternal. Also, in the Bible, Jesus is often referred to as the groom and his flock the bride, and their union is described as the act of becoming one body, one soul, and one life. The wedding ring symbolizes this unity, the union of humanity with God, of time with eternity. In this context, the kirk is also an important symbol because it is “traditionally constructed in the form of a cross, and the nave, where the worshippers congregate, symbolizes a ship bearing souls to Christ” (Fontana 126). The kirk and the mariner’s ship become analogous representations; both mirror each other’s symbolic role of enlightening its occupants and conveying souls home and to God. Furthermore, the act of congregating and worshipping is a ritual repeated every Sunday, and it becomes a symbolic re-enactment within finite time of the return of the soul to God after death or, in metaphysical terms, of emanated spirit in creation to the oneness of universal spirit. That is, while spirit in creation is continually returning to its source from which emanates new modes of spirit, spirit in humankind re-enacts this cosmic process in life as a way of maintaining its connection to the eternal and infinite “one Life.” Thus, in advocating the spiritual and eternal meaning of the wedding ritual, the mariner serves his archetypal role as not only an enlightened preserver of the divine ritual, but also, through his experience at sea of universal oneness through love, he becomes its very embodiment.

Through his tale, the mariner warns against being seduced by the petty and fleeting pleasures of society that distract humans from seeking a lasting and meaningful connection with God, which is to be achieved through communion with the natural world and, through it, the

eternal realm of spirit. Nature is not only the medium for spirit's actions but also the field for humankind's spiritual development. While society's rituals are meant to bring humans in touch with the spiritual realm, instead, they seem to distance humans from nature and spirit. Coleridge illustrates how the wedding celebrations, though couched in religious tradition, seem no longer the occasion for one's communion with spirit as they ought to be, but rather they are the cause of one's alienation from spirit in their promise of sensuous pleasures during the festivities. This is perhaps why the mariner singles out the wedding guest to instruct him on the true significance of the meaning of love and marriage, which is characterized by the reunion of mind and nature, humankind with God. As noted earlier, Coleridge's epigraph, however, describes that there is also a natural thirst in humans to seek answers concerning the "invisible natures [...] among the entities of the universe." He notes, "the human intellect has always tried to approach knowledge of these matters" so that it may present an "image of a greater and better world," so it may prevent the mind from limiting itself and sinking "completely into petty thoughts" and dealing solely with the mundane "daily occurrences of life" that distract the mind from striving for a nobler existence (*Poetical Works* 371). At the end, although the celebratory sounds of the wedding seek once again to impinge on the wedding guest's consciousness, he instead turns away from the festivities and leaves "a sadder and a wiser man" than he was earlier that day.

3.4 The Mariner's Transgression

While rituals that re-enact the eternal archetypes allow humans to experience eternity, breaking or violating the ceremonial procedure has powerful and decisive consequences that can redefine or realign the ritual's relation to the absolute. By killing the albatross and violating the ritual associated with the bird, the mariner ceases to participate in the eternal return through

ritualistic and repetitious acts and instead comes to embody the very act of eternal repetition itself. As a result of capriciously disrupting a holy ritual, he comes to resemble not an individual involved in spiritual seeking, desirous of communing and ultimately rising into eternity, but instead approaches an archetypal figure such as Prometheus.

Specifically, the mariner's suffering and enlightenment both occur when he violates an important ritual by killing the Albatross: "The Albatross did follow / And every day for food or play" returned to the ship (72-3). Every day the ritual is repeated: the bird circles above their ship and is offered food, and every day the ship steadily "returned northward through fog and floating ice." The mariner not only commits the ritual fault against the bird, which begins his trials on the road to enlightenment, but he also disrupts the ritual of the earthly wedding festivities by stopping the groomsman from attending the celebration. The guest is left discombobulated and wiser after he is denied the opportunity to enact the ritual. Like the mariner, he is delivered into a new paradigm of thinking, but both disruptions have widely differing consequences. By denying the guest the chance to participate in the adulterated wedding ritual, the mariner re-establishes in the guest's consciousness the true correlation between the archetype and its worldly, symbolic expression; he inaugurates a new and higher understanding of the ritual's significance as it relates to and serves as a mode of participation with the One.

In killing the Albatross, however, the mariner disrupts a spiritual ritual, perpetrating an act of defiance not only against the great "Spirit" who loved the bird, but also against the status quo and against the One.²⁰² In killing the "Christian soul" and savior of his stranded ship, the mariner disrespects the "law," commits a "ritual fault," and negates the disclosure of divinity. In this context, pain and suffering have meaning and purpose, for they become instruments of

²⁰² As noted before, "living in conformity with the archetypes amounted to respecting the 'law,' since the law was only a primordial hierophany, the revelation *in illo tempore* of the norms of existence, a disclosure by a divinity or a mystical being" (Eliade 95).

“purification and spiritual ascent” following the disobedience that results in the loss of original felicity (96). The ancient mariner’s existence, however, mocks the notion of a permanent salvation achievable through death because he cannot die; instead, he reinforces the idea of humankind’s belonging to an eternal return of the same, for, unless individuals can grow in knowledge and awareness by learning from examples such as his, they themselves risk being made into examples. Not only is the mariner’s journey circuitous, and not only is his journey eternally relived through his storytelling, but also his “reality is made, unmade, and remade in conformity with an immutable law” and permanence through Coleridge’s poem. The mariner becomes a living embodiment of the grand archetype, trapped in a never-ending cycle of repetition, unable to escape the act that binds him to it, for in the forced act of retelling his story, he must inevitably shoot the bird whose death condemns him to suffer and repeat the cycle in the first place.

