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"The New Poetic Power": The Imaginative Poetry of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

by

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Abbreviations used in References

BL-- Biographia Literaria-The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. James Engell & W. Jackson Bate, Princeton, 1983. Vol 7:I & 7:II.

DW-- Dichtung und Wahrheit, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, ed. Paul Robert Wilk, Insel, 1966.

RCA-- Romanticism Comes of Age, Owen Barfield, Wesleyan UP, 1986.

TT-- Table Talk-The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Carl Woodring, Princeton, 1990.

WCT-- What Coleridge Thought, Owen Barfield, Wesleyan UP, 1971.

Introduction

Traditional interpretors of literature might perceive little justification for discussing the poetry of the English Romanticist Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who lived from 1772-1834, in conjunction with that of the German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who lived from 1749-1832. While Coleridge is usually considered one of the most puzzling of all the Romantics, Goethe is generally regarded as a Classicist who wrote with remarkable clarity. Goethe's lengthy career, however, actually spanned a period of vast historical and corresponding aesthetic changes. Although he began composing for the Duke of Saxony under the existing patronage system, the disappearance of this system forced him to reevaluate his position as a poet. Coleridge began writing just as Goethe completed this transformation to a world in which he was no longer under the pressure of anyone but himself to compose; consequently, he could concentrate on establishing and developing this notion of an autonomous poet independent from society. These two authors of different cultures and generations, therefore, often address many of the same concerns about the poetic process as well as about poetry itself. The similarities which arise from their attempts to redefine poetry perhaps can disclose some of the most important traits of the Romantic mind and the creative process which it achieves.

If one studies the personalities of these two men, striking differences in demeanor quickly emerge. Goethe's personal and philosophic history, Dichtung und Wahrheit, portrays a man of the world extremely confident in his abilities and his work. On the other hand, Coleridge's comparable masterpiece, Biographia Literaria, depicts a man always struggling and never quite satisfied with his accomplishments. The careers of these two men certainly justify this impression. While Goethe served as a leading statesman and member of his society, Coleridge wandered about as a solitary poet who asserted "that it was best for me, to make or find my way of life a detached individual, a Terrae Filius" (qtd. in Holmes 2).

In Romanticism Comes of Age, one of the few books which discusses both of these men, Owen Barfield attempts to clarify many of the differences between the two by distinguishing the German mind and the English one:

> Whereas the English will do a thing half instinctively, and only really wake up to what they have done when it is all over, the Germans are much more conscious of their activity. They strive to be fully conscious of and to theorise about a thing actually while they are doing it.... It was so with the Romantic movement.... Goethe was a kind of prophet of Romanticism.... He not only sought for beauty, freedom and truth; he knew that he was seeking them (32-33).

The distinct plan throughout Dichtung und Wahrheit certainly provides a noticeable contrast to the apparently random meditations of Biographia Literaria, but this generalization proves deceptive for much of these men's poetic careers. Goethe

remains more systematic because he still operates within some of the old boundaries, whereas Coleridge enjoys the freedom to pursue any direction he chooses. In spite of this fact, however, both works consistently address the nature and role of art itself. Neither poet can simply compose; instead, each must consider his inspiration and state of mind while writing.

Coleridge actually introduces the Biographia with a quote from Goethe's Propyläen introduction about his role in instructing others through his writings. As he translates Goethe's comment:

> Little call as he may have to instruct others, he wishes nevertheless to open out his heart to such as he either knows or hopes to be of like mind with himself, but who are widely scattered in the world.... He wishes to spare the young those cicuitous paths, on which he himself had lost his way (3).

Coleridge's use of this quote suggests that the two poets shared many of the same concerns about the role of the artist. The poet, as both Goethe and Coleridge believe, wants to "open out his heart" to others to impart the wisdom which he possesses. As the work of each of these poets quickly reveals, each prescribes a new, romantic poetry to lead his readers away from the "circuitous paths" of poetry written under the old patronage standards.

Chapter One

The New Poetry:
The Union of Feeling and Intellect

The extensive attention given to the nature of poetry and of the poet in both <u>Dichtung und Wahrheit</u> and <u>Biographia Literaria</u> indicates that the desire to transform traditional poetic structure and give the word "poetry" a whole new meaning becomes one of the primary considerations of these poets. During this period in both Germany and England, numerous treatises attempting to redefine poetry appeared as emerging artists fought to alter a world still ruled by the rationalism of the Enlightenment. Basil Willey aptly describes the historical context: "The eighteenth century had reduced the universe to an assemblage of parts, the mind of man to an aggregate of sense-impressions, and poetry to a judicious arrangement of ready-made images culled from the memory" (11). Consequently, these poets rebel against the traditional constraints of such poetry, which they believe do not allow for adequate expression. As they do so, they recognize the importance of reflection as a means of investing their poetry with more of their own passion.

As a man of the previous generation, Goethe falls into this eighteenth century trap of inadequately inspired poetry at times in his early career. At the beginning of <u>Dichtung und Wahrheit</u>,

he relates many occasions on which he succombs to the old notions of patronage and readily composes a poem at another's request. Coleridge vigorously criticizes such poetry for its lack of real thought or feeling. In a conversation with Henry Crabb Robinson, he complains that Goethe does not live up to his potential as a great poet because he coldly and confidently writes to portray the "beautiful" which would appeal to society rather than to voice the passion which he possesses (2 Mar 1813, TT 572). This attack, however, ignores Goethe's own admission that "die Gedichte, die ich [früher]... verfaßt hatte... schienen mir kalt, trocken und... allzu oberflächlich" (DW 315). Such comments clearly indicate his increasing awareness that poetry cannot be inspired merely by another's suggestion.

His discovery that "die deutsche Literatur und mit ihr meine eignen poetischen Unternehmungen waren mir schon seit einiger Zeit fremd geworden" (DW 300) propels Goethe to analyze previous German poetry and to decide that most of it serves as a mere vehicle for pleasant words and phrases instead of as a means of expressing thoughts. The problem with this poetry, he argues in <u>Dichtung und Wahrheit</u>, is that it is "völlig prosaich... ohne Spur von Phantasie oder Wundersamen... Träume" (38). As this comment suggests, he recognizes the need for motivation beyond appealing language. He gradually comes to recognize that poetry can be a prime means of expressing innermost thoughts and reflections, and he understands that previous poetry does not fulfill this potential to be the voice of man's soul.

Although Goethe often pompously explains that words come easily to him, his poems increasingly occur only when he decides "alles in mir selbst zu suchen. Verlangte ich nun zu meinen Gedichten eine wahre Unterlage, Empfindung oder Reflexion, so mußte ich in meinen Busen greifen" (DW 255-56). He needs his poetry to be natural and in a sense inevitable, not something which he can achieve at whim or command. This recognition leads him away from the poetry which is accused of being superficial to compose at a more personal level. His poem "Willkommen und Abschied" arises out of this new-found attention to the self and one's own feelings in poetry. His passion becomes the center of the poem as he proclaims:

> In meinen Adern welches Feuer!
> In meinem Herzen welche Glut!

This necessity of finding the motivation to write from something that affects one internally rather than merely externally becomes one of the primary considerations in his new type of poetry.

His discussion in Dichtung und Wahrheit of the older German poets further reveals Goethe's increased attention to the inner, personal aspect of poetry rather than to its superficial qualities. He comments that one did achieve something when one "doch noch auf die Hauptsache stößt und die Darstellung der Sitten, Charaktere, Leidenschaften, kurz, des inneren Menschen, auf den die Dichtkunst doch wohl vorzüglich angewiesen ist... sich genötigt findet" (239). The beginning of "Neue Liebe Neues Leben" addresses this necessity of looking at the inner man:

> Herz, mein Herz, was soll das geben?

Was bedränget dich so sehr?
Welch ein fremdes, neues Leben!
Ich erkenne dich nicht mehr....
Weg dein Fleiß und deine Ruh-
Ach, wie kamst du nur dazu!

The opening questions immediately direct attention to the problems of the heart as the pressing issue becomes his effort to understand his intensely personal emotions.

As Goethe turns to his internal struggles even more, he employs a new method of composition in which, "Was mich betraf, so fuhr ich fort, die Dichtkunst zum Ausdruck meiner Gefühle und Grillen zu benutzen" (DW 484). The structures he chooses must correspond to the feelings he wishes to articulate. The irregular meter of the last two lines of "Wandrers Nachtlied I," for example, indicates his lack of peace as he enjoins:

Süßer Friede,
Komm, ach komm in meine Brust!

That this whole poem revolves around this plea illustrates the importance Goethe attributes to the effort to bring passion into his poetry. Since he cannot feel the peace he desires, the rhythm cannot be ordered and smooth. He refuses to be bound by convention, but instead allows himself the freedom to suit the rhythm to his feelings.

Gretchen's song at the spinning wheel in <u>Faust</u> expresses this same loss of inner peace in the words of an innocent country girl:

Meine Ruh ist hin,
mein Herz ist schwer;
ich finde sie nimmer
und nimmermehr (3374-77).

The rhythm of the poem captures Gretchen's own unrest as she unhappily spins her wheel. Consequently, this simple song demonstrates Goethe's continuing interest in the combination of the inner self and the outward expression which arises from it. As he clarifies his position:

> schon damals hatte sich bei mir eine Grundmeinung festgesetzt....Es war nämlich die: bei allen, was uns überliefert,.. komme es auf den Grund, auf das Innere, den Sinn, die Richtung des Werks an; hier liege das Ursprüngliche, Göttliche, Wirksame, Unantastbare, Unverwüstliche, und keine Zeit, keine äußere Einwirkung noch Bedingung könne diesem innern Urwesen etwas anhaben (DW 460).

He allows no outward pressures to interfere with this inner vision. After he develops this emphasis on expressing something original and intimate in poetry, it remains one of his primary goals.

In his old age, he affirms this principle of bringing together his feelings and his intellect even more directly in his poetry. The passion he requires leads to a heightened sense of awareness and excitement for all of his faculties, and each of these emotions requires a characteristic form for itself. He concludes "Dauer im Wechsel" with resounding praise of the proper use of these two in poetry:

> Danke, daß die Gunst der Musen
> Unvergängliches verheißt,
> Den Gehalt in deinem Busen
> Und die Form in deinem Geist.

The praise he offers the Muses for this great privilege hints at the immense difficulty which it often causes him and

simultaneously reveals his appreciation of the importance of both the heart and the mind.

Coleridge never needs this process of realization; his continual efforts to reconcile intellect with feelings always dictate the direction which his poetry assumes. He specifies the compromise he hopes to find by emphasizing the value of keeping "alive the *heart* in the *head*" (BL I 152). True poetry, he argues in the Biographia, should be written in a simple and natural manner which reflects a proper degree of deep thought rather than in an artificial form. "I sought for a subject, that should give equal room and freedom for description, incident, and impassioned reflections on man, nature, and society, yet supply in itself a natural connection to the parts, and unity to the whole" (I 195-96), he explains in reference to his choice of subject matter. He suffers his whole life from this overwhelming desire to write poetry which comes from his poetic soul rather than from any outside impetus.

He elaborates on this conviction that poetry must consist of the deepest thoughts expressed in the most fitting language in his chapter on "Poets of Past and Present" in the Biographia. The modern poet, he explains, focuses on

> new and striking IMAGES; with INCIDENTS that interest the affections or excite the curiosity. Both his characters and his descriptions he renders, as much as possible, specific and individual, even to a degree of portraiture. In his diction and metre, on the other hand, he is comparitively careless. The measure is either constructed on no previous system, and acknowledges no justifying principle but that of the writer's convenience; or else some mechanical movement is adopted, of

which one couplet or stanza is so far an
adequate specimen, as that the occasional differences appear evidently to arise from accident,
or the qualities of the language itself, not
from meditation and an intelligent purpose.
(II 29-30)

In contrast, during the ancient period the general impression rather than the specific was most important and "novelty of subject was rather avoided than sought for. Superior excellence in the manner of treating the same subjects was the trial and test of the artist's merit.... they placed the essence of poetry in the art" (BL II 32-33). While he praises some of the merits of each of these methods, he pronounces each ultimately inadequate because it fails to balance subjects which give rise to creative, internal images with carefully constructed means of expressing them. Coleridge insists that these two extremes be united in poetry that reveals the ideal combination of the two. This combination occurs when inspiration strikes the heart and then the head becomes the tool for expressing this internal stimulus.

