MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
3 1293 01044 4937

This is to certify that the

dissertation entitled

Owen Barfield and the Heritage of Coleridge

presented by

Jason Randall Peters

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

doctoral degree in philosophy

RK Mercer
Major professor

Date October 21, 1994

MSU is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Institution

O-12771

LIBRARY
Michigan State
University

PLACE IN RETURN BOX to remove this checkout from your record.
TO AVOID FINES return on or before date due.

DATE DUE	DATE DUE	DATE DUE
FEB 05		
JUN 26 1997 SEP 23 1997		
FEB 02		
JAN 18 1999 GQ7297163		

MSU is An Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Institution
c:\circ\datedue.pm3-p.1

OWEN BARFIELD AND THE HERITAGE OF COLERIDGE

By

Jason Randall Peters

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of English

1994

ABSTRACT

OWEN BARFIELD AND THE HERITAGE OF COLERIDGE

By

Jason Randall Peters

Coleridge preserved a quasi-adamic notion of language for the later nineteenth century--a notion deployed against the Lockean arbitrary sign and the idea-word-thing paradigm. Coleridge also provided the principal critique of Locke's inheritor, Horne Tooke, who kept philology out of England until the 1830s: Coleridge's commitment to unity in multeity required a consubstantial relationship between sign signified--a belief preserved by two Coleridgeans, F.D. Maurice (in his social trinitarianism) and Richard Trench (in his influential, though theoretically naïve, view of language). Trench, grandfather of the *OED*, passed along to Owen Barfield an essentially Coleridgean view of language, which Barfield has preserved together with a Coleridgean idea of imagination.

Trench was interested in words "contemplated singly" (as was Tooke); he belonged to a popularist tradition of writers on language to which Logan Pearsall Smith and *OED* editor Henry Bradley also belonged. Each influenced Barfield's early work, *History in English Words*, which shares with its sources structural and verbal similarities. Smith, additionally, suggested to Barfield that the evolution of consciousness lay hidden in the history of single words. Coleridge had also intimated this evolution.

The late work in *History in English Words* on myth and imagination prefigured *Poetic Diction*. Barfield defined himself against Locke, Max Müller, and I.A. Richards. That the evolution of consciousness could be traced in words meant that neither Locke's arbitrary sign nor Müller's "mythic period" was acceptable either for language origin or development. Barfield postulated the "given" meaning in response. He also postulated, from Coleridge, a paradigm of polarity which served his critique of the Ogden-Richards collaboration, *The Meaning of Meaning*; he thereby (again) defined himself as a true

Coleridgean, though Richards was to become the respected authority.

In the context of Cambridge English: *Poetic Diction* anticipated and supplied a critique of Richards on Coleridge. The best Coleridgean at Cambridge, Raymond Williams, disapproved of Richards's criticism of trained reading and response and instead preserved Coleridge for writing in society. His and Barfield's distance from Richards invites comparison. That they are both important preservers of Coleridge (especially in the tradition of words contemplated "singly") who yet have nothing to say to each other suggests the enormity of Coleridge's vision.

Barfield's later works show him defining more carefully imagination as it relates both to the production of poetry and nature herself--to phenomena. Barfield's reading of Wordsworth and Coleridge as both "nature" and "mind" poets, but as poets in whom either nature or mind dominates, brings him once again to polarity. The difference on Barfield's account between Wordsworth and Coleridge suggests an important and radical hermeneutic for Romantic texts. A study of "Frost at Midnight," "Tintern Abbey," and the two great odes, "Intimations" and "Dejection," bears out Barfield's reading of Coleridge as the one Romantic who attempted to achieve in himself the ultimate polarity which is imagination.

© Jason R. Peters
1994

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my gratitude to the following: the College of Arts and Letters, Michigan State University, for a Dissertation Fellowship in 1993 and for a Research Fellowship in 1994; the Department of English, Michigan State University, for a Graduate Assistantship from 1987 to 1992; Professor John Netland of Calvin College for his research suggestions; James A. Smalley, interlocutor and proof-reader; Professor Michael Koppisch, outside reader; Professors William A. Johnsen and Michael Lopez, past members of my Guidance Committee; current members, Professors James Hill, Donald M. Rosenberg, and especially A.C. Goodson and R.K. Meiners (the director of this dissertation) for providing an initial polarity of enthusiasm and scepticism; R.K. Meiners, specifically, for certain idioms and ideas from conversation and correspondence which no doubt have made their way into many of my better sentences, few though they be; Owen Barfield for kindly allowing my wife and me to visit him at his home in Forest Row, East Sussex, in August of 1993; and my wife, Kristin, for a version of patience Job himself might have cursed God and died for.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Key to Abbreviations of Frequently Cited Texts	vii
	Introduction	1
Chapter 1	From Locke to the *OED*: The Survival of the Consubtantial Sign	12
Chapter 2	The Popularists on Language from Trench to Barfield	79
Chapter 3	Barfield and the Opposition: Versions of Coleridge from I.A. Richards to Raymond Williams	131
Chapter 4	Imagination and Polarity: Coleridge in Poetic Conversation	194
	Conclusion	244
	Bibliography	250

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS OF FREQUENTLY CITED TEXTS

BL	S.T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*
CI	I.A. Richards, *Coleridge on Imagination*
CL	S.T. Coleridge, *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*
CN	S.T. Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*
CPW	S.T. Coleridge, *Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*
C&S	Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society*
CW	S.T. Coleridge, *Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*
CWDS	Dugald Stewart, *Collected Works of Dugald Stewart*
HEW	Owen Barfield, *History in English Words*
L&M	Richard Trench, *Letters and Memorials*
M&C	Alasdair MacIntyre, *Marxism and Christianity*
M&L	Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*
PD	Owen Barfield, *Poetic Diction*
PL	S.T. Coleridge, *Philosophical Lectures of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*
RCA	Owen Barfield, *Romanticism Comes of Age*
ROM	Owen Barfield, *The Rediscovery of Meaning*
STA	Owen Barfield, *Saving the Appearances*
WCT	Owen Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*
WS	Raymond Williams, *Writing in Society*

INTRODUCTION

"For after all what kind of a man was Coleridge?"

The question was asked by "one of the most learned, if most controversial of his twentieth-century interpreters"--or that is the epithet for Owen Barfield enlisted by Stephen Prickett, a learned interpreter of Coleridge in his own right.[1]

One answer Barfield gave to his own question is that Coleridge "was almost the discoverer of the unconscious mind and one who was constantly and penetratingly pondering his own."[2] And what kind of man was Barfield? He was almost the discoverer of the evolution of consciousness and one who also was constantly and penetratingly pondering Coleridge's mind.[3] He is in fact among the most important readers of STC (to use Coleridge's own habitual self-designation). A critical reception for Coleridge apart from Barfield's mediation is, by now, a difficult and undesirable state of affairs to imagine. From his early commitments to polarity in *Poetic Diction* (1928) and the immature but perceptive essay "The Philosophy of Samuel Taylor Coleridge" (1932, in *RCA*) to his doing for STC in *What Coleridge Thought* (1971) the very thing STC, whether of

---

[1] "On Reading Nature as a Romantic" in David Jasper, ed., *The Interpretation of Belief* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 138.

[2] *What Coleridge Thought* (Middltown: Wesleyan, 1971), 8; hereafter, *WCT*.

[3] Barfield won his own way to an understanding of the evolution of consciousness, though Coleridge and Rudolf Steiner, to name two, got there ahead of him. Still, Barfield was a major English explorer of, and among the first to articulate in English, the evolution of consciousness. But, as he himself said, so far as concerned "the histories of verbal meanings and their bearing on the evolution of human consciousness, Steiner had obviously forgotten volumes more than I had ever dreamed." See *Romanticism Comes of Age*, 2nd ed. (1966; Middletown: Wesleyan, 1986), 13; hereafter, *RCA*.

indolence, could never do for himself, Barfield has shown himself keenly attuned to the pitches of Coleridge's thinking. In accordance with the specifications of *Biographia* chapter vii, it is a case of two water insects interested in many of the same otherwise unavailable thoughts about the mind's self experience in the act of thinking.

But Barfield has not received the kind attention he deserves. This is not to say he has received no attention. He has received a great deal of attention from certain quarters. But still he has not received the *kind* of attention he *should* receive. The reasons for this are legion, and Prickett's designating him "controversial" only intimates their number. The most significant is Barfield's devotion to the German philosopher and anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner--a figure at least as widely relevant though widely ignored as Barfield. I have attempted the ridiculous: to write about Barfield with very few references to Steiner. But I have done this for two reasons, and they are both good ones. The first is that Steiner is not someone one simply reads and writes about. I do not know what it means, but I am fully prepared to accept, that "followers and disciples will be limited to secondhand insights and experiences unless and until they pursue the disciplines such as the ones Steiner recommends."[4] As I can hardly call myself a "follower" or a "disciple," I accept it on good faith and as common sense that my ignorance of and inexperience with the "disciplines" obliges me to a kind of Wittgensteinian silence: *"Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muß man schweigen."* The second reason for my virtually omitting Steiner is that first attempts at creating an audience for Barfield must, it seems to me, be on Coleridgean, not Steinerian, terms. For the odds, though not great, are better with Coleridge.[5] The

---

[4] Robert A. McDermott, ed., *The Essential Steiner* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 3; perhaps overstating the case, McDermott also says of his own Steiner studies, "Eight years and two hundred books later I can attest, with undiminished surprise and delight, that I have yet to find a work by Rudolf Steiner that I consider derivative or pedestrian" (x).

[5] There are no doubt many admirers of Barfield who say a plague upon both Steiner and Coleridge and who prefer to create an audience for Barfield among the many admirers of his close friend C.S. Lewis. These, I believe, are the least desireable terms for a Barfield audience, and I have left Barfield's co-opting by evangelical Christians alone altogether. This is not a case of judging a man by the company he keeps. The

dismissing of Steiner (it is a charge Barfield levelled against Lewis) as if he were just another spook chaser is a species of negligence and ignorance for which the academy should some day be made to give an answer. But it is simply the case that at each invocation of Steiner the number of Barfield readers dwindles. For my purposes here, then, I have centered on Barfield as a Coleridgean.

A second obvious reason for Barfield's neglect is his institutional marginality. It is not a marginality like Raymond Williams's, because Williams, though he was at odds with general tenor of Cambridge English, nevertheless held academic posts. Barfield's is a marginality of the margin plain and simple: he did *not* hold academic posts. He had hoped to, but after the publication of *History in English Words* (1926) and *Poetic Diction* (1928) circumstances required that he go into the family law practice, and when he came out nearly thirty years later to write what is perhaps his most important book, *What Coleridge Thought* (1971), all hope of an established academic career was over. He enjoyed guest lectureships in the United States, but for the most part the institution and he did not cross paths.

This is significant for what Barfield both did and did not accomplish, and I mention Steiner and the margin as first causes only because it is a wiser move to start simple: as when your engine won't turn over it is sensible first to check the fuel level before towing the thing off for an overhaul. Barfield's neglect is no great mystery, and there should be no great noise about why no one listens to him. There are palpable circumstances stacked against him. These two reasons are, to an extent, sufficient and obvious. This judgment does not address any important objections, as for example that Barfield should *not* have been neglected; it is only a statement about the circumstances.

Redeemer himself was said to have had sons of thunder in his entourage and to have eaten with sinners. It is simply my purpose to situate Barfield within the heritage of Coleridge criticism. Barfield's friendship with Lewis was of course important in the development of both men, but the relationship is outside the scope of these essays. Anyone wishing to read about their early years of cordial argument should consult Lionel Adey, *C.S. Lewis's "Great War" With Owen Barfield* (British Columbia: Victoria, 1978).

But these two reasons are circumstantial, and ultimately they are *not* sufficient. Barfield should *not* have been neglected.

The "not crossing paths" is a state of affairs in which Barfield is as culpable as the institution. For a close study of Barfield's later work, especially the essays, reveals an important symptom *of* the marginality: Barfield did not engage with much specificity those whom he took to be enemies. So it really will not do to push the obvious reasons for neglect. The more fitting inquiry is to look for the reasons in Barfield himself. What one finds in Barfield is a tendency to be as dismissive as he found Lewis in regard to Steiner, a wilful resistance to the opposition, a reluctance to penetrate the enemies' country. Respectful as I am of Barfield's achievements, and as profoundly influenced by him as I have been--perhaps moreso than by any other writer--I do not share the sentiment of certain ephebes who believe that his "intellectual vision . . . like his life, spans most of the twentieth century," and that "in the acuity and rigor of his analysis, in the breadth of the materials he encompasses, Barfield is unequalled among his contemporaries."[6] Here is an inverted instance of the fact that "Barfield has not received the kind attention he deserves," if "deserves" here be taken as "has earned." For he has not earned such messianic approbation. This judgment is inflated. Barfield's acuity cannot be disputed, and his mind, like the desert monk's, is an important kind of mind for the greater fund of human consciousness--one of many necessary kinds of minds. But that he is encyclopedic, or "unrivalled," is simply false, though he is indeed unique, important, brilliant, and many other things.

He took an anti-modernist stance when modernism was riding a crest. He then disappeared into the bar for thirty years and re-emerged just in time to witness Deconstruction. At no point in Barfield's works does he take seriously the more important

---

[6] *A Barfield Sampler*, ed. Jeanne Clayton Hunter and Thomas Kranidas (New York: SUNY, 1993), 1.

voices of Modernism. On no page in his works does he engage head-on the more important theoretical problems raised by, for example, Structuralism, Post-Structuralism, or Marxism.[7] Above all, perhaps, nowhere does he look with any irony on the inadequacies and complicities of the languages in which he must do his own thinking. It may be true that such suspicions can cripple the mind or even bring on a kind of ultimate paralysis, but they are nonetheless the residual conditions of modernity, and the wholesale resistance to suspicion smacks of Milton's cloistered virtue, which Milton could not respect. One might argue that a writer cannot be expected to write out of moods foreign to his own consciousness, and that Barfield's experience simply excludes great suspicion--that it was never part of his collective representations. It is no doubt true that suspicion played little if any part in his consciousness (in spite of Steiner's respect for Nietzsche), but then this may well be a case of what Coleridge called "the delusive notion, that what is not imageable is likewise not conceivable."[8] Barfield's *pronouncements* on suspicion and irony are a different matter. I am speaking now of his resistance. And his resistance is often the sub-contracted method of speaking of science and linguistic analysis and logical positivism and behaviorism and structuralism as if they were all the same thing--a tactic (and an un-Coleridgean one) that does not go over well in the arena. And the arena is where one fights the beasts, whatever they may be. Barfield said of Lewis that "His being at odds with a great deal of contemporary vogue is precisely the quality which many of us value most in him,"[9] and this no doubt is true of Barfield and his followers as well. But it will not do in the arena. Be against what you will, but show you've read the relevant texts

---

[7] cf. *WCT*: "I have generally resisted the temptation to detect exciting links with up-to-date, and perhaps ephemeral, developments such as generative grammar, structuralism and so forth" (11). One may agree that this was a wise choice and at the same time note both the resistance and its tone. What "and so forth" sounds like here are the *et ceteras* so often deployed in lieu of the firmly grasped.

[8] *Treatise on Logic* (Egerton 2826), ii, 403, in *WCT*, 20.

[9] *Owen Barfield on C.S. Lewis*, ed. G.B. Tennyson (Middletown: Wesleyan, 1989), 67.

outside your own tradition.

The margin, then, was not so much the condition as the occasion for Barfield's parochialism. Again, it is significant for what he both did and did not accomplish, and I am only centering for the moment on what he did *not* accomplish. The causes of neglect do indeed extend beyond the obvious: as when the engine won't turn over because the oil has simply run out. Only now the thing has seized-up.

Is Barfield's relevance diminished by this criticism? I believe that it is. And as is the case with all of us, he must lie in the bed he made--or, perhaps more *àpropos* of his own experience, dance with the one he brought. But the criticism is an injury, not a fatality. For Barfield has, nonetheless, and in spite of his wilful abnegation, challenged a great number of thinkers at the very foundations of their thought. This is important for those who are honest, those who are mindful of what applies no less to themselves than to others: that if you grant a man his assumptions he can prove anything. I am committed to the proposition that even as the likes of Barfield must engage certain texts, certain traditions, to write on certain topics, so there needs to come a time (though I doubt it will come) when a far greater number of thinkers will need to hold their peace until they have come to terms with Barfield or someone who runs the same arguments. There is no substitute for doing the work, and that applies to the materialist as much as to the idealist. The critical model of so inward, cautious, and perhaps stifling a writer as Geoffrey Hill--that we must always listen for "the antiphonal voice of the heckler"[10]--can also be deployed, albeit somewhat hypocritically, by such critics as Barfield who themselves have tended to turn a deaf ear to antiphonal voices. For Barfield, too, is a heckler, or can at the very least be heard as one.

---

[10] "Redeeming the Time," *The Lords of Limit* (New York: Oxford, 1984), 90.

I do not claim to have done all the work, or half or a quarter or an eighth. But what I have done is this:

In my first chapter I have sketched the genealogy for thinking about language to which Barfield belongs--a genealogy in which words are "contemplated singly."[11] Trench's idiom includes Locke no less than himself, himself no less than compilers of the great Oxford Dictionary, which is Trench's grandchild. Locke had challenged the adamic notion of language and replaced it with the arbitrary sign, setting in motion what became a rigorously materialist view of language whose champion was the radical philosopher Horne Tooke. Tooke's influence in England successfully closed the island to continental philology, as Hans Aarsleff has ably shown,[12] the result of which was that Britain was a generation behind continental philology. England's philological forerunner was Coleridge himself, and his critique of the Locke tradition turned the English soil for philology. The germination was in great measure tended by Coleridge's followers, including Trench and his close friend F.D. Maurice. The adamic notion of language challenged by Locke survived in Coleridge and was thus ushered into the epistemological era, where it could be tried rather than merely asserted and where it has survived under the care of the such Coleridgeans as Barfield.

In my second chapter I reduce the scale of the inquiry to Barfield's immediate underwriters, to Trench himself but specifically to Logan Pearsall Smith and the *OED* editor Henry Bradley. Both belong to the genealogy of linguists interested in words

---

[11] Richard Chenevix Trench, *On the Study of Words* (1851), ed. A. Smythe Palmer (London: Routledge, n.d.), 1.

[12] *The Study of Language in England, 1780-1860* (Princeton: Princeton, 1967).

"contemplated singly," and the importance of both for Barfield can hardly be exaggerated. This is difficult material to evaluate because, as I show, many passages in *History in English Words*, not to mention its very structure, are built on passages and structures very similar to those in the books of Trench, Smith and Bradley. It is fitting that Coleridge himself should have been bedevilled by the charges of plagiarism, about which Barfield wrote:

> Verbal plagiarism, as a labour-saving breach of the law of copyright, is a matter of determinable fact, and there is not much doubt that, as the law now stands, Schelling could have sued Coleridge in respect of one or two pages in the *Biographia Literaria*. Psychological plagiarism, or "borrowing," on the other hand, depends on a number of imponderables such as the way a man reads, the way he thinks and, in the last resort, on your view of the nature of mind. (*WCT*, 6)

Consciousness and its reification is a difficult course to chart. I have only presented the similarities that exist between Barfield and those in the tradition who immediately preceed him. As his originality is sometimes heralded, I offer this as evidence against it.

