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Coleridge and Schelling: The Missing Transcendental Deduction

A FEATURE OF A NUMBER OF RECENT ACCOUNTS OF THE Coleridgean symbol has been their comparative neglect of Coleridge's ideas on logic, and of the relationship between his *Opus Maximum* and his reading of Schelling. The two issues are related. The neglect of Coleridge's logic has led far too many commentators to conclude that Coleridge anticipated (in whichever form) post-structuralist theory of the symbol, despite (as we shall see) Coleridge's explicit rejection of the idea that Reason is based on binary opposition. And Coleridge's interest in Schelling has often been presented as a matter of imposture and plagiarism, despite the fact that Schelling is the author on whom Coleridge honed his meta-logic, and that Coleridge's interest in Schelling's transcendental deduction continued far beyond the *Biographia* and was central to both the *Logic* and the *Opus Maximum*.¹

In this paper I offer a highly synoptic account of Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism*. I also give a brief account of Coleridge's marginal notes on Schelling and meta-logic, the failure of the transcendental argument in the *Biographia*, and Coleridge's continuing interest in Schelling's arguments in the later manuscripts. There, I shall argue, something very like Schelling's deduction appears as an explanation of the finite creation, but with foundations which are built on a logic which is essentially

I wish to thank Raimonda Modiano, James Engell, Anthony Harding, John Colmer, Jerome Christensen and Stephen Prickett for reading earlier drafts; and Tom McFarland, Fred Burwick, Bob Barth and Morton Paley for their comments when I spoke at the Wordsworth Summer Conference in 1991. I owe a special debt of thanks to Peter Heath (Schelling's translator), who kindly responded to an appeal for help. Mistakes, however, remain my own responsibility. Mary Anne Perkins' valuable new book, *Coleridge's Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), broadly confirms the picture I paint here.

1. Raimonda Modiano deals with Schelling's role within Coleridge's *Logic* in her review of J. R. de J. Jackson's edition (*The Wordsworth Circle* 13 [1982]: 108–12). References to the

Trinitarian rather than pantheistic. And the Trinitarian foundation raises questions about the role of form, questions which I leave for another occasion. I should note here, however, my agreement with Raimonda Modiano's view that (attractive as the myth may be) "Coleridge did *not* fail to develop a philosophical system"—that a stable, coherent and systematic philosophy is evident in his writings from September 1818 onwards.² It is more than time for critics to cease relying in these matters on the dubious authority of Wellek and de Man.

1. Background: Schelling; Method; and Logic

I shall start with a general reminder of the structure of Chapter XIII of the *Biographia*. The chapter begins, after some prefatory matter, with the following passage:

DES CARTES, speaking as a naturalist, and in imitation of Archimedes, said, give me matter and motion and I will construct you the universe. . . . In the same sense the transcendental philosopher says; grant me a nature having two contrary forces, the one of which tends to expand infinitely, while the other strives to apprehend or *find* itself in this infinity, and I will cause the world of intelligences with the whole system of their representations to rise up before you.³

Coleridge then proceeds to a defense of the very idea of contrary forces (drawn from Kant), and the beginnings of a deduction, before interrupting his argument with the famous letter from a "friend." The letter advises Coleridge that the argument will bore his readers and should be omitted—and Coleridge proceeds accordingly to the even more famous definitions of the imagination and the fancy. The letter was of course written by Coleridge himself (*Biographia* 1.300, n. 3) and is a master-stroke of irony, extricating Coleridge from an embarrassing philosophical impasse whilst at the same time typifying those moments in Coleridge's writing identified by Kathleen Wheeler—moments where the activity of readership is fore-

Opus Maximum are to the University of Toronto's Victoria College Library MS 29 (designated MS B1, B2 and B3 by Snyder, and elsewhere referred to as *Say*, Volumes 1–3). Note that the volumes should be read in reverse order. VCL MS 28 is referred to by Snyder as MS B supplementary. Also see Huntington Library, HM 8195 ("On the Divine Ideas"). *The Index of English Literary Manuscripts* gives sources more generally for Coleridge's manuscripts.

2. Raimonda Modiano, *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature* (London: Macmillan, 1985) 188.

3. S. T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983) 1.296–97. Subsequent references will (mostly) be incorporated in the text.

grounded.⁴ This should not stop us wondering, however, what the shape of the missing argument might have been, for Coleridge describes its extent as not “so little as an hundred pages” (*Biographia* 1.303), and the later manuscripts contain at least that. Coleridge borrowed the passage about Descartes, with which we began, from Schelling’s *System of Transcendental Idealism*,⁵ and it is to Schelling that we must turn if we are to appreciate the significance of Coleridge’s argument about the two opposing forces.

Before I begin, however, I should make four general points.

1) The exposition of Schelling which follows is entirely schematic. Schelling’s *System* is itself, of course, highly organized, but its structure is almost entirely implicit. In two hundred and thirty pages (in the English translation) of consecutive argument there are few signposts and almost no concessions to the reader. One sees a similar strategy in Schelling’s syncretic habit of deducing from his system the conclusions of his predecessors (the Christian doctrine of the immanence of God within humanity; much of Plotinus, Spinoza, Leibniz, and Kant, etc.) without in any way referring to the parallels so drawn. These are clearly self-conscious strategies, but they also raise the danger (for the expositor) of over-systematizing. One of the pleasures of reading Schelling is watching the birth (here and in Fichte, with its more remote origins in Kant) of dialectic as a method. But whereas, in what follows, I have used the term “dialectic” (and have represented this diagrammatically), it is not a term which Schelling (as opposed to Coleridge)⁶ used, and Schelling’s methodology is in fact less clear cut than I am going to suggest. For all its self-confidence, the *System* is in part an exploratory work.

2) The second point concerns the neo-Platonic appearance of the *System*’s argument, which finds in self-consciousness a principle which instantiates both itself and the world. That appearance is misleading, for self-consciousness is an originating principle only within the confines of a (much enlarged) Kantian world of phenomena. As we shall see, the real grounding principle turns out to be will, something which emerges in Schelling’s third

4. Kathleen Wheeler, *Sources, Processes and Methods in Coleridge’s Biographia Literaria* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1980) 96.

5. F. W. J. Von Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), translated by Peter Heath (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1978) 72–73; SW 427. For convenience I have noted the equivalent page references in the Standard German edition, *Sämtliche Werke* [SW] 3 (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1856–61).

6. Coleridge uses the term in *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* [CN], ed. Kathleen Coburn (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957–1990) III.4418, f. 13.

epoch but about which nothing further can be said because will lies beyond the Kantian limits to knowledge. Thus while there may be a tendency in some of Schelling's earlier work (the more Fichtean *Vom Ich*, for instance)⁷ to think of the self substantively, the self in the *System* is not fundamental. Rather, it is a *product* of the act of self-knowing—and hence a critical rather than an ontological entity (*System* 16–17, SW 354–57). The self's self-constitution, though it brings the empirical world into existence with it, is not in fact a moment of neo-Platonic self-instantiation through the Idea (as God was sometimes held to instantiate Himself).

The Platonic appearance of Schelling's argument is much less apparent in the *System's* companion work, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* (1797–1803),⁸ which begins with an analysis of matter (rather than knowledge) and presents a picture of the world as constituted by what Frederick Burwick nicely termed “energy physics.” Having said this, we should note that the Platonic element does enter *Ideas*. The relation between the two works reflects Schelling's biperspectivism,⁹ his insistence that it does not matter whether we begin our analysis with the subject *or* the object, for the two are ultimately mutually implicative. Thus the later sections of *Ideas* present in summary form the *System's* arguments: even in *Ideas* the material world only emerges as one half of the relation between perceiving subject and perceived object.¹⁰

3) Schelling (in the *System*, though not in his later work) may be considered in highly qualified terms a pantheist. Like every other generalization about such a syncretic thinker, this needs qualification if understood as a dogmatic or metaphysical statement, for (again) the real grounding principle within the *System* is the will, which lies beyond the Kantian limits to knowledge.

7. F. W. J. von Schelling, *Vom Ich* translated by Fritz Marti in *The Unconditional in Human Knowledge: Four Early Essays by F. W. J. Schelling* (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1980).