The proper relationship between the head and the heart yields poetry of both emotional and literary pleasure. "Hymn Before Sun-rise in the Vale of Chamouni" illustrates the value of choosing a subject with opportunities for both intellectual and passionate expression. Coleridge ardently addresses the river and then exclaims:

> Awake, my soul! not only passive praise
> Thou owest! not alone these swelling tears,
> Mute thanks and secret ecstasy! Awake,
> Voice of sweet song! Awake, my heart, awake!
> Green vales and icy cliffs, all join my hymn.

As the poet tells his soul, he needs more than casual, uninvolved praise of his surroundings. His soul needs to actively engage itself with his subject so that all things around him can join with him to produce that "Voice of sweet song" so necessary for poetic creation.

Biographia Literaria clearly reveals the new poetic direction which Coleridge envisions. He complains in the chapter "Principles of Modern Criticism," for example, that critics attack "the defects of a poet, who with all the courage of uncorrupted youth had avowed his zeal for a cause" without considering "that he *preferred* careless and prosaic lines on rule and of forethought" (56) in order to maintain the vitality of diction which can be learned from the ancients. Coleridge objects to this criticism because it ignores his essential premise that the form should be dictated by the subject matter itself. This issue leads him to turn away from early mentors like Hartley because their mechanistic, deterministic views allow no place for the creative outpourings of the soul.

This new determination to bring together poetic form and emotional content helps explain the characteristic preoccupation with language in all of its forms which consistently appears in the work of both of these poets. Goethe relates his ability to learn a language without specific rules and concepts: "Ich übersprang die Grammatik sowie die Redekunst; mir schien alles natürlich zuzugehen, ich behielt die Worte, ihre Bildungen und

Umbildungen in Ohr und Sinn und bediente mich der Sprache mit Leichtigkeit zum Schreiben und Schwätzen" (DW 217). The repeated use of the first person in this passage signifies his placing of himself before the rules and indicates his belief that language should serve him personally rather than constrain him to certain forms. Furthermore, he intimately connects man himself with his language by asserting, "War der Mensch göttlichen Ursprungs, so war es ja auch die Sprache selbst, und war der Mensch, in dem Umkreis der Natur betrachtet, ein natürliches Wesen, so war die Sprache gleichfalls natürlich" (DW 366). The language we employ evidently should reflect something deep within ourselves. In fact, both man and his language have the same origins so that language not only reflects but actually springs from our own souls.

As he seeks to unify emotion with expression, Goethe recognizes the limitations imposed on him by the preexisting notions of poetic form and fights to rid himself of them. As a child reading his father's collection of inevitably rhyming poetry, for example, he complains that the grammar of these works does not appeal to him and that the rules appear laughable to him (DW 30). Since they do not suit him, he does not hesitate to change these rules in his own poetry. He justifies his refusal to adhere to convention by asserting that, "Für die Dichterkunst an und für sich hatte man keinen Grundsatz finden können: sie war zu geistig und flüchtig" (DW 237). As a tool for articulating emotions, a poem cannot be formulaic. His insistence that

subjects have their own distinctive form apart from any established tradition becomes another important trait of the Romantic poets as they refuse to limit themselves to inherited forms.

While Goethe matter of factly argues his point and alters his work accordingly, Coleridge seems to have an inner drive which forces him to rebel against all previous poetry. He concerns himself with language throughout the Biographia in his efforts to assert that the language of the heart must be translated into poetry by the head. Furthermore, he insists that there are "modes of expression, a *construction*, and an *order* of sentences, which are in their fit and natural place in a serious prose composition, but would be disproportionate and heterogeneous in metrical poetry; and vice versa" (BL II 64). Not only is language itself important, but also it must be determined by the specific purposes for which it is to be used.

When Coleridge praises two poets who "combined natural thoughts with natural diction...[and] reconciled the heart with the head" (BL I 25), this opinion arises from his deepest feelings. The idea that poetic form and content must fit together consumes all of his work. Later, he expresses this notion of poetry quite directly when he emphasizes that, "Could a rule be given from *without*, poetry would cease to be poetry, and sink into mechanical art" (BL II 83). When poetry becomes contrived, it cannot achieve its purpose. This view appears to

be the next step from Goethe's realization that poetry is too spiritual to have all of its groundrules laid.

Coleridge also insists that we must closely examine the position of poetry and free it from external restraints. Evidence of this appears when he describes his early schooling with his teacher Bowyer: "I learnt from him, that Poetry, even that of the loftiest and, seemingly, that of the wildest odes, has a logic of its own, as severe as that of science; and more difficult, because more subtle, more complex, and dependent on more" (BL I 9). This assertion can be better understood by recalling his crucial demand that poetry reflect the simplicity of the heart; it should express passion with a directness which never before existed in poetry. At one point he comes to a revelation similar to Goethe's earlier one and asserts in a letter to John Thewall that, "you will find much to blame in them [his poems]-- much effeminacy of sentiment, much faulty glitter of expression"[1] which he must strive to overcome. He seeks throughout his life to escape such conventional expressions which he feels can not arise from true experience or feelings of the soul.

This concern with expressing something personal in a form which then can be understood by others lies behind both of these men's ability to delight in and relate simple moments which all

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[1]A partial quotation in Holmes 115 referred me to this full quotation in Coleridge's letter of late April 1796 in Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs, Oxford, 1956.

men experience but few take the time to consider. As Goethe tells his history in Dichtung und Wahrheit, he frequently relates certain vivid incidents which he wants to preserve. He does so in order to explain his belief that "nichts, was die Errinerung eines glücklichen Moments zurückruft, unbedeutend sein kann" (204). Such comments establish his conviction that poetry can be found in everyday events; it does not require a grand tale of epic proportion. These assertions could easily have come from Coleridge as well, as he argues that poetry lives in all. Each feels driven to inquire into the nature of all and then express his feelings for his readers.

At least part of the secret behind these poets' ability to find poetry in all things arises from their capacity for viewing the world with fresh eyes. Goethe praises the childhood state of inquisitivenesss in Dichtung und Wahrheit:

> Das Kind, an und für sich betrachtet, mit seinesgleichen und in Beziehungen, die seinen Kräften angemessen sind, scheint so verständig, so vernünftig, daß nichts drüber geht, und zugleich so bequem, heiter und gewandt, daß man keine weitre Bildung für dasselbe wünsche möchte. Wüchsen die Kinder in der Art fort, wie sie sich andeuten, so hätten wir lauter Genies (66).

This eager probing conveys a degree of understanding so important that Goethe terms it "genius" to maintain it. Throughout his narrative, he relates events with the detail of a child examining everything for the first time. Furthermore, he consistently notes that his young curiosity will allow nothing to go unnoticed or uninvestigated (82). Only by looking at everything with no preconceptions can one achieve the poetry of the heart.

This same ability to see the world in an unconventional way also shapes Coleridge's creativity. He describes his youthful interest and delight in his surroundings often in the Biographia. When he recalls his trip to Germany, for example, he still remembers the details of the streets in Hamburg through which he wandered with a sense of freedom and fascination. "Through streets and streets I pressed on as happy as a child, and, I doubt not, with a childish expression of wonderment in my busy eyes" (BL II 178), he relates of his amusement. Even such apparently trivial things awaken his heart to new sensations.

The childlike inquisitiveness which both poets divulge seems a necessary part of the poetic process. Goethe consistently explains, "Ich bemühte mich, alles möglichst ins Auge zu fassen" (DW 186). An anecdote from Coleridge's childhood exemplifies this same frame of mind. Holmes in his biography of the latter explains, "When, at the age of two, he came to be inoculated, he howled when the doctors tried to cover his eyes. It was not the pain, but the concealment of the mystery which upset him" (2). Most people simply ignore such experiences, but for Coleridge everything offers a mystery to be investigated. This desire to observe everything remains with each poet throughout his life and appears to be a crucial characteristic of the romantic mind.

Each of these poet's wide range of interests beyond poetry also supports the necessity of curiosity in the poetic process. Indeed, in many circles Goethe is known first as a statesman or a scientist; likewise, Coleridge also is known as a critic and a

philosopher. Goethe gives an example of his scientific mind as he writes, "Schon seit meinen frühsten Zeiten fühlte ich einen Untersuchungstrieb gegen natürliche Dinge. [Ich Besass]... Neugierde, das zu Verlangen, zu erfahren, wie solche Dinge zusammenhängen" (DW 107). Coleridge's notebooks from his walks with Wordsworth contain similar types of analysis of the nature around him (Holmes). All of these studies testify to a desire not just to see but also to understand the mystery of the world.

This desire to investigate everything demonstrates that, although both of these poets believe that one must turn inside to find true inspiration, poetry cannot be purely personal. Goethe explains his desire "in Leben ein zweites Leben durch Poesie hervorzubringen" (DW 239), and he expresses this idea more directly when he asserts that "Dichterkunst sei Welt und Völkergabe, nicht Privaterbteil" (DW 368). The poet actually has a mission to explore and then reveal the truths he discovers to the rest of the world which lacks that creative gift. The poet, by turning inside himself and conveying these feelings in the proper diction, can express something which all of his readers will have experienced in one form or another.

Chapter Two

The Intimate Connection with Nature:
The Internal and External Worlds

The concept that the poet has a calling to write something personal which then can be translated to his readers helps explain the fascination which all of the Romantics felt for nature. The image of these solitary figures wandering about in the woods or the fields exemplifies their hope that nature will offer the contentment and harmony which often eludes them elsewhere in our modern world. Nature for these poets represents a force common to all men; it contains none of the social distinctions so prevalent in our usual lives. There seems to be something primitive and thus unchanging in man's link to nature which possesses a restorative power for the artist.

This confidence in nature as a redeeming force for all men leads Goethe to name it "unserer Abgöttin" (DW 444). "Mailied", one of his earliest Sturm und Drang poems, reflects this glorification of nature and its effect upon his poetic structure:

> Wie herrlich leuchtet
> Mir die Natur!
> Wie glänzt die Sonne!
> Wie lacht die Flur!
> (1-4)

The racing rhythm corresponds to his delight in nature and demonstrates how closely his own feelings are allied with his

surroundings. "Gewiß, es ist keine schönere Gottesverehrung als die, zu der man kein Bild bedarf, die bloß aus dem Wechselgesprach mit der Natur in unserem Busen entspringt" (202), he asserts in Dichtung und Wahrheit. Evidently, nature exists deep in our own souls as well as in the outward landscape. Consequently, it affords a means of perceiving this inherent poetry of the heart.

He states this attitude towards nature directly when he remarks, "Wo sollte man nun aber diese [poetischen] Bilder anders hernehmen als die Natur" (DW 238). "Natur" hear could refer to both the internal and the external nature. This dual meaning of the word indicates the essential link which man must form with his surroundings. The natural images which occur throughout "Mahometsgesang" reveal this intimate connection between the poet and nature as he explains:

> Bäche schmiegen
> Sich gesellig an. Nun tritt er
> In die Ebne silberprangend,
> Und die Ebne prangt mit ihm,
> Und die Flüsse von der Ebne
> Und die Bäche von den Bergen
> Jauchzen ihm und rufen: Bruder!

Nature not only inspires him, but even comes close to him for company. That these natural elements adopt him and jubilantly call to him as a brother signifies an almost human bond between them which reaches back to their births.

The beginning of "Ganymed" takes this connection with nature to an even greater extreme. He addresses the poem to "Frühling, Geliebter!" (3) and explains his feeling of intimacy:

Daß ich dich fassen möcht
In diesen Arm!

Ach, an deinem Busen
Lieg ich, schmachte,
Und deine Blumen, dein Gras
Drängen sich an mein Herz.
Du kühlst den brennenden
Durst meines Busens,
Lieblicher Morgenwind!
(9-17)

This idea that nature can be his loved one reveals an intimacy far greater than simple enjoyment of the outdoors. Goethe not only feels the earth around him, he actually wants to become one with it. Later, the poem is disrupted as he is forced away from his beloved earth and his peaceful reflections:

Ich komm, ich komme!
Wohin? Ach, wohin?
(20-21)

This break in the poem and the questions which replace the assertions demonstrate the confusion and loss he suffers as he confronts the difference between himself and the world of which he so evidently forms a part.

Goethe also realizes, therefore, that nature alone cannot bring security and the realization of one's dreams. In "Auf dem See" he delights in the comfort of his immersion in the outdoors:

Und frische Nahrung, neues Blut
Saug ich aus freier Welt;
Wie ist die Natur so hold und gut,
Die mich am Busen hält!

This pleasure cannot be sustained, however, and he must turn back to reality:

Aug, mein Aug, was sinkst du nieder?
Goldne Träume, kommt ihr wieder?
Weg, du Traum! so gold du bist;

Hier auch Lieb und Leben ist.