In my third chapter I chart the points of departure from Max Müller and I.A. Richards that occasioned *Poetic Diction*. It is important for understanding Barfield's place in the context of criticism that he be seen as standing resolutely against Müller and especially Richards. This is important not only for Barfield's place as a Coleridgian--for Richards remains something of a sacred cow among those professing literature, though he got Coleridge wrong--but also for Barfield's relevance to myth criticism and hermeneutics. This latter connection I have pursued only so far as to show that in the 1920s Barfield was making good sense on myth and that by the 1940s Rudolf Bultmann was still making nonsense.

The main point of my third chapter is to hold Barfield up next to the major figures of Cambridge English, specifically Richards and Raymond Williams but also, briefly, William Empson. The distance between Richards and Williams is, as Williams himself said, entire, and Williams is clearly the better Coleridgean. That Barfield's distance from

Richards is also entire I take as an indication that Williams and Barfield have something to say to each other. At the very least they both belong to the Coleridge tradition which is interested in words "contemplated singly." But a weakness of both is that in fact they have *nothing* to say to each other, though as two very fine Coleridgeans they ought to. Their own distance from one another suggests how expansive Coleridge's mind was, which begot these two critics at once so different and so important.

In my fourth chapter I attempt to demonstrate Barfield's understanding of Coleridge on imagination--"Imagination is, or it is striving to become, the ultimate polarity of self and world experienced as such" (*WCT*, 90)--by means of a rapid analysis of four poems: "Frost at Midnight," "Tintern Abbey," and the two great odes, "Intimations" and "Dejection." As such, the essay is also an attempt to justify Barfield's pronouncement on the difference between Wordsworth and Coleridge: evidence of the truth of polarity as Coleridge conceived it, namely, that the former is both a "mind" and "nature" poet in whom the pole of nature predominated, whereas the latter is both a "mind" and a "nature" poet in whom the pole of mind predominated. Wordsworth

> looked for, and found, inspiration in nature considered, or certainly *felt*, as another being altogether rather than as counterpoint to his own mind. Coleridge also looked for, and sometimes found, inspiration in the same way. But his was a mind in which the opposite factor predominated--which was more inclined therefore to consider, and certainly to *feel*, how "We receive but what we give, / And in our life alone does Nature live." (*WCT*, 90)

And yet it was Coleridge who attempted to achieve within himself, at least in theory, "the ultimate polarity of self and world experienced as such."

iii

For his two or three major emphases Barfield should be accorded the *serious* attention of--in addition to the Coleridgeans, and to list only the most obvious--

philosophers, linguists, historians, and theologians. If his understanding of consciousness and its evolution only approximates the facts of the matter, and if it were widely accepted, the way Plato is commonly read, or the Pentateuch, would significantly change. It is one thing to read the ancients as pre-epistemological; it is quite another to read them as pre-self-conscious, though the two are in fact closely related. Or again, if Barfield's understanding of myth only approximates the facts of the matter, and if it were widely accepted, many of the most tacit assumptions about revelation and literature held most unequivocally by the surest theologians and critics would crumble. It is quite astonishing and a bit embarassing the number of experts on revelation, hermeneutics, and myth criticism who have never heard of, much less entertained, Barfield's most fundamental thoughts on the matter of myth consciousness or the meaning of the Incarnation.[13] At the least his ideas would have the very great benefit of helping to purge the world of journalists and the like who go about mistaking lies for "myths" and pronouncing with great authority that "the myth" of this or that should be "dispelled"--a campaign to which Coleridge would have given all his capable energies, committed as he was to "the moral and intellectual importance of habituating ourselves to a strict accuracy of expression" (*BL*, ii, 142). Apart from any moral outrage a good word, and with it a meaningful distinction--indeed, meaning itself--is lost.

But it is really quite futile to speculate. It is futile because Barfield will not be accorded serious attention, or at least I do not believe he will ever receive the kind of attention he deserves, which also means he will continue to receive the kind of attention he does *not* deserve, and I mean that in as many senses as I can imagine. Because writers like Barfield, really to be tried, must be judged in the arena of suspicion, and yet such a trial is really quite unimaginable. It is unimaginable at least as long as suspicion and faith are seen as differing in kind and not in degree, and there does not seem to be much evidence that

---

[13] See, for example, "Philology and the Incarnation" (1965) in *The Rediscovery of Meaning* (Middletown: Wesleyan, 1977), 228-236; hereafter, *ROM*.

this distinction, as opposed to division, will soon be made. It is too unacademic. Thus, what Barfield says of Coleridge and science can also be said of Barfield and the arena: "we cannot begin to determine Coleridge's relation to science without first proceeding to the somewhat unacademic extreme of making up our minds whether or not we must agree with something he said" (*WCT*, 142).

Barfield believed that Coleridge's relevance for our time needed to be located "where he himself located its relevance to his own": in

> his radical critique of one or two major presuppositions, upon which the immediate thinking, and as a result the whole cultural and social structure of this "epoch of the understanding and the senses" (including supposedly radical revolts against it) is so firmly--or is it now infirmly--established. As long as this is ignored, I doubt if he has much to say to us, whether as a philosopher or as a sociologist. (*WCT*, 11-12)

It is on these "one or two major presuppositions" that Barfield's relevance also rests, for it is precisely on them that his own unique and perhaps most accurate understanding of Coleridge rests.

ONE

From Locke to the *OED*: The Survival of the Consubstantial Sign

Believe thou, O my soul,
Life is a vision shadowy of Truth . . .

—Coleridge

In 1799 Coleridge said he would make a pilgrimage "to the burning sands," and again in 1803 another to the "Deserts" of Arabia if someone could explain to him "how there can be *oneness*" when there are "infinite Perceptions"--if someone could make him understand "how the one can be many." This was the ultimate straining--a quest not for "an intense Union but an Absolute Unity." That the one could be many was an "Eternal universal mystery." It was indeed a "contradiction *in Terms*," as he himself admitted, but "only in Terms."[1]

In this essay I attempt to paint in broad strokes some of the early figures in a Coleridgean tradition whose principal interest, variously manifest, was unity, variously conceived. I also attempt to paint, again in broad strokes, the principal line of thinking about language Coleridge reacted against as well as the principal line he situated himself along and eventually bequeathed. It can be said and ought to be said that Coleridge played no small part in preparing the English language for its great Oxford dictionary, the

---

[1] *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (*CN*), ed. Kathleen Coburn (London: Routledge, 1957), i, 556 and i, 1561; all Coleridge citations are from the *Collected Works* (*CW*) unless specified otherwise.

grandfather of which, Archbishop Trench, was a committed Coleridgean. It can also be said, in fact must be said, that Coleridge established a tradition of thinking about language which now, after the fact of the *OED,* is a persistent counter-tradition whose hallmark is that same ultimate straining, that quest for *unity.* It is no doubt a convenience, but then no great inaccuracy, to say that in Locke we have the articulated origin of the arbitrary sign and that in Saussure we have its articulated triumph--that Locke and Saussure, in other words, are good, visible coordinates on the map of language history. But all along there has been that metaphysical resistance, and in English it is Coleridge's peculiar legacy. This essay, then, implicitly, is also something of a gauntlet thrown down to those who go on believing that Wordsworth and not Coleridge was the prime mover of the English nineteenth century. Trench's belief that English could be the medium of Christian unity, and F.D. Maurice's similar hope for unity founded upon the real presence in the world of the Trinity, Coleridge supplied.[2] And it was the presence of Coleridge (in Maurice and others) that indicated the eclipse of the Mill/Bentham tradition.

Coleridge also supplied a moderating pattern, a decisive turn from radical politics to philosophy and religion, though the radicalism remained in various guises. This turn has been lamented by readers of the period who would rather drink with a Godwin than with a Burke, lamented especially by the Wordsworthians who see his particular turn the way Hunt and Hazlitt did: as an exchange of principles for a pension. But Coleridge's turn was different. One can register one's complaints about his opposing the Reform Bill (so did Trench) and about his "Clerisy," but not apart from being mindful, for example, of his defending liberty for Catholics despite his insistent Protestantism. He was, as Sanders put it, "in spite of his reverence for the past, a genuine liberal" (57)--a man with an

---

[2] Charles Richard Sanders made this same claim in *Coleridge and the Broad Church Movement* (New York: Octagon, 1972): "Like Coleridge, Maurice made the quest for unity the dominant interest of his life" (241). My approach differs from his as perhaps speculative does from practical.

"unquenchable thirst for liberty," as F.J.A. Hort wrote of him.[3] What matters here is the *moderating pattern*--a liberalism reborn in a religious consciousness respectful of the past. F.D. Maurice was persistently liberal, as was John Sterling, and both considered themselves, principally, students of Coleridge. And it needs keeping in mind that whatever recurs from and after Coleridge, his moral nebula has had and continues to have many incarnations. In the *Biographia Literaria* Coleridge remembered with "shame" and "regret" his being a Trinitarian in philosophy but a Unitarian in religion. "I was," he said, "most sincere, most disinterested" (*CW*, i, 180). Why? Because he "considered the idea of the trinity a fair scholastic inference from the being of God, as a creative intelligence; and that it was therefore entitled to the rank of an *esoteric* doctrine of natural religion" and as such it had "no practical or moral bearing" (*CW*, i, 204). But it was precisely this esoteric, this abstract conception which he overcame and which because of his distinctive moderating pattern lived on after 1834. The true trial of an idea was a moral one. The *logos* became for Coleridge "no mere attribute or quality, no mode of abstraction, no personification, but literally and mysteriously Deus alter et idem" (*CW*, vi, 95). What Maurice particularly learned from Coleridge was the moral and practical implications not of a doctrine but of a divine presence. What Hazlitt and Hunt accused Wordsworth of--namely, betraying his early radicalism--could not be said of Coleridge or, in this case, of Maurice. Wordsworth's turn may have been to internal revolutions, but Maurice, who always felt the practical and moral implications of Coleridge's mind, was never, as Hunt said of Wordsworth, marked for government property. If Maurice agreed with Hare that religion lifts a man out of circumstance, he did not therefore neglect the circumstance. Like Burke, Coleridge understood that there was a material, not a theoretical, touchstone to political thought. Maurice taught that the line of thinking Coleridge pursued

---

[3] From Hort's *Cambridge Essays* ("Coleridge"), cited in Sanders, 57.

> in the "Friend" may have struck many as unintelligible and absurd. Nevertheless it enabled some to reconcile the experimental wisdom for which Burke contends in his Reflections, with deep moral convictions respecting human rights which they could not part with.[4]

Like the Utilitarians, the Coleridgians respected and could not part with liberty. Unlike the Utilitarians, the Coleridgians understood that there was more to reality than the palpable.

I will argue this at greater length in due course, pursuing a linguistic history which might be sketched as follows: Locke and Leibniz stand near the headwaters of two traditions of language. Locke survived in Horne Tooke and the Utilitarians and successfully kept Continental philology at bay until the 1830s. I follow the main lines of argument in Hans Aarsleff, to whose influential book, *The Study of Language in England, 1780-1860* (1967), I am indebted throughout.[5] My principal argument with Aarsleff has to do with the attention he gives not to politics, as has been the complaint of some, but with the attention he gives to Coleridge and his disciples, who I contend won the victory for language.

In the years leading up to the conception of the *OED* and beyond, there was something of a reclamation of language. In Locke's day language had been in bondage to certain religious and philosophical assumptions. So, too, in Tooke's and James Mill's. The break language made from religion and philosophy was altogether necessary for the new philology: the *a priori* method had to be abandoned for the comparative method first intimated by Sir William Jones and later realized by Rask and Grimm and ultimately by Franz Bopp. My principal concern is with language *after* the fact of comparative philology, which is when the reclamation begins to take place. The *OED* made the return

---

[4] Maurice, *Sequel to the Inquiry, What is Revelation?* (Cambridge and London: Macmillan, 1860), 178-9.

[5] Anyone familiar with his book will notice which of his many fine assertions I either italicize or modify. He has come under some scrutiny in recent years; I discuss this briefly, particularly because I accept his main thrust: that the rise of the new philology in England was a philosophical triumph of a peculiar German sort.

to *a priori* questions of the mind possible again. The philosophical lesson it taught had to do not so much with assumptions about mind as with consciousness. But that, too, in due course.

i

Leaving aside the limited scope of the *Essay,* in terms of both its purpose and its readership, Locke's moment has everything to do with the prevailing version of language in the seventeenth century--namely, the *Natursprache*, the pristine natural language with which the first man was considered to have been endowed--and with Locke's own anti-cabalistic thrust. He had set himself up against such men as Jakob Böhme, Robert Fludd, and John Webster, who clung to an Adamic view of language and against whom Locke constructed his Word-Idea-Thing paradigm.[6] Language on Locke's account was not a natural but a conventional thing: "Because *Men* should not be thought to talk *barely* of their own Imaginations, but of Things as really they are; therefore they *often suppose their Words to stand also for the reality of Things*" (III. ii. 5).[7] Words stand for Ideas, and "it

---

[6] Fludd (1574-1637), four-time censor of the College of Physicians and a practicing physician in London, wrote in defense of Rosicrucianism; Böhme (1575-1624), self-taught shoemaker from Görlitz, was interested in the Jewish mystical tradition of the Cabala, and his theosophical writings influenced both Blake and Coleridge, whom the latter called a "stupendous human being"; Webster (1610-1682) was a popular puritan preacher and theological disputant. See Hans Aarsleff, *From Locke to Saussure* (Minneapolis, 1982):

> "I cannot but conceive [Webster said] that *Adam* did understand both their internal and external signatures, and that the imposition of their names was adequately agreeing with their natures: otherwise it could not univocally and truely be said to be their names, whereby he distinguished them." Thus whatever agreement Webster might have gained among the natural philosophers, he forfeited entirely by his belief in the cognitive value of 'innate notions' and by his closely related advocacy of the language of nature. Webster's mysticism violated the objectivity that was the very foundation of natural philosophy, as the Royal Society saw it, and its unsuccessful pursuit of certain knowledge of Creation. (61)

[7] All citations from the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* are from the Peter Nidditch edition (Oxford, 1975) unless otherwise specified. I retain the italics and all other textual peculiarities given therein.

is a perverting the use of words, and brings unavoidable Obscurity and Confusion, whenever we make them stand for any thing, but those Ideas we have in our own Minds" (III. ii. 5). Locke made it clear from the start of Book III that

> *Words*, which were by nature so well adapted to that purpose [of fitting "sensible signs" to "invisible *Ideas*"], come to be made use of by Men as *the Signs of* their *Ideas*; not by any natural connexion, that there is between particular articulate Sounds and certain *Ideas*, for then there would be but one Language amongst all Men; but by a voluntary Imposition, whereby such a Word is made arbitrarily the Mark of such an *Idea*. The use then of Words is to be sensible marks of *Ideas*; and the *Ideas* they stand for, are their proper and immediate Signification. (III. ii. 1)

Locke's reasons for asserting an arbitrary relationship between the sign and that which it signifies stand on quivering ground: if names truly belong (in Webster's sense) to their objects, "there would be but one Language amongst all Men." But we can hardly fault Locke for not knowing what he could not know about the development of language. Locke was of course greatly influenced by Robert Boyle who, like Locke, was a fellow of the Royal Society. At least one commentator has suggested that "the 'Newtonian' echoes [in Locke] were, in fact, derived from Boyle,"[8] and even as Boyle had found that the distinguishing of the species of natural bodies was "a kind of tacit agreement" among men and "more arbitrary" than they were "wont to be aware of,"[9] so Locke had asserted that words as they were presently conceived hindered true knowledge--that the natural as opposed to conventional view of words was also in fact a tacit agreement. In short, Locke shared the great modern rationalism of the Royal Society, namely, that Nature was the book of God waiting to be read. Locke had in a real way written an epistemology for the Royal Society--a handbook which was no impious thing to the rational attitude prevailing in the Royal Society but which, from the perspective of Leibnizian idealism, was dangerously materialistic.[10]

---

[8] Marie Boas Hall, *Robert Boyle on Natural Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana, 1965), 110.

[9] Cited in Aarsleff, *From Locke to Saussure*, 56.

[10] See Aarsleff, *From Locke to Saussure*, 57, 69.

Leibniz said of his own work that it bore a relation more to Plato, Locke's more to Aristotle,[11] and he would not accept the conventional view Locke held and believed necessary to true knowledge.

> I am for innate ideas, and against his *tabula rasa* [Leibniz wrote to Thomas Burnet]. In our mind there is not only a faculty, but also a disposition to knowledge, from which innate knowledge can be derived. For all necessary truths derive their proof from this internal light, and not from the experiences of the senses, which merely give us the occasion for thinking of these necessary truths and can never prove a universal necessity, giving us only inductive knowledge from some examples and probability in others yet untried.[12]

Leibniz maintained that there is "something natural in the origin of words--something which reveals a relationship between things and the sounds and motions of the vocal organs" (*New Essays,* III. ii. 283), and his broad knowledge of languages led him to believe that there was an *Ursprache* which stood behind all languages. Leibniz's observations were, in one sense, unspectacular: even as there seems to be a physical origin for words--a sensible idea behind a mental one--so there is a relation to the natural world which allowed for a single birth of language. Like so many others, Leibniz made use of onomatopoeia in his assertions on the origin of language. Leibniz assumed that the faculties of man were so suited to the natural world in which he lived--suited particularly to *sound* (an idea Herder perpetuated[13])--that language could not but develop naturally as

---

[11] Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding,* trans. and ed. Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett (Cambridge, 1981), Preface, 47. The Locke/Leibniz paradigm is one Herder himself established: "Whether a man be follower of Leibniz or of Locke, whether his name be Search or Know-all, whether he be an idealist or a materialist, he must . . . admit the fact of a distinctive character of mankind which consists in this [unique positive power of thought, or reason] and in nothing else." See *On the Origin of Language,* trans. Alexander Gode, ed. Gode and John H. Moran (New York: Ungar, 1966), 110.

[12] In the same letter (3 December 1703) Leibniz also wrote: "However, one must also admit that there are a great many fine thoughts in Locke's work and that when he defends true opinions, he illuminates them beautifully, so that it is, without doubt, one of the best philosophical books of this time." See *Philosophical Essays,* ed. Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989), 284-5. This was on the occasion Leibniz's re-reading Locke, this time in French translation. (For a discussion of the misunderstandings between Locke and Leibniz, due in part to their differing native tongues, see Aarsleff, *From Locke to Saussure,* 50.) In the Preface the the *New Essays* Leibniz called Locke's *Essay* "one of the finest and most admired works of our age" (44).