Thus, in the mariner’s journey there is no growth or transcendence beyond what eternally recurs within the circuit.²⁰³ Nothing new ever really happens in the mariner’s existence; he becomes the living, finite embodiment of the cosmic paradigm in which “time, which is determined and measured by the revolution of the celestial spheres, is the moving image of unmoving eternity, which it imitates by revolving in a circle” (Eliade 89). His existence is the eternal recurrence of the cycle of falling into division and establishing communion again with

²⁰³ It is akin to Henri-Charles Puech’s description of the traditional notion of eternal return in “La Gnose et le temps” as a trajectory whose internal motion and progress are continually and endlessly reset.

The circular movement that ensures the maintenance of the same things by repeating them, by continually bringing back their return, is the most immediate, the most perfect (and hence the most nearly divine) expression of that which, at the pinnacle of the hierarchy, is absolute immobility. According to the celebrated Platonic definition of time, which is determined and measured by the revolution of the celestial spheres, is the moving image of unmoving eternity, which it imitates by revolving in a circle. Consequently all cosmic becoming, [...] not only is the same sum of existence preserved in it, with nothing being lost and nothing created but [...] the same situations are reproduced that have already been produced in previous cycles and will be produced in subsequent cycles—*ad infinitum*. No event is unique, occurs once and for all (for example the condemnation and death of Socrates), but it has occurred, occurs, and will occur, perpetually; the same individuals have appeared, appear, and reappear at every return of the cycle upon itself. (Eliade 89)

spirit or the “one Life,” personifying the very model of the traditional concept of the “eternal return.” Hence, through the act of endlessly telling and retelling his life, he becomes an enactment of eternity; he becomes timeless. That is, the eternal repetition of the cycle of his existence (i.e. finite time) becomes the image of “absolute immobility” or of the timelessness of the One in which time and eternity are each other’s image, where eternity is given expression through time and time through eternity. It is important to remember, in Coleridge’s conception, that while God as absolute remains beyond creation, the one Life is not a reality beyond creation, but it is an everywhere. Therefore, creation and time are conceived as coexisting with and in relation to the eternal God.²⁰⁴

3.5 Being and Becoming: Eternity in Time

As introduced earlier, eternity consists of time and life; it is as such “ever-living” because there is a movement within it — namely “time” (and life within time) — beginning and ending in an eternally recurring pattern. Time itself, therefore, requires a process of regeneration for without this internal movement, patterns of a beginning and an end, there would be no reality or concept of time; everything would just be a constant stasis. “Being” exists because it manifests as “becoming,” and, as I shall elaborate, this is especially consequential for Coleridge; so too, eternity exists in relation to the endless patterns of repetition of finite time *as a result of* becoming. Therefore, eternity consists of being as becoming in time, and each exists because the

²⁰⁴ On this subject, the heavenly angels of the Bible occupy an interesting, liminal position in creation. Eliade explains that, as immortal beings, they “share in terrestrial Time, not only because they could appear to men within Time, but also because they were created and therefore, had their peculiar angelic fashion, a Before and an After” (70). The angel is a symbol, representing the synthesis of time and eternity, of the immutable and the mutable: “If God in his Eternity was the Immutable beyond and without Time, and if man in his tempus was the Mutable within a mutable and changing finite Time, then the angels were the Immutable within a changing, though infinite *aevum*” (70). The participation of “angelic spirits” in “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” is significant for, as Eliade notes, “the myths of many peoples allude to a very distant epoch when men knew neither death nor toil nor suffering and [...] the gods descended to earth and mingled with men.” However, this original felicity was lost as a result of a “ritual fault,” precipitated by an act of rebellion against the archetype.

other exists as a distinguishing concept and relation. All change and movement occur within the life of eternal being, within ever-living being. As an example of the archetype of the eternal return itself, then, “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” demonstrates this regeneration not only in the mariner’s retelling of his tale, but in the narrative itself surrounding the moment of the fateful ritual fault.

The ample fire imagery in “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” is especially significant to the notion of a return to *in illo tempore* or the state of original felicity and to the regeneration of time. The mariner beholds fire every day under the fiery sun’s eternally circuitous journey (the sun “peer[s] / With broad and burning face” (180) and every night under the moon’s eternally circuitous trajectory: “About, about, in reel and rout / The death-fires danced at night” (127-128). The ghost ship carrying Death and Life-in-Death also rides a “western wave [that] was all a-flame” (171); like the horsemen of the apocalypse, they have come to claim the living.

Heraclitus describes the world as being composed of fire that “by order of the destinies must one day burst into flame and consume itself; it would be reborn again one day” (Lukacher 1). Following the Heraclitean tradition, Nietzsche also describes the fundamental element of creation as an “ever-living” fire (8).²⁰⁵ The world is ablaze after the mariner disrespects the archetype and commits a “ritual fault,” and it signals the destruction of the world as he knows it and the regeneration of a new time. The reanimation of the dead sailors enacts the archetype in which “the dead shall arise” amid all the fire imagery. Porphyry notes that “[Pythagoras] taught

²⁰⁵ “This cosmos [...] always has been and will be fire ever-living, kindling itself in measures, and quenching itself in measures” (Quoted in Lukacher 8). In ancient philosophy Heraclitus’s conceives of a universal conflagration and Pythagoras describes the “great year” or “Metakosmesis” as the completion of a grand cosmological cycle, when all celestial bodies of the universe will return to their original state. Similarly, Nietzsche’s Anaximander announces, “even now fire is destroying your world; [...] But ever anew, another such world of ephemerality will construct itself” (14). These concepts are similarly reconfigured in the Judeo-Christian tradition, which proclaims how fire will renew creation and a new world will arise “free from old age, death, decomposition and corruption, living eternally, increasing eternally, when the dead shall rise, when immortality shall come to the living, when the world shall be perfectly renewed” (Eliade 124). William Blake, too, affirms, “The ancient tradition that the world will be consumed in fire [...] is true” (“Marriage of Heaven and Hell” Plate 14 E38 in *Blake’s Poetry and Designs*).

that the soul is immortal, and that after death it transmigrates into other animated bodies” (1).