As the dream fades, he actually commands it to leave so that he can partake in the life around him. He understands that, although nature can bring delight, he cannot forget his own self in the world. If he loses his own identity by communing with nature, he will have failed to realize the essential relationship between the inner and outer natures.

Coleridge immediately senses that nature herself can teach him something about his own place in the world. That we constantly comprehend matters better when we commune with nature suggests an essential link between man and nature which must be investigated. "I love fields and woods and mountains with an almost visionary fondness--and because I have found benevolence and quietness growing within me as that fondness increased, therefore I should wish to be the means of implanting it in others" (10 March 1798; qtd. in Holmes 186), he writes to his brother George of his motivation. As with Goethe, nature here stimulates something which was already "growing within." It brings part of his inner soul to life, and he hopes to act in the same capacity as nature to achieve the effect of "implanting" life in his public through his poems.

Just as nature awakens an essential part of man, so too a man with the proper attitude can uncover buried wonders in nature. Coleridge praises Wordsworth's poetry because of

> the perfect truth of nature in his images and descriptions as taken immediately from nature.... Like the moisture or the polish on a pebble, genius neither distorts nor false-colours

> its objects; but on the contrary brings out many a vein and many a tint, which escape the eye of common observation, thus raising to the ranks of gems, what had been often kicked away by the hurrying foot of the traveller on the dusty high road of custom
> (BL II 148-49).

This close relationship discloses many of the gems not only in nature but also in man himself. By finding these gems, the poet brings something to the surface which people would overlook otherwise. He does not make up anything foreign; instead, he unearths beautiful elements which have existed without our conscious knowledge.

By experiencing nature in his own personal way, a poet can prepare himself as much as possible for creative genius to come to him. As Coleridge writes to his friend William Sotheby:

> Nature has her proper interest; and he will know what it is, who believes and feels, that every Thing has a life of its own, and that we are all *one Life*. A Poet's *Heart and Intellect* should be *combined, intimately* combined and *unified*, with the great appearances in Nature.
> (10 Sept. 1802; qtd. in Holmes 326-27)

The specific correlation between the "head and the heart" for poetry is represented in the inner and outer worlds of nature. In this combination may be found the link needed for the poet to fulfill his obligation to his fellow men. Communing with nature can assist the poet in grasping his emotions and finding suitable images to portray them to others. Coleridge explains the poetic advantage of actually involving himself in nature rather than merely observing it in "Frost at Midnight":

> so shalt thou see and hear
> The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible

Of that eternal language, which thy God
Utters, who from eternity doth teach
Himself in all, and all things in himself.
(58-62)

The "eternal language" which he gains through this process will allow him the poetic expression he desires. Furthermore, once he learns this language, he will be able to appreciate the universal language which connects his internal and external natures.

Coleridge continues to specifically link the experience of nature to that of a successful poet by arguing, in a letter to Sotheby, that "It is easy to cloathe Imaginary Beings with our own Thoughts and Feelings; but to send ourselves out of ourselves, to *think* ourselves in to the Thoughts and Feelings of Beings in circumstances wholly and strangely different from our own" (13 July 1802; qtd. in Holmes 326) becomes the real accomplishment. What he experiences in nature, while it stems from something highly individual, can be transformed into poetry which reveals universal experience. The positive tone of "This Lime Tree Bower My Prison" shows this application in his poetry when he proclaims:

A delight
Comes sudden on my heart, and I am glad
As I myself were there!
(43-45)

His confinement to the bower while his friends go on a familiar walk first occasions sorrow, but he manages to share their joy by extending himself outward to imagine being with them.

Coleridge does not always need to physically participate in his environment to grasp nature's truths, because he has them within his soul as well. He therefore concludes:

> Henceforth I shall know
> That Nature ne'er deserts the wise and pure;
> No plot so narrow, be but nature there,
> No waste so vacant, but may well employ
> Each faculty of sense, and keep the heart
> Awake to love and beauty!
> (59-64)

He learns that no matter how far from the world he believes himself to be, nature in fact will remain with him because it is in all. As the poet meditates on the experiences his friends must be undergoing, he actually molds the familiar scenes of the walk in his mind and re-forms them to include both his friends and himself. His definition in Aids to Reflection of "*Natura*, that which is about to be born, that which is always *becoming*" (qtd. in WCT 22) illustrates this belief that we shape nature just as it shapes us. The world never remains static for Coleridge; instead, we can interpret nature from our own experience. As we do so, nature supplies us with power which can lead us back to our roots to find whatever is currently missing in our disjointed experience.

Coleridge emphasizes the distinction between man and nature even as he focuses on the connection. That one can find meaning in nature assures us that a connection exists, but each man must create his own unique ties. "The Nightingale" explores the extent to which nature can console and lift man's spirits. When

the poet catches himself thinking of the bird's song as melancholy, he exclaims:

> A melancholy bird? Oh! idle thought!
> In nature there is nothing melancholy.
> But some night-wandering man, whose heart was pierced
> With the remembrance of a grievous wrong,
> Or slow distemper, or neglected love,
> (And so, poor wretch! filled all things with himself,
> And made all gentle sounds tell back the tale
> Of his own sorrow) he, and such as he,
> First named those notes a melancholy strain.
> (14-22)

Nature can solicit the deepest thoughts and sorrows of men because of their close connection, but it itself contains none of these troubles which man imposes on it. This passage highlights the idea that the poet must maintain some detachment in order to sustain the crucial relationship between inner and outer natures. Only after looking into himself can the poet then look out into nature and gain something from it rather than simply projecting himself into it. In order to embrace the world around him, the poet must prepare himself to see everything according to his own unique outlook rather than relying on conventional attitudes.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner vividly portrays the dangers of projecting oneself directly into nature. Since the Mariner commits the atrocity of killing the albatross and feels himself completely set apart from the world surrounding him, he believes:

> The very deep did rot: O Christ!
> That ever this should be!
> Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
> Upon the slimy sea.
> (123-26)

The repetition of the word "slimy" emphasizes the distaste with which he views the rest of creation; he sees himself reflected in

these creatures of the deep because he cannot recognize their inherent connection. This identification of himself as a slimy creature becomes more apparent when he describes his companions' deaths and his enforced penance:

> Alone, alone, all, all alone,
> Alone on the wide wide sea!
> (232-33)
>
> And a thousand thousand slimy things
> Lived on; and so did I.
> (238-39)

As long he despises himself and feels isolated from all of his surroundings, he will extend his inner unhappiness out into the world.

The turn in this poem, however, again demonstrates that nature must stand distinct rather than become a mere reflection of man. The Mariner's own failure to cherish the albatross, not anything inherent in nature itself, brings about the evil which all must endure. After futilely attempting to pray, the Mariner's attitude changes so that he can look at the once slimy snakes and recognize "their rich attire" (278). When he does so, he discovers:

> O happy living things! no tongue
> Their beauty might declare:
> A spring of love gushed from my heart,
> And I blessed them unaware:
> Sure my kind saint took pity on me
> And I blessed them unaware.
>
> The self-same moment I could pray;
> And from my neck so free
>
> The Albatross fell off, and sank
> Like lead into the sea.
> (282-91)

By viewing the snakes in this unconventional way and recognizing that they, too, are part of God's creation, the Mariner finds that he can reassess himself and become a free man again. Only after he distinguishes himself from them can he appreciate their true affinity to him.

Nature provides one approach to discovering and expressing these truths, but man can accept what it offers only by first acknowledging his own nature as a valid component of the truth. This critical connection between the inner and the outer world of man also presents the problem which these poets confront in finding images which will translate their inherent poetry into an outward expression. Since most people do not comprehend this connection, the poet must serve as the mediator to reveal the truths he discovers to those who cannot themselves express them but who can understand these universal experiences through the poetic voice. Thus poetry externalizes essential internal truths which all men have experienced without being aware.

Goethe expresses the relationship between this duality and the role of the poet: "Überall aber trat Natur und Kunst nur durch Leben in Berührung, und so blieb das Resultat von allem meinen Sinnen und Trachten jener alte Vorsatz, die innere und äußere Natur zu erforschen und in liebevoller Nachahnung sie eben selbst walten zu lassen" (DW 488). While nature is important, it must be combined with personal feelings before being transmitted into poetry. Man cannot simply escape into nature to cure all of

his problems, as Faust's predicament clearly shows. Faust agonizes over his lack of satisfaction:

> Ach! könnt' ich doch auf Bergeshöh'n
> in deinem lieben Lichte gehn,
> um Bergeshöhle mit Geistern schweben,
> auf Wiesen in deinem Dämmer weben,
> von allem Wissenqualm entladen
> in deinem Tau gesund mich baden!
> (392-97)

The subjunctive "könnt" emphasizes the impossibility of such a solution; the beauties of nature cannot help him as long as he remains dissatisfied with himself. The two sides of nature can only be fused when man first accepts each separately.

Throughout Dichtung und Wahrheit, Goethe addresses this same essential relationship between the inner and outer for the poetic process. When he begins to compose personal poetry which can speak to all men, he explains:

> Und so begann diejenige Richtung, von der ich mein ganzes Leben über nicht abweichen konnte, nämlich dasjenige, was mich erfreute oder quälte, oder sonst beschäftige, in ein Bild, ein Gedicht zu verwandeln und darüber mit mir selbst abzuschließen, um sowohl meine Begriffe von den äußeren Dingen zu berichtigen als mich im Innern deshalb zu beruhigen (256).

In finding the proper expression for his intensely personal emotions, he manages to satisfy his own struggles as well. His externalization into his poetry then allows him to better understand himself. In this way these two aspects stay separate yet connected; neither would remain intact if he tried to mesh the two.

A vivid example of the necessity of distinguishing the internal from the external world occurs in Goethe's legendary

ballad "Erlkönig." The father repeatedly attributes his son's suffering to forces in nature:

Mein Sohn, was birgst du so bang dein Gesicht?-
Siehst, Vater, du den Erlkönig nicht?
Den Erlenkönig mit Kron und Schweif?-
Mein Sohn, es ist ein Nebelstreif.-

Mein Vater, mein Vater, und hörest du nicht,
Was Erlenkönig mir leise verspricht?-
Sei ruhig, bleib ruhig, mein Kind;
In dürren Blättern säuselt der Wind.-

Mein Vater, mein Vater, und siehst du nicht dort
Erlkönigs Töchter am düstern Ort?-
Mein Sohn, mein Sohn, ich seh es genau:
Es scheinen die alten Weiden so grau.

The son attempts to use the external vision of the Erlkönig as a means of expressing his internal pain, but the father refuses to see the correlation between his sensory experiences and his son's actual illness. The father focuses on outer elements so much that his son cannot convey his real personal danger; consequently, the child dies before he reaches safety.

When one protects his inner nature while allowing the outer nature to envelop him, nature can work deeply in him and he in it. "Die wahre Poesie kündet sich dadurch an, daß sie, als ein weltliches Evangelium, durch innere Heiterkeit, durch äußeres Behagen uns von den irdischen Lasten zu befreien weiß, die auf uns drücken" (524), Goethe explains in Dichtung und Wahrheit. The end of "Herbstgefühl" provides another image of this complex association:

Und euch betauen, ach!
Aus diesen Augen
Der ewig belebenden Liebe
Vollschwellende Tränen.

His addressing the poem to the vine and its berries implies that they share some common language. Furthermore, the idea that the poet's tears actually create a lifegiving force reveals that the poet's emotions can bring new life to otherwise neglected aspects of the external world.

Goethe does achieve absolute unity of the two worlds in "Wandrers Nachtlied II" by simultaneously distinguishing and connecting the peace in nature and that of the soul:

Über allen Gipfeln
Ist Ruh,
In allen Wipfeln
Spürest du
Kaum einen Hauch;
Die Vögelein schweigen im Walde.
Warte nur, balde
Ruhest du auch.

This poem captures the essence of the Romantic feeling of nature and the peace it can bring if one prepares oneself. The language which Goethe chooses further reflects the tranquility and rest which he senses in his surroundings. While the poet has not yet experienced this serenity, the external proof of it which he sees in nature convinces him to patiently await the internal realization of it as well.

This essential relationship between the inner and the outer can be seen even more directly throughout Coleridge's work. At one point in the Biographia, he asserts that it "abides in the dark ground-work of our nature, to crave an outward confirmation of that *something* within us, which is our *very self*, that something, not *made up* of our qualities and relations, but itself the substantial basis of all these" (II 216-17). One can be

complete only by understanding oneself in the context of a larger whole. He also links this relation between the interior and the exterior being to his ideas about the poets of past and present: "*Classically* too, as far as consists with the allegorizing fancy of the *modern*, that still *striving to project* the inward, contra-distinguishes itself from the seeming ease with which the poetry of the ancients *reflects* the world without" (BL II 235). Nature represents one of the poet's prime means of finding this outward confirmation of himself if he can only view it with fresh eyes untainted by any preconceptions. Coleridge, however, continues to emphasize that these lovely images found in nature alone do not constitute poetic genius. Only when joined with the poet's own innermost being do they evolve into worthy subjects (BL II 23ff).