8. F. W. J. von Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* (1797–1803), translated by Errol E. Harris and Peter Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988).

9. Joseph Esposito uses the term “biperspectivism” in *Schelling's Idealism and Philosophy of Nature* (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1977) 102. Professor Burwick's comments were made in response to an earlier draft of this chapter, read at the Wordsworth Summer Conference, Grasmere 1991.

10. The distinction between critical and substantial entities is itself less clear than it seems, for post-Kantian idealism seeks to minimize the role played in Kant's system by “things-in-themselves,” seeing them as signs in Kant of a residual dogmatism about the external world, and as an element which cast into doubt the ability of critical philosophy to establish its own foundations. The program of post-Kantian Idealism was to account for as much of the world as possible *within* the critical confines, eliminating as far as possible the “thing-in-itself.” Within the Kantian or critical realm, then, the self *is* self-instantiating though not perhaps self-grounded. See Esposito 19–22. See also Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* 25.

However, Schelling's Absolute Self performs the functions of a pantheistic God (Spinoza's metaphysic is subsumed), and the account as it stands is not reconcilable with traditional theism.¹¹ This point in itself should give pause to those who believe that Coleridge intended simply to plagiarize Schelling in the *Biographia*, for the *Biographia* (for instance in Chapter IX) is intensely aware of these issues. In Coleridge's use of Schelling's argument, therefore, we should be alert for signs of distinction. I mention the issue here, however, mainly to clarify the argument which follows. The self deduced in the first "epoch" of Schelling's argument (which follows) is in fact the Absolute Self (in effect God), though Schelling typically does not indicate this until one hundred and thirty pages into the deduction—in what he calls the "third epoch" of his argument. Given the pantheistic slant to his argument, Schelling's failure to distinguish the Absolute from the finite self for so long is of little significance, though it is likely to confuse the reader.

4) Finally, I wish to comment on *logic* and the Coleridgean "Understanding," a faculty to which I refer below and which requires a brief explanation. The Coleridgean Understanding (as also Schelling's) derives from the Kantian faculty described in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant there argues that the human Understanding supplies all of the formal (i.e. logical, spatial, temporal and mathematical) features of both our sensory perception of, and thinking about, reality. All thought is thus irremediably subjective, and nothing can be said about the thing-in-itself (the noumenon) as opposed to the thing-as-it-appears (the phenomenon). All transcendent or metaphysical argument is ruled out of court, and the function of philosophy is reduced to supplying a phenomenological (or transcendental) account of the structures of human thought. Coleridge, however, believed that he possessed what Carlyle sardonically referred to as "the sublime secret of believing by 'the reason' what 'the understanding' has been obliged to fling out."¹² Coleridge accepted the Kantian description of the uninspired human mind (reproducing it, for instance, in the *Logic*),¹³ but believed that this describes a faculty which reifies an underlying dynamic reality.¹⁴

11. See Thomas McFarland, *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969) for Schelling's own comment: "It will be said that this system is pantheism. Supposing now that it actually were pantheism in your sense, what would it then be? Supposing that precisely this system and no other followed from reason, must I not, despite your terror before it, maintain it as the only true philosophy?" (105).

12. Thomas Carlyle, *Life of Sterling*, quoted in Allan Grant, *A Preface to Coleridge* (London: Longman, 1972/1980) 22.

13. S. T. Coleridge, *Logic*, ed. J. R. de J. Jackson (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981).

14. See John H. Muirhead, *Coleridge as Philosopher* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1930/1954) 61 ff.

We can see what Coleridge meant if we look at his view of logic. Traditional logic takes it as self-evident that the world can be divided into X and non-X (wombats and non-wombats, etc.).¹⁵ The dynamic logic observes that if the world can be so divided there must be a unity prior to the division. This is in effect what Plato had argued in the *Parmenides* (as had Spinoza later), though the paradoxical appearance of the argument was one of the grounds for Kant's belief that all metaphysical argument leads inevitably to irresolvable contradiction.¹⁶ Coleridge, however, observes that since the prior unity is *prior* to the categories of logic it cannot be a thing (since "things" are defined in terms of the categories of logic) but must be an *act*. Once its dynamic basis is seen, logical opposition becomes not complete and categorical but an opposition of *polarity*—in which the polarized elements belong to single continuum. In terms of logic Coleridge's polarized opposites have the same status as Blake's contraries: it follows that neither thinker could ultimately have accepted the structuralist axiom that all thought reflects binary opposition. And the status of the Understanding can be seen by analogy, for all its categories can be seen to be reified forms of an underlying dynamic, of what Coleridge refers to as Reason.¹⁷

Schelling, on the other hand, though his system depends on certain dynamic presuppositions, did not in the *System* develop the meta-logic on which a consistent dynamicism would depend. As we shall see, Coleridge referred to this meta-logic as polar logic, as opposed to Schelling's dialectical logic—and Schelling's failure to develop such a logic fundamentally accounts for the *System's* inadequacy, an inadequacy which his later "philosophy of identity" sought to overcome. Let us begin, however, with the *System* and Coleridge's response to it.

2. Schelling's Premises

I shall begin by examining Schelling's two major premises; and then comment on his methodology before outlining the deduction itself.

Schelling's first premise is grounded in his acceptance of the correspond-

15. The category of non-wombats of course contains *all* existents which are not wombats—people, animals, physical objects, etc.

16. Kant's argument towards the antinomies (the inherent contradictions within reason) led various German theorists to propose "symbol" as a *reconciliation* of contradiction or opposites. Coleridge took up this idea, but on a much firmer meta-logical basis—confining contradiction merely to the finite sphere.

17. The intuition of the dynamic basis of logic is itself, for instance, an Idea of Reason. The human mind cannot, however, like Milton's angels, operate through immediate intuition, but is constrained to operate *through* the Understanding—through the medium of the

ence theory of truth—the view that truth implies a correspondence between ideas and the realities they represent. It follows that (all) knowledge is defined as a relation between a subject (the “knowing” mind) and an object (the object of knowledge).

We should note here that Coleridge accepts such a view in the *Biographia*, but later explicitly rejects it in the *Logic* as anything other than a description, *post hoc*, of the act of knowledge in the empirical world (*Logic* 37, 107; Muirhead 72–73). As we shall see, in his later marginal notes on Schelling’s *System* Coleridge rejects the subject–object model as a description of fundamental reality. In his later formulations of the Trinity, as the fundamental and self-constituting reality of his system, he goes to some length not to use the categories of subject and object, since these belong to the world of the (finite) Understanding. The Trinity belongs in (and is) the realm of Reason, the dynamic reality which underlies the reificatory Understanding and which is thus not describable within the Understanding’s categories.

Schelling however takes as his premise the correspondence view, and argues that if there is to be a knowledge–relation of subject and object this must imply an original union of subject and object. This follows from Spinoza’s argument that if two existents in any sense exist in the same realm there must be something common to the two, which is their prior unity; it follows more generally from arguments against an ultimate duality of mind and body.

Since this original union is specifically the union of the *subject* (or mind) with the object, it constitutes the “origins” (in terms which need heavy qualification to allow for the more fundamental role of will) not only of knowledge but of the self and all empirical reality. That the original union is a principle of knowledge points to the “Idealism” of Schelling’s argument: that it is the “origin” of empirical reality indicates that the originating principle must be not only analytic (a tautology) but also synthetic (informative about the world) (*System* 22; SW 362–63). The originating principle will thus in a sense be self-constitutive—a principle which is internally self-sufficient (as, for instance, the laws of logic, mathematics and geometry were taken to be by the rationalists) but which also implies its own existence empirically. Such a union of the synthetic and the analytic,

symbol (in this case, the symbol of polarity). Coleridge thus insists that the Reason is not a faculty but (in its human manifestation) a “power” within the faculty of the Understanding. On a different tack, in the light of Coleridge’s view of the categories as reifications, note that Schelling sought to out-Kant Kant by providing a critical derivation of the very forms of thought—an explicitly *dynamic* derivation of the categories. See *Über die Möglichkeit in Marti* 35–58.

Schelling argued, can only be found in self-consciousness, in which there is an identity of self-as-object with the self-as-subject—an analytic identity which at the same time produces the synthetic equation of subject and object.