This description is re-enacted by the spirits inhabiting the bodies of the sailors; the souls leave their bodies and spirits return and animate the corpses. This movement plays out, as a microcosmic repetition, as the re-enactment of a cosmic ritual, the universal process of the emanation and return of spirit in the eternal “intercirculation of Deity” (*OM* 206), which assures the continuous generation and regeneration of time in eternity.

The idea of an immortal fire as the fundamental essence of all things raises questions concerning the relation between time, life, becoming, and eternity. “The ever-living fire of time and becoming lives its life and dies its death like a living being. The antimony of this paradox is that the ever-living survives by dying, by suspending itself” (10). This echoes Coleridge’s concept of the individual’s relation to the universal spirit, namely that the finite and infinite each exists because of the other. The individual’s being is both “mortal” through its becoming, and “eternal” in its belonging to the totality of being.²⁰⁶ The immortal soul is the element of being in each entity, and though all entities are born, grow old, and die the souls return to their source and are continually being born.²⁰⁷ Coleridge affirms that the soul is our true being, and that if life’s purpose is to manifest the highest good, then being entails a becoming that is evolving. The human is indeed a “progressive being” who develops toward “continued amelioration and refinement” (*LL*, II, 193) to ultimately “evolve the process of eternal good” (“The Destiny of Nations” 259). If life is evolving, then being evolves too.

²⁰⁶ This notion is similar to Pythagoras’s conception of the cyclical system of recurrence in which nothing is permanent in time because everything changes in the process of becoming. Only “Being” is constant, permanent, and unchanging. Becoming occurs within Being, and, hence, becoming and change occur within an all-encompassing sameness and permanence. Pythagoras states, “Be sure there’s nothing perishes in the whole universe; it does but vary and renew its form. What we call birth is but a beginning to be other than what one was before; and death is cessation of a former state. Through, perchance, things may shift from there to here and here to there, still do all things in their sum total remain unchanged” (quoted in Lukacher 40). Being, the essence of all things, is constant, and the entire system, encompassing change, is constant.

²⁰⁷ Porphyry notes that “[Pythagoras] taught that the soul is immortal, and that [...] all animated beings are kin, he taught, and should be considered one great family” (quoted in Lukacher1).

In Parmenides's philosophy, because "Being" is beyond time and change, it is timelessly ever-present, eternally existent. It is eternal and therefore beyond any effect of time, for just as finite being is derived from "Being," time is derived from "Eternity." In the context of Coleridge's philosophy, God is the eternal and infinite absolute, whose being and perfection remain beyond time, change, and becoming, and so God as he is in-himself is also beyond conception. Yet, as universal spirit's process of becoming in creation, all individual manifestations of spirit derive their being from the universal spirit and can hence experience and contemplate their intrinsic connection with God.²⁰⁸ Just as imagination, reason, and love are God's essence and action in all things, according to Coleridge, all different modes of perception, creation, and contemplation are really actions of the infinite and eternal I AM. Here, Coleridge rescues finite and ephemeral individuality from losing all significance in relation to God's perfection. Each individuation is unique, and yet each is such that it allows the individual to conceive the I AM in action, and through the individual, God as spirit can perceive itself.²⁰⁹ Furthermore, according to Coleridge, while the individual embodies being's becoming, art expresses this synthesis. As discussed earlier, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is one such example.

²⁰⁸ Plato conceives of a space between "Being" and beings, and hence, "Being" and beings are located at different sites, *notionally*. The difference of location allows us to posit a conceptual distinction between "Being" and beings so as to, ultimately, entertain this duality, though only notionally and not as a real distinction. Similarly, Hegel notes that in Schelling's conception, the difference between "Being" and beings is a difference of position, but that this distinction is not truly a difference because their relative positions are a relation of essence, for everything contains the same essence of "Being."

²⁰⁹ In *Nietzsche: The Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, Martin Heidegger's Nietzsche explains, "to stamp Becoming with the character of Being [...] is the supreme will to power," which is to "imprint the emblem of eternity on our life" (201-2). That is, Nietzsche endows our beingness, which has the character of becoming, with the quality of eternal being. All becoming is a movement that arises from being and proceeds towards being, originating and occurring within being. Hence, although becoming implies "impermanence," its quality of "being" makes becoming a permanent impermanence: "Not that one must brush aside and replace Becoming as the impermanent—or impermanence is what Becoming implies—with Being as the permanent. The sense is that one must shape Becoming as Being in such a way that as becoming it is preserved [...]. Such stamping, that is, the recoinning of Becoming as Being, is the supreme will to power" (201-2). Heidegger concludes, if we recognize ourselves as essence, we understand that we will never come to an end; we realize our immortality.

The ritual fault of killing the Albatross thus starts a new cycle, a new time that thereafter is continually reset within the eternity of the tale. After the mariner blesses the snakes, the rain extinguishes the all-consuming fire; his act of devotion initiates the restoration process that allows for the creation of new forms to replace the old. Rain symbolizes purification and renewal; it is the life-creating and life-sustaining element, which animates and resurrects the mariner. It also re-animates the dead sailors, and their resurrection conforms to the traditional description of the end of time and return to a primordial chaos where new time begins again: “All barriers between the dead and the living are broken, and the primordial chaos is reactualized” (Eliade 62). However, the sailors are reanimated not by their own souls, but rather by “a troop of spirits blest.” This detail is significant because the loss of their “historical individuality” allows for their “reidentification with the impersonal archetype of the ancestor” (47), which signifies their return to the timeless spirit, the origin of their ephemeral identities, the source of the eternal recurrence of creation, and the place of the journey’s inception in the infinite “co-eternal intercirculation of Deity” (*OM* 206).