[13] Especially in section three of his prize essay, *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache.*

opposed to conventionally. Leibniz was knowledgeable enough not to share the popular seventeenth-century notion that Hebrew was the radical primitive tongue from which all others proceeded. Theophilus, Leibniz's mouthpiece in the *Nouveaux Essais* is, after all, both learned and wise. This was not the kind of mistake Leibniz could make. Neither did he hold with Böhme the *Natursprache* of Adam himself; he knew enough about the mystics--the Platonici, as he called them--to be wary. Leibniz stood between Locke and Böhme, holding what Aarsleff calls a "modified form of the Platonic doctrine of the nature of language."[14] Leibniz believed that

> if we had the primitive language in its pure form, or well enough preserved to be recognizable, the reasons for the connections [it involved]--whether they were grounded in reality or came from a wise "arbitrary imposition" worthy of the first author--would be bound to appear. But granted that our languages are derivative so far as origins are concerned, nevertheless considered in themselves they have something primitive about them. (*New Essays,* III. ii. 281)

There is an agreement between sounds and the natural dispositions of human speakers; traces of the primitive tongue survive. Aarsleff is right to hear echoes of the doctrine of sufficient reason,[15] which Leibniz stated succinctly in his essay "On the Ultimate Origin of Things." It was a variation on the so-called ontological argument:

> For even if you imagine the world eternal, nevertheless since you posit nothing but a succession of states, and as you find a sufficient reason for none of them whatsoever, and as any number of them whatever does not aid you in giving reason for them, it is evident that the reason be sought elsewhere. . . . [B]y suppposing the eternity of the world, an ultimate extramundane reason of things, of God, cannot be escaped.[16]

You cannot step outside of your own world and announce there is nothing outside it. Or, if you do, you will find when you get there that you are not alone.[17]

---

[14] Aarsleff, *From Locke to Saussure,* 88; on the "Platonici," see also 87.

[15] *ibid.*, 88.

[16] *The Philosphical Works of Leibniz,* ed. George Martin Duncan (New Haven: Tuttle, 1890), 100-101.

[17] A version of this would emerge in Coleridge's 1819 lecture against dogmatical materialism; I will discuss the relationship between Leibniz and Coleridge later.

Leibniz made use not only of onomatopoeia but also of the gestures and interjections familiar to later speculations on language origin. Such suppositions depend on the validity of common roots--a supposition which prevailed well into the nineteenth century; it was as integral to Max Müller's theories as the rejection of it was to Barfield's and Otto Jespersen's, which Barfield followed. Again, we cannot fault Leibniz for failing to know what he could not have known; we should rather think all the more highly of him for the acuity with which he anticipated comparative philology, particularly in relation to etymology. Seventeenth-century etymology served a particular end, and that was to secure whatever idols needed securing.

> As one seventeenth-century authority put it, in etymology it is entirely legitimate to add, subtract, transpose, and invert letters, for this procedure will seem reasonable when we consider that Hebrew writing goes from right to left, whereas in Greek and many other languages, it goes from left to right. The typical etymologist also felt free to compare any two words in different languages, no matter how widely separated they were in time and place. . . . In this fashion it was possible to make etymology prove that the language spoken in the Garden of Eden was Swedish or--as someone else believed--Flemish. In other words, etymology was not subject to the method created by the nineteenth century. (Aarsleff, *From Locke to Saussure,* 91)

Leibniz remained skeptical of etymology from the start. He did believe there was a future for etymology, but it seemed to him that in its present form it did little more than make guesses. He understood with remarkable clarity that in order for etymology to bring us to conclusive evidence, a great amount of work, properly applied, lay ahead.

> When the day comes that the Romans, Greeks, Hebrews, and Arabs have been used up, the Chinese will come to the fore with their ancient books, and will furnish materials for the curiosity of occidental scholars. And then there are various old books by Persians, Armenians, Copts, and Brahmins; these will be dug up some day, so that we shall not neglect any light which antiquity might cast, through the transmission of its teachings and from the chronicles of events. And when there are no more ancient books to examine, their place will be taken by mankind's most ancient monument--languages. Eventually every language in the universe will be recorded, and contained in dictionaries and grammars; and comparisons will be made amongst them. This will be extremely useful for the knowledge of things, since their properties are often reflected in their names . . . as well as for the

knowledge of our mind and of the marvelous variety of its operations.[18]

Of course this great collecting and comparing of the antiquities of language was one of the great achievements of the nineteenth century. It happened seemingly independent of Leibniz but not independent of his countrymen. Sir William Jones, the British Orientalist who became a supreme court justice in Calcutta and who brought to the attention of Europe the similarities among Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin,[19] had hoped that, as Europe had been indebted to the Dutch for its knowledge of Arabic and to the French for Chinese, so Europe would be indebted to the English for "the first accurate knowledge of Sanscrit, and of the valuable works composed in it."[20] But the Locke tradition managed to fend off Jones; his discoveries had to go to the Continent.

What for this argument Leibniz represents most strongly is a powerful opposition to the emerging and dominant materialism in linguistic thought.[21] It is no accident that his idealism was best received in Germany, where, as Leibniz himself said, the language was better suited to philosophy.

> But I venture to say that no European language is better suited than German for this testing and examination of philosophical doctrines by a living tongue. For German is very rich and complete in real terms, to the envy of all other languages. . . . The reason why philosophy has only recently been dealt with here in the vernacular is that the German language is incompatible, not with philosophy but with barbarous philosophy. And since this barbarous way of philosophizing has only lately been

---

[18] *New Essays,* III. ix. 336-7.

[19] I will discuss Jones at greater length later. In his famous address to the Asiatic Society in Calcutta (1786) he suggested that Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin had come from a common language. Jones is now agreed to have inaugurated the comparative method (see Aarsleff, *Study of Language*, 124), though a French Jesuit named Coeurdoux had pointed out similarities between Sanskrit and European languages nineteen years earlier.

[20] *The Works of Sir William Jones,* 9 vols. (London: G.G. & J. Robinson, 1799), i, 363 ("On the Literature of the Hindus"); hereafter Jones, *Works.*

[21] In the "Reflections on Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding*" (1696), Leibniz said he did not consider the question of the origin of ideas "preliminary in philosophy," but added that our ideas, "even of those sensible things, come from within the soul." More precisely, ideas come from a "union of the soul with the body. For I have found that these things had not been well understood. I am in no wise in favor of the *Tabula rasa* of Aristotle; and there is something sound in what Plato called reminiscence" (*Philosophical Works,* 95-6).

> rejected it is not surprising that our language has been slow to come into philosophical use.[22]

There is no doubt that Leibniz heard traces of the primitive language in his native German: "as far as these [onomatopoeic] words are concerned the Germanic language can be considered primitive" (III. ii. 282). Leibniz was participating in a growing national sentiment which began with Luther and which preferred the vernacular; its culminating testament was Grimm's *Deutsche Grammatik.* This interest in the vernacular is closely connected to the general romantic conviction that living languages and literature mark the privileged route to the human soul. As Iorgu Iordan says, this romantic quest "was the path that led to the creation of Philology."[23] Leibniz was the emblem of a Germanic tradition which would take the lead in philology proper a hundred years later.

Coleridge himself found the Locke-Leibniz paradigm a useful heuristic fiction.[24] In it we light upon two champions of the language question, happily divided by the channel and most certainly emblematic of what has become a fruitful cliché--the division between the empirical islands and the intuitive continent. While it is a great temptation to make of Locke what Carlyle made of him--a man who "had paved the way for banishing religion

---

[22] Leibniz, ***Philosophical Papers and Letters,*** ed. Leroy E. Loemker, 2nd ed. (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1966), 125.

[23] ***An Introduction to Romance Linguistics*** (London, 1937), trans. John Orr (Westport: Greenwood, 1970), 4; see also 5-15.

[24] I am referring here particularly to his 1819 lecture on German Philosophy; see *The Philosophical Lectures of Samuel Taylor Coleridge,* ed. Kathleen Coburn (London: Pilot, 1949), 368-391. We should keep in mind that Coleridge was never guilty of making Locke into a thorough-going materialist for the mere sake of simply siding with Leibniz. "Locke is no materialist. He teaches no doctrines of infidelity, whatever may be deduced from them. . . . 'I never denied [Locke said] the mind could form a just image of itself by reflection and deduction.' So that, in truth, those who have drawn the doctrines of materialism from Locke certainly drew what he never intended to draw" (379); and later, "I can, therefore, say this finally with regard to Locke, that it was at the beginning of a time when they felt one thing: that the great advantage was to convince mankind that the whole process of acting upon their own thoughts or endeavouring to deduce any truth from them was mere presumption, and henceforward men were to be entirely under the guidance of their senses. This was most favourable to a country already busy with politics, busy with commerce and in which yet there was a pride in human nature, so that a man would not like to remain ignorant of that which had been called the Queen of Sciences" (381; see also 383). Of Coleridge on Leibniz I shall have more to say later.

from the world"--we must not forget Carlyle's admiration for the "estimable character" of the man: that Locke was a "clear, humble-minded, patient, reverent, nay, religious man."[25] But Carlyle's view of Locke was far more simplistic than Coleridge's; Carlyle regretted the presidium of Locke, whose whole doctrine was "mechanical, in its aim and origin, in its method and its results," whereas in Germany philosophy dwelt "aloft in the Temple of Science, the divinity of its inmost shrine."[26] Still it is no difficult mental feat to see the maturation of an empirical view of language in the tradition in which Locke became a major influence, a tradition passing through Condillac and Tooke and leading directly to the Utilitarians. Nor is it difficult to see the broader romantic faith which in Germany prepared a highway for philology. Herder gave us perhaps the most telling specimen of the difference: "Locke geht uns nicht weiter an, als sofern er der Warheit diente, und wir sind lange schon durch Leibniz gewöhnt, auch schwache Seiten seiner Philosphie zu finden."[27]

ii

In the *Autobiography* Mill announced his approval of August Comte's three-stage historical *schema*: the theological, the metaphysical, and the positive. "This doctrine," Mill said, "harmonized well with my existing notions, to which it seemed to give a scientific

---

[25] *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, 5 vols. (London: Chapman, 1899), i, 215 ("Goethe," 1828); "estimable character" is from "Signs of the Times" (1829) in which Carlyle launches his complaint on mechanism, on faith "in the all-importance of physical things" which "is in every age the common refuge of Weakness and blind Discontent; of all who believe, as many will ever do, that man's true good lies without him, not within" (ii, 64, 80).

[26] *ibid.*, i, 73-6 ("The State of German Literature") and ii, 64 ("Signs of the Times"). Carlyle said, "our whole Metaphysics itself, from Locke's time downwards, has been physical; not a spiritual philosophy, but a material one. The singular estimation in which his Essay was so long held as a scientific work (an estimation grounded, indeed, on the estimable character of the man) will one day be thought a curious indication of the spirit of these times" (i, 64).

[27] Cited in Aarsleff, *The Study of Language in England, 1780-1860* (Princeton, 1967), 42.

shape."[28] Comte seems not to have noticed that the positive stage is not the end of the matter, that the metaphysical, aside from being resilient, tends to have a way of slithering into the positive unawares. Horne Tooke's *Diversions of Purley* betrayed the interesting phenomenon of a writer thinking himself positive but being thoroughly metaphysical, and the short-lived popularity of Tooke's ideas makes clear how utterly metaphysical they were and how the positive stage had yet to dawn, though it was just beyond the horizon and in fact already shining on the continent as far as language was concerned.

Horne Tooke was a philosopher and political liberal of the late eighteenth century known not only for having been charged with sedition in 1777 but also for his immensely popular *Diversions.*[29] It is important for an aerial perspective that we see Tooke as a principal descendent in Locke's lineage and that we understand the enormous influence he wielded in England in the years leading up to the *OED,* for it was a decidedly anti-Tookian, anti-Utilitarian, anti-materialist impetus which made philological studies possible and which culminated in one of the great documents of the philological enterprise.

Locke wanted to do away with innate ideas and at the same time retain reflection. Ideas were not mere impressions, but neither were they given. The blank slate was blank, but yet ideas had a double origin in sensation and reflection. Locke's career in the lineage which terminated in Tooke would no doubt have troubled him greatly. James McKusick points out that the mind's passivity is

> more dogmatically asserted by Tooke than by any of his forebears in the English empiricist school. Locke had allowed ample room for the faculty of Reason in his account of mental process; and Hartley, having reduced all thinking activity to a series of "vibrations," timidly dismisses this view as a mere heuristic device, which

---

[28] Mill, *Autobiography*, 99. Citations are from the Riverside, ed. Jack Stillinger (New York, 1969).

[29] Aarsleff says, "Tooke's work was reviewed, outlined, quoted, and excerpted in fifteen different publications in nearly twenty articles totalling over two hundred pages. A few might question the philosophy, disapprove of the politics, and take issue with this or that etymology, but they were all, with a single exception, unanimous in their opinion of the "unspeakable value of Mr. Tooke's hypothesis'"; see *Study of Language*, 74; the internal citation is from the *Annual Review*, IV (1805), 675-9.

> might be replaced by "some other Kind of Motion" without detriment to his system. Tooke more boldly defends the extreme materialist position and is, consequently, much more consistent in his account of language than any of his predecessors.[30]

Locke had given chronological priority to sensation: a mind needed something on which to reflect (II. i. 20, 24); he did not deny active power. Locke had maintained that Language was a necessity of communication and an aid to memory. But he had also noted

> how great a Dependance our *Words* have on common sensible *Ideas*; and how those, which are made use of to stand for Actions and Notions quite removed from sense, *have their rise from thence, and from obvious sensible* Ideas *are transferred to more abstruce Significations,* and made to stand for *Ideas* that come not under the congnizance of our Senses; *v.g.* to *Imagine, Apprehend, Comprehend, Adhere, Conceive, Instill, Disgust, Disturbance, Tranquillity,* etc. are all Words taken from the Operations of sensible Things, and applied to certain Modes of Thinking. *Spirit*, in its primary Signification, is Breath; *Angel*, a Messenger. (III. 1. 5)

This observation, Locke claimed, "may also lead us a little toward the Original of all our Notions and Knowledge" (III. 1. 5). Locke continued in words that suggest his respect for the Port-Royal Grammar[31] which he knew and admired:

> I doubt not, but if we could trace them to their Sources, we should find, in all languages, the names which stand for Things that fall not under our Senses, to have had their first rise from sensible *Ideas.* By which we may give some kind of guess, what kind of Notions they were, and whence derived, which filled their Minds, who were the first Beginners of Languages. (III. 1. 5)

These observations had been and would be made over and over again and lead on some occasions to the most fantastic theories about the origin of language. Barfield himself would spend no little time deliberating on this very connection between what Locke called "sensible *Ideas*" and "Modes of Thinking." But it is a leap of medal distance to go from Locke's measured suggestion--that these observations "*may* lead us a *little* towards the Original of all our Notions and Knowledge," and that by them "we may give *some kind of*

---

[30] "Coleridge and Horne Tooke," *Studies in Romanticism* 24:1 (Spring 1985), 85-111; 92.

[31] The *Grammaire générale et raisonnée*, also known as *L'art de parler* or the *Port-Royal Grammar* (Claude Lancelot and Antoine Arnauld, 1660) concerned itself with a rational explanation of the parts of speech and suggested that language is a painting of the mind. The *Port-Royal Grammar* was in fact among the first to draw the connection between language and mind. Its claims extended to all languages, hence "Universal Grammar."

guess" what originary notions filled the minds of those who invented language (my italics)--to Condillac's gymnastics in showing that reflection begins with sense impressions, to Tooke's sleight-of-hand demonstrations that *all* words have this material origin, and to Bentham's notion that "Remembrance is but the work of a particular species of perception."[32] However one wishes to read Locke, it is true nonetheless that his *Essay* set in motion a species of materialism and skepticism (Coleridge: "it was at the *beginning* of a time . . . ") which prevented comparative philology from reaching England until a much later date than the one by which it had reached the continent. If reflection were only possible because of language, and if language were really the product of impressions, then the mind turned out to be more passive than even Locke would have approved. But this is precisely what became of what started out, in Locke, as a tendency away from the *Natursprache.* Condillac found language born of need and instinct, manifest in gestures and interjections. Any less material version--as for example James Harris's or Lord Mondboddo's--would not do.[33] Whereas Monboddo's work fared well in Germany, in part at Herder's suggestion that it be translated,[34] Tooke took it to be the kind of thing that needed wiping away, and he shared with Condillac a point of departure from Locke: whereas Locke emphasized the imperfections of language--in reaction to the prevailing adamic doctrine of the seventeenth century--Condillac and Tooke emphasized the imperfections of our understanding. As Tooke himself put it, "the perfections of language, *not properly understood,* have been one of the chief causes of the imperfections of our

---

[32] Citations are from the John Bowring *Works of Jeremy Bentham,* 11 vols. (1838-43; rpt. New York: Russell, 1962), viii, 320; hereafter Bentham, *Works.*

[33] On the modified rationalism of Harris and Monboddo, in contrast especially to Locke and Tooke, see McKusick, 89-91.

[34] Aarsleff, *Study of Language,* 41.

philosophy."[35] This turned out to be truer than he knew. The same could be said of many later versions of it, especially Max Müller's and, at the end of a long tradition, Rudolf Bultmann's.[36]

Tooke's mind had no activity of its own. Its business, he said,

> as far as it concerns Language, appears to me to be very simple. It extends no farther than to receive Impressions, that is, to have Sensations and Feelings. What are called its operations, are merely the operations of Language.[37]

The intellectual scaffolds Tooke needed were already in place: "universal grammar and the Lockean doctrine of the origin of ideas in sensation."[38] The first ensures that doctrines of language will be derived from doctrines of mind; the second will be the foundation for the ambitious attempt to show that all words derive from sense impressions.

For Tooke to maintain that the mind was passive he needed to show that, after Locke, there were only two classes of words--nouns and words used for "quickness and dispatch," or abbreviations. These abbreviations are signs of other words and must also be shown to derive from sense impressions. Whatever else Tooke was doing, it is clear that he was doing philosophy (and, arguably, metaphysics), not philology, claiming, as did

---

[35] *Diversions of Purley*, 19, italics mine; hereafter *Diversions*; all citations are from the 1829 edition. It needs pointing out, because of his enormous influence, that Aarsleff performed an important reverse pivot regarding Condillac. In *The Study of Language in England, 1780-1860* (1967) he had argued that Condillac tried to reduce all reflection to sensation. In "The Tradition of Condillac: The Problem of the Origin of Language in the Eighteenth Century and the Debate in the Berlin Academy before Herder" (1974) he said "[I] now consider that false. The single principle by which he [i.e., Condillac] wished to explain the mind was 'la liaison des idées' ('the connection of ideas'), a principle that was designed to imitate the power of the concept of gravity in Newtonian philosophy. Condillac makes it clear that 'la liaison des idées' is not the same as association of ideas" (*From Locke to Saussure*, 199, n. 1); this essay is reprinted from *Studies in the History of Linguistics*, ed. Dell Hymes (Bloomington: Indiana, 1974), 93-156.

[36] I shall take this up later. Müller tried to explain myth in just these terms; so, too, did Bultmann, who was the *terminus ad quem* of a line of German New Testament criticism.

[37] *Diversions*, 51.

[38] Aarsleff, *Study of Language*, 14.