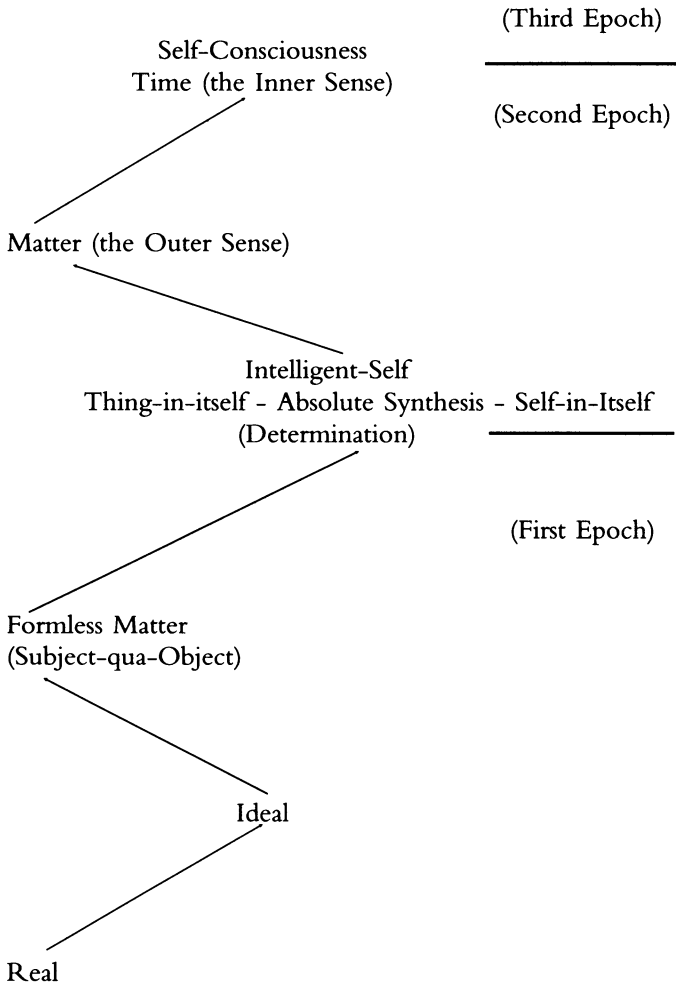
Schelling's second premise is that selfhood is essentially a form of limitation, since to say "I" is to imply the existence of a "Not-I." This premise is also rejected by the later Coleridge, for whom the consubstantiation of the Trinity rules out such an argument as the ultimate nature of selfhood. The constant motive force in Schelling's system, however, is the attempt of the self to intuit itself, via limitation, as object. Since Schelling willingly acknowledges that the self is not ultimately an object, each attempt at such intuition contains the seeds of the next step in the dialectic, for actual self-intuition is infinitely deferred.

3. Schelling's Methodology

Before proceeding from Schelling's premises to the actual deduction, I shall comment briefly on Schelling's methodology. I shall also derive the first two terms of the dialectic illustrated in the diagram on page 459.

At each step in the argument Schelling implicitly asks a question of the form, "if we know that certain conditions must obtain, what further conditions must be satisfied?" The steps in the argument can be displayed schematically as follows:

1. We need a prior ground of subject and object.
2. Since this is a prior ground it can be neither subject nor object, nor describable in terms of any of the categories of knowledge. It is thus not a *thing*.
3. The prior ground must therefore be an act.
4. As prior to the categories, this act must be without limit—since limitation is a categorical concept.
5. Instantiation requires self-consciousness through limitation. If limitation is to occur, it must imply a second limiting act.
6. We thus have two infinite activities, identical but opposed in direction; i.e.
 - the Real: the outward moving blind attempt to intuit the self, as object. Schelling refers to this as "mere activity" (since it is prior to the categories it can have no other predicate), or as "no other than the original, infinitely extending, activity of the self" (*System* 39; SW 383–85); and
 - the Ideal: the inward-looking attempt to intuit the self within the outward looking act, thereby limiting it. The Ideal is also a mere

The Three Epochs

This diagram should be read from bottom to top. The priority of the lower levels, however, is purely conceptual: they only exist in and as the final synthesis.

activity, distinct from the Real solely in the inward-looking direction of its operation.

The Real and the Ideal activities should not be identified immediately with the object and subject terms of self-consciousness, though they parallel them, since the latter terms do not emerge until the end of the first epoch, in the Absolute synthesis.

7. We have thus arrived at Schelling's version of the passage about Descartes with which we began. However, since neither of these two activities on its own is self-constituting there must be a third activity, "compounded" of the two and embodying the necessary synthesis of ideal and real or subject and object. This is the self-itself, or the (unconscious) Absolute God, and can be seen on the accompanying diagram as the fourth moment in the dialectic, or as the culmination of what Schelling calls the "First Epoch" of the deduction. Its situation there, however, allows us an immediate insight into one of the basic problems in Schelling's system. If Schelling's purpose was to provide a *systematic* deduction (as I shall comment below, Coleridge appears to have read Schelling this way) then the Absolute should appear at the base of the dialectic—and not as the product of two more basic activities whose own status then becomes problematic. Schelling seems to have become aware of this problem, for (as we shall see) his later philosophy of identity sought to overcome it by incorporating the first three moments *within* the Absolute—though Coleridge would probably not have regarded this as an adequate solution for the meta-logical problem.

4. Schelling's Deduction

The deduction itself takes a dialectical form, and is divided into three "epochs." These are the moments in the argument where the existents of the system emerge—the Absolute Self or the (unconscious) God; matter; and finite self-consciousness. The steps in the argument can again be displayed schematically.

First Epoch

1. We begin with the Real or outward looking activity, which was derived in steps 1 to 4 above.
2. As we saw in step 5 above, this necessitates an opposing limiting or Ideal activity. This is represented dialectically on the accompanying diagram as a move to the Ideal.
3. The product of this limitation is a Real with limits—an object. Dialectically, this represents a move towards the Real. However, no object can in fact represent the self, since the self is actually an act. Nor does

this limitation of the Real by the Ideal involve any simultaneous limitation of the Ideal—as would be necessary for the instantiating identity of Real and Ideal. Thus, this initial limitation can only issue in what Schelling calls an unstable “byproduct”—the formless matter of *Genesis*, and Plato’s *Timaeus*, but also of Coleridge’s *Opus Maximum*.

4. If the Real and the Ideal are to be equated, the Ideal requires limitation. Since the Ideal is the limiting power, this limitation must be self-imposed. It is also a move back to the Ideal pole of the dialectic. The Ideal takes within it the limit of the Real by a process of “determination.” As Schelling says, “that which I am to determine must be present independently of myself. But in that I determine it, it again becomes . . . a thing dependent on myself.”¹⁸ (For example, on Rationalist presuppositions, my knowledge that $2+2=4$ depends not on any appeal to empirical experience but on my own inner determination. It is nonetheless independently true.) Since it is within the ambit of the Ideal, the determined self is now available for (self-) perception. Schelling calls this act the “Absolute Synthesis,” for within it emerges the (putative) synthetic identity of self-as-subject and self-as-object. However, though this is Schelling’s pantheistic God, self-consciousness has not yet been derived and is in fact to be found only in finite consciousness. The following stages in the deduction still occur within the unconsciousness—and we thus understand Coleridge’s implication that where the *secondary* imagination “[coexists] with the conscious will” the primary imagination is largely a matter of the unconscious.¹⁹

Second Epoch

5. The reason why the Self at this stage still cannot be self-conscious is that in the process of determining the self-as-object, the self is reified

18. *System* 63; SW 414–15. It is also worth noting that Schelling speaks of determination as the determination of the boundary between the self and the non-self. The non-self is (schematically at least) a purely critical entity. However, there is a curious methodological reversal implicit in Schelling’s dialectic. When, for instance, the Ideal determines its own boundaries, that (merely potential) element which lies beyond the boundary is naturally labelled the non-self. That which lies within the boundary is, however, objectified—and where it had been Ideal, becomes Real. As such, Schelling refers to the object as the “thing-in-itself”—and at times almost seems to speak of it as a non-self. This is due to lack of clarity.