Furthermore, at dawn, the spirits, having left the sailors’ bodies, fly “around, around” (355), thus creating their own circles and repeating the circular pattern in the sky created by the Albatross. The spirits and the bird mirror each other’s actions; their repeated circular motion generates the symbol of infinity, eternity, and the eternal return. Their circuitous course also mirrors the movement of the celestial bodies that enact the natural ritual of eternal renewal by bringing back night and day. The Albatross, the spirits, sun, moon, and stars establish the course representing “the moving image of unmoving eternity, which [they imitate] by revolving in a circle” (Eliade 89). That is, their trajectories establish the symbols of self-contained unity and absolute immobility that are, paradoxically, only brought about and maintained through

perpetual movement. All these circular trajectories symbolically re-enact the mariner's own circuitous journey from and back to his home country and of spirit's emanation and return to its source. The circular track, continuously returning upon itself, portends the eternal re-enactment of the mariner's journey from "self-unity [...] through multiplex self-consciousness back to self-unity" (NS 215) through the perpetual telling and re-telling of his tale. They perform "the circular movement that ensures the maintenance of the same things by repeating them, by continually bringing back their return" (Eliade 89). Since these spirits are not "souls of the men [...] but] a blessed troop of angelic spirits sent down by the invocation of the guardian saint" from heaven, they thus represent literal examples of the descent and return of "spirit." Also, the word "invocation" itself evokes and reinforces the concept of ritual that is driving the whole production of life and time in eternity.

Also in ancient tradition, the eternally recurring cosmic drama is compared to a game of dice, here in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" played between Death and Life-in-Death, where everything is left up to chance, where no meaning exists, where the same game is played over and over again endlessly and without purpose. Friedrich Nietzsche comes close to this idea when he states, "in the *great dice game of existence*, [...] a circular movement of absolutely identical series [...] has already repeated itself infinitely [...] and it] plays its game *ad infinitum*" (*Will to Power* 549). Nietzsche's will to power is embodied in Heraclitus's cosmic child who plays his game of dice without any attachment to the results.²¹⁰

²¹⁰ Indeed, Nietzsche's will-to-power is not purposeful, but it simply is and does:

This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence [...]. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned upside down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust! (*Gay Science* 101)

In the traditional notion of eternal return, the inter-circulation of being occurs in a self-contained loop, which is always reset, and which follows a continuously self-revolving and self-repeating trajectory. The mariner enacts this archetype through the retelling of his story. After inexplicably “disrespecting the ‘law,’” he is caught in a vortex that does not deliver him from time. However, through him and his ritualized storytelling, individual auditors are brought into his sphere and, therefore, commune with the eternal, for through the mariner, eternity is brought into time. Specifically, the eternal return of time is repeated in his single life, demonstrating the possibility of the ultimate unity of spirit both moving through time as it progresses and remaining timeless and absolute.

Thus, in Coleridge’s metaphysics, the eternal and infinite recurrence of spirit, by which the eternal fountain of spirit incessantly pours out ephemeral echoes or mirrors of itself into creation, repeating eternally the act of producing individuals who represent spirit to itself through its otherness, is juxtaposed in “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” with the traditional theory of the eternal return. Coleridge’s idea of the eternal and infinite recurrence forms part of spirit’s journey in which spirit is ever in the process of re-presenting itself more completely and diversely through the collectivity of unique individuals progressing in different configurations through time; with each generation, individual manifestations repeat the journey of consciousness at greater levels of awareness, for, at each new beginning, the lessons of the past are retained and further developed. However, the mariner’s unchanging fate appears to refute this central tenet of the progress of spirit towards its self-revelation as it appears elsewhere in Coleridge’s writings. In “Frost at Midnight” for example, Coleridge envisions his son’s spirit as an extension of his own, a realization that results from, while it simultaneously reveals and confirms, the divine blueprint of spirit’s self-seeking in nature whose ultimate function is to

approach unity with the “Almighty Spirit.” The mariner, though, cannot progress in time, which seems to contradict Coleridge’s own vision of spirit’s progressive journey and the role of the individual in relation to that collective journey. The mariner, however, I have argued, ceases to be an individual as such. Rather, he becomes the embodiment of the archetype of the eternal return. He serves a purpose in allowing his auditors, and ourselves as readers of Coleridge’s poem, to gain an understanding of the lessons of love, the dangers of violating sacred rituals, and experiencing eternity through his timelessness. His recursive storytelling becomes an instrument that *serves* spirit’s circuitous, *progressive* journey when individuals gain knowledge by interacting with him. The poem thus reveals that, in Coleridge’s vision of spirit’s journey and God’s self-revelation, a set of endless cycles coexists with and serves as symbols that contribute to spirit’s self-education.

Conclusion

As a work of art and a representation of an archetype that illustrates the relationship between eternity and time, being and becoming, “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” is not a complete betrayal of the possibility of progress. It is instead the expression of spirit’s self-representation. The poem, as a work of art, encapsulates the mariner’s story which itself contains his act of eternal repetition. As discussed in previous chapters, a work of art captures the artist’s own spiritual quest to achieve oneness and unity. In the act of writing “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” Coleridge attempts what Abrams calls the “quest to achieve, in a temporal and mutable medium, the perpetual motion-in-stillness of ‘the form, the pattern’ which is the perfected work of art. The entire poem, therefore, in its constitution as in its subject matter, is the search for that condition in which the conflicting contraries of temporal experience are reconciled in a timeless

experience” (NS 320). Coleridge’s quest to achieve permanence coincides with the act of writing the poem in which the poet’s task is mirrored in the mariner’s own saga. Furthermore, Coleridge’s represents “the cultural history of mankind, in the recurrent Romantic apologue of the circular educational journey, as man’s quest for unity between his mind and nature” (269). Abrams notes, “the Mariner’s experience [is] an instance of the Christian plot of moral error, the discipline of suffering, and a consequent change of heart. The literal voyage, then, is also a spiritual journey” (273).