Bentham, that grammar was "absolutely necessary in the search after philosophical truth."[39] Like Leibniz's *Nouveaux Essais,* the *Diversions* was written in dialogue--a common form for philosophy, as H.J. Jackson points out, but not for grammar.[40] In particular, then, Tooke was saving his philosophical appearances:

> TOLLE, and the French word *Taille* (which is taken of Goods) differ only in pronunciation and consequent writing of them. It is a part *lifted off* or taken away. Nor will this use of the word appear extraordinary, when we consider the common expressions of--*To raise* taxes--*To Levy* taxes--*Lever* des impots.--A *Levy* upon any persons--Une *Levée*. The TOLL of a bell, is, its being *Lifted up,* which causes that sound we call its TOLL. TOOL is (some instrument, any instrument) *Lifted up,* or taken up, to work with. TOIL (for labour), applied perhaps at first principally to having *Tilled* (or lifted up) the earth; afterwards to other sorts of labour. The verb was formerly written in English *Tueil* and *Tuail*. . . . TOIL (for a snare) is any thing *Lifted up* or raised, for the purpose of ensnaring any animal. As, a spider's web is a TOIL (something *Lifted up*) to catch flies: springes and nets, TOILS for other animals.[41]

One thinks of Sir William Jones crying in the wilderness (1786): "Etymology has, no doubt, some use in historical researches; but it is a medium of proof so very fallacious, that, when it illucidates one fact, it obscures a thousand, and more frequently borders on the ridiculous, than leads to any solid conclusions."[42]

Two volumes of the *Diversions* were published in Tooke's life, the first appearing in 1786, the same year Sir William Jones gave his famous paper "On the Hindus" to the Asiatic Society of Calcutta. Tooke held England captive until the middle of the following century, eliciting admiration even from the young Coleridge (briefly) and, as late as 1851,

---

[39] *Diversions,* 3; Bentham wanted to work out "the principle relations between the field of *thought* and the field of *language*--comprising, of necessity, the leading principles of the art and science of *universal grammar*" (*Works*, viii, 120).

[40] "Coleridge, Etymology and Etymologic," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 44:1 (1983), 75-88; 76.

[41] *Diversions,* 435; Brian Rosenberg points out that Carlyle, too, would "devise etymologies for words he thought especially important; and if those etymologies conformed more closely to his own expectations that to historical reality, he was unconcerned." See "Etymology as Propaganda: A Note on Carlyle's Use of Word Origins," *English Language Notes* 24:3 (March 1987), 29-34; 29. On DeQuincey's lampooning this practice, see Jackson, "Coleridge, Etymology and Etymologic," 79.

[42] *Works,* i. 20 (third Anniversary Address: "On the Hindus," 1786).

from Richard Trench, whereas Jones set continental philology reeling, particularly in Germany where philology was not as enslaved to metaphysical assumptions about mind. This gave Europe a philological head start of a whole generation. So while Rask, Grimm, and Bopp were going about the business of establishing the methods of comparative philology, Mill and Bentham were still trying to preserve Tooke's lack thereof. The only equal and opposite reaction to Tooke's materialism came from Thomas Reid's pupil, Dugald Stewart, and from Coleridge (which I will discuss presently). The critiques were nearly the same and equally effective. For a third volume of the *Diversions* was supposed to appear and complete Tooke's project, but in 1812, shortly before his death, Tooke burned the manuscript and all his correspondence. It was only two years later (1814) that Rask finished his first piece of comparative philology, whereas Mill had not yet put his pen to writing the *Analysis of the Human Mind*, a book in which the validity of the Locke/Tooke tradition would not only be taken for granted but also perpetuated.

Tooke had effectively accomplished the union of philology and philosophy, or rather had turned a species of philology into incontrovertable evidence *of* his philosophy of sensation. Or again, as A.C. Goodson notes, Tooke considered language "pseudo historically, as an institution with life of its own."[43] Since no one among their English contemporaries was able competently to refute Tooke on philological grounds, James Mill and Jeremy Bentham in particular had a sure foundation on which to build their edifices of utilitarian thought. Even Coleridge, whose attitude toward Tooke was ambivalent, had trouble dispensing with him. Goodson says Tooke served Coleridge the way Harris served Tooke: "as an antithetical figure, attractive for the issues he had raised but

---

[43] "Coleridge on Language: A Poetic Paradigm," *Philological Quarterly* 62:1 (Winter 1983) 45-68; 55; also *Verbal Imagination* (Oxford, 1988), 99.

threadbare in the main lines of his argument."[44] Before the assumptions which carried Tooke could be rejected, his philosophy had to be changed to philology. It would take a rigorous factual critique by Dugald Stewart on the one hand, and Coleridge on language on the other, to prepare England for the new philology.

iii

It is important to note that Stewart's critique of Tooke is philosophical, that Tooke's philosophical views gradually collapsed on account of their own contradictions and not, until the 1830s, as the result of philological development. The first philosophical critique came from the Scots realist tradition, known for its impatience with Humean scepticism and Lockean materialism. Dugald Stewart turned the soil in England so that philology as a separate and distinct pursuit could germinate and grow. The implements Stewart worked with he inherited from his teacher Thomas Reid, who possessed what C.S. Peirce called a "subtle but well balanced intellect."[45] Reid had objected from the start: philosophy of mind cannot be built on analogy; it must be built on reflection. Stewart followed Reid in objecting to Locke's "closet":

> At one time, we liken it [memory] to a receptacle in which the images of things are treasured up in a certain order; at another time, we fancy it to resemble a tablet, on which these images are stamped, more or less deeply. . . . Instances of all these modes of speaking may be collected from no less a writer than Mr. Locke. "Methinks," says he, in one place, "the understanding is not much unlike a closet,

---

[44] "Coleridge on Language," 53. McKusick also comments on this odd relationship: "As early as 1801, then, Coleridge is willing to adopt Tooke's materialistic etymologies while remaining skeptical of their ability to explain anthing more than the accidents of linguistic theory" ("Coleridge and Horne Tooke," 103). Prior to the turn of the century Coleridge could still be excited by Tooke's politics: "Though other factors, political sympathy primary among them, were also involved, the perceived philosophical alliance of Tooke with great predecessors and contemporaries whom Coleridge thought of as materialists--Locke, Condillac, Hume, Hartley, and Godwin--played a crucial part in both Coleridge's initial excitement over the *Diversions* and his eventual estrangement from Tooke's principles" (Jackson, "Coleridge, Etymology and Etymologic," 77-8).

[45] Cited in Roger D. Gallie, *Thomas Reid and 'The Way of Ideas'* (Boston: Kluwer, 1989), xxi.

> wholly shut up from light, with only some little opening left, to let in external visible resemblances, or ideas, of things without: Would the pictures coming into such a dark room but stay there, and lie so orderly as to be found upon occasion, it would very much resemble the understanding of a man, in reference to all objects of sight, and the ideas of them."[46]

Reid had said that "in our inquiries concerning the mind and its operations, we ought never to trust to reasonings drawn from some supposed similitude of body to mind" because "there are no two things in nature more unlike." The source from which "the knowledge of the mind and its faculties [should] be drawn . . . is accurate reflection upon the operations of our own minds."[47] That Stewart should be a chief critic of Utilitarian thought on the one hand, and that Reid should become a principal influence on Peirce's pragmatism on the other, is indeed a curiosity of sorts. It is a greater curiosity that the critique should run so closely to Coleridge's answer to Wordsworth's naïveté: "the best part of human language, properly so called, is derived from reflection on the acts of the mind itself."[48] Coleridge on language is distinctive here not only in contrast to Wordsworth. He is distinctive more importantly in contrast to Tooke. Wordsworth, like Tooke, preferred the name, the noun, the sign reducible to its thing, whereas Coleridge preferred the act, the verb, the sign traceable to its action.[49] Here is the great difference between the grammar of Tooke's passive, and Coleridge's active, mind. Coleridge accepted that words are things, but that they are "living Things too." In a letter to Josiah Wedgwood (February 1801) Coleridge tried to show the identity of "mind" with "memory," both of which he derived from "mowing": "all alike mean a repetition of similar motion, as in a scythe." H.J. Jackson

---

[46] Stewart, *Collected Works of Dugald Stewart,* ed. Sir William Hamilton, 11 vols. (Edinburgh: Constable, 1855), v, 168-9; hereafter, *CWDS.*

[47] *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785), ed. A.D.Woosley (London, 1941), 39, 37, and 40 respectively.

[48] *BL,* i, 52.

[49] "Wordsworth," Goodson asserts, "would adopt the language of rustics 'because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best parts of language is originally derived.' The name is for him the exemplary part of speech, as it is for Hartley and Tooke. Language is nomination. . . ." See "Coleridge on Language," 59.

comments aptly:

> The disciple of Tooke sees the origins of all words in names for things, nouns; but Coleridge's etymology of "mind" traces it to an action, mowing. . . . Coleridge challenged the idea that words were ultimately things, and he sought the origins of words increasingly in intangibles, in actions rather than in names for things.[50]

Again, we find this in the *Notebooks:*

> Mind--min--meinen--mahnen--mahen
> vibratory yet progressive motion.[51]

For Coleridge, the sign is not and cannot be arbitrary. It was no mere impassioned *way* of putting things for Coleridge to say that signs and symbols and vestments and rituals are consubstantial with all that they signify, though impassioned it was indeed, both in the way it was said and in the way believed. It was for Coleridge the real, the actual, the uncompromising truth of the matter. Coleridge, McKusick reiterates, maintained that "words are themselves things--elements, that is, of an organized structure that imposes mental categories on the external world." He goes on to cite a notebook entry of 1810:

> words are not mere symbols of things & thoughts, but themselves things--and that any harmony in the things symbolized will perforce be presented to us more easily as well as with additional beauty by a correspondent harmony of the Symbols with each other.

Words are real things, participated like every other appearance by the active mind; formed upon correspondent harmony, the sign cannot be said to be arbitrary.[52] McKusick is excellent here:

> phonetic resemblance ("harmony") between words indicates a resemblance in the things they signify. If the systematic nature of such a resemblance could be demonstrated, then each language could be described as a "mapping" of objective phenomena on to a phonetically-marked semantic space. Language would then mirror the external world in a systematic way rather than merely piecemeal, as in

---

[50] Jackson, 80. The letter and journal entry are also cited in Jackson.

[51] *CN*, i, 378; also in Goodson, "Coleridge on Language," 52.

[52] The question of harmony is ultimately begged here; it is a matter for my third and fourth chapters. But it is important to recall Leibniz on harmony here and to remember that Coleridge's lecture on Dogmatical Materialism (1819), built upon chapter xiii of the *Biographia,* aligned itself with Leibniz's doctrines of pre-established harmony and sufficient reason.

> onomatopoeia. The existence of puns, flectional regularities, and poetic "harmonies" of the kind Coleridge cites, indicates that some such phonetic schematism does exist, although perhaps not in such a rigorously logical way as Coleridge would like. Coleridge's doctrine of "harmony" is not very fully worked out, but we are nevertheless able to discern a foreshadowing of Humboldt's doctrine that each language possesses an *innere Sprachform,* or semantic and grammatical structure, imposed upon the "given" phonetic material by the creative genius of the people who speak it.[53]

Coleridge on language reflects Coleridge on mind. The word as a living thing, derivative of action, is like unto the mind itself. Coleridge understood the necessary distinction between thinking and thought; more particularly he understood that mind is both the thinking subject and the object of thought. Barfield has repeatedly insisted upon Coleridge's awareness of his own mental activity--of his "mind's self-experience in the act of thinking."[54] It looms here because it is this very activity, like Reid's "accurate reflection upon the operations of our own minds," which produces the "best part of human language, properly so called."[55] Goodson notes that "Coleridge's antithetical attention to the reciprocity of language and thought in the symbolic process supports a dynamic poetics honoring 'natural thoughts in natural diction.'"[56] Amid a tide of faulty etymological practices which he himself was not equipped to stem, Coleridge gave us nothing less than a

---

[53] McKusick, "Coleridge and Horne Tooke," 98.

[54] *BL*, i, 124; see especially *What Coleridge Thought* (Middletown: Wesleyan, 1971), 13-21 and *Romanticism Comes of Age*, 2nd ed. (Middletown, 1966), 150.

[55] The relationship between Coleridge and Reid has not been systematically explored. As is the case with so many other influences on Coleridge, the burden of proof requires not only a thorough knowledge of both but an ear for the echoes of Reid in Coleridge's language itself. Paul Hamilton has done a modest amount of work here, noting on the one hand Coleridge's Kantian "objections to the anti-theoretical prejudice inherent in British common-sense philosophy" and on the other the fact that "throughout Coleridge's writings we find similar moments at which he discusses common sense, and its expression in language, in a manner reminiscent of the British opponents of Hume"; see *Coleridge's Poetics* (Stanford, 1983), 64-5; see also 35-42. In the context of a discussion on Coleridge's coinage of the word *desynonomy*, Stephen Prickett notes that Coleridge replaces "the mechanical metaphors of Hartley by the organic models advocated by the Scots rhetoricians such as Reid and turn[s] the etymological search not towards roots but towards a history of linguistic *development*"; see *Words and the Word* (Cambridge, 1986), 138.

[56] "Coleridge on Language," 64. In a fragment of c. 1817, Coleridge says, "Habituate yourself to derive your illustrations from your consciouness [sic] inwardly, instead of from visual Images=eidola" (cited in Jackson, 83).

language theory which in spite of us will not go away.

The fifth of Stewart's *Philosophical Essays*, "On the Tendency of some Late Philological Speculations" (1810), was devoted almost entirely to Horne Tooke. Stewart, who was Thomas Reid's pupil and James Mill's teacher, brought to the essay knowledge of Sir William Jones's work, to which he had refered in his second essay, "The Idealism of Berkely."[57]

Stewart perpetuated the doctrines of his master:

> It is only by the patient and persevering exercise of Reflection on the subjects of Consciousness, that this popular prejudice ["the analogical phraseology concerning the mind"] can be gradually surmounted. (*CWDS*, v, 157)

He complained that

> So many of our late philologists and grammarians . . . have shewn a disposition to conclude that the only real knowledge we possess relates to the objects of our external senses; and that we can annex no idea to the word mind itself, but that of matter in the most subtile and attenuated form which imagination can lend it. (163)

Stewart did not accept that language was so complete a picture of thought as many before him had; he believed language analysis needed to assume a "regular and systematical form" (167). He did not, as he himself admitted, "undervalue the researches of Mr. Tooke and his followers." But as

> long as the philologer confines himself to discussions of grammar and of etymology, his labours, while they are peculiarly calculated to gratify the natural and liberal curiosity of men of erudition, may often furnish important data for illustrating the progress of laws, of arts, and of manners;--for clearing up obscure passages in ancient writers;--or for tracing the migration of mankind, in ages of which we have no historical records, (176)

this last especially suggesting Stewart's familiarity with the comparative method.[58]

The main thrust of Stewart's critique was aimed at Tooke's radical atomistic view

---

[57] Before the end of his intellectual career, Stewart knew Bopp's *Conjugationssystem*. He had read essays on Sanskrit in the Asiatic Researches and had also written a rather regretable essay on the origin of Sanskrit. See Aarsleff, *Study of Language*, 103, 110.

[58] And again, two pages earlier: a word's pedigree can be traced "by those alone who are skilled in ancient and in foreign languages" (174).

of word-meaning. He objected to the diminution of the meaning of a sentence to the sum of its constituent parts: no one claiming to be a philosopher could say that in mathematics it is "impossible for us to annex to such words as *point, line,* or *solid,* any clear or precise notions, distinct from those which they literally express,"[59] or further to supppose that abstraction is a mere phantom--that it is "one of the contrivances of language for the purpose of more speedy communication" (171). And although Stewart observed a fairly strict decorum in argument, he could occasionally deploy a forceful irony: Tooke, for instance, had attempted to break down the distinctions among the parts of speech, claiming that substantives supply the place of adjectives, differing not at all; in not hesitating to draw this inference, it is, Stewart says, as if Tooke "had concluded, because savages supply the want of forks by their fingers, that therefore a finger and a fork are the same thing" (167). Stewart further considered the intellectual powers of man, as presented in Hartley, Priestley, Darwin, and Tooke, to be the "sorry mechanism that gives motion to a puppet" (175). Stewart's critique had sought out the heart of Tooke's philosophical assumptions, not his philological assertions.

Whereas in 1794 Coleridge had called Tooke a "Patriot and sage," by 1796 he was writing to Thelwall of Tooke's "foul song." By 1809, the year prior to the publication of Stewart's essay, Coleridge said Tooke conveyed "the most inflammatory falsehoods."[60] In 1812, two years after Stewart's essay devoted to Tooke was published, Tooke threw his manuscript for part three of the *Diversions* into the fire. Coleridge and Stewart (with Reid behind him) had presented a powerful countervailing argument against the materialism of Tooke's *Diversions.* Or as Aarsleff, somewhat unmindful of Coleridge, contends, "Stewart's critique helped clear the way for new views of language" (*Study of Language,*

---

[59] 170; cf. Coleridge on the propensity among men "to mistake distinct images for clear conceptions" (*PL,* 352).

[60] See McKusick, 93-96.

112).

The fertile ground of comparative philology proved to be the *romantische* soil of Germany rather than the empirical soil of England, due in part to the work of the Berlin Academy and the prize essays of Michaelis in 1760 and Herder in 1771. Both tended to emphasize methodology instead of philosophy in language study. Herder found the genius of the tongue to be in its native literature: "der Genius der Sprache ist . . . auch der Genius von der Litteratur einer Nation."[61] Like Coleridge, Herder perceived language as an organism, and as an organism it could be taken as an object of inquiry on its own, not as part of a philosophical system in relation to thought only, as Bentham maintained.[62] We have in Herder sentiments that emerge in Romantic texts around the globe--in Shelley, in Wordsworth, in Emerson: "For what was this first language of ours other than a collection of elements of poetry?"[63]--a sentiment that would create a view of language on which Barfield's critique is altogether necessary. It is a question of what the evidence of a historical approach to language leads us to--a question not so much of etymology but, after etymology, of consciousness.

Herder did more than help fix the idea of the Orient as the cradle of humanity.[64] His tendency toward the study of an organism set in motion the work of the Schlegels, von Humboldt, and Jacob Grimm. He was their tutelary spirit, and what he did above all, as

---

61 Cited in Aarsleff, *Study of Language*, 148.

62 "Of the nature of language [said Bentham] no clear, correct, and instructive account can be given but with reference to thought" (*Works*, viii, 186). "That the history of a race or nation follows the same course as a human being from birth to old age was not a new idea; but it was new that language itself and its development not only could be conceived in terms of that metaphor, but actually in a real sense had life of its own as if it were an organism. This shift in point of view had the important consequence that language not only could, but ought to be studied as an entity that had independent existence without reference to thought and logical categories. It could be studied as any other natural being; and since language also showed development, it should be studied historically" (Aarsleff, *Study of Language*, 152).

63 Herder, *Origin*, 135; though on Herder's wavering between the *Aufklärung* of his *Preisschrift* and his romanticism, see Edward Sapir, "Herder's 'Ursprung Der Sprache,'" *Modern Philology* 5 (July, 1907), 109-142; 137-9.

64 See, e.g., G.A. Wells, *Herder and After* ('s-Gravenhage: Mouton, 1959), 67-75.

Edward Sapir pointed out some time ago, was to shift the "point of view": Herder effectively turned the camera away from questions of divine origin; the "crude conception of the 'invention' of a language had to give way more and more to that of the unconscious, or, as we should perhaps say now, largely subconscious, development of speech by virtue of man's psychic powers." Again, for "the introduction of the idea of slow, but gradual and necessary, development from rude beginnings, we are very largely indebted to Herder."[65] Herder's own rationalist tendencies would not allow him to go so far as to maintain with Rousseau that man, *sans* language, deliberated his way out of his langauage vaccuum and into a world nicely ordered by symbols chosen quite arbitrarily. He had also reacted to the German version of Adamic language which Johann Peter Süssmilch held and to whom he often referred in his *Preisschrift,* though Herder himself did in fact regard Hebrew "as a peculiarly primitive or 'original' language."[66] Herder's own solution to the question of origins looked much more like Condillac's, though as one standing in the tradition of Leibniz he could not accept a mechanistic psychology that provided no answer as to why animals did not develop speech, paying as it did too little attention to the higher *a priori*, mental faculties of man. Herder argued against both Rousseau and Condillac:

> Condillac, with his hollow explanation of the origin of language, provided Rousseau, as we all know, with the occasion to get the question in our century off the ground again in his own peculiar way, that is, to doubt it. Acutally, to cast doubt on Condillac's explanation, no Rousseau was needed; but to deny straightway--because of it--all human possibility of the invention of language, that to be sure did require a little Rousseauesque verve or nerve or whatever one may wish to call it. Because Condillac had explained the thing badly, could it therefore not be explained at all? Because sounds of emotion will never turn into a human

---

[65] Sapir, 110. Here Sapir is not altogether correct, though not altogether incorrected either. It might be argued that Herder as the prize-winner is above all another convenient coordinate on the map of language history. But see Aarsleff, "The Condillac Tradition": The Problem of the Origin of Language in the Eighteenth Century and the Debate in the Berilin Academy before Herder" in *From Locke To Saussure,* 146-209.