Coleridge presents this idea that nature and man are both united and separate as a crucial paradox in his philosophy rather than as an irreconciliable contradiction. Barfield discusses this paradox as "a relation between man and nature in which the Twoness is as important as the oneness" (RCA 233-34). All of the communing with nature which we associate with this period can be better understood through this essential relationship. Thus nature and man together can form a part of some unidentifiable unity and yet still maintain their own uniqueness. Coleridge's conviction that everything is somehow related never allows him to forget that the distinctions between these parts are what allow us to perceive the mystery of the oneness. He explains in the

Biographia that "the essential duality of Nature arises out of its productive unity" (qtd. in RCA 154). Without individual passion, we must content ourselves with observing our world in the state of twoness rather than taking part in it, but by joining this passion with the external world we can recognize the inherent connection between all things.

The creative process serves to reveal part of that nature which exists inside us all. As Goethe understands it, no real division between the poet and the nature about which he writes will last if the poet first can maintain the distinction. He asserts that, "was ein vorzügliches Individuum hervorbringe, sei auch Natur" (DW 372). The key is that only after the individual brings his inner life forth into the world will it become nature as well. Without the individual, part of nature will remain internalized and unity will not be found. "Die Natur wirkt nach ewigen, notwendigen, dergestalt göttlichen Gesetzen, daß die Gottheit selbst daran nichts ändern könnte. Alle Menschen sind hierin unbewußt, vollkommen einig" (610), he asserts at the end of Dichtung und Wahrheit. His use of "Alle Menschen" instead of "die Menschheit" or some other collective term again points to the importance of each person in this overall unity.

That Goethe strives to recreate the original oneness in his poetry, therefore, does not mean that he desires to achieve this at the cost of all individuality. In fact, he enjoys nature

precisely because the variety charms him.[2] His description of the plants as representative of man in "Die Metamorphose der Pflanzen" opens by recognizing differentiation:

> Dich verwirrt, Geliebte, die tausendfältige Mischung
> Dieses Blumengewühls über dem Garten umher;
> Viele Namen hörest du an, und immer verdränget
> Mit barbarischem Klang einer der andern im Ohr.
> Alle Gestalten sind ähnlich, und keine gleichet der andern;
> Und so deutet das Chor auf ein geheimes Gesetz,
> Auf ein heiliges Rätsel.

He proceeds to present the idea that the unity actually stems from these distinct parts; they are all important components of the whole and must be brought together as such without sacrificing their individual equality.

Goethe preserves the importance of the individual because his perspective can capture a part of the universal truth. As he asserts in Dichtung und Wahrheit:

> Die Geschichte aller Religionen und Philosophien lehrt uns, daß diese große, den Menschen unentbehrliche Wahrheit von verschiedenen Nationen in verschiedenen Zeiten auf mancherlei Weise, ja in seltsamen Fabeln und Bildern der Beschränkheit gemäß überliefert worden; genug... daß wir uns in einem Zustande befinden, der... Gelegenheit gibt... uns zu erheben und die absichten der Gottheit dadurch zu erfüllen (318).

Each of these systems arrives at some aspect of the truth; there is never only one way to perceive it because it is divided in our world. Although all of these beliefs vary, they all provide the same opportunity for raising ourselves to feel the universal.

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[2]Dichtung und Wahrheit contains numerous examples of Goethe's interest in the variety of nature. See for instance the comments about the artwork at Josef II's coronation, p.141.

This notion lies behind Goethe's many different attempts to find unity in his poetry.

Coleridge develops this basic idea as part of his complex metaphysical scheme. As he explains in the Theory of Life, life is "*the principle of individuation* or the power that unites a given *all* into a *whole* that is presupposed by all its parts" (qtd. in WCT 49). "Presupposed" emphasizes that the parts must exist before the whole can be reached; the distinct elements contain the "power" to find unity. He even can cite the precedent of Aristotle to lend his conviction credibility as he explains that the Greek philosopher "required of the poet an involution of the universal in the individual" (BL II 185). "The Eolian Harp" speculates on the pleasure we would derive in being individuals in tune with the universal:

> 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?
> (44-48)

When we extend our inner selves outwards, we will discover our connection with the external world. The beauty of the music which will be created by the one breeze, however, resides in the fact that it contains so many various types of harps. If we had only one gigantic instrument, we could never create the ideal harmony of all these "diversely framed" harps playing together.

Coleridge further attempts to clarify this seeming paradox by defining terms:

> Now the sum of all that is merely OBJECTIVE,

> we will henceforth call NATURE, confining the term to its passive and material sense.... On the other hand the sum of all that is SUBJECTIVE, we may comprehend in the name of the SELF or INTELLIGENCE. Both conceptions are in necessary antithesis. Intelligence is conceived of as exclusively representative, nature as exclusively represented; the one as conscious, the other as without consciousness. Now in all acts of positive knowledge there is required a reciprocal concurrence of both, namely of the conscious being, and of that which is in itself unconscious.... During the act of knowledge itself, the objective and subjective are so instantly united, that we cannot determine to which of the two the priority belongs. There is here no first, and no second; both are coinstantaneous and one.
> (BL I 255)

The detailed definitions of these things "in necessary antithesis" immediately followed by the assertion that they "both are coinstantaneous and one" exemplifies the importance of both aspects. While he makes distinctions between various things, he does not make divisions between them. Although we tend to interchange the notions of distinction and division, this is a fatal step in understanding the Coleridgean system. Our very perception of unity requires distinction, but division prevents this perception and must be overcome.

In "Hymn Before Sun-Rise, in the Vale of Chamouni," Coleridge presents a moment in which he sucessfully discovers a correlation between something in the external world and his own deepest soul. He articulates this connection to the river:

> Yet, like some sweet beguiling melody,
> So sweet, we know not we are listening to it,
> Thou, the meanwhile, wast blending with my thought,
> Yea with my life and life's own secret joy:
> Till the dilating Soul, enrapt, trasfused,
> Into the mighty vision passing--there

As in her natural form, swelled vast to heaven!
(17-23)

The choice of "blending" signifies the necessity of both ingredients for a successful vision; one cannot overpower the other. The poet must ensure that the soul, while "into the mighty vision passing," maintains its "natural form." The realization of this goal enables the poet to accept both twoness and oneness and thereby reach towards the heavens.

Chapter Three

Unity in Polarity: The Poetic Quest for Higher Truth

This complex concept of things being simultaneously distinct and joined does not center just around man in nature or the internal in the external; in fact, the idea of unity in polarity underlies both of these poets' work and helps explain many of the seeming contradictions in their thoughts. When Coleridge speaks of the beauties of Wordsworth's poetry, for example, he remarks "that the greater part of our success and comfort in life depends on distinguishing the similar from the same, that which is peculiar in each thing from that which it has in common with others" (BL II 144). He firmly believes that we must do so because the very existence of distinction testifies to the inherent unity.

The Conclusion of the Biographia opens with a forceful argument for the unity in polarity:

> The sense of Before and After becomes both intelligible and intellectual when, and only when, we contemplate the succession in the relations of Cause and Effect, which like the two poles of a magnet manifest the being and unity of the one power by relative opposites, and give, as it were, a substratum of permanence, of identity, and therefore of reality, to the shadowy flux of Time (II 234).

The phrase "succession in relations" between two apparent opposites suggests the continuum of which we should always be aware. Furthermore, the choice of "relative opposites" demonstrates that these are not absolutes because their union holds this higher position. If it were not for the opposites and distinctions which so often confront us, we could never realize that there was some greater unifying force to make sense of these phenomena.

The recurring images of polarity and unity throughout the Biographia demonstrate Coleridge's continual efforts to clarify that the existence of distinction does not preclude that of unity. As he continually asserts, our minds are structured so that we can distinguish and connect at the same time. In fact, the very act of distinguishing things involves bringing them together for comparison. Just as the parts express the whole, so too the whole is expressed in the original parts. Instead of being contradictory, these principles actually require each other. Polar opposites derive from one source and then evolve into something new; therefore, we cannot consider one half of the polarity without considering its connection to the other.

"Kubla Khan" provides an excellent instance of a successful realization of the unity in polarity. Even the choice of names, from Xanadu to Alph with Kubla Khan in the middle, reflects this idea. While we may first think of "A" and "Z" as opposite ends of the alphabet, they actually are unified by the whole spectrum of letters in between. The joining of the archetypal opposites

of heaven and hell as well as of male and female indicates this idea as well:

> A savage place! as holy and enchanted
> As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
> By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
> (14-16)

The two poles require each other rather than being mutually exclusive; he does not juxtapose truly incompatible elements. Just as angels and devils originated together in heaven and only later split, so too any opposites should have a preexisting unity. The overwhelming split between the holy woman and her counterpart the demon lover, as her wailing further evidences, also conveys the difficulty of overcoming the pain of separation to restore the unity.

In the same way, Coleridge must have the practical world of Kubla Khan's decrees in order to create the dream world; one cannot exist without the other. Although they seem to be contradictory, the poetic vision of the dome reflected in the water actually arises out of Kubla's own worldly vision. Coleridge can bring these two together for a moment in his poem:

> The shadow of the dome of pleasure
> Floated midway on the waves;
> Where was heard the mingled measure
> From the fountains and the caves.
> It was a miracle of rare device,
> A sunny pleasure dome with caves of ice!
> (31-36)

The alliteration in the choice of "midway" and "mingled measure" to point to the "miracle" of this reconciliation emphasizes its importance for the poet's own purpose. That these lines are set off in the middle of the poem from the rest of the text further

reinforces their importance as a moment of achievement and reconciliation for the poet.

Likewise, the awareness of the split that has occurred directs Goethe's reflections and his efforts to fuse disjointed elements. Language such as "Die Welt war bevölkert, aber entzweit" (118) or "verwandt ersten... aber ihre Beschäftigungen trennten sie bald" (122) pervades Dichtung und Wahrheit, indicating that he remains aware of this loss of original unity not just in the context of nature and writing poetry but in all situations. Despite the distinctions, we are aware that a oneness must exist for him to so dramatically feel the rupture and endeavor to portray the similarities in apparent differences. The acute sense of loss which accompanies the division of the self occurs in "Neue Liebe, neues Leben":

> Ich erkenne dich nicht mehr.
> Weg ist alles, was du liebtest,
> Weg, warum du dich betrübtest,
> Weg dein Fleiß und deine Ruh-
> Ach, wie kamst du nur dazu!

At the moment he can feel only the difference between his present situation and his earlier love. Still, the repetition of "Weg" attests to the fact that unity first existed. He must continue to strive to recover all that he knew instead of resigning himself to its loss.

Goethe's "An Charlotte von Stein" further clarifies the dual nature of this attempt to preserve some moment of oneness in poetry. At the beginning, he reproaches destiny because it allowed the lovers to experience the joy of love when it was only

illusory happiness. Then, however, he discovers that his memory can serve to preserve that otherwise lost love:

> Und von allem dem schwebt ein Erinnern
> Nur noch um das ungewisse Herz,
> Fühlt die alte Wahrheit ewig gleich im Innern,
> Und der neue Zustand wird ihm Schmerz.
> Und wir scheinen uns nur halb beseelet,
> Dämmernd ist um uns der hellste Tag.
> Glücklich, daß das Schicksal, das uns quälet,
> Uns doch nicht verändern mag!

Although his present condition occasions sorrow and agony, that he once had this joy is a promise that he might have it again. Furthermore, his possession of the memory serves as a command to him to regain that moment. His poem does capture the moment in which he "Fühlt die alte Wahrheit" so that he actually possesses it.

Coleridge portrays this loss and its ensuing difficulties for creativity even more directly in his poetry. When he cannot feel the unity to which he so often refers, he suffers because he cannot express his thoughts. The Rime of the Ancient Mariner provides one of the clearest examples of this problem. When the albatross first appears, harmony and joy prevail as the ice breaks and the wind rises. The Mariner describes the sense of blessing:

> At length did cross an Albatross,
> Through the fog it came;
> As if it had been a Christian soul,
> We hailed it in God's name.
> (63-66)

The fog lifting demonstrates their power to see clearly, and their hailing the bird as a fellow creature shows the voice which comes with this pervading awareness of oneness. After the

Mariner has slain the albatross because of his failure to recognize that it too is part of God's creation, however, he notes:

> And every tongue, through utter drought,
> Was withered at the root;
> We could not speak, no more than if
> We had been choked with soot.
> (135-38)

The impairment of speech shows how crucial unity is for the poetic voice. By setting himself apart, the Mariner reduces all of his companions and strips them of their individuality. The situation in which the mariners find themselves exposes the absolute necessity of the poet's personal role for the community; he must face his own alienation in order to effectively function as a vehicle for the expression of a larger truth.