Abrams adds that Coleridge’s understanding of humankind’s fall into “division and isolation and of redemption as a reconciliation, together with his related conception of the circuitous movement of the organizing imagination and the circular shape of an organic poem, are consonant with the subject matter, imagery, and ordonnance of a number of his own writings” (NS 272). For instance, Abrams describes the circular structure of Coleridge’s conversation poems:

The speaker begins with a description of the landscape [...which] evokes a varied but integral process of memory, thought, anticipation, and feeling which remains closely interwoven with the outer scene. In the course of this meditation, the lyric speaker achieves an insight, faces up to tragic loss, comes to a moral decision, or resolves an emotional problem. Often the poem rounds upon itself to end where it began, at the outer scene, but with an altered mood and deepened understanding which is the result of the intervening meditation. (CB 77)

Like the conversation poems, the circular structure of “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” which also loops back upon itself and ends where it began, evokes the image of the ouroboros, the tail-biting serpent, and Coleridge description of the eternal act of divine creation and the eternal

return and recurrence of spirit. Following the divine paradigm of creation, the poem as a finite expression therefore represents “the nearest analogue in the finite world to ‘the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM’” (*CB* 24). The eternal act of telling and retelling of the tale is captured in the finite and temporal world. Art houses time and eternity, being and becoming, and represents the medium that can express this truth.” “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” therefore embodies these cyclical journeys. The mariner’s rituals and violation of the “law,” bring time and eternity together, with the mariner acting as timeless archetype, teacher to those in the poem’s world hear his tale and to readers of Coleridge’s poem; the poem itself, as Coleridge’s own art, is itself a creative expression, a repetition of the eternal act of creation.

The achievement of this ever-increasing knowledge and ultimate salvation through spiritual unity is not guaranteed, as the mariner demonstrates; however, the enactment of rituals of the cycles of the eternal and infinite recurrence of spirit along with those of the eternal return or repetition of time, create the mechanism for God’s self-revelation. I have argued that God’s creative process, as the master blueprint, is replicated in nature’s processes, in human thinking and consciousness, and in human creativity. Our recognition of this cyclical course of emanation and return in nature and in human life is precisely spirit’s recognition of its own journey occurring in all things and at all levels of its emanation. The signature of all things and all processes is therefore spirit’s self-seeking, which is endless because it is an eternally recurring part of the “co-eternal intercirculation of Deity.”

CONCLUSION

Coleridge covered a remarkably wide range of subjects and disciplines and was informed by his extensive study of the history of Western thought. Indeed, embodying the role of a philosopher-poet was essential to Coleridge's self-identification as a serious artist and intellectual. This project has demonstrated how Coleridge develops and defines his unique individuality through his conscious aspiration to distinguish himself as a philosopher-poet by attempting to articulate his own all-encompassing system. Coleridge's keen understanding of the mind's role in creating knowledge is informed by his extensive knowledge of German idealist philosophy. In addition to some reference to Hegel's works, which notable critics like Paul Hamilton and Thomas McFarland have claimed should inform readings of Coleridge, I have primarily analyzed texts by Coleridge's major influences, including Kant, Schelling, Schlegel, and Schiller, in order to place Coleridge in the proper intellectual context. My analysis of these philosophers' works sets the philosophical frame for my discussion of the development of Coleridge's subjectivity through artistic expression. That is, my study illustrates the individual's relationship to universal spirit, using Coleridge himself as a focal point and German philosophy's conception of the development of consciousness and the theory of organicism as frameworks.

Coleridge progressively attains a greater understanding of his developing self-consciousness and intellectual powers through self-writing; this activity, I argue, mirrors a universal process of humankind coming to a better awareness of itself throughout history. I conclude that Coleridge's writing reveals that the macrocosmic and microcosmic processes are organically interrelated, interdependent, and symbiotic. I argue further that the organic interrelationship between the poet and his poem is a microcosmic analogue of the interrelationship between the individual and the universal spirit. I demonstrate this by examining

Coleridge's prose and poetry, in which he defines his self in relation to his faith, philosophical convictions, experiences in nature, and poetic articulations. The process by which he develops his theories on poetry, art, and life is simultaneously a process of self-discovery.

His poetic accounts of the discovery of his mind's powers through his interactions with the natural world reveal nature to be a conscious guide and communicator of God's ideas; everything in the universe is understood and experienced as being interdependent, interrelated, and interconnected by a sacred spiritual element. Nature allows Coleridge to experience this common, unifying spirit or divine essence operating in all things, and his meditations upon his experiences shape his relationship with and understanding of God and the universe. He discovers an underlying kinship, compatibility, and fundamental unity of mind and nature.

Coleridge's quest for communion with God leads to the discovery that the universe is an organic whole consisting of interrelated parts that are wholes in themselves. He also discovers that the forms in nature comprise a sacred, symbolic language through which God communicates his ideas and through which God can be comprehended. Furthermore, Coleridge affirms that the divine can be contemplated through poetry and art, through philosophy and religion, and through reason and imagination, for indeed, as the Romantics realize, the mind's powers are nature's highest expression. In fact, Coleridge notes, "Man separates from Nature only that Nature may be found again in a higher dignity in the Man" (*CL*, IV, 769). The mind distinguishes itself from nature only to discover nature or spirit working through the mind.