[66] Sapir, 112. Süssmilch, in *Versuch eines Bewises, dass die erste Sprache ihren Ursprung nicht vom Menschen, sondern allein vom Schöpfer erhalten habe* (1756; published 1766), argued that perfect reason was not possible apart from the adjudication of language and that therefore language had to be prior, "given."

> language, does it follow that nothing else could ever have turned into it? . . . . Condillac and Rousseau had to err in regard to the origin of language because they erred, in so well known a way and yet so differently, in regard to this difference: in that the former turned animals into men and the latter men into animals.[67]

Herder, like Leibniz before him and in contrast to Locke, was careful to save for the mind its own operations. Herder said:

> But in the most sensuous state, man is still human; and hence there still was in him the activity of reflection, although to a less notable degree. And the least sensuous state of the animals was still animal, and hence--with all the clarity of their thought--there never worked in them the reflection of a human concept. . . . Man, placed in the state of reflection which is peculiar to him, with this reflection for the first time given full freedom of action, did invent language. (114-15)

And again,

> To invent a language out of one's brain, arbitrarily and without any basis of choice, is--at least for a human soul that wants to have a reason, some reason for everything--no less of a torture than it is for the body to be caressed to death. . . . An arbitrarily thought-out language is in all senses contrary to the entire analogy of man's spiritual forces. (139)

Whether crafty or careless, Herder had managed to affirm man's spiritual constitution and maintain a human, constitutive (as opposed to natural) origin of language. Nearly a hundred years later Michel Bréal, in his introduction to the French translation of Bopp's *Comparative Grammar* (Paris, 1866), made a point of mentioning Herder's importance :

> Herder taught Germany to regard languages as something other than mere instruments for the exchange of ideas: he showed that they also contain, for those capable of inquiring into them, the most ancient and authentic testimony to different peoples' ways of thinking and feeling.[68]

Above all, Herder had demonstrated that since language developed, it could be approached, studied, thought of historically. He had fused a reverence for a native philosophical tradition with an emergent native philological disposition.

---

[67] Herder, *Origin*, 101, 103; Even here in translation the power of Herder's prose shows just why, apart from his polemical force, he took the Berlin prize. This, too, is problematic, however, particularly in light of the haste with which Herder wrote his essay. He did not get Condillac or Rousseau completely right and had, in fact more in common with Condillac than he admitted. See Aarsleff, *From Locke to Saussure*, 155.

[68] Michel Bréal, *The Beginnings of Semantics: Essays, Lectures and Reviews*, ed. George Wolf (Stanford, 1991), 22.

The year of Herder's *Preisschrift*, again, was 1771. Jones's famous address suggesting that Greek, Latin, and Sanskrit all came from a common origin "which, perhaps, no longer exists," was fifteen years away,[69] as were Tooke's *Diversions* and Paley's *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy.* Three years after that, in 1789, Bentham's *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* finally appeared, thanks to the proddings of his friends; the moral world now had its Newton.[70] In 1803 Friedrich Schlegel began his study of Sanskrit under the tutelage of Alexander Hamilton. In 1808 his *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* appeared. It is the same year that James Mill met Bentham. In 1809 Wilhelm von Humboldt created the new University of Berlin, following Halle and Göttingen in "freeing the humanities from the dead hand of the scholastic theology then practised in most German universities."[71] Bopp's *Conjugationssystem* appeared in 1816, and this generally is the year given as the birth of the comparative method. Rask's *Undersogelse* of 1814 was published in 1818, and Grimm's *Deutsche Grammatik* in 1819. Tooke was now seven years in the grave. There can be no real point in arguing "who got there first." Schlegel, who preserved a version of idealism while at the same time insisting on the comparison of forms and grammatical structures, had in fact in the opening pages of *Über die Sprache* acknowledged his debt to Sir William Jones, whereas James Mill had not even got around yet to treating him disparagingly in his *History of British India.* Schlegel's proposal for a science devoted to the "inner structure of languages or comparative grammar" was, it must be said, more

---

[69] Jones's third anniversary address to the Asiatic Society of Calcutta--"On the Hindus"--was given 2 February 1786. See Jones, *Works*, iii, 26. In 1792 Jones asserted with greater certainty that the first race of *Persians* and *Indians*, to whom we may add the *Romans* and *Greeks*, the *Goths* and the old *Egyptians* or *Ethiops*, originally spoke the same language and possessed the same popular faith" (*Works*, i, 129-30; this is from his ninth address, "Origin and Families of Nations").

[70] This had been Bentham's ambition: "What Bacon was to the physical world, Helvetius was to the moral. The moral world has therefore had its Bacon; but its Newton is yet to come" (Halévy, *Growth of Philosophic Radicalism*, 19).

[71] Stephen Prickett, *Words and The Word* (Cambridge, 1986), 1.

successfully carried out by Bopp. Across the channel, Horne Tooke, dead, was still the champion of language and would remain so for another decade. Bopp's *Comparative Grammar* had been favorably reviewed by Alexander Hamilton in the *Edinburgh Review*,[72] but Bopp did not otherwise fare well in Britain. He himself prepared an English version of his work (minus the translations)--itself a telling story[73]--which appeared in the *Annals of Oriental Literature* under the name "Analytical Comparison of the Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, and Teutonic Languages, shewing the original identity of their grammatical structure." Whereas Schlegel had hoped that "many similar and equally beautiful specimens of Asiatic genius, like that [the Sakontala], the offspring of loveliness and love, will ere long be presented to us" (425), the *Annals*, in which Bopp's English translation appeared, collapsed for lack of readers after only three issues. What was a matter of grand curiosity to the Germans--Bonn University established a Sanskrit chair in 1820 for Schlegel, and Berlin in 1821 for Bopp--proved to be of little interest for the English: there would not even be a chair in Cambridge for Anglo-Saxon until 1867.[74] Tooke had kept philology out.

---

[72] Vol. 33 (May 1820), 431-42.

[73] Additionally because of its superiority: "Bopp's *Analytical Comparison* represents not merely a translation of the first half of his *Conjugationssytem*, as has often been claimed in the literature, but a significant advance in theoretical clarity and methodological soundness of analytical and comparative procedure." Seven years after it appeared it was translated back into German as "Analytische Vergleichung des Sanskrit, des Griechischen, Lateinischen und der germanischen Dialekte, welche die ursprüngliche Übereinstimmung ihres grammatischen Baues beweiset" in Gottfied Seebode's *Neues Archiv für Philologie und Pädagogik* 2:3.51-80, 4.1-30 (Hannover: Hahn, 1827). See Bopp, *Analytical Comparison*, ed. E.F.K. Koerner (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1974), x.

[74] See E.F.K. Koerner's preface to Bopp, *Analytical Comparison*, ix, especially notes 6 and 7.

That Tooke reigned in England and Sir William Jones remained relatively unknown is largely attributable to the rise of Utilitarianism. Indeed, the disparaging treatment the East received in Mill's *History of British India* spilled over into the treatment Jones himself received in it, though Mill's book could not have been written at all without Jones's precedent. Anyone acquainted with even the first volume of the *History* cannot fail to notice that Mill spared few occasions to use the book as a platform for his own ideas on religion and mind. He claimed that "there is an universal agreement respecting the meanness, the absurdity, the folly, of the endless, childish, degrading, and pernicious ceremonies, in which the practical part of the Hindu religion consists,"[75] that aside from "the causes which usually give superstition a powerful sway in ignorant and credulous ages, the order of priests obtained a greater authority in India than in any other region of the globe" (i, 198). To this ideological nationalism was joined the mentality of Hartley and Bentham:

> In a cursory survey, it is understood, that the mind, unable to attend to the whole of an infinite number of objects, attaches itself to a few; and overlooks the multitude that remain. But what, then, are the objects to which the mind, in such a situation, is in preference attracted? Those which *fall in with the current of its own thoughts;* those which accord with its former impressions; those which confirm its previous ideas. These are the objects to which, in a hasty selection, all ordinary minds are directed, overlooking the rest. For what is the principle in the mind by which the choice is decided? Doubltess that of association. And is not association governed by the predominant ideas? To this remains to be added, the powerful influence of the affections; the well known pleasure, which a man finds, in meeting, at every step, with proofs he is in the right, and the eagerness with which he is thence inspired to look out for that source of satisfaction; the well-known aversion, on the other hand, which a man usually has, to meet with proofs that he is in the wrong, and the readiness with which he obeys the temptation, to overlook such disagreeable objects. (xvi-xvii; my italics)

Mill goes on to say that the historian stands in a kind of judicial relationship to his

---

[75] *The History of British India,* 3 vols. (London: Baldwin, 1817), i, 245.

information,

> comparing the whole *collection of statements* with the general probabilities of the case, and trying it by the established laws of human nature, endeavours to arrive at a complete and correct conception of the complicated transaction, on which he is called to decide. (xvii; my italics)

Mill felt himself uniquely suited to adjudicate the "collection of statements," even though--and this escaped his attention--he attended in large part only to those which fell "in with the currents of his own thoughts."

Two attitudes toward the East could not be more opposed than those of Sir William Jones and James Mill: from a young age Jones had maintained the necessity of knowing all languages which could be said to belong to learned peoples; sufficient knowledge required "the accumulated experience and wisdom of all ages and nations."[76] Elsewhere, with characteristic caution, he said "I enter with extreme diffidence on my present subject, because I have little knowledge of the *Tartarian* dialects; and the gross errours of European writers on Asiatick literature have long convinced me, that no satisfactory account can be given of any nation, with whose language we are not perfectly acquainted."[77] Mill in his *History*, however, made his famous claim that not knowing eastern languages and never having been to India particularly qualified him to write an objective history of that land. Indeed, Mill argued that the qualifications to write a history could be acquired only in Europe. Jones was engaged in an "unremitted application during the vacations to a vast and interesting study, *a complete knowldege of India,* which," Jones said, "I can only attain in the country itself."[78] Mill said that when "every thing of importance is expressed

---

[76] From the "Essay on Education" (1768), which Jones wrote when he was twenty-two, cited in Aarsleff, *Study of Language*, 118-9. In August of 1787 Jones wrote to the second Earl Spencer: "I had made a *Sanscrit* stanza, signifying that 'as the thirsty antelope runs to a pool of sweet water, so I *thirsted* for all kinds of knowledge, which was as sweet as nectar.'" *The Letters of Sir William Jones*, ed. Garland Cannon, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), ii, 742.

[77] Jones, *Works*, i, 51 ("On the Tartars").

[78] Jones to John Eardley-Wilmot, 20 September 1789, *Letters of Sir William Jones*, ii, 848.

in writing, a man who is duly qualified may obtain more knowledge of India, in one year, in his closet in England, than he could obtain during the course of the longest life, by the use of his eyes and his ears in India" (xv). Jones had said that the "Sanscrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the *Greek,* more copious than the *Latin,* and more exquisitely refined than either,"[79] a matter Mill was incapable of judging, working only with translations, some of which were Jones's own. And of course Mill's influence was more than intellectual; it was largely because of his *History* that he gained his post as an administrator in the East India Company, as he himself admitted in an 1819 letter to Thomas Thomson.[80] Even more ironically, the *Works* of Jones were dedicated to the East India Company.

But more than merely perpetuating an unsympathetic regard for Indian literature, Mill had followed closely in the steps of Tooke, whose well-known statement on the "perfections of language not properly understood" Mill used as the epigraph to his chapter on abstraction in *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind* (1829). It is interesting that the *Analysis*, derivative as it is of the *Diversions*, mentions Tooke's name almost reticently, and if not reticently then at least sparingly.[81] There is sufficient evidence that

---

[79] Jones, *Works*, i, 26 ("On the Hindus"); and elswhere, "the Asiatics have soared to loftier heights in the sphere of imagination" than the Europeans (i, 11); and again, "the Mahomedans have not only the permission, but the positive command, of their law giver, *to search for learning even in the remotest parts of the globe"* (i, 17); *et alibi,* "I desire no better proof than that, which the language Bráhmans affords, of an immemorial and total difference between the *Savages* of *the Mountains,* as the old *Chinese* justly called the *Tartars*, and the studious, placid, contemplative inhabitants of these *Indian* plains" (i, 61; "On the Tartars").

[80] Concerning a "place in the India House . . . about to be vacated" and for which he had applied, Mill wrote to Thomson in tones of characteristically high self-regard: "The reputation of my book, too, I am told is even a strong recommendation"; cited in Alexander Bain, *James Mill* (London: Longmans, 1882), 184. Thomson had been a college companion of Mill's and was, at this time, professor of chemistry at Edinburgh. Thomson had told Mill of an appointment to the chair of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh, which Mill seems to have considered pursuing (see Bain, 165-8).

[81] "Even with regard to his criticism on politics and politicians," Mill wrote in 1806, "which seem the least connected with the subject, they are in general naturally introduced, and have always in them a keen point, and not infrequently real justice. They are often however in such bitter language, as, if mild and respectful words ought always to be used respecting the great, must be condemned as indecorous"

even the philosophical radicals--indeed, even those who were *not ex*-radicals--preferred to be dissociated from the twice-prosecuted-for-treason Horne Tooke.[82] But whatever the reason for Mill's reticence, we must not fail to see that the *Analysis* is spun out of Tooke's philology.[83] Like Tooke, Mill emphasized not only naming but the naming of sensations.

> The primary importance to men, of being able to make known to one another their SENSATIONS, made them in all probability begin with inventing marks for that purpose; in other words, making Names for their SENSATIONS. (i, 134)

Mill had followed Locke in declining to say "by what Motions of our Spirits, or Alterations of our Bodies, we come to have any Sensation by our Organs, or any *Ideas* in our Understandings."[84] Instead he jumped straight into the fact *of* sensation: "The feelings which we have through the external senses are the most simple," and so, says Mill, there is "propriety" in "commencing with this class of our feelings" (1). Those sensations needed naming, and in order to be recalled to the mind they needed to be subject to the law of association.[85] The *Analysis* is itself a momentous event in philosophy of mind, but it is also the last great Lockean testament up to the *OED* of language in bondage to specific

---

(*Literary Journal*, i (1806), 1, cited in Olivia Smith, *The Politics of Language, 1791-1819* (Oxford, 1984), 141; see also n. 8. Mill is less reticent about mentioning James Harris and the "mystical jargon" of *Hermes*. See James Mill, *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind* (1829), i, 253; all citations are from the 1878 edition, 2 vols., ed. J.S. Mill (1869; London: Longmans).

[82] Leigh Hunt's essay in *The Examiner* (5 April 1812) on the event of Tooke's death is an example of the regard for Tooke among radicals: Tooke's was a "polluted intellect," Hunt wrote, "a wrong spirit on a right side of thinking" (135), and "it is not the worst thing to say of Mr. Horne Tooke, that the best feature in his eventful life was the close of it" (141). Hunt's essay can be found in *Political and Occasional Essays of Leigh Hunt*, ed. Lawrence H. Houtchens and Caroline W. Houtchens (Columbia, 1962), 134-141; citations are from this collection. See also Stephen Prickett, "Radicalism and Linguistic Theory: Horne Tooke on Samuel Pegge," *Yearbook of English Studies* 19 (1989), 1-17; 3, 7-8.

[83] Aarsleff gives a list of words and etymologies "lifted directly from the *Diversions*" (*Study of Language*, 95). John Stuart Mill mentions in his preface to the *Analysis* the "somewhat obsolete philology which the author had borrowed from Horne Tooke" (xx). One of J.S. Mill's co-editors, Andrew Findlater, draws attention to James Mill's borrowings and says "nearly all Tooke's derivations are now discredited" (i, 209, n. 61; see also i, 213, n. 62).

[84] This is Locke in the *Essay* (I. i. 2), which Mill uses as the epigraph to his first chapter.

[85] Ideas, once named, cannot be recalled to the mind; if that were the case, they would not need recalling, already being there: "You cannot bid a thought come into the mind without knowing that which you bid; but to know a thought is to have the thought" (i, 130). It is after establishing the fact of Association that Mill commences to discuss language. On Association in Hartley and Mill as mediated by Stewart, see Leslie Stephen, *The English Utilitarians*, 3 vols. (New York: Putnam's, 1900), i, 152-68.

philosophical assumptions.[86] It was axiomatic for Mill that the investigation of mental phenomena should be built on the Newtonian model for the investigation of physical phenomena. The title of his book itself consciously drew attention to chemistry--a fact which J.S. Mill made clear in his preface:

> These explanations [that "it is the labour of the intellectual inquirer to analyse, as it is the labour of the chemist to reduce the compound bodies on which he operates"[87]] define and characterize the task which was proposed to himself by the author of the present treatise, and which he concisely expressed by naming his work an Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind. It is an attempt to reach the simplest elements which by their combination generate the manifold complexity of our mental states, and to assign the laws of those elements, and the elementary laws of their combination, from which laws, the subordinate ones which govern the compound states are consequences and corollaries. (ix-x)

The author of the immensely popular *History*, the administrator in the East India Company, had in his *Analysis* taken the mechanistic philosophy of mind, intimated by Hobbes and Locke and expounded by Hartley, and joined it with the material philosophy of language made popular by Tooke. Philology as a discipline became possible only when this relationship was challenged. Whereas in England the East was a matter of political and commercial interest, in Germany the East was a matter of scholarly intrigue. While Indian languages failed to impress the Utilitarians (who in turn managed to keep them in low esteem), the Germans found the East romantically attractive.[88] By 1820 James Mill had

---

[86] Recall Bentham's prior corroboration: "Of the nature of language no clear, correct, and instructive account can be given but with reference to thought" (*Works*, viii, 186).

[87] J.S. Mill's citation is from Thomas Brown's "Introductory Lectures" (unidentified; see *Analysis*, v. i, viii-ix). Brown, a Scottish metaphysician, was appointed Professor of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh in 1810; he was a disciple of Dugald Stewart, and though he was criticized by Sir Alexander Hamilton his *Lectures* were highly esteemed.