19. *Biographia* 1.304. I do not wish to imply that in either case Imagination is wholly tied to the predominant conscious or unconscious mode. Coleridge’s interest in marginal perceptual phenomena shows that he was aware that in certain limited circumstances the conscious will is capable of influencing the perception of external reality. See, for instance, *CN* III. 3280. Similarly, Coleridge would not have denied the unconscious a role in art.

and can no longer lie within the ambit of the Ideal. (This also explains why in finite consciousness we do not perceive the physical world as simply a presentation of the self-as-object: it constitutes Schelling's Idealist explanation of our sense of contingency in perceiving the external world.) The self now attempts to intuit itself in the reified object, and thus moves towards the Real pole of the dialectic. The product is determined or formed matter, though since we have not yet deduced the forms of space and time this determined "matter" should not be confused with empirical matter. Schelling argues that the "production" of determined matter represents an "equilibrium"—but because determined matter can no more represent the self than could any previous stage in the dialectic, this is an equilibrium which is unstable. Because of this instability, Schelling claims that the original Ideal and Real activities emerge in the guise of "forces" from which the dimensions of space are constructed. It is worth noting additionally that Schelling speaks of the constructive ground to the "forces" as gravitation, thought of as a synthetic force of coherence which reaches towards the conditions of the new equilibrium denominated as matter.²⁰

6. If determined matter is to exist it must be brought back within the ambit of the Ideal—through perception. We thus move back to the Ideal pole. However, even in perception there can be no satisfactory synthesis of subject and object, since the self is not ultimately an object. An infinite series of attempted resolutions ensues—forming the roots of temporality. In each of the final attempts to perceive the self-as-object in the determined objects of perception, the Self (Schelling claims) "feels itself driven back to a stage of which it cannot be conscious." This leads to the feeling of self-consciousness, of the present. That which lies *within* the determining Ideal thus becomes the (Kantian) inner sense (or time), while that without becomes the outer sense (or space and its contents).

Third Epoch

In the Second Epoch we outlined the "production" of matter, but matter can in fact exist only as one half of the perceptual relation. We still lack

20. *System* 85; SW 443–44. There seems to me to be a flaw in the argument here, since determined matter no more represents an equilibrium than did formless matter. Both are merely dialectical moments awaiting their final (putative) synthesis in perception. The most the argument can derive is thus "determined" matter—but not (on this argument at least) the details of its spatial form. I am not aware of Coleridge making this particular criticism, but I note that he nowhere reproduces this particular argument of Schelling's—even while adopting much of the form of the rest of Schelling's scheme.

the deduction of the self-as-object, necessary for this as for the act of instantiation by which the world is to come into being.

7. The self now feels itself driven back upon itself in its attempts at self-intuition.²¹ It must intuit itself in this feeling of being driven back. This it does not by producing but by creating an abstraction of the self-as-object, separate from the process of intuition. Schelling argues that the shift in mode from "production" to "abstraction" is necessary—since we intuit not something new but the whole pre-existing structure (*System* 121–34; SW 489–506). And since intuition is not a mechanistically determinable consequence of what precedes it, but rather a response of the self to its frustration with the process of production, Schelling speaks of it as an act of will and of freedom. Thus the will, which otherwise lies outside the realm of knowledge (and about which nothing else can be said), appears as the truly fundamental moment in the *System*—where the self and its prior activities are merely self-products. In other words, the original "real" activity is not to be identified with this will, since the real activity is the basic building block of the self, which is a critical, not an ontological entity.

In order to make this "transcendental" abstraction, the entire Kantian "Understanding" must emerge—the structure of mind which (Schelling argues) makes us see things which are essentially activities, in the reified forms of subject and object.²² Only through such a reificatory faculty can the required abstraction of the self be produced; and it is only thus that the self can perform the synthetic act of self-instantiation as object. We might note in passing that Schelling's deduction of the Understanding, unlike Kant's, proceeds within a dynamic context.

21. This move seems particularly questionable since Schelling has argued all along that prior oppositions "sink" from consciousness and, by implication, from the ambit of the self. How they can now be "felt"—thought not immediately intuited—I do not understand. The danger here seems to lie in the use of the word "feeling," though since I argue that Coleridge adopted this analysis within the finite domain it is a usage he must have been prepared to allow.

22. Technically, at this point Schelling introduces the notion of the schematum—as the familiar Kantian link between concept and object (*System* 136; SW 537–38). We are now conceptually enabled to conceive of abstraction, since the abstraction of a concept from its object does not leave a mere zero. If generally the schematum is the condition of empirical abstraction, however, that abstraction in which the self is intuited must be described as a transcendental abstraction, and its product a transcendental schematum. The transcendental proves to be the condition of the empirical. Only through transcendental schematism can the self-in-itself be (notionally) divorced from the self as product; and only in the resulting finite consciousness do questions of the role of empirical schemata, in the perception of finite objects, arise.

However, what we are never quite told is about the status of the consciousness of self which brings the basic model to a close. The proposed solution is clearly not satisfactory if (as the introduction to his work suggests) Schelling's scheme was to establish self-consciousness as the point at which the synthetic equation of subject and object is fulfilled. For self-consciousness arises here only through transcendental abstraction, itself the product of the kind of objectification which at every step baffles the attempts of the apperceptive self—and the self is neither shown to be, nor in fact is, an object. Yet Schelling himself seems peculiarly unperturbed by this fact. He speaks, in a moment of quite atypical lyricism, of the dialectic as “the odyssey of the spirit, which, marvelously deluded, seeks itself, and in seeking flies from itself” (*System* 232; SW 628–29).

As Michael Vater points out, Fichte was also aware of this contradiction as it functioned at the heart of his *Science of Knowledge*—Schelling's major source (*System* xxiii). Fichte too denied that reflection can be a moment of transparent self-perception, presenting rather a model of infinite deferral—which has the virtue of being true to our experience of being self-conscious and yet blind to our ultimate natures. Both philosophers thus think that self-consciousness can only arise out of the process of experience—and in that sense there is much to commend Schelling's view of self-consciousness as an abstracted grasp of our role within that process. Seen in these terms, the self-as-object is more a postulate than a reality; the failure of final transparency merely a testament to the realities of human self-consciousness; and the dialectic an anatomy of the way in which an ultimately self-blinded consciousness operates. Given that the dialectic is not self-instantiating but rather reliant on the interposition of the will from outside its own parameters, the failure to derive satisfactorily the synthetic equation of subject and object may be a virtue—though it casts into renewed doubt the status of knowledge which Schelling had sought to rescue from Kantian agnosticism. The *System's* failure, then, is not necessarily a failure to account for the facts of experience. It may merely amount to a failure to ground the forms of knowledge in the way in which the early parts of the book seem to promise, and which Schelling had earlier demonstrated in *On the Possibility of a Form of All Philosophy*.²³

It is worth noting finally the parallel between Schelling's deduction and the Christian doctrine of the immanence of God within the creation (including the human person). This parallel may be good theology, though once again it reveals the non-commensurability of the subject and the object terms. As we have seen above, the self-conscious subject actually

23. *Über die Möglichkeit einer Form der Philosophie überhaupt* (see Marti 35–58).

belongs in the finite and temporal sphere: the perceived object, however, is the self-in-itself, the Absolute Synthesis—since though the object term is notional or schematic, it is explicitly a schematum of the entire process, and not merely of its finite terminus. The Absolute Synthesis constitutes the Transcendental Unity of Apperception common (on post-Kantian accounts) to all persons—and is equivalent to the divine immanence, though Schelling typically does not refer to the analogy. It is also worth noting that both subject and object terms are ultimately reflections of pure inwardness—again, a theological concept.

Art: an Extra-Systematic Solution

As I have already suggested, the “failure” of the final deduction does not seem to have perturbed Schelling, who proposes (without any particular explanation) his own solution. This turns on an analysis of the aesthetic. As Michael Vater puts it, the solution “is extra-systematic since on the Fichtean model of consciousness—an activity ever-deflected from complete reflection into unconscious and preconscious production—a fully transparent philosophical moment of self-reflection is not possible (*System*, “Introduction” xv). I shall outline it briefly, in a single paragraph, mainly in order to make it clear how far Coleridge’s purposes (for instance in *On Poesy or Art*) were from Schelling’s—for nowhere in the later manuscripts have I found Coleridge using this argument.