As I have demonstrated, Romantic Organicism illustrates humankind's interconnectedness with nature. Modern Ecocriticism analyzes how writers draw meaning from, assign value to, and define their relationship to nature through their experiences and interactions with the natural world. Coleridge, on the other hand, expresses a more "Ecotheological" view

within Organicism—namely that nature, as God’s creation, reveals the character of the divine artist. This reading elucidates our understanding of Coleridge’s views on the interrelationship between humankind, nature, and God. Through his interactions with nature, he is able to experience the spirit that connects all things. Nature is perceived as manifesting the divine, and all life is the gradual revelation of spirit’s immanence.

Through his poems, Coleridge observes “the flux and reflux” of his conscious mind and ventures “into the twilight realms of consciousness” pursuing his “deep interest in the modes of innermost being” (*BL*, II, 147).²¹¹ Coleridge explains that for self-consciousness to emerge “there must be Reflection—a turning in of the Mind on itself. In order to be a Subject, the conscious Percipient and Appropriator of outward Objects, it must have been made itself an Object for itself—for so only can it know itself to be a *Subject* relatively to all else” (*CL*, V, 517).

Ultimately, Coleridge discovers that true self-knowing, however, comes with the awareness that the individual is a “subject” evolving to an awareness of his own divine nature and intrinsic kinship with the spiritual universe or God “in whom we live, and move, and have our Being” (*CL*, II, 893).²¹² The “I am” of his finite self-consciousness evolves to an awareness of himself as the infinite “I AM,” for Coleridge discovers that his being is not only a manifestation of the infinite I AM, but that his being is a finite reflection that contributes to and ascribes the quality of infinity to the eternal I AM: “We begin with the *I KNOW MYSELF*, in order to end with the absolute *I AM*. We proceed from the *SELF*, in order to lose and find all self in God” (*BL*, I, 256).

The self in recognizing its true being simultaneously recognizes the need for the “other;” nature

²¹¹ Ralph Waldo Emerson, a self-professed disciple of Coleridge, observes that in fact “the key to the [entire Romantic] period appeared to be that the mind had become aware of itself. Men grew self-reflective and intellectual. There was a new consciousness” (326).

²¹² Coleridge realizes that his phenomenal being is merely the shell that allows him to experience a God to whom he owes his being; that is, his experience of existing as a separate entity allows him to distinguish between two selves, the phenomenal self, linked to his body and ego, and the abstract self, his spirit, soul, and life, linked to the universal “one Life.”

is his “other” in the same way his separate individuality gives the infinite “I AM” its character. Through self-reflection, the self becomes its own other and finally realizes that all manner of “othering” occurs within the same infinite and eternal subject.

McNiece remarks, “one may indeed have a sense of remembrance of that original unity of nature and the soul accompanied by the feeling that all antithesis is only apparent and entities are united by the harmony of love” (32). Hence, Coleridge and Schelling envision true knowledge as a return to a unity between mind and nature while preserving individuality, or as the achievement of the coexistence of subject and object, of form and matter, of the universal and the particular in the mind. Moreover, the individual’s awareness of his true self as being none other than the infinite I AM’s own self “othered” is achieved only by a highly enlightened consciousness. In this state the individual maintains his integrity as a self who is an other to himself and to the infinite I AM within whom his self is an other.

For this highest realization, the separation of subject and object is a beneficial limitation. Hence, when Coleridge perceives nature as “a symbolical language for something within me that already and forever exists,” his perception is accompanied by “an obscure feeling” that his observation of nature is actually a “dim awakening” of “a forgotten or hidden Truth” of his “inner nature” (*CN*, II, 2546).²¹³ The truth Coleridge refers to is the original and fundamental unity of subject and object, the kinship of mind and nature. Indeed, Coleridge finds Descartes’s dualism—the absolute division between mind and nature—unacceptable. His solution to the dualist dilemma is his conception of the absolute as a reality consisting of a unity in multiteity. Hence, Coleridge’s absolute “I AM” as a multiteity in unity and a unity in multiteity is precisely the

²¹³ This echoes Wordsworth’s experience: “I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature” (note to the poem “Intimations of Immortality”). Similarly, Shelley describes a state in which men “feel as if their nature dissolved into the surrounding universe, or as if the surrounding universe were absorbed into their being. They are conscious of no distinction” (“On Life” 174).

kind of richer identity of subject and object that Idealists sought as the foundation of knowledge. The self remains separate from nature only so it may realize its fundamental unity and kinship with nature: “all things shall live in us and we shall live / In all things that surround us.” This is humankind’s true spiritual condition “parts and proportions of one wondrous whole” (“Religious Musings” 25). The many are “still seen as the many” and the one is only experienced as a “whole” because it is “presupposed by all its parts” (TL 41-2). There is no absolute separation between self and nature. In fact, the illusion of an absolute “separation of mind from nature leads inevitably to the conception of a dead world in which the estranged mind is doomed to lead a life-in-death” (CB 96). Coleridge illustrates this grim reality through the ancient mariner’s trials, for it is his abrupt separation from nature through excessive self-assertion that brings life-in-death upon him. Hence, humankind and the universe are separate, though only conceptually, for one could not be “conscious” of their unity if one did not simultaneously maintain the awareness of this conceptual distinction. This idea characterizes the state of unity in multiteity, which Coleridge describes in his own terms through his poetry.²¹⁴ Coleridge concludes, “for of all we see, hear, feel, and touch,” ultimately brings us to the realization that “the life which is in us is in them likewise” (“On Poesy or Art” 259).