The end of "To William Wordsworth" reveals why Coleridge continues to pursue his goal despite such setbacks. This poem, like the conclusion of The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, provides a good example of the peace which comes when he can find that unity in being which he knows underlies all of our experience of polarity. He explains that close ties remain despite the loss of communion with his friend:

> Thy long sustained Song finally closed,
> And thy deep voice had ceased--yet thou thyself
> Wert still before my eyes, and round us both
> That happy vision of beloved faces--
> Scarce conscious, and yet conscious of its close
> I sate, my being blended in one thought
> (Thought was it ? or aspiration? or resolve?)
> Absorbed, yet hanging still upon the sound--
> And when I rose, I found myself in prayer.
> (104-12)

This could be a moment of despair as Wordsworth's "voice had ceased," but Coleridge's vision of their collaboration sustains him so that the division does not jar the prior bond between them. His union of "Scarce conscious, and yet conscious" again reveals the continuity between the past with his friend and the present without him which affords the poet a moment of contentment. This state allows him to grasp tranquility because he has his "being blended in one thought." This recognition of oneness allows him to keep his poetic voice and reach towards a higher concept of unity.

Another problem which is linked to the struggle to find unity in polarity stems from the apparent inabilty to find something constant on which to rely. The Erdgeist in <u>Faust</u> gives a vivid image of the ever-present change which confronts man in his world:

> In Lebensfluten, im Tatensturm
> Wall ich auf und ab,
> Wehe hin und her!
> Geburt und Grab,
> Ein ewiges Meer,
> Ein wechselnd Weben,
> Ein glühend Leben.
> (501-07)

By having the Earth-Spirit himself claim that he weaves change into life, Goethe indicates how central this variation is to our earthly existence. Faust must hear this truth just when he envisions himself as a god; the Erdgeist appears to reinforce how far Faust actually remains from the understanding of the gods by shattering his feeling of oneness with them. After this spirit speaks, Faust cannot accept the news of Christ: "Die Träne

quillt, die Erde hat mich wieder!" (784), he exclaims. This perception of continual change prevents him from reaching his higher goal.

This change and uncertainty, however, forms a necessary part of the poet's inspiration. It leads the poet to his calling to uncover something constant which underlies it. Goethe's linking of "Geburt" with "Grab" and "ewig" with "wechselnd" points to his belief that these things are distinctions which constitute a larger whole, not opposites which cannot be reconciled. Faust himself does not give up when he hears this proclamation; instead, he continues to search for a means of overcoming it. He, like the poet, will continue to encounter difference and be forced to seek a new way of expressing the unity which he feels must exist.

Coleridge also acutely feels the unstable and changing nature of his world and seeks to understand himself accordingly. He focuses on this concern in "Limbo" as he observes a contented old man:

> No such sweet sights doth Limbo den immure,
> Wall'd round, and made a spirit-jail secure,
> By the mere horror of blank Naught-at-all,
> Whose circumambience doth these ghosts enthrall.
> A lurid thought is growthless, dull Privation,
> Yet this is but a Purgatory curse;
> Hell knows a fear far worse'
> A fear--a future state;--'tis positive Negation!
> (21-28)

He cannot possess the same joy and peace as the old man because of his fear of the unknown. He despairs more as he realizes that the "blank Naught-at-all" can confront him and prevent him from

finding some "sweet sight" in his poetry. The negative dread which pervades this poem because of his refusal to accept instability seems to lead him to the conclusion that he cannot obtain unity.

In "Constancy to an Ideal Object," however, he succeeds in finding something positive in this transcience. He wonders about his own place in the universe as he speculates whether his thoughts are real if they are only real to him:

> why shouldst thou remain
> The only constant in a world of change,
> O yearning thought! that liv'st but in the brain?
> (2-4)

In this case, his recognition of this change brings the awareness of a preexisting unity in the reality of his mind. As he explains in his chapter on "Definitions of a Poem and Poetry" in the Biographia: "In order to obtain adequate notions of any truth, we must intellectually separate its distinguishable parts.... But having done so, we must then restore them in our conceptions to the unity, in which they actually co-exist" (11). Only by admitting that there are parts and seeking to understand those can we hope to arrive at the truth. When the universal truth has contact with our changeable and uncertain world, it becomes obscured through many false divisions. We must therefore reconstruct the system to find their prior connection.

Merely perceiving this connection does not complete the poet's task; once he finds unity, he must struggle to express that unity as well. Part of the poet's agony arises from the

ability to see these truths but not be able to translate them into his poetry. In fact, this failure leads to some of the most passionate poetry of the age. In "An den Mond," for example, Goethe portrays this despair and frustration:

> Fließe, fließe, lieber Fluß!
> Nimmer werd ich froh,
> So verrauschte Scherz und Kuß,
> Und die Treue so.
>
> Ich besaß es doch einmal,
> Was so köstlich ist!
> Daß man doch zu seiner Qual
> Nimmer es vergißt!

At first he can only bemoan the agony of his great loss. The pain of his loss, the "Qual" of never being able to forget it, recalls Coleridge's agony of composition as well. Experiencing this vision at one time does not suffice; the poet's responsibility entails possessing it in his poetry as well.

Coleridge's overwhelming despair arises when he does not dare to hope as in his poem "Work Without Hope." As he watches all things in nature perform their assigned tasks, he feels completely out of synch with no means of entering into the world around him. His disturbance at being "the sole unbusy thing" (5) leads him to proclaim:

> Work without hope draws nectar in a sieve,
> And hope without an object cannot live.
> (13-14)

Despite all of his efforts, he believes that the moments of truth he achieves are as inconsequential as nectar in a sieve. He never will reach the measure of ambition in which he can contain all of the juices together; consequently, he must suffer because

of his longings for something immortal which man cannot have. Even in this distress, however, he perceives that hope may be possible because all other things do have their purpose. He then grasps the necessity of this hope for his poetry to have value.

The poet must continue to suffer this dilemma because it propels him on his search to find something eternal and to find an appropriate translation for it in his poetry. He understands that he constantly will be dissatisfied with his efforts to achieve that oneness, yet he knows that he must seek it. Just as he must experience change to know that constancy exists, so too his inspiration must always arise from this problem of having something, losing it, and having the poetic duty to regain it. This search to resolve the dichotomy and disjunction which inevitably confronts us becomes one of the poet's major functions as he seeks to understand his own role in the universe. During this age, the poetic process evolves into an eternal search for something to unite our fragmented lives.

Goethe frequently relates the frustration of seeing something and then lacking the full power to capture it in his writing, as when he explains: "Was ich damals fühlte, ist mir noch gegenwärtig; was ich sagte, wüßte ich nicht wieder zu finden" (DW 202). Although his poetry progresses through numerous forms and subject matters, one always can note his efforts to retrieve something which has escaped him. Even his vast array of love poems can be seen as an attempt to rediscover the lost link between the two sexes. He specifies the importance

of this search in terms of his poetic achievement when he explains, "Die Natur meiner Poesie mich immer zur Einheit hindrängte" (DW 516). This is one of the most direct statements that the quest to discover the unity which will clarify man's place in the world becomes one of the poet's dominant purposes. The emphasis on the proper form, language, and use of emotion in poetry all point to this overriding aim.

Faust's life parallels Goethe's struggles as he suffers under the knowledge that, despite all of his efforts, man still lacks something vital in his understanding of himself and his world. In his first appearance, he laments:

> Habe nun, ach, Philosophie,
> Juristerei und Medizin
> und leider auch Theologie
> durchaus studiert, mit heißem Bemühn.
> Da steh' ich nun, ich armer Tor
> und bin so klug als wie zuvor!....
> es möchte kein Hund so länger Leben
> Drum hab' ich mich die Magie ergeben....
> daß ich erkenne, was die Welt
> im innersten zusammenhält.
> (354-383)

No matter how discouraged he becomes, however, Faust will continue to pursue new means of insight into "was die Welt/ im innersten zusammenhält." His continual search for something which will explain his world and provide contentment for his soul represents Goethe's own life-long desire to achieve this goal in his poetry.

The poetic search was crucial for Coleridge as well "because, as Wordsworth said, 'to him the unity of all had been revealed'; he was one of that rare class of minds which cannot

contemplate any one thing without becoming aware of its relation to everything else" (Willey 8). Coleridge aptly explains his concept of the search: "It is the essential mark of a true philosopher to rest satisfied with no imperfect light, as long as the impossibility of attaining a fuller knowledge has not been demonstrated" (BL I 242). This idea of light suggests that we can find a clearer vision of our world to lead us out of the dark mystery of uncertainty and change. Like the philosopher, the poet has a responsibility to illuminate man's place in the world and express the truth he discovers to his audience. The poet never can rest satisfied because his agony over division assures him that knowledge of unity does exist somewhere deep within himself, and this knowledge compels him to continue his struggles to voice it.

Coleridge explicitly refers to this hope of regaining the vision of unity at the end of "Kubla Khan" when he exclaims:

> Could I revive within me
> Her symphony and song,
> To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
> That with music loud and long,
> I would build that dome in air,
> That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
> And all who heard should see them there,
> And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
> His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
> Weave a circle round him thrice,
> And close your eyes with holy dread,
> For he on honey-dew hath fed,
> And drunk the milk of Paradise.
> (41-54)

The phrase "caverns measureless to man" (27) quickly exposes the failure of Kubla's worldly decree, and the longing demonstrated

in "Could I revive" shows the impossibilty of completely fulfilling Coleridge's desire to preserve this entire vision in his poem as well. Obviously Kubla Khan will never successfully "build" this "miracle of rare device" of the dome reflected in the water which the poet wants, but at least the poet sees it for an instant so that he may capture and preserve it in his poem.

Those who see the poet must fear him and stand in awe of him because they perceive his tremendous power to actually make this vision happen by recalling it. The image of the poet as a god in the last two lines conveys his power to envision and then create his own world which re-forms the apparently lost connections between the moments of revelation. As God can comprehend the overall scheme of his creation, so too the poet can have a vision of the overall unity which lies beyond basic human perception. The new principle of poetic power to which these men subscribe allows him to obtain this vision at the end; he in fact has built the caves of ice for a moment in his poetry.

The German word Sehnsucht captures this notion of continual striving for something beyond our usual experience of inconstancy. Goethe explains in Dichtung und Wahrheit:

> Was wir können und möchten, stellt sich unserer Einbildungskraft außer uns und in der Zukunft dar; wir fühlen eine Sehnsucht nach dem, was wir schon im stillen besitzen. So verwandelt ein leidenschaftliches Vorausergreifen das wahrhaft Mögliche in ein erträumtes Wirkliche. (348)

His concept of Einbildungskraft reveals his symbolic belief that, if he could see things, he could see through them to one larger

truth as well. The terms "possibility" and "reality" further suggest that his external perceptions are actually an imagined version of what truly rests inside himself. Moreover, his unusual yoking of the possibility he sees outside himself with an indescribable sensation which he earlier possessed inside himself directs him to search to retrieve that feeling.

Chapter Four

Self Consciousness and the Will:
The Blessing and the Curse of Revelation

As these poets confront division and inconstancy and seek to recover the preexisting unity which they intuitively feel, they choose opposite approaches to finding a solution. Whereas Goethe wants to find objective proof of the unity and then turn it inward, Coleridge wants to feel it in his soul and then project it outward. It is perhaps because of these entirely different methods that Coleridge comments in Table Talk that, while Goethe's ballads and lyrics are "most excellent," he has "this quality of non-sympathy with the subjects of [his] poetry. [He is] always... feeling *for*, but never *with*, [his] characters".[3]

Goethe does observe his world first as a spectator and then form his conclusions accordingly; his primary objective is to understand the world around him, because recognizing unity in it allows him to intuitively grasp an internal feeling of unity as well. Coleridge, on the other hand, first intuitively feels the unity and then wants to find some external confirmation of it. While Goethe directs the outward truth inward, Coleridge projects his inner truth outward. Since Goethe's interest is primarily

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[3]Coleridge accuses Goethe of this problem in his discussion of Faust in Table Talk of 16 Feb 1833. I was referred to this discussion by a note in BL II 150.

objective, he looks to the external world for convincing proof of the truth of unity. Coleridge's subjective nature, however, propels his desire to find a mental, philosophical explanation of this truth. Barfield treats this difference in attitude in <u>Romanticism Comes of Age</u> when he notes that Coleridge's "whole system of *thought* resembled in character the organic *world* which Goethe revealed" (146).