Schelling’s solution centers on the role of art. Art, he argues, is both a conscious production and thoroughly determined by the unconscious.²⁴ It is thus a conscious expression of the predicament of consciousness as an attempt to render conscious that (the self-as-object) which is *not*—not conscious and indeed not even existent or instantiable.²⁵ Schelling offers

24. By this he makes the romantic appeal to the experience in which artists claim to be driven in their production by something outside their immediate consciousness—to be “inspired” or to have the form of their art somehow given to them. Such claims of course go back at least as far as Plato’s complaint in the *Republic* that artists do not even know what their own works mean.

25. This can be explained more fully. The *penultimate section* of Schelling’s *System* deals with the “Essentials of Teleology according to the Principles of Transcendental Idealism,” and sets forth a Kantian position on the status of Nature as appearing purposive whilst in fact being brought into existence without purpose (*System* 215; SW 606–7). Since self-consciousness is consistently a trope, the object (or Nature) whilst appearing to signify the self does not in fact do so. In this Nature reflects a paradox of self-consciousness itself (*System* 217; SW 610). Or since Nature is an unconscious product which figures (or better, which only appears to figure) the conscious or purposive, it cannot be an object for the self’s predicament. For this the self must produce a conscious product, an artifact. This is the subject of the *System’s final section* (*System* 219; SW 611–13). In the production of art the artist

little assistance in explaining what to make of this, though in general terms it reflects a useful conception of art as the one human activity that imitates and symbolizes the divine act of creation. Since the entire dialectic has been critical rather than substantial, the fact that art plays merely a formal (i.e. not substantial) role in concluding the deduction may perhaps be a virtue. But it does not, as we shall see, solve the deeper problems of meta-logic to which Coleridge pointed.

This completes the exposition of the *System*, and we have only to note that in deducing the emergence of physical perception we have deduced the equivalent of Coleridge's Primary Imagination—both the entity (or power) itself and its perceptual products.²⁶ We should also note the similarities of Schelling's scheme with Coleridge's doctrine of Reflection in the later manuscripts ("the Understanding itself, a synonym, not a predicate") (*Logic* 89, ¶35). But finally we should note the *System's* relative failure—and that since the object term does not in fact represent the self, the world of nature derived by Schelling is in effect a trope—a figure used "in a sense other than that which is proper to it" (*O.E.D.*). We should turn then to Coleridge's critique of Schelling's *System*, a critique to be found in his marginal notes to *System* and published by his daughter Sara Coleridge in her edition of the *Biographia* in 1847.

5. Coleridge's Marginal Critique

In my comments above I have been more sanguine than Coleridge appears to have been about Schelling's failure to derive the categories of thought and logic which underlie his system. Coleridge's interest is fundamentally in the question of meta-logic—and I shall argue that his criticism is essentially that dialectic, as a form of logic, depends upon the very assumption of a subject/object model of consciousness which Schelling is forced ultimately to elide. Even if the entry of the will from outside the dialectic allows Schelling's system to escape total vitiation, it leaves dialectic as a methodology shorn of most of its explanatory power—a mechanism merely of delusion, shored up by a mystificatory will which lies beyond explanation.

I should say at the outset that Coleridge's marginal notes do not represent (at that point in Coleridge's development) a fully developed position—as

is conscious both of the free act he makes in producing and of the utterly determined nature of what he produces. What is consciously produced is an object or representation of the unconscious: in art freedom recognizes its identity with determination.

26. I refer to Imagination here as an entity rather than a faculty because strictly speaking Imagination (like the Reason) is (in the finite mind) a power *within* the Understanding—which is the faculty as such.

the following note on the relation between the self and the object of perception reveals:

Add to this, one scruple which always attacks my mind when I read Schelling or Fichte. Does [sense-]perception imply a greater mystery . . . than the act of Self-consciousness, that is, Self-perception? Let perception be demanded as an Act Specific of the mind, and how many of the grounds of Idealism become $o=0$!

No! I am wrong. For grant this mysterious Perception, yet ask yourself *what* you perceive and a contradiction ensues. (*Biographia* [1847] 316)²⁷.

This note (to which I can assign no date but which I assume predates the *Logic* and *Opus Maximum* manuscripts) shows how fundamentally Coleridge was considering and reconsidering the grounds of Idealism. But if this note does at least recant its own doubt, the marginal critique more generally clarifies the meta-logical shortcomings of Schelling's *System*. It has, moreover, a constructive aspect which points to the basis of Coleridge's system as it existed from about September 1818 (the date of the crucial letter to Green).

Coleridge begins by pointing to the difficulty I referred to earlier: that the Real term at the base of the dialectic (see diagram) cannot do the work apparently demanded of it since this would require it to be self-constituting—and the moment of self-constitution does not occur until the derivation of the third activity, the self-in-itself. The Real term, as it stands, is in a sense *abstract* or *critical*, necessarily presupposed as the primary act prior to subject and object and, as an act, productive of the self (a product)—but nonetheless existent only in the moment of self-knowing. It is thus only by a sleight of hand (by treating the Real as implicitly objective) that Schelling is able to ground his dialectic. This, I think, is the point of Coleridge's objection that "Schelling . . . commences by giving objectivity to abstractions."²⁸

The previous point may be more formal than substantive (Coleridge's notes are not full enough to indicate how he read the role of the will in the *System*) but it leads to what Coleridge thought of as a worrying element of manicheism in Schelling's thought. Thus Coleridge comments that:

27. Unfortunately, as Sara Coleridge observes, the rest of the note is missing. But if objectness is to be banished from the realm of metaphysics then, as Coleridge sees, there remains the problem of just what is perceived.

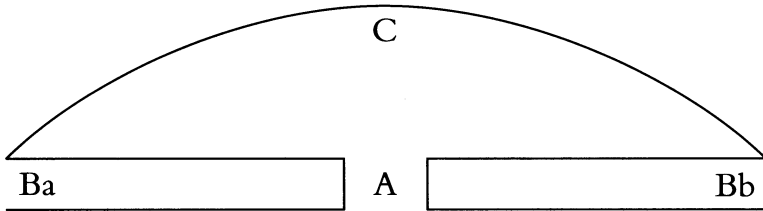
28. *Biographia* (1847) 315. Similar objections are raised in CN III.4449 and CN IV.4910, f. 73v. and BM Egerton 2801, ff. 75–76, where Coleridge says (in a note presumably intended for Green):

all Schelling's 'contradictions' [or dialectical moments] are reducible to the one difficulty of comprehending the coexistence of the Attributes *Agere et Pati* [activity and passivity, subject and object], in the same subject. (*Biographia* [1847] 315)²⁹

Coleridge further comments that Schelling's method "already supposes plurality in the original self." Coleridge is pointing then to the way in which the real term at the base of the dialectic is not autonomous but already covertly implies the existence of the second limiting power—the contradiction which drives the dialectic and which is mirrored in the dual nature of the Absolute Synthesis.

Coleridge reveals his interest in this as a methodological issue in the following quotation:

This system may be represented by a straight road from Ba to Bb.



with a gate at A, the massive door of which is barred on both sides: so that when he arrives at A from Ba, he must return back, and go around by C to Bb, in order to reach the same point from that direction. (*Biographia* [1847] 317)

It is ever awful . . . to me to reflect on the morning of our [?] first systematic [conversation?] when we opened Schelling's Introduction to his *Naturphilosophie* and looking thro' the first 20 pages obtained a clear conviction that he had imprisoned his System within a circle that could never open—and from which the Past and the To Come could exist only by . . . and under the name of Illusory (Scheinwesen [? spectre])—that his Principle was little more than an arbitrary universalization of a [Fact?] or two supplied by magnetism and electricity . . . [not synthetic but] merely analytic and the *Naturphilosophie* as Theory grounded in an Hypothesis . . . not [grounded in a real synthetic first principle].