Coleridge then not only establishes this metaphysical conception, but ultimately presents it as a viable totalizing doctrine by demonstrating that, with the divine powers of imagination, reason, and love, it is possible to realize this ideal. He himself is able to attain a higher consciousness in which this principle of life attains its highest individuation—the perfect embodiment of “multiteity in unity”—and in which the principle of beauty finds its greatest

²¹⁴ Similarly, in “Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage,” Byron’s protagonist proclaims, “I live not in myself but I become / Portion of that around me; and to me, / High mountains are a feeling / [...] And thus I am absorbed, and this is life” (Canto 3, ll. 680-9). Keats describes himself as a “camelion poet [...] who] has no Identity—he is continually in for—and filling some other Body,” which describes his ability to completely merge his identity with such things as a sparrow, a nightingale, and a Grecian urn (Letter to Richard Woodhouse, October 27, 1818).

expression as a “unity of multiteity.” His consciousness upholds and celebrates the simultaneous multiplicity and unity of all things, and he describes how, through aesthetic education, human actions may express beauty, truth, and virtue. Coleridge’s body of work reveals him to be indeed a philosopher-poet.

In this project I have demonstrated a complex web of interrelated concepts at the heart of both my arguments about Coleridge and the poet’s own philosophy and works. I have organized the chapters in a way that presents my arguments and exposition in a logical progression. The divine attributes of love, reason, and imagination are in service of a spiritual intention in creation; the organic properties and forces are the *modus operandi* of a divine blueprint in all things that establish an interrelated analogy between God, creation, the individual, humankind, nature, and art. Since, according to Coleridge, human thinking is determined by the mind’s constitution that is fashioned by God, and because human consciousness emerges through the interaction with material reality that is God’s expressions, there is a spiritual intention guiding our knowledge of reality that ultimately leads to this precise realization. I have argued that he also believes that knowledge, as an interpretation of the world, is precisely what it ought to be based on God’s fashioning of all creation. Coleridge describes an analogy between nature and the poet’s consciousness; both manifest from the same source in the infinite I AM. Since spirit or God’s consciousness is expressed and embodied symbolically in nature, analogously, the poet’s consciousness is expressed in the symbolic language of his art. Therefore, Coleridge also establishes an analogy between nature and art; both are expressions of spirit or consciousness. These correlations reveal how the poet and his imaginative expressions are akin to or “repeat” the relationship between God and his creation. There is an analogy between the poet as a second maker and God as the first and ultimate creator.

Furthermore, the poet and his poetry are analogous expressions occurring within universal spirit for spirit's self-revelation. Therefore, the poet and his poem are both organic entities, created within the infinite I AM. As demonstrated in Chapter One, Coleridge illustrates how a poem is organically created and is itself like a living organism.²¹⁵ For Coleridge, God expresses himself in his creation, and all of nature is God's language. The poet is like God in that he creates a second nature according to the same organic pattern of operation that God uses to fashion the universe and the poet himself.²¹⁶ The description of a poem as a living entity is significant because the creation of the poem is a "repetition" of, that same informing of spirit into creation. The poet's process of creation and self-reflection is a microcosmic repetition of the infinite I AM's process of separation by embodying consciousness in external form. Through the natural or organic workings of the mind, the poet's consciousness is articulated and formed into symbols. Hence, as I have illustrated, the poem is to the poet as nature and the cosmos are to God. Consciousness is brought into matter in God's creation, and matter is fashioned into form and is raised to the level of consciousness in human artistic creation.

Every piece of art consists in the union of the universal and the particular, of form and matter, and embodies, as an individual manifestation, the union of the infinite and the finite, just as each individual human who creates art is an individual manifestation of the infinite in the finite resulting from "the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM" (*BL*, I, 304). Just as the poet is the highest individuation of spirit in nature, the poem is the expression, as the separation or objectification of the poet's consciousness, now informed in the concrete pages of a manuscript.

²¹⁵ Every part, like organs of a body, is integral, necessary, intimately related, and non-arbitrary. All parts unite around a governing idea, and the work as a whole grows organically from this innate principle. A seed contains the idea of a plant, which, according to Coleridge, is spirit's will-to-self-revelation; analogous to the growth of a plant, the idea unfolds and a poem takes shape around a central, unifying idea.

²¹⁶ Coleridge states in *The Watchman* that a poet's work is akin to a divine creation, and the poet develops "the powers of the creator, and by new combinations of those powers to imitate his creativeness" (132).

The symbolic language of poetry “repeats” the infinite I AM’s expression, of interfusing the universal with the particular, the infinite essence with the finite body. Poetry is a symbolic expression of “divine imagination;” it is therefore spiritual. Art is a fresh echo and image itself generated from an echo and image of God’s primal act of creation. Hence, art or a poem, as an expression of consciousness in symbolic language, is an individuation analogous to the artist who is an individuation and expression of consciousness or spirit. Both poet and poem are manifestations of spirit. Ultimately Coleridge’s philosophy reveals how there is an analogy between nature and the poet’s consciousness; between nature as the expression of divine consciousness and poetry (or art) as the embodiment of the poet’s consciousness; between the poet and the poem he produces and God and his creation; between the poet as an organic entity and the poem also as an organic entity; and between the poet as a creator and God as *the* Creator.

Coleridge, like Kant, Hegel, and Schelling, has a vision of humankind’s destiny in his own overarching philosophy. He describes humankind as nature’s highest achievement and as a microcosm containing all of nature’s successive stages of growth and complex forms: “At once the most complex and the most individual of creatures, man, taken in the ideal of his humanity, has been not inaptly called the microcosm of the world in compendium, as the point to which all the lines converge from the circumference of nature. This applies to his sum of being, to his powers collectively” (*PL*, II, 461). Humanity, however, Coleridge concludes, continues to evolve: “Then too shall we be in a state to which science in all its forms is gradually leading us; then will the other great Bible of God, the book of nature, become transparent to us, when we regard the forms of matter as words, as symbols, valuable only as being the expression, an unrolled but yet glorious fragment, of the wisdom of the supreme Being” (*PL*, II, 541). Coleridge reveals that the process by which nature and humankind have been evolving is mirrored in the

individual “taken in the ideal of his humanity;” both macrocosmic and microcosmic processes are analogous and interdependent.