[88] Jones had translated Calidas's Sakontala; it appeared in Calcutta in 1789 and soon after in England, where it made small impression. Georg Foster translated it into German, however, and in 1791 Herder sent a copy to Goethe, whose *Faust* is indebted to it. "It is against this background of scholarly and literary achievement, reputation, and authority," Aarsleff says, "that we must understand the impact of Jones's statements on the principles of language study and the affinity of Sanskrit to other languages" (*Study of Language*, 120); see also Goodson, "Coleridge on Language": when Coleridge questions the "arbitrariness of the sign, he poses himself against Tooke's view of the 'artful contrivances of Language.' This leads in turn to his antithetical characterization of words as 'parts and germinations of the Plant,' as 'living Things' for which there exists a law of growth in an explicitly organic sense. It is within this

freed himself of the influence of his teacher, Dugald Stewart, and had set about to give a philosophy of mind suitable to his political ideals, and this philosophy needed the support of Tooke's etymologies. Aarsleff writes:

> For the study of language in England, it is an historical fact of the utmost importance that Horne Tooke was adopted by the Utilitarians. With them his reputation was secure, and language study remained philosophical rather than historical or philological much longer than on the Continent, where romanticism had found expression in a philosophic faith whose attitude toward the past fostered the new philology and provided the conditions under which it could develop into a new and independent historical discipline.[89]

Olivia Smith argues a case very different from mine: "After a long period in which the study of language was dominated by that of mind and civilization, in a particularly obnoxious combination, Tooke began to make language an autonomous study which would be analysed by its own properties and history."[90] However reverberating here the use of "obnoxious" is, and with whatever irony we read it, the judgment cannot be altogether correct. To be sure, Olivia Smith italicizes the political import of Tooke's program, but she does so at a cost. She argues that "Literariness and political radicalism were considered antithetical" (141). The argument is sustainable because whereas Blake, for example, does not obtrude, Samuel Johnson does, who said of Tooke's acquittal: "I hope they do not put the dog in the pillory for his libel; he has too much literature for that." This is proof that "literary characters are contradictory and superior to political ones." What is more, the "effect of this assumption on the *Diversions* was to justify overlooking the political content because Tooke understood language too well" (141). That Tooke in fact got language *wrong* does not seem to be part of the working assumptions. Smith avers that Stewart's critique of Tooke is a political, not a philosophical, act. Stewart "attempts to recover the essential conservatism of previous theories from the persuasive challenge of the

---

reactive process that Coleridge feels his way toward a preliminary sense of language" (54).

[89] *Study of Language*, 96; also Stephen, *English Utilitarians*: The *Diversions* was a "great authority for James Mill" (i, 141-2).

[90] Olivia Smith, in *The Politics of Language 1791-1819* (Oxford, 1984), 141.

Diversions," and his doing so is an attempt "to maintain distinctions between the vulgar and the refined, to concentrate attention on abstract rather than experiential modes of thought, and even to restrain the expectations of the multitude" (143). The only judgment more astonishing than this is the one levelled at Coleridge, who also "portrays himself according to conventional assessments of refined or philosophical thinkers. He thereby demonstrates his credentials as a thinker who, by definition, was disengaged from political concerns" (221-2)--as some critiques are apparently disengaged from both philosophy and historical facts. This is no preferential pronouncement. Such an analysis would surely have perplexed Coleridge's contemporaries, whatever their quarrels with him. They, no less than we, could have pointed to any number of passages in the *Lay Sermons* or the *Constitution of Church and State*, for example, as instances of Coleridge's intimate engagement *in* political concerns.[91]

Marilyn Butler, too, has been one to emphasize the politics of Tooke's ideas on language, though her selections from the *Diversions* are not the most politically telling ones Tooke affords.[92] James Harris, she says, saw language as representing "comprehensive and permanent ideas," and Tooke, according to Butler, saw Harris's theory as an "ideological device" (19), giving the impression that *Tooke's* notions on language were political but *not* ideological. Butler's judgments are more nuanced than Smith's, and her critique of Burke--that he is the "preeminent prose writer of the decade" (16)--is certainly correct, though one might argue differently.[93]

---

[91] This is too obvious as to require much comment, but one might recur less obliquely to the essay, "On the Principles of Political Knowledge," from *The Friend* (i; *CW*, iv, 165-8).

[92] ***Burke, Paine, Godwin, and the Revolutionary Controversy*** (Cambridge, 1984). This anthology belongs to the *Cambridge English Prose Texts* series. One might have expected to see Tooke's etymology for "just" or "right"--"Right is no other than RECT-um (Regitum), past participle of the Latin verb Regere" (*Diversions,* 304)--as the representative selection. It is perhaps these etymologies more than any others that Tooke's political views inhabit.

[93] Olivia Smith's judgment is sound--that Burke's prose is a discursive model for the 1790s by reason of its vulgar eloquence; Butler says Burke "has a range, inventiveness, wit, and personal feeling

A third attempt to politicize Tooke's linguistics at the cost of the larger theoretical and cultural context appears as the lead essay in *Ideologies of Language*.[94] In this piece of what might be called liberation philology, Tooke is said to have been "interested in freeing speakers from linguistic dogma," from "ideas propounded by philosophers, grammarians and other intellectual authorities" (17). In the course of fewer than two pages the author says that meaning is independent "of some individual speaker's use of the terms" *and* that "language is a public institution." He concludes by saying we can "reject the authoritarian and obfuscating arguments of philosophers and grammarians" (20-21) and by claiming that the *OED* is a piece of authoritarian elitism. That the lexicographers of the *OED* may have been authoritarian or elitist may be arguable, but to suggest that this invalidates their work is, at least, theoretically naïve.

It is worth noting what Stephen Prickett has shown--that

> the essential link between Tooke's political radicalism and his linguistic theorizing, apparently obvious to modern commentators, is not so much invisible to contemporaries, but actually a cause of mystification and grave suspicion--even among those who in the normal course of events might be expected to sympathize with the position so established.[95]

The question these three books raise (and which Prickett does not address) is precisely the one which bedevils criticism of the period. One might legitimately object in any of these examples to the easy formula of *The Politics of*. . . so long as one does so without de-materializing the theoretical, religious and linguistic discourses, Coleridge's especially. But the opposite is also true; stripping the material discourses of their theoretical and religious implications is equally objectionable. It is incontrovertable that Tooke's politics *mattered* in his "philology" and that Bentham took him as *more* than a "philologist"; it also the case that Maurice, for example, saw the whole Utilitarian matrix as more than

---

which no one else matches" (16).

[94] Talbot J.Taylor, "Which is to be Master?: Institutionalization of Authority in the Science of Language." *Ideologies of Language* is co-edited by Talbot and John E. Joseph (London: Routledge, 1990).

[95] "Radicalism and Linguistic Theory: Horne Tooke on Samuel Pegge," 7.

politically consequential. Coleridge's turn from radical politics was, to his mind, a political *as well* as a religious and philosophical turn, but he would warn here against the "dull and obtuse mind, that must divide in order to distinguish" or, "still worse, that distinguishes in order to divide."[96] Or to modify Wordsworth's more vivid if not more memorable phrase, we must be careful not to murder when we dissect. Critics can as easily err on one side as the other. Perhaps Maurice should be the model: he attempted to preserve Coleridge's synthesis. The point in any case is to get things right and not err with James Mill in attending merely to those things which fall in with the currents of our own thoughts.

v

The Reform Bill of 1832 was, to use Raymond Williams's phrase, a triumph for the early period of English Utilitarianism.[97] But with John Stuart Mill's concessions to Coleridge, which in the words of Leslie Stephen "scandalized the faithful" and marked the "apogee of Mill's Benthamism,"[98] Utilitarianism began to give way to less radical versions of liberal thought. It was a pattern in Wordsworth and Coleridge that was developed and modified by that remarkable group of students at Trinity, the Cambridge Apostles, who consciously aligned themselves especially with Coleridge, at least two of whom were persistently liberal in politics and three of whom were to be secondary movers in the middle part of the nineteenth century. Up until his travels on the Continent in the late 'twenties and early 'thirties John Kemble had been an ardent Benthamite, and F.D. Maurice had gone headlong into the establishment at Cambridge with an eye toward becoming a politician on the model of Horne Tooke's pupil Francis Burdett, through whom Bentham became

---

[96] *Aids to Reflection* (*CW*, ix, 33).

[97] *Culture and Society: 1780-1950* (New York: Columbia, 1958), 56.

[98] *The English Utilitarians*, ii, 377.

acquainted with Tooke's work.[99] Aside from their political liberalism, they were all men of letters--men interested in history, literature, philology, and theology. Kemble, Maurice, and Sterling for a while eventually came round to the Church, as of course did Trench, and it was from *within* the Church that they asked anew the questions of allegiance to the articles on the one hand and privilege on the other. It was from *within* that they attempted their reforms. It was *into* the Church that they carried their Coleridgean heritage. It was the beginning of an alliance in England between language and Christianity. The relationship was variously manifest and in no way a privileged one, but still a historical (if odd) fact. It both contributed to the *OED* and, after it, allowed for a return to questions of language and mind.

F.D. Maurice

It was his father's Unitarian tolerance and his older sisters' sometime Calvinism and abiding radicalism that fostered Maurice's own politics and openness, though he himself came to believe, as Coleridge had, that tolerance by itself was a species of pretentiousness.[100] But in the years prior to the passage of the Reform Bill, Maurice found he could not align himself with any political movement which required a rigorous materialism. "By his own account," Peter Allen says, Maurice "'defended Coleridge's metaphysics and Wordsworth's poetry against the Utilitarian teaching' of other Apostles, Benthamism being 'the prevalent faith' among 'the younger and cleverer undergraduates of

---

[99] Halévy, *Growth of Philosophic Radicalism*, 257.

[100] Recall that in *The Friend* (i) Coleridge said "But notwithstanding this deep conviction of our general fallibility, and the most vivid recollection of my own, I dare avow with the German philosopher, that as far as opinions, and not motives; principles, and not men, are concerned; I neither am *tolerant* nor wish to be regarded as such. According to my judgment, it is mere ostentation, or a poor trick that hypocrisy plays with the cards of nonsense, when a man makes protestation of being perfectly tolerant in respect of all principles, opinions and persuasions, those alone excepted which render the holders intolerant" (*CW*, iv, 96-7).

the day.'"[101] By 1827 Maurice, still determined to pursue legal studies, had left Cambridge for London, where, in the London Debating Society, his and Sterling's "Coleridgean views set them off from the Benthamite and Tory factions that made up most of the membership" (Allen, 75). Maurice became convinced that the target of his reforming tendencies should not be the institutions but the hearts of men, and in a "minor elaboration upon Coleridge's idea of the 'clerisy' he assigned the task of social regeneration to those who had experienced spiritual awakening. Thus he himself speaks as a prophet, one with a fresh view of the social problems that concerned him and conventional liberals" (Allen, 79). He wrote to Edward Strachey in February of 1837, "I do conceive that those who are destined by their property or birth to anything above the middle station in society, and intended to live in England, are bound to show cause why they do not put themselves in the best position for becoming what Coleridge calls the Clerisy of the land."[102] Coleridge had taught him that a materialist program brought to bear the faculty of Understanding, which could affect social circumstances, but that it failed to bring to bear Reason, which alone could apprehend divine truth (Allen, 78). For all their differences, and for all his inability really to understand the "Germano-Coleridgeans," J.S. Mill recognized with Maurice that there was more to the story than the Utilitarians were telling.[103] Maurice abandoned his legal/political ambitions and, like the hero in his novel *Eustace Conway* (1834), ascended "to that service which is perfect freedom" in the Established Church and in the side of

---

[101] Peter Allen, *The Cambridge Apostles: The Early Years* (Cambridge, 1978), 74.

[102] *The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice, Chiefly Told in his Own Letters*, ed. Frederick Maurice, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1884), i, 224; hereafter Maurice, *Life*.

[103] In the *Autobiography* Mill had designated Maurice and Sterling as "Coleridgeans" and a "very important and belligerent party to our contests" in the debating society. One needs to keep in mind what Mill said of Maurice: "I have so deep a respect for Maurice's character and purposes, as well as for his great mental gifts, that it is with some unwillingness I say anything which may seem to place him on a less high eminence than I would gladly be able to accord to him." Mill also considered Maurice superior to Coleridge "in merely intellectual power" (which says something about Mill's understanding and reading of Coleridge), but felt that because of his Anglicanism "there was more intellectual power wasted in Maurice than in any other of my contemporaries" (77, 92-3).

which he remained something of a thorn for the rest of his days.[104] Kemble wrote to Trench that "the Church will rarely have possessed a braver or a more protecting champion. He is a man of war in the panoply of intellect and will."[105]

Maurice's liberalism emerged in what must finally be called a social theology. In *The Kingdom of Christ* Maurice contended that Benthamism "came into notice when the great Rousseau experiment had been made," which itself had helped the cause of Burke, who now seemed to be be right.[106] But, said Maurice, there remained the sense that the "trial [of popular government] might have been conducted differently" (i, 196). Spain and America found themselves "in that naked revolutionised condition which seemed to make a new constitution of some kind necessary for them. These feelings Mr. Bentham met." Maurice admitted Bentham's "very acute and pains-taking intellect." Then, in a passage which sounds very close to his own experience, Maurice said:

> To young men who were ashamed of being reckoned sentimental, and who yet panted for the glorious commonwealth which the sentimental school had promised, the sight of a new society built upon logic was most consolatory; their elders could more easily appreciate, even if they were not disposed to acknowledge, the justice of Mr. Bentham's practical charge that while in their ordinary acts and discourses they admitted no other principle than that to which he referred all things, they were yet maintaining various institutions, which upon that principle could not be justified; that they were consequently carrying out the doctrine of self-interest so far as it furthered their own ends, and repudiating it just when it might inconveniently interfere with them. These were facts which could not be gainsaid; and if Mr. Bentham could have contrived that his system should seem to meddle with nothing but law and government, he would for a considerable time have retained the disciples which he had made, and even have obtained frequent accessions to their numbers. (i, 197-8)

But that was precisely the problem. After the failure in France, "men whose tendency was

---

[104] *Eustace Conway, or, The Brother and Sister,* 2 vols., ed. E. Want (1834; Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1978), ii, 902; Maurice echoes the *Prayer Book's* Collect for Peace; cf. Olive J. Brose's title: *Frederick Denison Maurice, Rebellious Conformist* (Athens: Ohio, 1971).

[105] Kemble to Trench, 1 April 1830, in Richard Chenevix Trench, *Letters and Memorials,* 2 vols., ed. M. Trench (London: Kegan Paul, 1888), i, 57; hereafter Trench, *L&M.*

[106] *The Kingdom of Christ,* 2 vols. (London: James Clark, 1959), i, 196. Maurice first published this in 1838 as *Letters to a Member of the Society of Friends.* All citations are from the 1842 edition.

to occupy themselves with the workings of their own minds, began to lose all interest in politics, and even to decry them as belonging to a merely outward region" (198). In short, Bentham had in fact meddled with more than just law and government. In Maurice's judgment poets could defend their craft only as "a kind of amusement," and religious men "were driven to ask themselves whether the doctrine of Paley and Bentham could be reconciled with that of the Sermon on the Mount" (198). A generation found itself occupied with literature and metaphysics; Benthamism, occupied with "the rationale of evidence," had nothing to say to them and

> could only sound a retreat, and endeavour, at whatever risk of theoretical or practical inconsistency, to defend the existence of its philosophy by circumscribing the application of it within very narrow limits. But even within these limits it has no safe dwelling-place. For while the desire of man for a universal polity has grown every day more strong, this desire has connected itself more and more with deep feelings and passions, has had less and less to do with the mere calculating understanding. (198-9)

Maurice then attempted to show a particular weakness of the Utilitarians--the sacrificing of family ties (a notion which had worked its way into the scheme for Pantisocracy in the question of marriage dissolution)--by comparing it to the doctrines of the St. Simonians, who held that the notion of mankind as "an aggregate of individual atoms" was a "practical delusion" (199). That a universal society could not be founded on Utilitarian or St. Simonian principles and still maintain logical consistency unless "all acknowledgment of relationship as a significant fact" were "extinguished" Maurice did not argue, and he appreciated that residual morality in the Utilitarians which forced them to notice that if all family ties were broken, the greatest good might not be served. But still he maintained

> that if a universal society is to be constructed, either upon the Utilitarian maxim, or upon the *chacun selon sa capacité* maxim of the St. Simonians, it is an indispensable preliminary that domestic feelings, associations, sympathies, all the laws by which they are upheld, all acknowledgment of relationship as a signifcant fact, should be extinguished. . . [and that] if such a society is to be built by human hands, these must be the conditions. (200)

The St. Simonians understood this, and it was "another indication of the deeper wisdom

which was at work amidst their extravagancies and contradictions." They understood that human hands could not build such a society, that there was needed a "seeing eye," a "supernatural foundation for this commonwealth, some superintendence over it." And so they assumed their own apotheosis: it became a duty for them to "assume the airs of inspired men. Upon this fraud of course followed every species of absurdity and falsehood--under the weight of these the system sank rapidly" (200).

To show by contrast the inferiority of the St. Simonians, Maurice proceeded to discuss the socialism of the Owenites, who held that a self-denying superintendent of industry may make a factory a "blessing, not a curse, to its inmates and the neighborhood" (201) and that under Owen's scheme men were to be treated as men, not animals. But from there Owen proceeded to explain that the "whole secret lay in the particular machinery" and that "such a machinery was in itself capable of producing every desirable moral result." This meant of course that men "are mere creatures of circumstances, and that by a readjustment of circumstances their condition may be completely reformed" quite apart from any "intellectual subtlety" (201-2). The Owenites, too, recognized that even if religious faith were subject to control by circumstance, then marriage could not abide "logically or practically," the existence of spiritual principles and obligations being done away with. He concluded that the "worship of circumstances is the habit of feeling into which the easy and comfortable part of mankind naturally fall" (202).[107]

The leap from factories and machinery to marriages in his critique of these three versions of social thought is emblematic of Maurice's strong and intrusive sense of *family*. But he offered his critique of Benthamism, St. Simonianism, and Owenism with

---

[107] Sanders comments aptly: "The free mind," Maurice believed, "is ready to consider all questions from many different points of view and to give careful attention and thought to the various opinions of different men. Nothing is more characteristic of Maurice's thinking and style than his desire to state impartially every side of a question, a desire which also motivated Coleridge" (*Coleridge and the Broad Church Movement*, 232).

characteristic conciliation and liberality, and the critique shows his respect for radical politics:

> No doubt every one of these schemes embodies some truth which cannot be lost. The greatest happiness of the greatest number, though it may be the most idle and insignificant of all formulas till each one of its substantives and adjectives has been translated, must yet contain a meaning which will somehow or other be realised. The phrase, *chacun selon sa capacité,* indicates a persuasion of gifts appropriated to peculiar vocations and offices which we cannot afford to part with; the idea of co-operation, on which Owen dwells, is one of wonderful depth and importance. But each of these is chiefly remarkable as the shrine of a feeling which it cannot satisfy, and of a conviction which it labours to stifle--the feeling, I mean, that a universal society is needful in man; the conviction that if there be such a society, the treatment of man as a voluntary or a spiritual being must be the characteristic distinction of it. (203)

It was a shrewd maneuver, like St. Paul at the Areopagus filling in the missing details for the Athenians. But it was not simplistic. Maurice did understand how problematic this could be to the practical statesman:

> To satisfy the cry for a power which shall not be merely legal, not merely punitive, but which shall act directly upon the human spirit, that the legal and punitive sanctions may make their appeal to the consciences of men, not the fears of brutes--you inspire a body with this power, or at least you force it into acts implying this power, which is saying continually, that it can deal with nothing internal--can take cognizance only of overt acts. (209)

He was articulating a conclusion fitful yet resolute; it accounts in part for his turn from *sola* politics to politics within the context of the Established Church:

> Still the difficulty remains: if there be no spiritual universal society--and all attempts to create one in this nineteenth century have been very abortive--the state must, at any hazard of inconsistency, in despite of every danger to individual liberty, notwithstanding the strong and increasing feeling of its incompetency, assume the appearance, and perform the duties of one.[108]

Maurice made his entry into social thought by a theoretical reflection on the institution of the family, which materialist versions of social reform, according to him, could neither understand nor account for. And talk about the family began with talk about the Trinity. Man is a social being; the "indications of a spiritual constitution" for national

---

[108] 209; on Maurice's turn from politics to theology, see also Cleve Want, "Frederick Denison Maurice and Eustace Conway," *Anglican Theological Review* 54:4 (1972), 330-342, esp. 339.

communities and local communities derive from the *fact* of the human family--"the family state is the *natural* one for man" (231)--which itself derives from the divine family. Nations, like families, possess "some of the characteristics of a spiritual constitution" (235). The Abrahamic covenant had been established with a family (239). The acts of Christ expanded the Covenant to all of humanity and promised an eschatological love: "there was a still more wonderful union between Him and His Father, to the knowledge of which they might through this union attain, and that a Spirit would come to dwell with them and to testify of Him and of the Father" (253). Maurice's "conversionist" theology, as H. Richard Niebuhr called it,[109] made good on the metaphor of his own title: Christ is king of a kingdom,

> a kingdom which is maintaining itself against an oppressing tyranny, whereof the ultimate law is brute force of unalloyed selfishness; a kingdom which must prevail because it rests upon a *name* which expresses the perfect Love, the ineffable Unity, the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. (260)

Maurice could not have constructed a social theology on his father's Unitarian beliefs. The

> truth of the Divine Unity, this awful, everlasting primary truth, had been turned by the (so called) Unitarians into a mere notion or dogma, a notion or dogma actually deduced from material considerations and therefore self-contradictory; a notion purely negative, which said to Polytheists, *"You ought not to worship many gods,"* without declaring to them the one God whom they ought to worship; a notion not leading to the adoration of a Living Being, but to a superstitious reverence for the number one, a notion therefore which never should be the symbol of a human fellowship. (282)

While Maurice's theology was in fact grounded on patristics, the patristic influence regarding the Trinity was rather less than might be expected.[110] Where did this Trinitarianism come from? It is not enough to say that Maurice, *qua* Anglican, embraced the first of the thirty-nine articles. (His relation to the articles was an anxious one.) He did not simply accept that there is "but one living and true God" and that in the "unity of this

---

[109] *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper, 1951), 224.