29. This manichean element extends to the logic of dialectic itself, as Coleridge comments (*Biographia* [1847] 303):

Schelling has more than once spoken of the necessity of a thorough study of logic. . . . Would that he had prefixed to [the *Philosophische Untersuchungen*] a canon of his own Logic, and, if he could, had taught us wherein his forms of thinking differ from the transrealization of not Ideas alone, but more often—Abstractions and arbitrary general terms in Proclus!

In Schelling's dialectic, explanation is forced at every point to revert to its opposite moment in an attempt to explain the fundamental and unresolved opposition of self-as-subject and self-as-object. This process proceeds from what Schelling calls "original *sensation*" in the initial Absolute synthesis to the (putative) self-consciousness or self-*perception* with which the system closes. But Coleridge, using the term "perception" for self-consciousness, comments: "[n]ow I appear to myself to obviate this inconvenience by simply reversing the assumption that Perception [self-consciousness] is a species of which Sensation is the genus."³⁰ Perception or self-consciousness is to be treated as the prior term, not as the product of the dialectic but as its condition. In its broadest terms, the dialectic is to be collapsed back into a preceding polarity, a polarity which *does* contain the opposition of subject and object (for we are at this level still within the world of the Understanding), but is not self-instantiating and is based on a consciousness prior to the finite world. For as Coleridge points out, if it were true as Schelling claims that the self cannot both intuit and intuit itself intuiting at the same time, then "*the I could never become self-conscious*" (*Biographia* [1847] 319).

And where this is to speak concretely of the basis of dialectic, it has its correlative in Coleridge's meta or polar logic which I described earlier. Schelling's logic, though dynamic in appearance (i.e. as an instrument for generating oppositions), in fact only works by covertly introducing *plurality* into the first term—and thus contains no genuine meta-logic. The dialectic is certainly dynamic, but since it is based implicitly on a subject/object view of knowledge (on the contradictory requirement of a quest for perception of self-as-object as the basis of knowledge) it cannot in itself provide the logical grounds for its own existence—the more secure meta-logical basis which Coleridge's polar logic provides. It was this mere appearance of dynamicism which caused Coleridge to accuse Schelling of "*stealing-in the Law of Polarity*" (Wheeler 34). Coleridge's analysis, on the other hand, turns on the demonstration that *plurality* presupposed unity—a demonstration which in his analysis of the Trinity is taken a step further. For (as we shall see) in his analysis of the Trinity Coleridge shows not only that the many must be one, but also that the one must be many—and this, on the level of meta-logic, is the origin of Coleridge's view of form.

As we have seen, then, Coleridge's is a system grounded in a logic which ultimately eschews the notion of objectness—both as a ground of logic

30. *Biographia* (1847) 317 (See also CN iv.4540 for a similar analysis of Idealism in Berkeley). Similar objections are raised in Ms B Supplementary (f. 38), where Coleridge comments that "some . . . philosophers" have been blinded by "the too exclusive habit of contemplating all things . . . as Thesis, Antithesis & Synthesis." The argument is that dialectic blinds such philosophers to the common polarity or pro-thesis.

itself and as a feature of the instantiating self. The necessity for this followed from Coleridge's acceptance of the neo-Platonic argument that the ultimate principle of reality must be self-instantiating, and that only a Divine Will can fulfill the conditions for this. Given the failure of the "self-as-object" model as a fundamental explanation, Coleridge concluded that: "the [finite] *I itself*, even in its absolute synthesis, supposes an already perfected Intelligence, as the ground of the possibility of its existing as it does."³¹ A self-consciousness which does not rely on an object term thus becomes axiomatic. And this perhaps enables us to date the marginal comments on Schelling for, until the September 1818 letter to Green, Coleridge continued to try to analyze the Trinity in subject/object terms—while paying lip-service to the criticisms I have mentioned by denying that polarity could be applied to the Ground which underlies the Trinity (see below).

The nature of such consciousness (Coleridge would argue) is something we cannot immediately intuit, since *we* are finite beings dependent for our consciousness on the mediation of an object term. This does not, however, prevent a demonstration of the necessity of such a consciousness as ultimate ground—both negatively (through a critique of Schelling's model) and positively (by pointing to the underlying nature of logic). Coleridge furthers this latter aspect when he contrasts his view of predication with Schelling's. For Schelling, predicates reflect the qualities of objects as objects: for Coleridge, ultimately, there are no objects but merely subjects; and predication is a purely logical act. We can see this contrast in the following quotations.

In the position, "Greeks are handsome," Schelling says, the *Subject* "Greeks" represents the Object—the Predicate "handsome," the Subjective. Now I would say "Greeks" is a Subject assumed by apposition with myself as a Subject. Now this Subject I render objective for myself by the Predicate. By becoming objective it does not cease to be a Subject. (*Biographia* [1847] 316)³²

31. *Biographia* (1847) 318. Similar conclusions are reached in HM 17299, f. 19, though Coleridge's (tentative) phrasing here is curious given that the manuscript seems to date from 1825 (see f. 20)—by which time his views on the matter were long established. The passage reads:

I do not yet see into the Force of Schelling's reasoning which with all his disguises renders limitation[, or a] successive[?] sense of imperfection in each present act[,] essential conditions of an IAM. Methinks I have the same right & far better reason for climbing a step higher and from his transcendental to infer a Transcendental Absolute Will, as the identity of Act and Agent in whose supreme reality Actual & Potential are one.

32. Similar views are forwarded in HM 17299: 18.

Coleridge has already told us that

the Logical *I* attributes its own Subjectivity to whatever really *is*, and takes for granted that a *Not-he* [i.e. *other*] really *is*—and that it is a *Subject*; and this he proceeds to make objective for himself by the predicate. (*Biographia* [1847] 316–17)

In these passages Coleridge argues that “Greeks” do not exist as reified objects but exist as subjects, a possibility we allow by analogy with our own existence as subjects. Coleridge is quick, however, to explain that “N.B. It does not follow, that the Logical *I* attributes its Egoity, as well as its Subjectivity, to the *not-itself*, as far as it *is*.” It would be absurd, then, to assert that buses and beefsteaks are possessed of egoity, but the argument is that in so far as they *exist* it is as subjects and not objects.³³ Objectness only comes into being through the reificatory process of the Understanding—through predication. This explains Coleridge’s striking desire in the *Logic* to speak of subject and predicate rather than subject and object. Objectness there becomes a (purely) logical concept, as becomes apparent in the following quotation: “the functions of logic commence when we consider the subject objectively, that is, as a something which is not the same with our own subject or our mind, but an object of our mind” (*Logic* 94). Objectness emerges (only) when we consider what is in fact a *subject* “objectively.”

6. The Trinity

Having clarified the logical status of subject and object, we need to say more about the ultimate, self-instantiating, consciousness which is the ground of Coleridge’s system. The kind of self-consciousness Coleridge had in mind was an “Absolute Subject,” a subject not dependent (for reasons already explained) on an object either for its existence or for its consciousness. This consciousness was, of course, to be found in the Trinity.

A simple image of the Trinity can be seen in the explanation of the dynamic logic offered earlier—a three term logic in which the opposition of X and non-X is bound together by an underlying union. The three terms translate as the three members of the Trinity, with the Father and the Son as the thesis and antithesis, and the Spirit as the union. So long as the idea of opposition is seen in its dynamic context, this is not to contaminate the description of the Trinity with the terms of the Understanding. We need to see, however, *why* there needs to be an idea of

33. See *Logic* 80: “There may be many SUBJECTS (the living principle, for instance, in plants) which we may call powers, lives, principles, active FORMS, that which manifests itself and without which there is not conceivable *objectivity*; but *that* subject alone is a mind which is its own object.” Coleridge is here of course talking merely of the finite mind.

opposition (and the limits to such) in the divine unity—and that this is not an opposition of subject and object.

Coleridge's clearest account of the Trinity occurs in the *Opus Maximum*. Coleridge begins in *Say* Volume 2 by arguing that the fundamental idea of a systematic metaphysic must be one of "will" (239). The idea of will is, he argues, implicitly an idea of causativeness, and hence of self-causativeness. He also argues that will is the ultimate basis of personhood (164, 180, 243). But we should note that while will lies at the heart of the self-instantiation of the Trinity it does not instantiate itself as a discrete entity. Will is the ground of the Trinity, but it has no existence other than in its existence *as* the Trinity,³⁴ nor is it to be equated with the Father.