Regardless of this distinction, each hopes to arrive at a middle ground in which the subjective and the objective join. Both Goethe's description of the "Urphänomen" and Coleridge's definition of the "idea" represent similar struggles to find an entity in which subject and object are no longer separate (RCA 148). As he searches in the <u>Biographia</u> for some absolute truth which will reconcile such apparently opposing systems, Coleridge asserts: "It is to be found therefore neither in object or subject taken separately, and consequently, as no other third is conceivable, it must be found in that which is neither subject nor object exclusively, but which is the identity of both" (I 271-73). The truth which each of these poets hopes to gain incorporates both ends of this spectrum. Their concerns with the head and the heart, language and form, man and nature, the inner and the outer, and the individual in the universal all reveal the same desire to join opposing poles. Consequently, these two different systems actually reflect a similar search for the pre-existing unity which connects evident opposites.

The intimate connection between the seemingly contradictory approaches of the objective and the subjective can be understood more fully in terms of both Goethe's and Coleridge's unusual treatment of self-consciousness, which they understand not as thinking about the self but as an awareness of their own place in the world. The concept of the world which each of these poets develops rests on the idea that the soul can receive images through the senses and then recreate these. Barfield explains in Romanticism Comes of Age that, during the eighteenth century, man first began to consider the possibility of the detachment of the mind and to structure his notions accordingly (170). This new concept allows both Goethe and Coleridge to develop their ideas about man's mind being separate from and yet closely linked with the external world. Since the mind is distinct from nature, both poets agree that the creative spirit must be willing to suspend its own consciousness in order to approach nature from within herself.

Goethe, as Barfield explains, always has "*both* this reverence for the soul... *and* a deep and abiding sense of man's responsibility of self-consciousness. Only, instead of allowing the consciousness to destroy the soul, he strove to maintain it as the golden thread of self-awareness" (RCA 174-75). He insists that one must develop one's awareness of the soul without losing the latter altogether. As should be apparent, this argument closely resembles that which calls for preservation of the inner in the face of the outer or of the individual in the face of the

universal. Just as one can engage actively in nature but then must passively wait for inspiration to arise, so too one can consciously prepare for poetry but then must wait until poetic truths strike one's unselfconscious mind.

Faust, the work which became Goethe's life-long pursuit, divulges the utter despair which can accompany this predicament of self-consciousness:

> Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach, in meiner Brust,
> die eine will sich von der andern trennen;
> die eine hält in derber Liebeslust
> sich an die Welt mit klammernden Organen;
> die andre hebt gewaltsam sich vom Dust
> zu den Gefilden hoher Ahnen.
> (1112-1117)

His agony arises from his sense of division between a soul which directs itself inside and one which participates in the world. The line "die eine will sich von der andern trennen," however, leads one back to their original connection even as he specifies their differences. Although Faust himself does not realize it, the one's desire to separate itself from the other demonstrates the preexisting unity which each of these poets addresses. Only when he consciously thinks about the negative side of this distinction does he render himself incapable of functioning contentedly.

The workings of his mind fascinate Coleridge as well, and he typically develops these ideas as part of his poetic philosophy. His thought process intrigues him because of its unique character as an unconscious entity which creates a conscious product, as his intense attention to his thoughts in "Constancy to an Ideal

Object" demonstrates. As Coleridge defends the imputed obscurity of one of Wordswoth's odes, "the ode was intended for such readers only as had been accustomed to watch the flux and reflux of their inmost nature; to venture at times into the twilight realms of consciousness, and to feel a deep interest in modes of inmost being" (BL II 147). Proper poetry requires both the "realms of consciousness" and the "modes of inmost being."

Coleridge's motivation for taking his sketchbook along on walks stems from his conviction that participation in his surroundings can awaken his feelings and his mind to an increased awareness of himself. In a letter to Thomas Wedgwood, he describes the elation that he feels on his walks as: "a wild activity, of thoughts, imaginations, feelings, and impulses of motion, rises up from within me- a sort of *bottom-wind*, that... comes from I know not whence, but agitates the whole of me.... the greater becomes in me the Intensity with the feeling of Life" (14 Jan 1803; qtd. in Holmes 343). Such vivid impressions describe the state of creativity itself and the inspiration from whence it can arise. Since he exists in all of nature, the poet becomes self-conscious through observing nature and internalizing its effects upon him.

The idea of self-consciousness assists in the resolution of the seeming paradox between the internal and the external as well. When Coleridge defines the "I AM... [or] self-consciousness," he claims that, "in this alone, object and subject, being and knowing, are identical, each involving and

supposing the other" (BL I 273). This dual quality allows it to incorporate both aspects of our nature. "The act of self-consciousness is for *us* the source and principle of all our possible knowledge," (284) he continues his explanation. This awareness, therefore, becomes a means of understanding rather than a mere state of existence. Only through being aware of and comprehending ourselves will we draw forth universal knowledge.

This emphasis on self-consciousness and the complicated relation between the two worlds provides more justification for these men to redefine the role of the poet as well. When Goethe refers to Klopstock in Dichtung und Wahrheit, for example, he declares that, "Die Würde des Gegenstandes erhöhte dem Dichter das Gefühl eigner Persönlichkeit....[er hat] das völlige Recht, sich als eine geheilte Person anzusehen" (359). The poet occupies this exalted position because of his ability to connect seemingly discordant elements in order to obtain moments of reconciliation for his readers as well as himself. Since the poet must suffer to disclose the mysteries of the universe, he also must be glorified when he does provide insight.

Coleridge capitalizes on this idea and directly states his belief that the poet must serve as a prophet for mankind. This conviction explains one of the reasons he is gripped by such overwhelming happiness when inspired and by such utter despair when he feels drained of those same creative powers. In an argument which he relates in the Biographia, he maintains that a poet must not try to please everyone, because it is "the province

of a great poet to raise people up to his own level, not to descend to theirs" (II 203). He firmly believes that it is not his right but his duty to compose so that the rest of the world can benefit from his realizations. Thus he explains to Robert Southey: "I cannot write without a *body* of *thought*- hence my *Poetry* is crowded and sweats beneath a heavy burthen of Ideas and Imagery! It has seldom Ease" (11 Dec 1794; qtd. in Holmes 81).

This theory that being a poet carries a heavy burden in addition to its pleasures pervades all of Coleridge's writing and leads to the importance of the will in the poetic process. His conviction that he must serve as a prophet provides consistent pressure to compose, while the importance he places on experiencing true inspiration means that he finds it incredibly difficult to do so. "NEVER PURSUE LITERATURE AS A TRADE" (BL I 223), he enjoins his readers, because it depends on the "will of the moment" and cannot be exercized "*mechanically*" (234). His poetry and philosophical thoughts consume him and he wants to write frequently, but he can write only when the spirit strikes. This conflict can be seen in all of his attention to the role of the will itself when he contemplates the creative process.

Despite the general ease of composition to which he sometimes refers, Goethe seems to feel this same pressure of the will weighing on him at times.

> Ich war dazu gelangt, das mir inwohnende dicht-
> erische Talent ganz als Natur zu betrachten....
> Die Ausübung dieser Dichtergabe konnte zwar
> durch Veranlassung erregt und bestimmt werden;

aber am freudigsten und reichlichsten trat sie
unwillkürlich, ja wider Willen hervor" (DW 611),

he explains his position. Like Coleridge, Goethe feels that poetry arises somewhere deep within and then forces itself to the surface. He, while he occupies a vital role as bearer of this truth, must submit himself to this other will.

He relates one vivid occasion of the pressures of poetry in which: "Ich empfand nun keine Zufriedenheit als im Wiederkaüen meines Elends und in der tausendfachen imaginären Vervielfältigung desselber... Poesie und Rhetorik... drohten... in eine unheilbare Krankheit zu Verwickeln" (DW 193). He perceives this as a threat and, instead of giving his whole soul over to it as Coleridge does, he attempts to escape back into his safe, conventional world. At times, he manages to avoid these pressures and to divide his poetic self from the rest of his activities so that "Die frühesten Morgenstunden war ich die Dichterkunst schuldig; der wachsende Tag gehörte den weltlichen Geschäften" (DW 628). Despite his efforts to override this tendency towards being ruled by his creativity, however, he seems to be unable to escape it completely.

Goethe's lifelong work on <u>Faust</u> certainly illustrates a Coleridgean struggle of the will and burden of poetry. The intense feeling of this appears in the dedication, which he writes upon resuming work after a long lapse:

Ihr naht euch wieder, schwankende Gestalten,
Die früh sich einst dem trüben Blick gezeigt.
Versuch' ich wohl, euch diesmal festzuhalten?
Fühl' ich mein Herz nach jenem Wahn geneigt?

Ihr drängt euch zu! Nun gut, so mögt ihr walten,
wie ihr aus Dunst und Nebel um mich steigt;
mein Busen fühlt sich jugendlich erschüttert
vom Zauberhauch, der euren Zug umwittert.
(1-8)

He does not consciously choose for these visions to appear; once they do so, however, he must acknowledge them because they stir him deep in "mein Busen." Coleridge's unusually frank acknowledgement of Goethe's genius to Henry Crabb Robinson after hearing this part of Faust testifies to the extent to which such conflict spoke to the former's own experience (13 Aug 1812; TT).

Although Goethe asks himself whether he should try to grasp these visions, he understands that he must be their agent and decides to let them have control. He continues:

Und mich ergreift ein längst entwöhntes Sehnen
nach jenem stillen, ernsten Geisterreich;
es schwebet nun in unbestimmten Tönen
mein lispelnd Lied, der Äolsharfe gleich.
Ein Schauer faßt mich, Träne folgt den Tränen;
das strenge Herz, es fühlt sich mild und weich.
Was ich besitze, seh' ich wie im Weiten,
und was verschwand, wird mir zu Wirklichkeiten.
(25-32)

The images of "mich ergreift" and "Ein Schauer faßt mich" vividly portray the poet's passive role in these events. Still, these floating thoughts come to him because, although he accepts them when they visit him, he also maintains the integrity of his soul apart from their influence. By preserving his own identity even as they enter his thoughts, he can become the agent for their expression through no conscious effort.

Coleridge's Mariner becomes a paradigm of the poet and his struggle of the will as he ventures on his quest to see and then

relate the truth of universality in our polarized world which lies behind his awful story. Repeated references to his "glittering eye" and the "bright-eyed Mariner" demonstrate how this old seaman compels the Wedding Guest to listen:

> He holds him with his glittering eye--
> The wedding-guest stood still,
> And listens like a three years' child;
> The Mariner hath his will.
>
> The wedding-guest sat on a stone:
> He cannot chose but hear;
> And thus spake on that ancient man,
> The bright-eyed Mariner.
>
> (13-20)

His insight into the mysteries of the universe gives him actual power over the Wedding Guest. He cannot clarify this simply through his words, but his striking appearance embodies that which he has seen. Furthermore, the phrase "the Mariner hath his will" carries not only the literal meaning that he has his wish, but also all of the deeper associations of the fulfillment of the will for poetry. When the poet, like the Mariner who represents him, has his will, he conveys a message which must speak to someone in his audience. The ambiguity about the antecedent of "his" suggests that when the poet has his own will, he also may control the will of his audience.

Like the Mariner, the poet must bring forth his most personal experiences into the external world of his poetry in a way in which other men who lack his poetic insight can benefit from them. His vision occurs whether or not he attempts it; it is both his blessing and his curse. The Mariner's confession

dramatically discloses the suffering which accompanies his wisdom:

> 'God save thee, ancient Mariner!
> From the fiends, that plague thee thus!--
> Why look'st thou so?'--With my cross-bow
> I shot the Albatross.
> (79-82)

Although he cannot fully state the power of the universal revelation he has had, the Mariner must call forth this painful memory into the world of the wedding guest who could profit from the tale. The poet's burden is not lifted when he has a revelation of the truth; he then must continue to relive the agonizing search as he expresses the truths he discovers for others through his poetry.