[110] On the patristic influence, see A.M. Allchin, "F.D. Maurice as Theologian," *Theology* 76:640 (1973), 513-525.

Godhead there be three Persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost," as the article says. Maurice did not particularly care for propositional theology, for doctrine abstracted into formulas. As Anthony Harding rightly points out, "Maurice, though a subtle reasoner in his own sphere, disliked being seen as a thinker or an intellectual. He wished to be thought of as a practical man."[111] It is important to know exactly what the Trinity meant to Maurice and where it came from.

The source of Maurice's Trinitarian emphasis was Coleridge. Even as Coleridge needed the Trinity to save imagination--indeed, needed it to supplement the "'I am' schematisms"[112] in the context of the "many"--so Maurice needed the Trinity to save his socialism. Like Coleridge, Maurice saw the Trinity as something greater than a doctrine, agreeable more or less. He saw it as a powerful model for all theological and social thought and action, and he shared with Coleridge the conviction "that no theoretical model of the human community could replace that of the family" (Harding, 107), which itself for Maurice was a Trinitarian construct. But more: even as for Coleridge the Trinity was a living presence of the divine in the world--an Alterity in Ipseity--so for Maurice the Trinity was more than a modal abstraction: the structure of the Divine Family was a real presence in human relations. Indeed, it was the ground for asserting that man, made in the image of God, is a social creature. Again, not an analogous, but a real, an ontic, participatory, Human-Divine relation: "human relationships are not artificial types of something divine, but are actually the means and the only means, through which man ascends to any knowledge of the divine."[113] Maurice was in fact an early social Trinitarian. Of the

---

[111] *Coleridge and the Inspired Word* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queens, 1985), 111.

[112] Thomas McFarland, *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition* (Oxford, 1969), 203.

[113] 245; Niebuhr's assessment is concise and accurate: "Men, Maurice understood, were social by nature; they had no existence save as sons, brothers, members of community. This conviction united him with the socialists. But the community in which men were created was not merely human; it could not be truly human if it were not more--the community of men with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In Maurice's understanding of the 'spiritual constitution' of mankind, all the intricate interrelations of love in the

"Trinity in Unity" he said, "Each consciousness that we have discovered in man, each fact of Revelation that has answered to it, has been a step in the discovery and demonstration of this truth."[114] Torben Christensen, rightly beginning his study on Maurice with the Trinity, says

> In contrast to contemporary theology which was based, according to Maurice, on the religious man's experiences and notions about God, he stated the principles for true theology in the following way: "My desire is to ground all theology upon the Name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; not to begin from ourselves and our sins; not to measure the straight line by the crooked one."[115]

The Trinitarian emphasis here is as strong as the anti-Calvinist one. Even as Coleridge had taken the Trinity as the ground, in McFarland's idiom, "of all reticulative philosophy" (229), so Maurice took the social image of the Trinity as the ground for all Christian social thought. Maurice's sincerity, his conviction of a *real*, social relationship may perhaps be measured by the dedication of his his *Lectures on Social Morality* to young men

> for whose well doing, domestic, national, human, the lecturer has the deepest responsibility, through whom he has learnt to feel for all that are engaged in the conflicts of their age, who have taught him how poor, helpless, and useless the life of a father on earth would be if there were not a father in heaven.[116]

The object of his life, Maurice said, had been to show the truth "not in notions but in a Person."[117] Likewise, Coleridge said "the human race not by a bold metaphor, but in

---

Godhead, of the Father's love of men and of Christ's, of the human and divine natures of the Son, of the creating and redeeming Word, of man's love of neighbor in God and of God in the neighbor, of family, nation, and church, have their place" (*Christ and Culture,* 221). Niebuhr assigns to Maurice a high honor: he is the last theologian in his, Niebuhr's, discussion of Christ "The Transformer of Culture" model. Niebuhr emphasizes Maurice's hatred of selfishness, individualism, and arrogance; he also notes Maruice's Johannine eschatology: eternity is "the dimension of the divine working, not the negation of time" (227).

[114] *Theological Essays,* ed. Canon Edward F. Carpenter (1853; London: James Clarke, 1957), 284. Carpenter's comment in his introduction is apt: Maurice's "intense hold on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, pointing to the truth that co-operation not competition was the basic law of creative life[,] led him to take the lead in what was called 'The Christian Social Movement,' and to protest bitterly against the current economic gospel of *laissez faire*, which, so he maintained, expected 'universal selfishness to do the work of universal love'" (8).

[115] *The Divine Order: A Study in F.D. Maurice's Theology* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973), 27. Christensen's first section is titled: "The Triune God and the Divine Order"; his first chapter: "The Triune God and the Creation of the Divine Order"; his first subtitle: "God as the Triune God."

[116] London (1869), v.

[117] Maurice, *Life*, ii, 241.

sublime reality, approach to and might become, one body whose Head is Christ (the Logos)."[118] The body of this "Person," this belief in a "sublime *reality*," became the basis for a view of language vehemently challenging the tradition of the arbitrary.

By no later than 1810 Coleridge had become a strong Trinitarian. "The day before his death," Maurice wrote to Trench in 1834, "Coleridge spoke to Green of the Trinity, entering into it as one who had indeed fellowship in the mystery, and ending with, 'Remember, that is the foundation of all my philosophy'" (Trench, *L&M*, i, 164). What for him was originally a solution to the problem of the One and the Many became in the end an article of religious conviction: "No Trinity, no God--is a matter of natural Religion as well as of Christianity, of profound Philosophy no less than of Faith."[119] Whether Coleridge on the Trinity owed more to philosophy than dogma is not of major importance unless one intends to argue that his *magnum opus* would have made a point to make the distinction problematic. On the one hand Coleridge could lecture on "Our Lord as Philosopher" (1819), and on the other he came to believe that the *I am* "moved out of the sphere of philosophy into the sphere of religion."[120] Furthermore, he had implied in the theses for his Dynamic Philosophy that "philosophy would pass into religion, and religion become inclusive of philosophy. We begin with the I KNOW MYSELF, in order to end with the absolute I AM. We proceed from the SELF, in order to lose and find all self in GOD" (*CW*, vii, 283). Again, the issue of whether this is a purely a philosophical trinity is

---

[118] *Unpublished Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs, 2 vols. (London: Constable, 1932), i, 357-8.

[119] *CL*, iii. 283-4 (to Poole, 28 Jan. 1810), cited in McFarland (242), who comments: "God had to be Christ in order to be God."

[120] McFarland, 202; it needs keeping in mind, however, especially for those who think Coleridge did little more than establish a philosophical Trinity, that he did not like mere modality, that he objected to *persona* in Trinitarian thought. See *CW*, v, 174. But it should also be called to mind what Raimonda Modiano has identified as the distinctive Schellingean influence, which "consists in his [Coleridge's] addition of a fourth element to the traditional triad" (189). It has been Modiano's particular contribution to show that Coleridge did in fact work very hard, perhaps too hard, at a philosophical synthesis for his fundamentally Trinitarian beliefs. See *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature* (Tallahassee: Florida State UP, 1985), 186-206.

beyond the scope of my study, but one can insist the specific influence Maurice felt was anything but merely philosophical, was in fact both social and moral. For Coleridge there was

> No I without a Thou, no Thou without a Law from Him, to whom I and Thou stand in the same relation. Distinct Self-knowledge begins with the Sense of Duty to our neighbor: and Duty felt to, and claimed from, my Equal supposes and implies the Right of a Third, superior to both because imposing it on both.[121]

Coleridge's grounding of theory in actual social morality inhabited his best followers and served as the ground to ideas of social reform. Coleridge held that "religion and morals cannot be disjoined without the destruction of both."[122] He held that "Religion must have been the Basis of Morality, and Morality of Sciential insight. . . . [and said] This is the corner-stone of my system, ethical, metaphysical, and theological--the priority, namely, of the Conscience to the Consciousness in Man."[123] To put it another way, this pressing out of moral responsibility in an I-Thou ("man is truly altered by the co-existence of other men; his faculties cannot be developed in himself alone, and only by himself"[124]), this insistence that man is, first and above all, a moral being, is an important part of the base on which Coleridge's thought is founded. What was true for Maruice was hardly less true for the other Apostles: Coleridge's ghost had a moral, material agenda.

The Kingdom of Christ was first published in 1838. In the dedicatory letter to Derwent Coleridge for the second edition (1842), Maurice acknowledged his and his generation's debt to S.T. Coleridge:

The power of perceiving that by the very law of the Reason the knowledge of God

---

[121] From Notebook 26 in James D. Boulger, *Coleridge as Religious Thinker* (New Haven, 1961), Appendix 1, 227.

[122] The passage appears in *The Friend* (i). For context, and to illustrate: "sciences may be estranged from philosophy, the practical from the speculative, and one of the two at least may remain. Music may be divided from poetry, and both may continue to exist, though with diminished influence. But religion and morals cannot be disjoined without the destruction of both" (*CW*, iv, 444).

[123] Notebook 26 in Boulger, 227.

[124] *Unpublished Letters*, i, 357-8.

> must be *given* to it; that the moment it attempts to create its Maker, it denies itself; the conviction that the most opposite kind of Unity to that which Unitarianism dreams of is necessary, if the demands of the reason are to be satisfied--I must acknowledge, that I received from him. . . . I cannot help feeling, while I read the profound, and, to a theological student invaluable, hints respecting the doctrine of the Trinity, which occur in Mr. Coleridge's writings: "This is not enough. If the reason be, as he said it was, expressly the human faculty, belonging to rich and poor alike--not merely those personal truths which belong to each individual's state and condition, but this highest truth, which he presents to us as demanding the highest efforts of thought and abstraction, must belong to the very humblest man; must be a sacred part of his inheritance; must in some way or other be capable of being presented to him." (i, 15-16)

He continues:

> The hope that diverse sides of thought may some day be brought into reconciliation, may begin to disconnect itself with the dreary vision of a comprehensive System, from which all life is excluded, if the central Unity be that of the living Being.[125]

Maurice had been fated, he said, to be caught between the unchristian socialists and the unsocial Christians. But what he had accomplished, in whatever relation to the Broad Church movement one chooses to place him, was a measured return. Maurice is the emblem of what had happened to the more nuanced churchman of the century, the emblem of an England both ready and--more importantly--equipped to think the kinds of thoughts being thought beyond the boundaries of its own damp islands. This Coleridge had made possible. It was not enough for Maurice to attempt a synthesis of Christianity and socialism. He needed nothing less than Coleridge's life-long quest for the Unity in Reason, the ultimate expression of which was the Trinity--the Alterity in Ipseity.

That Maurice should acknowledge his debt to Coleridge on a theological matter, given his thorough grounding in patristics and especially in light of the brand of theology

---

[125] 16; Maurice's long tribute contains more than just an acknowledgment of his debt to Coleridge's Trinitarian thought. It mentions a "thousand indications of the influence" Coleridge had "over the mind of this generation" (4), drawing attention to the poetry, *The Friend*, the *Biographia Literaria*, the *Aids to Reflection*, the *Lay Sermons*, and *The Statesman's Manual*, the "little book upon Church and State" (12) and especially that ultimate quest, "that harmony which God has created, and of which He is Himself the centre," all of which comprise the "leading thoughts which in this book I have been trying to express" (17). Conspicuously absent are Coleridge's "Letters on the Inspiration of the Scriptures," though Maurice could not have objected to them.

being done in Oxford, is testament to the persistent influence of Coleridge on the secondary movers of the nineteenth century. But the influence is more subtle still. What Newman and Maurice shared besides a patristical intellectual heritage was something broader--so much broader, in fact, that their "tradition"--Maurice's at the least--cannot be said to be historically Christian so much as--*Coleridgean*. What both men did was transplant one tradition into another--transplant, that is to say, their historical sense of Christian theology into a specifically Coleridgean mentality, a specifically Coleridgean philosophy. This has been intimated with characteristic acuity by Stephen Prickett in an essay investigating Newman's *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845) and Maurice's singular critique of it.

> Maurice's criticism of Newman takes its weight not so much from the actual context of the debate, important as that was, but from the sense both have of working within a *common tradition* of language and feeling that was accustomed to thinking of "ideas" as organic, active, and creative. The apparent shadow-boxing of Maurice's distinction [of "idea" as organic, not essential] is concerned specifically with the difference between the empiricist mechanical use of the word "idea" and its fundamentally opposed use by the Romantic poets in terms of creativity. Both accept a common tradition, which saw words not as mere "things" but as "living powers, by which the things of most importance to mankind are actuated, combined, and humanized": the literary and linguistic tradition, in short, of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.[126]

Both Newman and Maurice saw that Coleridge had not only greatly complicated and enriched any discussion of literature, but that he had changed the rules of religious thought by pushing reflection on language to the fore. Coleridge had made it possible to play language games without giving up what Leibniz called sufficient reason, without giving up the real presence of real meaning in the *logos*--the eternal repetition, albeit in finite minds, of the infinite I Am. Prickett notes that what Maurice learned above all from Coleridge was a

> sense of language as a living creative *poetic* medium whose words and ideas are not defined in advance, but are forged, tempered, and hardened into meaning by the

---

[126] "Coleridge, Newman, and F.D. Maurice," *Theology*, 76:637 (1973), 340-349; 344.

> literature from which they are inseparable--and by the needs of the society of which that literature is both product and creator. This is what one critic has called the "fiduciary" tradition of language.[127] We take it on trust, Coleridge believed, because we cannot stand outside it: it is the vehicle of our very consciousness and imagination. It is the vehicle of the activity by which our minds develop. (347)

Prickett concludes that the common assumptions Newman and Maurice shared were "as much literary as theological--a background that enables them to discuss questions of 'development' within the same, largely implicit, framework of ideas" (347-8), which is no small matter, given Maurice's contempt for all the Oxonians recurring to Rome at the time. But that two men from two committedly different traditions could talk at all was testament to the intellectual framework Coleridge provided. Newman and Maurice shared with Coleridge not a set of ideas so much as a method of thought. Coleridge had, in short, rationalized romantic truth. There could be both ground and growth, as the Catholic Newman and the Anglican Maurice variously argued.[128]

In Contrast: John Sterling and J.C. Hare

What distinguished Maurice and Trench from the many others whom Coleridge influenced was the extent to which they carried his quest for unity. The cast of mind Coleridge forged was a mold filled by lesser and different men. John Sterling, J.C. Hare, J.H. Green, and T.H. Green were four Coleridgeans the greatest of whom--an attenuated

---

[127] Prickett is referring to John Coulson, *Newman and the Common Tradition* (1970), ch. 1.

[128] I do not mean to gloss over the very important differences that existed in this triad. Newman felt that Coleridge had contributed to a spiritual awakening, that he had watered the arid religious and literary landscape of the previous century, but Newman also did not hesitate to say that Coleridge "indulged in a liberty of speculation, which no Christian can tolerate, and advocated conclusions which were often heathen rather than Christian." Even so, Coleridge did in fact install "a higher philosophy into inquiring minds, than they had hitherto been accustomed to accept. In this way he made trial of his age, and succeeded in interesting its genius in the cause of Catholic truth." Newman's emphasis is not on Coleridge's conclusions so much as on his method or rather habit of mind--his "inquiring." See Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, ed. David J. DeLaura (New York: Norton, 1968), 84; see also Basil Willey, *Nineteenth Century Studies* (1949; New York: Harper, 1966), 2-3, and Sanders, *Coleridge and the Broad Church Movement*, 31.

Coleridgean at best--Geoffrey Hill has situated among his lords of limit.[129] Sterling's early demise helps in some ways to determine his place in the story, which was mostly as a red flag. The High Churchman and the Evangelicals could unite against such common enemies as Sterling, who, it would seem by either rendering, died young for the sake of either cause, sparing as both did no opportunity to point out that the name John Sterling could be uttered in the same breath as Maurice and Trench on the one hand and Blanco White and David Friedrich Strauss on the other. Sterling had been corresponding with Emerson toward the end of his life, complaining that Carlyle was the "only man who sees and lives in the idea of a God not exclusively Christian,"[130] and Carlyle's decision to turn the custody of Sterling's papers completely over to J.C. Hare was an act of disguised blessing, leading to his, Carlyle's, attempt to set the record straight in his own *Life of John Sterling* (1851). It was between such poles that Sterling's short life ran. In 1828 he wrote to Trench that the

> continental philosophy of the eighteenth century undervalued Christianity because it

---

[129] I do not propose to discuss either of the Greens here, though J.H. can be situated in the pre-Barfield tradition as such. He is the author of *Spiritual Philosophy founded on the teachings of the late Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (London and Cambridge: Macmillan, 1865) and was to Coleridge what Dugald Stewart was to Thomas Reid. He tried after Coleridge's death to interest Faraday in Coleridge's philosophy but seems to have been unsuccessful, though some of Faraday's opinions on matter appear quite Coleridgean (see *What Coleridge Thought*, 244, n. 17). T.H. Green in particular cannot be said to have been a confirmed Coleridgean, though it is true that his "religious teaching derived from Coleridge through Maurice." See Melvin Richter, *The Politics of Conscience: T.H. Green and His Age* (London: Weidenfeld, 1964), 49. T.H. Green's colossal influence is incontrovertable--if, that is, A.C. Bradley's comment is at all exemplary: Green, he said, had saved his soul (Richter, 14; also, "Between 1880 and 1914, few, if any, other philosophers exerted a greater influence upon British thought and public policy than did T.H. Green," 13). Hill's complaint, harsh and exacting, is that Green's "compound of optimism and humanism" became in him a "confused thinness analogous to, though not identical with, the superficiality of secular evangelism, from Mill to J.M. Keynes, which encouraged what the latter called 'the civilising arts of life' while largely disregarding their stubborn textures." See "'Perplexed Persistence': the Exemplary Failure of T.H. Green" in *The Lords of Limit* (Oxford, 1984), 104-120; 106-7. Hill's diction invites another version of the "thinness," namely, Wordsworth's salvific claims for poetry in the 1802 *Preface*. And the "stubborn textures" of Coleridge's answer obtrude: chapter seventeen of the *Biographia* is nothing less than a complete change of subject.