The objective of *Naturphilosophie*, as articulated by Schelling, is to achieve the identity of mind and nature, and to Coleridge this identity would confirm and reveal the presence of God.

The theory of natural philosophy would then be completed, when all nature was demonstrated to be identical in essence with that which in its highest known power exists in man as intelligence and self-consciousness; when the heavens and the earth shall declare not only the power of their Maker, but the glory and the presence of their God.

[...] philosophy would pass into religion, and religion become inclusive of philosophy.

We begin with the I KNOW MYSELF, in order to end with the absolute I AM. We proceed from the SELF, in order to lose and find all self in GOD. (*BL*, I, 256)

The “I” returns from its illusory “empirical” state to a fleeting intimation of itself as the universal self, either as a notion through the process of self-reflection or as an experience of *ecstasis* that it achieves through its interaction with nature as a narrative creation. Coleridge’s recognizes his poems to be finite iterations of God’s creativity. Spirit’s *Bildungsroman* is mirrored in his own growing awareness of himself through his interactions with the world and with his poetic articulations. Coleridge’s act of composing a poem is simultaneously an act of self-reflection, and his poem chronicles his growing self-awareness through the very process of creating it. Since all spirit’s creativity is an act of self-seeking and self-discovery, Coleridge self-consciously perceives his own creative activity as part of this cosmic intention.

By closely examining the maturation of Coleridge’s philosophical consciousness through his prose and poetry, this project has illustrated how Coleridge draws meaning from his experiences and grows in self-knowledge through the process of writing and reflecting upon his

imaginative works. Through an analysis of Coleridge's philosophy, this study demonstrates how Coleridge's creative self-expression relates as it simultaneously reveals its analogous relationship to spirit's self-expression. Also, by exploring the dynamic tension between the individual and the whole, or the individual consciousness and its relation to the universal consciousness, I have focused on Coleridge's oeuvre first as a unique repetition of the universal spirit's primary act of creation then as a spontaneous inner drive of spirit's will-to-self-consciousness.

Following the divine paradigm of creation, the poem as a finite expression therefore represents "the nearest analogue in the finite world to 'the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM'" (*CB* 24). Although each poem is an expression of the infinite I AM, each represents a unique utterance. In "The Eolian Harp," Coleridge describes how the spirit of God animates nature and the human mind. In "The Lime-Tree Bower My Prison," God is shown to be manifest as spirit in creation and is veiled behind the material objects of nature. In "Frost at Midnight," we are shown how nature embodies the symbolic language of God's self-revelation, the *verba visibilia*. "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," like the three aforementioned poems, mimics in its structure and illuminates through its content, the "co-eternal "intercirculation of Deity" (*OM* 206). Since all creation is part of the "one Life," which is the spirit or God's consciousness, spirit comes to know itself through creation when humankind recognizes its own divine nature. Coleridge reveals that if imagination is the means by which the spirit in humankind perceives its true identity with universal spirit, love evinces their inherent unity. Through Coleridge's depictions of the powers of love, reason, and imagination, God's instruments of self-seeking in creation, I have illustrated how humankind has the tools necessary to evolve into a higher consciousness.

Coleridge's philosophical and religious conceptions articulate a path by which the individual can achieve these higher states of consciousness which, in his thinking, is also necessarily the awareness of God and the infinite, and the individual's place in it, as part of a multitude in unity. I focus on the concepts of time and repetition to illustrate the progressive yet cyclical journey towards this spiritual end. Humankind, as the collective of unique individuals, travels a road that leads to a state of conscious harmony with itself and the cosmos. Spirit's journey follows a circuitous or ascending spiral track along which particularized emanations of spirit grow to increasing levels of consciousness of themselves as unique individuals in their finite lifespans. As parts of the collective of humankind, each finite journey mirrors, while it is subsumed by and contributes to, the collective voyage. I have argued that God's creative process, as the master blueprint, is replicated in nature's processes, in human thinking, consciousness, and creativity. Our recognition of this cyclical course of emanation and return in nature and in human life is precisely spirit's recognition of its own journey occurring in all things and at all levels of its emanation. The signature of all things and all processes is therefore spirit's self-seeking, which is an eternally recurring part of the "co-eternal intercirculation of Deity" (*OM* 205-6).

This study has shown, then, that Coleridge's philosophical, poetic, and prose works, his breadth and depth of spiritual and intellectual exploration, and his own personal journey embodies what Coleridge himself articulates as, "the *evolution of the human mind* from its simplest state of information to the highest extent its faculties will reach" (*PL*, I, 321). He certainly attempted to put into practice his beliefs through his life, philosophy, and poetry, which represent his aspiration to achieve "a communion [...] an intellectual, a positive, possession of this Supreme Being which would supersede all knowledge" (*PL*, I, 321).

ABBREVIATIONS

Works by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

- AR* *Aids to Reflection. The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.* Vol. 9. Ed. John Beer. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- BL* *Biographia Literaria. The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.* Vol. 7. Ed. James Engell and W. J. Bate. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983.
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- LL* *Lectures 1808-1819 on Literature. The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.* Vol. 5. Ed. R. A. Foakes. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987.
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- M* *Marginalia. The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.* Vol. 12. Ed. H. J. Jackson and George Whalley. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999.

- OM* *Opus Maximum. The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Vol. 15. Ed. Thomas McFarland. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002.
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- TM* "Treatise on Method." *Shorter Works and Fragments. The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Ed. H. J. Jackson and J. R. de J. Jackson. Vol. 11. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995.
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