In the later part of Dichtung und Wahrheit, Goethe often concentrates on the aspect of poetry which cannot be willed but which must come in a flash of inspiration. At one point, for example, he provides a vivid description of awakening in the middle of the night and wanting to grasp some idea before it escapes him forever:

> Ich war so gewohnt, mir ein Liedchen vorzusagen, ohne es wieder zusammenfinden zu können, daß ich einigemal an den Pult rannte und mir nicht die Zeit nahm, einen quer liegenden Bogen zurechtzurücken, sondern das Gedicht von Anfang bis zu Ende, ohne mich von der Stelle zu rühren, in der Diagonale herunterschrieb. In eben diesem Sinne griff ich weit lieber zum Bleistift, welcher williger die Züge hergab: denn es war mir einigemal begegnet, daß das Schnarren und Spritzen der Feder mich aus meinem nachtwandlerischen Dichten aufweckte, mich zerstreute und ein kleines Produkt in der Geburt erstickte. Für solche Poesien hatte ich eine besondere Ehrfurcht (611).

Goethe depicts a trance-like state in which he is truly possessed by his vision. That he fears such poetry also recalls the image of "Kubla Kahn" when the poet imagines achieving his vision and writes "Beware! Beware!/ His flashing eyes! His floating hair!" (49-50). This idea that he can achieve reconciliation or inspiration only for a moment, because it cannot be willed, explains why the romantics so frequently write fragments as they incessantly search for these moments.

One easily can picture Coleridge suffering from this same almost feverish desire to preserve his "nachtwandlerischen Dichten" in his poetry before he awakens. He introduces "Kubla Khan: Or, A Vision in a Dream" with "A Fragment" intended to explain the process of composition through an analogy:

> [The author fell] in a profound sleep, at least of the external senses, during which time he has the most vivid confidence, [that he composed the poem]...; if that indeed can be called composition in which all the images rose up before him as things, with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions, without any sensation or conscious-ness of effort.

He consciously prepares himself for this revelation by reading the story of Kubla Khan, but only in an unconscious or passive state can he translate this into poetry. His story is reminiscent of the prophets who consistently served as the vehicles for visions of a higher power. After being interrupted by a man from Porlock, however, he returns to his work only to find that "all the rest had passed away like the images on the surface of a stream into which a stone has been cast, but, alas! without the after restoration of the latter!" This flash of

insight over which he has no control again recalls the importance of the will in the process of self-consciousness.

Near the end of the Biographia, Coleridge claims that a work will be believable "if the whole of his work be in harmony...even when the component characters and incidents border on impossibility. The poet does not require us to be awake and believe; he solicits us only to yield ourselves to a dream" (II 218). The dream to which we must yield ourselves is that such as has just been described in "Kubla Khan". The idea of the dream should not suggest that this is mere fancy; instead, it actually can lead one to a higher truth. The vision which Coleridge experiences constitutes the reality of which he can find only fragments in his awakened state.

The idea of the dream provides a fitting analogy for the poetic process because it incorporates all of the major struggles which the poet undergoes. The problem of being both self-conscious and yet unconscious is portrayed in our traditional associations of the dream with our buried psyche; it presents an intuitive vision of truth which we self-consciously possess but which we cannot grasp during our conscious state. The role of the will in this issue also arises in that the poet, like the dreamer, cannot force any images to come; he must simply prepare himself for sleep and then wait to receive inspiration. Furthermore, the fleeting nature of a dream which we never will recall fully after we awaken clarifies the poet's challenge to

search to retrieve fragments of the unified vision which he once possessed.

Goethe clearly recognizes the value of the dream for the idea of poetic reconciliation in both his verse and his prose. He asserts in Dichtung und Wahrheit that: "Das Wissen fange vom einzelnen an, sei endlos und gestaltlos und könne niemals, höchstens nur träumerisch, zusammengefaßt werden und bleibe also dem Glauben geradezu entgegengesetzt" (555). Our body of knowledge cannot be fully combined except in a dream-like instant. Although we can know only parts of the truth which is revealed while we sleep, however, we still can believe in the whole which we never can wake to prove.

Faust divulges the important role of the dream by attributing to it his own joy in the sunset:

> Ein schöner Traum, indessen sie entweicht.
> Ach, zu des Geistes Flügeln wird so leicht
> Kein körperlicher Flügel sich gesellen!
> Doch ist jedem eingeboren,
> Daß sein Gefühl hinauf-und vorwärtsdringt
> (1089-1093)

Later in part two, he again wonders whether the beauty he sees by the river Peneios is reality or a dream:

> Ich wache ja! O laßt sie walten,
> Die unvergleichen Gestalten,
> Wie sie dorthin mein Auge schickt!
> So wunderbar bin ich durchdrungen!
> Sinds Träume? sinds Errinerungen?
> Schon einmal warst du so beglückt.
> (7271-76)

Even though he believes that no bodily wings can accomplish what the mind can, he still believes in the power of these positive impulses of feeling to momentarily match the dream-like joy. He

discovers that dreams do not preclude reality; in fact, they can reveal more than we often discover while awake.

"Christabel" vividly reflects the importance of the dream as a representative way of reaching the truth in Coleridge's poetry as well. Although Geraldine appears as a beautiful maiden, Christabel sees her hideous nature in a dream:

> With open eyes (ah woe is me!)
> Asleep, and dreaming fearfully,
> Fearfully dreaming, yet I wis,
> Dreaming that alone, which is--
> (292-95).

The power of her visionary experience demonstrates Coleridge's struggle to bring together ideal beauty and absolute ugliness and to reconcile them. Geraldine possesses this dual nature because she is both an agent for relief of the division and a sign of that very division.

The terrible horror of Christabel's vision illustrates the challenge which any attempt to reunify discordant qualities, in this case by recovering the friendship between Sir Leoline and Lord Roland, will bring. The narrator explains these former friends' disagreement in conjunction with their remaining connection:

> They parted--ne'er to meet again!
> But neither ever found another
> To free the hollow heart from paining--
> They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
> Like cliffs which had been rent assunder;
> A dreary sea now flows between;
> But neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder,
> Shall wholly do away, I ween,
> The marks of that which once hath been.
> (418-26)

Christabel's efforts to expose Geraldine incur her father's wrath because she tries to prevent the reconciliation which might "free the hollow heart from paining." She attempts to use her insight to maintain division rather than regain union; consequently, her vision for him is ineffective. Her predicament demonstrates the poet's position as well as he continually must strive to reveal visions for the benefit of those around him rather than for his own selfish reasons.

Chapter Five

The Solution:

The Reconciling Power of the Poetic Imagination

The dual nature of the dream which attracts the attention of both of these poets helps them to arrive at a rejuvenating power which can reconcile their problems as well. The qualities of a dream provide a parallel for the most important creative discovery of the age, the idea of the poetic imagination. The imagination incorporates all aspects of the dream and actually provides glimpses of unity which allow the poet to express his vision. This new principle presents a way to explain and thus overcome the central problem of poetic inspiration with which both of these men are confronted.

Just as we cannot will our dreams, no matter how much we think about them, so too the poet cannot will his creative inspiration. Coleridge quotes the Ennead in one attempt to clarify this matter:

> It is not lawful to enquire from whence it sprang, as if it were a thing subject to place and motion, for it neither approached hither, nor again departs from hence to some other place; but it either appears to us or it does not appear. So that we ought not to pursue it with a view of detecting its secret force, but to watch in quiet till it suddenly shines upon us; preparing ourselves for the blessed spectacle as the eye waits patiently for the rising sun (5.5.8; qtd. in BL I 241).

This image of the light shining through again indicates the new resolving principle of imagination for poetry. Like the lamp, the imagination contains creative powers to magnify, intensify, and project all at once. It can suddenly shine through our perception of division to give a clear picture of the unity which lies beyond. Frustration and despair arise when we see only the clouds and the haze, but the moments of light are blinding in their revelation.

Goethe, as one of the founders of the Romantic movement, began to perceive that an imaginative faculty could supply the romantic poet with a means of explaining and reconciling these problems of creativity with which he is continually faced. Barfield contends that "Goethe, with such conceptions as that of the 'exact percipient fancy' and with all of his scientific work, brought an initial confidence in the truth of imagination at any rate to the verge of a theory of knowledge" (RCA 130). This imaginative faculty inspires him to recognize the higher force of unity which he intuitively feels in the world. By preserving his individuality while fully sinking himself into the world around him, Goethe reaches that goal of the imagination to overcome the dichotomy between subject and object, or between the observer and the observed, with which we usually are confronted.

While Goethe's progresses through many different stages in his poetry, he continues to use his poetic imagination to find a solution to the problem of the opposites which continually face him and the lack of constancy which they present. His <u>West-</u>

östlichen Divan, as the title suggests, wrestles with his search for something which will encapsulate the polarity which he encounters. He believes in "Hegire" that he has found the solution through imaginative poetry:

> Wisset nur, daß Dichterworte
> Um des Paradieses Pforte
> Immer leise klopfend schweben,
> Sich erbittend ewges Leben.

His imagination in fact assures him of this position as he moves from the factual to the spiritual. The words of the poets are associated with paradise because they achieve a vision of eternal life in a world of change.

Goethe's poetic imagination also reassures him that the opposing forces he encounters actually constitute a whole. When he can see this, he can praise the mixture which life affords, as in "Talismane":

> Jenes bedrängt, dieses erfrischt;
> So wunderbar ist das Leben gemischt.
> Du danke Gott, wenn er dich preßt,
> Und dank ihm, wenn er dich wieder entläßt.

These opposites to which he refers are no longer separated but instead are blended and fused into one. He still perceives the poles of his experience, but his poetic vision arrives at a principle which both combines the two and maintains their individuality. The notion of life being "gemischt" captures this idea that apparently separate entities can be satisfactorily brought together in harmony. Without this poetic imagination, he is left only with the prospect of being taken away from his earth as happens to Ganymed.

Goethe's poetic imagination enables him not only to recognize both the division and the reconciliation but also to accept his place in such a world. As he affirms this philosophy in "Parabase":

> Freudig war, vor vielen Jahren,
> Eifrig so der Geist bestrebt,
> Zu erforschen, zu erfahren,
> Wie Natur im Schaffen lebt.
> Und es ist das ewig Eine,
> Das sich vielfach offenbart:
> Klein das Große, groß das Kleine,
> Alles nach der eignen Art;
> Immer wechselnd, fest sich haltend,
> Nah und fern und fern und nah,
> So gestaltend, umgestaltend-
> Zum Erstaunen bin ich da.

He continues to write poetry because he has found a principle which unifies all of these things. He cannot fully understand this principle; he must simply wonder at and accept this situation. He can overcome the lost connection through imaginative poetry so that he may admire the world without explaining his exact relation to it. The eternal or unending force of which he writes functions as the imaginative force which allows him to accept division in the knowledge of a greater unity.

The aptly named "Eins und Alles" again portrays Goethe's solution. The title of this poem points to the importance of having both together, not one or the other. He explains the situation from which the imagination must rescue us:

> im Grenzenlosen sich zu finden,
> Wird gern der einzelne verschwinden,....
>
> Weltseele, komm, uns zu durchdringen!
> Dann mit dem Weltgeist selbst zu ringen,

Wird unsrer Kräfte Hochberuf...

Das Ewige regt sich fort in allen:
Denn alles muß in Nichts zerfallen,
Wenn es im Sein beharren will.

Everything must assume the new identity which imagination will provide, and imagination allows one to look beyond the individual to achieve the universal soul within oneself. As the last line reveals, however, each segment is not lost but instead progresses to become a part of some greater whole.

Faust provides the ultimate example of an imaginative solution to the sickness of the poet who must attempt to find meaning in his world. Faust changes completely from a man agonizing to explain everything to a man who, after his ordeal, can tell Mephistopheles:

Gebirgesmasse bleibt mir edel-stumm,
ich frage nicht woher und nicht worum.
(10095-96)

He comes to this peaceful acceptance through his reliance on imagination. When he begins to dig the canal near the end, he finally enters unselfishly into his world and is redeemed by his imaginative vision of helping the people rather than elevating himself above them. This action supplies him with the vision of the universal which he wills all along but which he never has been granted. He ultimately realizes that he never satisfactorily will prove its existence; he must content himself with feeling the power and understanding which the imagination brings.

While Goethe accepts his intuition that a higher imaginative power exists, Coleridge must assure himself of a proper philosophic explanation of it. He conscientiously defines a higher power which functions as an antidote to the problems of self-consciousness and the internal-external polarity. Instead of relying on a vague sense of unity, he actually creates new principles and a system of thought which effectively serve to direct him to his unique concept of the poet. Through this principle, he believes that he will achieve the ideal art which consists of "the forming form shining through the formed form" (BL II 215).