The next step in Coleridge's argument is to derive the necessity of opposition. This Coleridge does by arguing that the idea of Self necessarily implies the idea of a non-self or Other. It is through recognition of the Other (the Son) that the Self (the Father) comes into being (244). This other is in no sense Schelling's self-as-object, however, since it is itself necessarily a complete self or person.

The personhood of the Son follows for two reasons. The first is that at the core of the idea of will lies love, as the fundamental idea of cohesive-ness. Love, Coleridge argues, also implies the idea of communication, of the extension of its benediction beyond the Self—but this can only make sense if there is an "other" Self to receive it (252). Thus Coleridge conceives of the Father as an infinite fullness, and of the Son as an infinite capacity (251). An impersonal "other" could not perform this function, nor would it explain why the will, as a source of causativeness which is personal in nature, should issue forth in the causation of an impersonal product.

The second reason for the personhood of the Other emerges from a deeper look at the sense in which the Other is the condition of the Self. The Son, Coleridge argues, must be psychologically complete since it is only through the Son, as the "adequate idea" of the Father, that the Father emerges. Psychologically, the argument seems to be that selfhood is a communal idea, that in recognizing the psychological distinctness of another we recognize our own (269). Metaphysically, moreover, if the idea

34. Thus Coleridge goes to some lengths to distinguish his doctrine from that of Plotinus, for whom the originating Ground or One is existential and for whom there is thus a process of development in the Godhead. See *Say* 2: 266, *HM* 8195 71, 151, and *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* [CL], ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1956) IV.1145: 874; Robert Barth (in *Coleridge and Christian Doctrine* [Cambridge, Harvard UP, 1969] 94); W. G. T. Shedd (in *Coleridge's Complete Works* [New York: Harper & Brothers, 1884], "Introductory Essay" I: 44), and Modiano 189–201, misunderstand this point. To be clear, while Coleridge often speaks of the divine Tetractys, only the Trinity is existential. To grant the Ground existential status is to commit a category mistake.

is to be "adequate" it must be substantial, and hence personal and consubstantial. Similar arguments imply the personality of the Spirit, though the later notebooks are uneasy on this point.

7. The Later Manuscripts

Having seen something of the foundations of Coleridge's system, and noted how different they are from Schelling's in terms of logic and ultimate conception of self, we need to turn to Coleridge's manuscripts of the early 1820s to trace the later history of the transcendental deduction. This, as I have suggested above, is restricted to the finite realm.

The starting point conceptually is Coleridge's treatment in the *Opus Maximum* of the problem of evil—to which Coleridge gives the standard Christian answer, that evil is based in humanity's free will. As God is the ground of the finite will, however, this requires of Coleridge an explanation of how it is that evil is not found in the Ground. The answer will not only solve the problem of evil, but also clarify the essence of God's transcendence, or how the finite relates to the infinite. Coleridge's answer lies in desynonymizing the real and the actual. Rejecting the dichotomy of the real and unreal, he substitutes instead a prothesis (*reality*) realized in the poles of "the actual & the potential" (*HM* 8195, page 49). Evil is in its origin only potential, real but requiring an act of will to move it in the direction of the actual—for evil is not ultimately a dynamic reality but a failure of will.

The story more broadly, then, is that *actuality* is a quality ascribable ultimately only to the divine will. Actuality can only be the product of causativeness, and the divine will, as self-causative, is thus wholly actual. This actuality, however, depends upon the act of the will in willing itself as the unity which its basis in love indicates that it must be. Since will is free, however, it must contain the potential to will itself as something separate from its divine nature. This Coleridge calls the "apostatic" will—a will which does not recognize its inner unity with the divine will and which therefore has no actuality (*Say* I: 65). The apostatic will wills itself as an autonomous self, outside the divine plenum. This conception of an autonomous self is implicitly reificatory, and hence (I suspect) forms the roots of the reificatory Understanding. Such a conception is of course a delusion, and it is only through a volitional act of divine grace that the apostatic will is brought into any kind of actuality.

Having thus clarified the relation between the finite and the infinite will, we can now trace the mechanics of how the finite will comes to be actual. This is where Schelling enters the picture, and is the subject of surely Coleridge's most disorganized piece of writing, the later sections of *Say*, Volume I. Coleridge does *not* begin with a polarity of the divine and the apostatic will (presumably because polarity is a term which belongs to the

Understanding) but tells us rather that “the true poles are the apostatic Will and the metathetic or redemptive Spirit and Word” (65). The general story is that the finite will exists *in potentia* but requires a volitional act of the Spirit and Word to become actual.

How does this polarity relate to Schelling’s outwardly and inwardly striving activities? The answer would seem to be that the apostatic will is originally merely potential and thus a purely critical entity. Coleridge speaks of this potential as Chaos or Indistinction (*Say* 1: 48, 54, 64), and thinks of it as an impulse to objectification—which makes it the equivalent to Schelling’s proto-object term.

Since this state is merely potential it can become actual only through an outside intervention, an act of God. That is, if the potential is to be actualized (48) the indistinct Chaos must be raised to Multeity (53). Indistinction is a state of being without parts: Multeity is wholly and only partness. If the former is to become the latter there must be a superinduction of unity; that is, the Indistinct must be distinguished into parts, and if these parts are to subsist they must have their own unity. Unity is the business of the Spirit, and the form of its influence on the potential is to induce an inward looking activity—Schelling’s proto-subject term.

At this point the *Say* manuscripts come to an abrupt halt, though Coleridge proceeds in tortuous detail through what Snyder called Ms B Supplementary to present a deduction of the conditions of space and matter.³⁵ The two accounts differ significantly in detail, nor to my knowledge does Coleridge arrive at the formal deduction of the Understanding in Schelling’s third epoch. It was always Coleridge’s insistence, however, that the finite mind is a product of Reflection—indeed, that “the reflection is the understanding itself, a synonym, not a predicate” (*Logic* 89, ¶35). Thus, if some of the detail is missing, the *Logic* manuscript gives a general account of the Understanding, and a particular account of perception, which is totally consistent with Schelling’s story. It is to the *Logic* that we should turn now.

For Coleridge the central problem of logic in no way involves the traditional concern with the nature of syllogism: syllogistic inference is after all reasonably obvious. Coleridge’s concern is thus not with the relation of minor to major premise: it is with the act of instantiation formulated within the major premise itself. A premise consists of a relation between a subject and a predicate. If this relation can be understood (and this translates as a demand for a theory of perception) then the question of how we derive inferences from a premise is in large measure explicable, if of little interest.

35. Victoria College Library, MS 28 (*Index of English Literary Manuscripts*, CoS 954).

It is the *affirmation* of the premise which provides “the foundations of logical evidence” (79).

Conceptually, the starting point of the argument is the Kantian assumption of a manifold which is in some sense uncombined—though Coleridge rejected the Kantian claim that the manifold is completely uncombined or contains *no* reason why we should combine in one form rather than another.³⁶ That the manifold must in some sense be uncombined follows from the claim (of this kind of Idealism at least) that the essence of the percept is related to the act of perception itself.

From this starting point Coleridge asserts that finite self-consciousness involves, firstly, the giving of unity to the perceptual object. Coleridge refers to this as “the unity of *primary* perception,” or as the “*primary* mental act” (70, ¶13; 76; my emphases)—and claims that it is “presupposed in . . . all consciousness.” This unifying act is clearly analogous to Schelling’s first two epochs, and similarly it is through Schelling that we should understand Coleridge’s subsequent claim that in the act of reflection on the unifying process, the finite intelligence comes to consciousness—that “[w]ithout the repetition or representation of this act in the understanding [that] completes the consciousness we should be conscious of nothing” (78, ¶20). The *Logic* thus provides the account of perception and self-perception which was missing in the *Biographia*: its talk of unification as the primary mental act clearly echoes the *Biographia*’s “Primary Imagination.” Though the *Logic* does not contain the dialectical hierarchies we found in Schelling, it nonetheless completes the deduction as it appears in Coleridge’s work.