Coleridge first introduces fancy as "the aggretative and associative power" (BL I 293); it is the type of memory which is associated with the traditional notion of imagination. For Coleridge, however, there must be something above this fancy which can transform man and provide him with a new knowledge of his world; otherwise, we would never have the intense experiences of and subsequent longings for unity which we cannot always see. Coleridge, in his typical manner, suggests that his unifying principle is not something in our everyday vocabulary by introducing a new term, "esemplastic," which he defines as "to shape into one" (BL I 168). He then proceeds to contrast fancy with the new principle of imagination, which functions as the "shaping or modifying power"(BL I 293). While fancy merely brings together and assembles images, the imagination actually moulds them into a new creative unity.

Coleridge further prepares his readers for the existence of imagination in chapter 12 of the Biographia when he notes:

> *inconceivable* is a cycle of equal truths without a common and central principle.... That the absurdity does not so immediately strike us, that it does not seem equally *unimaginable*, is owing to a surreptitious act of the imagination, which, instinctively and without our noticing the same, not only fills out the intervening spaces, and contemplates the cycle... giving to all collectively the unity of their common orbit; but likewise supplies... the one central power, which renders the movement harmonious and cyclical (267).

All of our knowledge actually originates from this synthesis rather than from the division which we first perceive. Imagination can bring together all of our different experiences, and they all depend upon it. Without this imagination, we never would gain understanding of our world. Although we never have direct knowledge of the imagination itself because of its operative requirement of unself-consciousness, we must believe that it exists because we can feel that a higher unity exists.

As Coleridge defines imagination, its function is to apprehend the polarity with which it is confronted by restoring the lost connection and leading one towards the ultimate truth. He further distinguishes:

> The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet

> still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify (BL I 304).

The primary imagination thus constitutes the most ideal oneness. The secondary, on the other hand, is that on which the poet relies in his writing to reach a similar feeling of unity to that which exists in the primary form. This form constitutes the creativity which fights against our dull, daily lives to find a new, vital unity. Whereas the primary never can be expressed except perhaps in nature herself because we cannot be conscious of its actions, the secondary can be because we can be more conscious of its activities.[4]

This secondary imagination transforms the poet's fervor into the highest type of critical power, the power of seeing unity in multeity. In Chapter 14 of the Biographia, Coleridge directly relates the imagination to the importance of the poet:

> The poet, described in *ideal* perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity...He diffuses a tone, a spirit of unity, that blends, and... *fuses* each into each, by that synthetic and magical power, to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination. This power, first put into action by the will and understanding... reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities (16).

Chapter thirteen, "On the Imagination," effectively portrays the constant struggle of the imagination to fulfill this role in poetry by successfully overcoming the "film of familiarity" which hangs over our perceptions of the world. This film prevents man

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[4]For further clarification of the distinguishing characteristics of the primary and secondary imaginations, see the chapter on "Imagination and Fancy (2)" in WCT.

from seeing the truth of greater unity which rests behind the false divisions with which we are continually confronted. Moreover, it allows us to mistakenly assume that our everyday, customary impressions are the reality when, in fact, our dreams and imagination are more real.

The imagination constitutes a poetic means of piecing together the fragments of truth which we can grasp and of moulding them into a creative whole. Sometimes the truth lies buried and seems not to exist, as when we confront only division in our world. Underneath or beyond what we perceive, however, there exists an absolute oneness which constitutes the truth. "We are to seek therefore for some absolute truth capable of communicating to other positions a certainty, which it has not itself borrowed; a truth self-grounded, unconditional and known by its own light" (BL I 268), Coleridge instructs his readers. If the poet can "paint to the imagination, not the fancy" (BL II 127), he can arrive at his ultimate goal of truth.

Coleridge does not strive for imagination as his end result, but he needs to use imagination in order to fulfill his poetic obligation to reveal the truth to his readers. This truth actually exists in the poetic imagination, so we must seek glimpses of the latter. As soon as the poet prepares himself to receive and then translate this truth, the imagination becomes the unconscious vehicle for him to grasp it and reveal it in poetry. Since the imagination is a power "coexisting with the conscious will," it serves in the same capacity as the will in

reaching out for the truth. It simultaneously remains distinct from the will, however, because its function does not end when we reach the passive state required in the self-consciousness dilemma. Instead, it serves to actively reveal that passive state. For this reason, the imagination occurs both in nature and in man; it is both active and passive. It actively seeks the experience of unity; once it has found this, however, it waits for the inspiration to shine forth rather than forcing it to arrive. This ability to incorporate seeming opposites within itself allows the imagination to overcome the difficulty of finding unity in an apparently fragmented system.

When Coleridge introduces this complicated concept in the Biographia, he senses the misunderstanding which his inability to completely define it will cause. He addresses this issue when he creates the imaginary letter from a friend who remarks, "You have been obliged to omit so many links... that what remains, looks... like the fragments of the winding steps of an old ruined tower" (I 302-3). This metaphor is crucial for the acceptance of the Coleridgean system in which nothing ever will be fully explained. The ruined tower steps image conveys the idea that all of the pieces in the argument did exist at one time, and enough can be pieced together to arrive at an understanding of the whole which was there. The scattered parts do constitute a larger whole; we unfortunately have lost some of the component pieces. This concept, therefore, avows that even though these parts are ultimately real, we must imagine them because they have been

lost. The poet's role is to employ this function of imagination in order to progress far beyond the average person's experience of fancy, which only combines what it sees.

When the imagination fuses these opposites, therefore, it does not destroy their separate identities. Instead, it reconciles the two so that they can exist both with their distinctions and as part of a larger whole. It accordingly functions as the ultimate solution to the problem of unity in multeity. Poetry itself is the manifestation of imagination; its existence allows for the expression of the truth of these reconciliations which the poet feels. As Coleridge states in one of his lectures, "the power of Poetry is by a single word to produce that energy of mind as compels the imagination to produce the picture" (16 Dec 1811; qtd. in BL II 128).

The imagination also represents that which the poet must continually seek to lead him from the everyday into the visionary. Since Coleridge's central concern is the issue of poetic creativity itself, he naturally envisions this new force as a way of struggling with and ultimately satisfying this need. When Coleridge and Wordsworth introduce the Lyrical Ballads, for example, the former explains that he was to fulfill one of the "two cardinal points of poetry... the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination" (BL II 5). His task of transforming the supernatural into something believable demonstrates the importance he places on achieving something visionary rather than ordinary. Furthermore, it

attests to his reliance on the imagination's creative power to possess moments of truth in his poetry.

The crucial importance of the imagination explains the contrast between the utter despair of "Dejection: An Ode" and the thrill of "The Eolian Harp." In the former, Coleridge reveals his lack of imagination:

> I see them all so excellently fair,
> I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!
> (37-38)

Whereas this seeing might be satisfactory for Goethe to then intuitively feel their beauty, the philosophic Coleridge needs to feel it first in order to find objective proof which will demonstrate its truth. As he describes his problem, he gives a poetic description of the imagination which he lacks:

> Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth
> A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
> Enveloping the Earth--
> And from the soul itself must there be sent
> A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
> Of all sweet sounds the life and element!
> (53-58)

The joy of which he speaks as a necessity can arise only when he can feel himself a part of the whole through the power of his imagination. This metaphor of light for the poetic vision recalls the images of the dream and helps clarify the meaning he places in imagination. The light must "issue forth" instead of being drawn out; it must come from the unconscious recesses of his soul and be transmitted into the world through his imaginative vision. In this way, the soul must function as an instrument of a higher will through which inspiration comes.

In contrast to this bleak outlook when he lacks the power, "The Eolian Harp" demonstrates the joy which occurs when imagination takes hold:

> O the one life within us and abroad,
> Which meets all motion and becomes its soul,
> A light in sound, a sound-like power in light,
> Rythm in all thought, and joyance every where--
> Methinks it should have been impossible
> Not to love all things in a world so filled;
> Where the breeze warbles, and the mute still air
> Is Music slumbering on her instrument.
> (26-33)

The imagination stimulates him, as the wind does the harp, to perceive the one life which merges the internal and the external. He then can feel himself a part of the whole universe and love it all. Imagination is closely allied with love, as The Rime of the Ancient Mariner demonstrates, because it allows us to see and bless the unity of which we are a part. Thus, references to love and the unity of creation are yet another of the innumerable ways of talking about imagination's capacity for incorporating both poles.

The disjunction and breakdown which come in "Dejection" allow for the imagination to enter and provide the joy of oneness in "The Eolian Harp." When Coleridge thinks too much about his obligation to compose, he loses the spontaneity which the imagination requires. As in the preceding discussion about intense loss leading to recovery, the poet must endure the utter despair of the lack of imagination in order to earn its momentary blessings. This explains the necessity of all of Coleridge's sufferings while he waits for that poetic inspiration which leads

to reconciliation. His absolute belief in this system forces him to become a solitary poet on the fringe of society rather than an involved citizen such as Goethe. He needs to remain apart in order to maintain his individual poetic calling, whereas Goethe never doubted his. Coleridge's solitude and failures are crucial to the success of his vision because the lost connection which they represent provides more demonstrable proof of the need for and existence of imagination.

Coleridge always strives to provide glimpses of the imagination through his own poetry. In The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, for example, imagination brings about the mariner's salvation. The moon rises as the Mariner recognizes the inherent unity in the world, and afterwards he can sleep and dream. He describes this reconciliation:

> The silly buckets on the deck,
> That had so long remained,
> I dreamt that they were filled with dew;
> And when I awoke, it rained.
>
> My lips were wet, my throat was cold,
> My garments all were dank;
> Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
> And still my body drank.
> (297-304)

This dream suggests his rejuvenated imagination as he discovers the inseparable relation between love and vision. Like the mariner, the poet must tell his tale so that others may see the importance of his imaginative vision. He must endure the suffering which most people could not bear in order to have this revelation. Just as he curses the albatross and must bear the cross of his sin, so too he now must bear the cross of his

salvation for others. In this way, the poet becomes a Christ-like figure destined to both suffer for and save the people who listen to his word.

The image of the soul receiving light in "To William Wordsworth" again expresses the poet's blessing of vision through imagination. Coleridge praises Wordsworth because he can transform "Thoughts all too deep for words!" (11) through his imagination:

> Now in thy inner life, and now abroad,
> When power streamed from thee, and thy soul received
> The light reflected, as the light bestowed--
> Of fancies fair, and milder hours of youth,
> Hyblean murmurs of poetic thought
> Industrious in its joys, in vales and glens
> Native or outland, lakes and famous hills!
> (17-23)

Worsworth has the poetic vision which can reach these higher truths and convey glimpses of them to the world. Since there is never just one way of talking about these truths, poetry never offers the ultimate solution to our problems. Despite this fact, Coleridge elevates poetry because of its ability to provide some hints of truth.

"To William Wordsworth" further reveals Coleridge's conviction that what the imagination creates is the "Truth" which existed in the world before divisions arose:

> Among the archives of mankind, thy work
> Makes audible a linkéd lay of Truth,
> Of Truth profound a sweet continuous lay,
> Not learnt, but native, her own natural notes!
> (57-60)

The imagination becomes the poetic means of reaching that truth which lies so deep within that we have not been able to express

it. Once it is expressed, it becomes common to all men. This is the same fusing and formative power of the imagination which the poet uses to achieves his recreation of the world in "Kubla Khan" as well.

The imagination, therefore, answers the many questions posed by our continual confrontation with division and our frustration with not being able to express the feeling that something more exists. "What Is Life?" poses the question of how much truth we can know:

> Resembles life what once was deem'd of light,
> Too ample in itself for human sight?
> An absolute self--an element ungrounded--
> All that we see, all colours of all shade
> By that encroach of darkness made?--
> Is very life consciousness unbounded?

All human activities are forms of methods which strive to answer this crucial question; the existence of the imagination actually helps to provide some answers by allowing for the belief that human sight can have glimpses of what life truly is. Imagination overcomes the boundaries of division which we traditionally encounter to allow us glimpses of life itself in its fullness.

The discovery of the imaginative vision enables these poets to momentarily overcome their creative struggles to reveal the "poetic genius itself, which sustains and modifies the images, thoughts, and emotions of the poet's own mind" (BL II 15-16). Whereas the patronage system provided artists with an important place in society during the previous generations, the imagination supplies the romantic poets with a unique new sense of importance as the vehicles for expressing higher truths. As the poet loses

his privileged place in society, Goethe formulates a new position for him as an individual who possesses insight into the nature of the world itself. This change allows Coleridge to completely adopt the role of a prophet seeking to reveal his unique insight into a confusing and often troubling world. By doing so, he succeeds in producing an entirely different understanding of poetry and its critical importance in helping man to grasp his own place as a distinct part of the universe. Instead of writing superficial poetry designed merely to please their readers, Goethe and Coleridge use the imagination to establish poetry as a creative means of conveying the essential message of unity which all men must feel.

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