8. *Biographia*

Having seen something of the deduction’s later history in Coleridge’s manuscripts we should turn back to the *Biographia* itself. There is reason to believe that Coleridge intended to modify the deduction there, for not only was Schelling close to pantheism, but there also seems no reason why Coleridge could not merely have paraphrased Schelling if that was his intent.

While there is some evidence of the general direction of Coleridge’s intended modifications, a precise analysis of his intentions does not seem possible. Since no broad scale differences emerge, we must necessarily look for what Coleridge called the “seemingly trifling difference” (I.234). It is probably best here merely to list the points at which Coleridge seems to be diverging from his source:

36. G. N. G. Orsini, *Coleridge and German Idealism* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois UP, 1969) 113; Wheeler 29.

1. Coleridge reproduces Schelling's view that since subject and object are mutually implicative, argument may begin from an analysis of either. However, where Schelling leaves it "completely open as to where explanation starts from,"³⁷ Coleridge proceeds straight to the "Corollaries" Schelling draws. Schelling's conclusion is elided: the subject is somehow (though the *Biographia* doesn't tell us how) to be privileged.
2. The next step in Schelling's argument is to argue that our conceptions of both object and subject are prejudices (*Grundvorurtheil* [I.258, n. 2] and *Vorurtheil* respectively), on the general grounds that the process which produces them obscures their real natures and makes them seem like absolute categories. Coleridge agrees that our conception of the object is a prejudice, but says that the subject "cannot so properly be intitled [sic] a prejudice" (I.260). Coleridge here privileges the subject in ways which go beyond Schelling.
3. In his comments on Descartes Coleridge says that the finite self can only claim that "I am because I am" on epistemological grounds. In the ontological sphere the finite self must acknowledge that "I am because God is." This distinction makes little sense in the context of Schelling's *System*, where the Infinite is actually dependent on the finite for its existence; and where the finite is the only point at which the Self comes to consciousness.
4. In referring to the original union of subject and object as a principle of knowledge, Coleridge speaks not of "the" principium but of "this" principium, as if other principia might be possible. He also goes further than Schelling in grounding the principium in the Will.

I have no room here to expand further on the implications of this list, other than to comment that generally it displays a desire to privilege the subject, in ways which go well beyond Schelling's *System*. This can be seen particularly clearly in Coleridge's description of the Spirit as "that, which is its own object, yet not originally an object, but an absolute subject."³⁸ Yet even here, the basic flaw in the *Biographia*'s conception is clear, for while the *Biographia* is moving in the direction of an absolute subject it remains firmly wedded to the correspondence view of knowledge, and to the subject-object language which the later Coleridge was to abandon.

I wish to conclude with a brief note on form, and thereby draw together some of these strands. I have taken some pains to point to the dynamic

37. *System* 7; SW 342. Modiano makes the same point more generally on 169.

38. *Biographia* I.278, thesis vii. As the editors note, this is drawn from Schelling's *Abhandlungen*.

nature of Coleridge's logic—to the way his logic fundamentally differs from the *System's*. I have thus pointed to the way Coleridge contextualized Schelling's system, adopting it as an explanation for the finite world but grounding it (much more securely than the *System*) in the dynamic act of the Trinity—the ultimate act of self-construction, and an act which eschews the subject-object categories of the finite Understanding. What remains is to clarify the status of Nature, or of the objects which we perceive through the Primary Imagination. As we have seen, perception for Coleridge is fundamentally an attempt to perceive the self as object—a delusive undertaking. We should not, however, dismiss Nature as a mere trope—"a figure used in a sense other than that which is proper to it" (*O.E.D.*)—though much contemporary Coleridge criticism, misunderstanding his metaphysics, has tried to do this. For as Coleridge argued in the *Biographia*, the Primary Imagination is "a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM" (1.304). The forms of Nature, though the product of an illusory process, reflect the archetypal forms of the Trinity.

This question can be put another way. Why, in representing the self as object, does Nature take on the manifold forms with which we are familiar? Coleridge's answer takes us back to the heart of the Trinity. The fallen self, he claims, in seeking to instantiate itself, necessarily repeats the forms in which the Trinity actualizes itself—though the fallen self does so in a reified manner. In the Trinity we saw that only in the recognition of the Thou (or the Son) could the I (or the Father) come into being, though the I and Thou are simultaneously consubstantial. What I did not refer to earlier was Coleridge's insistence that the Son, as the "adequate idea" (*Say* 2: 263) of the Father, is necessarily a *formal* presentation of the Father—that idea itself is not above form but necessarily formal. This insistence appears in all of Coleridge's major pronouncements on the Trinity,³⁹ reflects his broader view that "[e]very reality must have its own form" (*Say* 2: 265), and is clearly based on a serious epistemological claim. As I hope to show elsewhere, there is reason to believe that Coleridge was right to insist that form has a role to play in epistemology. But here I must admit that though Coleridge is consistent on the point, he seems to have no ultimate explanation for it.

39. See "Formula Fidei de Sanctissima Trinitate, 1830" (*Literary Remains* [Shedd 5: 19]), *Say* 2: 265–72, etc. The relation should not, incidentally, be conceived of as one of *forma formans* and *forma formata* (formless idea and formal embodiment), for Coleridge insists that where the Son is the formal presentation of the Father, so also is the Father the Formal condition of the Son. That Coleridge had thought through the implications of his idea of form to this extent is one reason I take his pronouncements on form seriously.

9. Postscript: Schelling's Philosophy of Identity: meta-logic & the Trinity

As I have suggested above, Schelling too was apparently aware of some of the meta-logical problems implicit in his *System*—for he produced a refined version known as his philosophy of identity in his writings from 1801 to 1803. As Harris and Heath describe it, Schelling's logic was no longer Fichtean, "the dialectical positing by a one-sided moment of its opposite." Rather, "Schelling's philosophy now encompassed the absolute, and duality was now understood as the division of a primordial neo-Platonic unity."⁴⁰ In the revised (1803) edition of *Ideas* Schelling insists that the Absolute is not a *combination* of opposites, but rather a prior unity, their aboriginal *identity*. Why then should the original unity divide? This derives from its nature as "an eternal act of cognition"—an act of self-knowing which (presumably because of Schelling's correspondence theory of knowledge) involves a related series of distinctions between form and essence, and subject and object.

Schelling presumably hoped that this would ground his logic, for it explains how the primary object term already has its opposite implicit within it (neither term is in fact wholly one-sided). But even so—modified, the system remains a process of delusion, for the Absolute still attempts to know itself as object, while it is in fact fundamentally *act*. Thus the system still relies on the will as its extra-systematic ground, and the basis of logic (as other than the form of illusion) remains without the kind of secure foundation which Coleridge's trinitarian argument gives it.

At this point we should turn from meta-logic back to the Trinity. Notwithstanding the meta-logical problems, a number of critics, noting Coleridge's refusal to ascribe polarity to the ground, have also noted that a polar relation of subject and object nonetheless exists in Coleridge's notebook entries of August/September 1818, between the Father and the Son.⁴¹ Modiano usefully diagnoses the role Schelling's philosophy of identity played at this stage in Coleridge's thought, for Schelling too insists that polarity cannot be ascribed to the Absolute, the prior term. And Coleridge makes his debt here explicit, curiously signing CN.4428 'S.T.C. = Schelling.' However, this was but a temporary stage in Coleridge's thought, for his letter to Green (30 September 1818) clearly reflects a new development in his thinking, and explicitly denies that polarity belongs within the

40. Harris and Heath xx. The details which follow are drawn from 46–47.

41. See James Engell, *The Creative Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1981) 364–65, and Modiano 189–201, on Coleridge's refusal to ascribe polarity to the "Absolute" or Ground. Similar arguments are to be found in Barth and Shedd.

Godhead.⁴² Rather, it insists that polarity first arises from “the contradictory Will of the Apostasy.” The manuscripts of the early 1820s (see section 7 above) explain the polar status of the apostatic will, thus freeing the Trinity from contamination by the concepts of a polarized logic, but simultaneously providing the foundation (in logical terms) for the viability of the transcendental deduction within the finite sphere.

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42. Coleridge's precise views on Schelling's philosophy of identity will not be known until the marginalia are published, though *CL* IV.1145 clearly documents his abandonment of it as a *fundamental* principle.