[130] Sterling to Emerson, 7 October 1843, in *A Correspondence between John Sterling and Ralph Waldo Emerson, with a Sketch of Sterling's Life*, ed. E.W. Emerson (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1897), 71; hereafter, *Correspondence*. Also Allen, 190.

> looked at all religions with equal contempt. The continental philosophy of the nineteenth undervalues it because it looks at all with equal respect, and is as far in the one case as in the other from comprehending rightly the wants of the individual mind.

The implicit influence of Coleridge here Sterling makes explicit immediately following:

> We must do more than clearly understand in what way the various religions have resolved such great problems as those of free-will and necessity (for instance); we must also do it for ourselves. We must live not only for the past, but also for the present. And herein is the great merit of Coleridge. (Trench, *L&M*, 16)

Earlier in 1828 Sterling had met Wordsworth and, writing to Trench on the occasion of having done so, said "Coleridge is, I think, the greater man" (9). By 1832 Sterling was still considering taking orders and still under the sway of Coleridge: "I also feel that I owe the deepest gratitude to Coleridge," he wrote to Trench. "I have read the 'Aids to Reflection' again and again, and with ever new advantage," in contrast to the *Sermons, Lectures, and Discourses* of Edward Irving, whose "polemical violence" Sterling still found repulsive but whom Trench admired (119). The *Aids to Reflection* had gone a long way to advance Coleridge's fusion of intellectual and moral responsibilities. In it he asked, on the one hand, "if you are not a thinking man, to what purpose are you a man at all?" and, on the other, has the book "removed any obstacle to a lively conviction of your responsibility as a moral agent?" (*CW*, ix, 9, 3). The effect on Sterling can be measured by his intimating his own version of the clerisy in an 1834 letter to Blakesley: "For immense as is the evil that exists I am daily more and more convinced that by God's blessing immense good is possible if even a very few energetic men would seriously take in hand to strengthen their own faith and that of those around them." The obligation Sterling felt is by his own disclosure a traceable thing:

> It seems to me that the having known him [Maurice] and Coleridge and some others and read their books and had the thoughts presented to us in various ways which have been floating for a few years in the circles we both of us are familiar with--adds prodigiously to the seriousness of our responsibility in times of perturbation

and destruction like these. [131]

But Sterling was impressionable in ways that Maurice and Trench were not. By 1835 he had met Carlyle and by 1839, seven years before George Eliot's translation appeared, he had read Strauss's *Leben Jesu*, having already been for some time an admirer of Schleiermacher. He had admitted that Maurice's *Kingdom of Christ* was possessed of a "nobleness of feeling and dialectic force" but that as an "answer to to the Germans" it was "quite inadequate."[132] Even so, while Hare regretted Sterling's interest in German criticism, Maurice was far more ecumenical on this score. Coleridge's "Letters on the Inspiration of the Scriptures" (later *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*), which Sterling had read in manuscript and copied for his own use, had also affected Maurice, who answered, upon being asked once whether the Bible should be read in the same manner as Thucydides and Aeschylus: "I agree with those authors who say, (none have said it so much as the Germans), that a student who does not humble himself to his author, who does not sit at his feet, who does not wish to learn of him, is good for nothing."[133]

Hare was the Classics professor at Trinity during the years Kemble, Maurice, and Trench assumed their apostleship there; his and his brother's modest *Guesses at Truth,* first

---

[131] Sterling to Blakesley, 16 May 1834, Blakesley MSS (papers of J.W. Blakesley, owned by Mrs. C.G. Chenvix-Trench), cited in Allen, 170.

[132] William Coningham, ed., *Sterling's Letters to Coningham,* 3rd ed. (London and Bath: Simpkin, 1872), 28; cited in Harding, 111. In December of 1841 Sterling wrote to Emerson, "Incomparably our most hopeful phenomenon is the acceptance of Carlyle's writings. But how remarkable it is that the critical and historical difficulties of the Bible were pointed out by clear-sighted English writers more than a century ago, and thence passed through Voltaire into the whole mind of Continental Euorpe, and yet that in this country both the facts and the books about them remain utterly unknown except to a few recluses! The overthrow of our dead Biblical Dogmatism must, however, be preparing, and may be nearer than appears. The great curse is the wretched and seemingly hopeless mechanical pedantry of our Monastic Colleges at Oxford and Cambridge" (*Correspondence,* 47).

[133] See Harding, 109-12; Trench had a more reserved and reticent attitude toward the Germans but wrote to J.C. Hare in 1836 "I am glad to hear that Strauss is not such the mighty monster, and that he will not swallow up church and steeple at a single gulp; though it struck me that the book was not to be set down in such a summary manner as the British Magazine seemed inclined to do it in" (Trench, *L&M*, i, 217-18).

published anonymously in 1826, was a species of perhaps necessary guesswork. It bore witness to an opening of the English mind after the pattern of Coleridge and Wordsworth. And it was indebted to the cast of Coleridge's poetic faith

> that every work of genius is at once an organic whole in itself, and the part and member of a living, organic universe, of that poetical world in which the spirit of man manifests itself by successive avatars. These two main ideas which have been brought to light and unfolded by the philosphical criticism of Germany since the days of Winckelmann and Lessing, he united with that moral, political, and practical discernment, which are the highest endowments of the English mind, and which give our great writers a dignity almost unparalleled elsewhere, from their ever-wakeful consciousness that man is a moral, as well as a sentient and percipient and thinking and knowing being, and that his relations as a moral being are of all the most momentous and the highest. . . . Above all, for understanding Shakspeare [sic], Coleridge had the two powers, which are scarcely less mighty in our intellectual than in our moral and spiritual life, Faith and Love,--a boundless faith in Shakspeare's [sic] truth, and a love for him, akin to that with which philosophers study the works of Nature.[134]

While both Sterling and Hare had been profoundly influenced by Coleridge--by what Sanders (perhaps unhappily) called his "general scholarship" and (better) his "book-mindedness" (59)--neither can be said to have preserved Coleridge's habit of mind the way Maurice and Newman had. Hare had tried to extend Coleridge's moral emphases, but had done so along the narrow lines of scrupulous adherence to biblical "history" as it was conceived of and fought for in the Established Church. Sterling's failure was of a different sort. He never published, as he had once hoped to, a work on the Old Testament because there was too much in it he could not accept. Coleridge had suggested to him that

---

[134] *Guesses at Truth,* 191; citations are from the 1848 edition (London: Macmillan, 1874). Hare also said (anticipating Trench) a "man should love and venerate his native language, as the first of his benefactors, as the awakener and stirrer of all his thoughts. . . . He who thus thinks of his native language will never touch it without reverence. Yet this reverence will not withhold, but rather encourage him to do what he can to purify and improve it. Of this duty no Englishman in our times has shewn himself so well aware as Coleridge: which of itself is a proof that he possest some of the most important elements of the philosophical mind" (235). In his memoir E.H. Plumptre says that for the theological historian Hare's name "will probably be chiefly conspicuous as a connecting link between the teaching of Coleridge and that which has since his death attracted notices as identified in popular language with the school of 'Broad Church' theologians,--as one who contributed by personal influence and example, as well as by direct teaching, to foster the study of that German philosophy and divinity which seems to many so fraught with evil" (*Guesses,* liii).

Christianity could be appropriated to the higher demands of the mind, and though in fact he told Hare as late as 1836 that "his education, in the fullest sense, was owing to Coleridge" (Harding, 119), his sentiments lay ultimately more with Shelley than with Coleridge, and

> Shelley had been prevented, by his very English inability to grasp the philosophical and historical bases of Christian belief, from proceeding beyond an Enlightenment scepticism about the claim of Christianity to represent the sublimest truth about the human condition and had therefore wasted his genius in nothing more than "mad revolt . . . against nature and necessity, no less than laws and men." What the world desperately needed, Sterling had come to feel, was undoubtedly a Christian Shelley.[135]

Maurice's estimation of Shelley goes some distance in showing the difference between his mind and Sterling's: the nation, a young Maurice said, had been taught to think that "Shelley was vitiated by one fundamental error . . . an error which proved him to be both a fool and a villain--the want of belief in religion."[136] But Maurice pushed the matter: "Wherefore then should it be said that an atheist is necessarily a bad man? He is one in whom the faculty, or part of our nature whereby we see and embrace the Divine idea, is still lying undeveloped" (67). Maurice held that if Shelley "had done nothing more than thus to oppose the philosophy of circumstances, he would have fulfilled the highest duty incumbent upon man by proclaiming to his brethren that they are masters of their own destinies" (74). But the "utmost that can be justly and positively asserted against Shelley's religious opinions is that he was not a Christian." In fact,

> Shelley was not an atheist; at all events, not in the sense in which that word is commonly understood. He was, in spirit and habit of feeling, the most strongly opposed of all men to that philosophy, if philosophy it may be called, which spends itself among physical causes, and can find satisfaction in mere phenomena. He uniformly referred, for the reason and the truth of things, to invisible principles within us or without, of which natural appearances are merely the clothing and the shadow. (68)

---

[135] Harding, 135-6; for this discussion on Sterling I am indebted to Allen's "The Sterling Club" in *The Cambridge Apostles* and Harding's (perhaps best) chapter in *Coleridge and the Inspired Word*, "John Sterling."

[136] *Sketches of Contemporary Authors, 1828*, ed. A.J. Hartley (Archon, 1970), 66; Maurice's piece, "Sketches of Contemporary Authors. No. viii.--Percy Bysshe Shelley," appeared in the *Athenaeum* 13 (7 March 1828).

In short, Shelley's proclaimed atheism was no real stumbling block to a man working within an organic critical theory derived from Coleridge. Maurice's essay was, in fact, spun out of a Coleridgean tenet that poetry and a sense of moral duty are inseparable. Shelley's being regarded as debarred of "exerting a good moral influence"(66) Maurice held to be absurd. Shelley seemed "always to be carried along by the whirlwind of a strong conviction that his poetry ought to be made the instrument of moral good, which he evidently had as much at heart as any, the greatest of reformers" (71). Moreover, the "great moral peculiarity of his writings is his constant inculcation of man's capacity for a higher condition than the present" (74), and the

> instruments by which Shelley advanced these high moral objects were a magnificent imagination, a fairy-like fancy, a powerful intellect, a delicacy and range of perfection which were scarcely ever equalled, and a faculty of expression which, we have no hesitation in saying, has been in our day quite unrivalled. (75)

The youthful ebullience is forgivable; it remains typical of what was always best in Maurice: his enthusiastic welcome to and synthesis of all views which could be seen as ushering in the Kingdom.

Both Hare and Sterling admired the literary faith of Coleridge, but neither was able to see, as Maurice had, both the ground and the growth. They were, in short, Representative Victorians, whereas Maurice and Newman were stubbornly Romantic.[137]

John Kemble

John Mitchell Kemble's greatest claim on our attention is, doubtless, philological, and his interest in language began, doubtless, when he was sent to Clapham, where he

---

[137] "For truth I hold not to be that which every man troweth, but to be that which lies at the bottom of all men's trowings, that in which these trowings have their only meeting-point" (Maurice, *Life*, ii, 316). It bears keeping in mind that Maurice felt no threat from Darwin. In fact he "was never tired of quoting the spirit of Mr. Darwin's investigations as a lesson for Churchmen" (*ibid.*, 609).

studied under the lexicographer and disciple of Horne Tooke, Charles Richardson.[138] But Kemble, too, belonged to the chiefly Coleridgean Apostles at Trinity, Cambridge. Kemble, according to Trench, was "the only one who upheld for a long space of time the most degrading system of philosophy that ever was framed, without having his mind or heart impoverished or worsened by it,"[139] and was described by his sister as "neither tory nor whig, but a radical, utilitarian, and adorer of Bentham, a worshipper of Mill, an advocate for vote by ballot, an oppponent of hereditary aristocracy, the church establishment" (Dickins, 5). But Kemble wrote Trench from Germany in 1834 to say "I have cut politics, and stick to Teutonics" (Trench, *L&M*, 163). In a letter as early as 1829, and in a characteristically abrupt declaration of purpose, Kemble told W.B. Donne (another Cambridge Apostle) his own duty henceforth was

> to lend my hand to the great work of regenerating England, not by Political Institutions! not by extrinsic and conventional forms! By a higher and holier work, by breathing into her the vigorous feeling of a Poet, and a Religious man. . . . This task not I alone must lay before me. To you, to Trench and Sterling, to Maurice, to all that band of surpassing men is the labour confided, and the commandment given. It is the law of your being: you cannot, must not escape from it. In God's name then on. . . ." (Allen, 100)

Here, too, the ebullience is forgivable. But this passage goes some distance in representing if not the very opinion the Apostles had of themselves then at least a hint of the effect they had on their generation. By the time Kemble returned from Germany, where he had spent a great deal of time reading Kant and metaphysics, and a very short time courting and marrying the daughter of a Göttingen professor of philosophy, and which country William Donne called his "spiritual cradle,"[140] Kemble's conversion from Benthamism was

---

[138] Bruce Dickins, *Two Kembles: John and Henry* (1894; Cambridge, 1974); "Richardson is said to have employed the more intelligent of his boys on the dictionary" (4).

[139] Trench to Donne, 18 October 1829; Trench, *L&M*, i, 37.

[140] William Donne to Trench, undated but endorsed "December 1829; Trench, *L&M*, 40; sometime around 1850, after a good portion of his translations were published, Kemble went to Hanover where he found the "Leibniz correspondence from which he drew a great part of the material printed in *State Papers and Correspondence illustrative of the . . . state of Europe from the Revolution to the Accession of the*

complete. A younger and more moderate Sterling wrote of him, "he is a brand plucked from the burning" (Allen, 99). Back in England, Kemble assumed editorship of the *British and Foreign Review,* in which he began to advance his commitment to reform through education. He had seen and experienced the scholarship of Germany; the "depth of the knowledge" of the students he found there was "something he could hardly have conceived"; they studied "everything, and everything well" (Dickins, 7). He, too, held the strong Coleridgean belief in the link between intellect and moral duty. His sense of the clerisy had a distinctly German cast: "Education must be taken out of the hands of the parsons, till the parsons are educated for their task of educating others. The *clerisy* of the land must no longer be the parsonry of the land."[141]

Though Kemble floundered about for a steady vocation his whole life, his return from the Continent after having taken a diploma from the Royal Society of Antiquities at Copenhagen ("one of the highest marks of distinction that could have been conferred upon him")[142] did allow him to fullfill his early promise, proving him in the end to be one of the great participants in the development of philology in England.

However Utilitarianism fell out with those who did not want to be robbed of God or poetry--who, in Leslie Stephen's idiom felt that "thought, not fact, must be the ultimate reality" (380)--it nonetheless proved to be profoundly important to small group of Cambridge men who, though they rejected it, returned to the establishment with a more nuanced sense of both social structures and intellectual labor. Trench, Sterling, Tennyson, and Kemble had all been involved in the aborted revolutionary plot of the Spanish exiles under General Torrijos in 1830-31. Each seems to have had a period of dissatisfaction

---

House of Hanover (1857)" (Dickens, 16-7).

[141] Cited in Allen, 164; italics Kemble's.

[142] R.J. Tennant, also an Apostle, to Tennyson, October 1834, cited in Allen, 163.

with England and a fascination for what travelling could teach them.[143] Although they became more wary of German thought, they were nonetheless curious enough to be fascinated by such writers as Strauss[144] and smart enough not to be associated with--indeed, ennobled in their being smeared by--the arch-conservatism of the *Record.* What evolved during the years between the 1780 and the proposal for a New English Dictionary founded on historical principles--that is to say, what emerged when the dust settled from the French, the Industrial, the Poetic, and the Religious Revolutions that may be said to have occurred--was a kind of synthesis of Christian socialism on the one hand and Continental Scholarship on the other. It was not without its opponents, but still it was a less provincial, less incestuous England, which fostered a new kind of philological ("die Erkenntnis des Erkennten"[145]) undertaking. Maurice, Kemble, and Trench were largely responsible for it.

In the end Tooke's reign came to a rather abrupt halt, beginning sometime around 1830 with the importation of the new philology into England in Benjamin Thorpe's translation of Rask's *Grammar of the Anglo-Saxon Tongue* and Grundtvig's *Bibliotheca Anglo-Saxonica,* a prospectus for major Anglo-Saxon texts. Thorpe (1782-1870) was, in fact, England's first real philologist. But the success of the new philology must in large

---

[143] William Donne seems to have been more ambivalent on this. He wrote to Trench of his, Donne's, "satisfaction" at Kemble's going to Germany, affirming "we must study in Greece and in Germany with Plato and Kant, because none of our home prophets have set themselves to a oneness of development and indagation in these walks of the higher metaphysics," but neither would Donne give up the "absurdity of looking abroad in home-matters" (Trench, *L&M*, i, 41-2). On Kemble's going to Germany, Trench had previously written to Donne "I rejoice at it" (37). Trench, initially wary of Kemble's ability to fend off the Germans, affirmed nonetheless that Kemble had an "antidote within himself" (37) and later came round in 1829 to asking Kemble to tell him about "all things else German" (47).

[144] "The rationalistic demythologizing of D.F. Strauss's *Leben Jesu* attracted their horrified fascination long before Strauss's name became a by-word for infidelity with the British public" (Allen, 174).

[145] See n. 148, below.

part be accorded John Kemble, who with Thorpe was assiduously engaged for the next two decades in the publication of Anglo-Saxon texts and whose inflammable disposition heated the philological debates of the 1830s. The opposition was gone in as few as six and no more than twelve years.[146] The *ad hominem* war between the old and new Saxonists which Kemble started in 1834 demonstrated in the end that England had no one competent in philology until Thorpe and he had returned from their studies on the Continent, Thorpe under Rask and Kemble under Grimm.[147] And whereas Continental philology had already been institutionalized, Thorpe's and Kemble's battle had to be waged in the texts they published and in the pages of periodicals, since the English universities were not equipped to receive the philology which had been prospering on the continent since the turn of the century. England suffered a certain amateurism in philology, the work of which was left largely to such learned societies as the Antiquarian, of which Kemble, in a characteristic double insult, said that, "were it not mischievous by fostering all the mediocrities, [it]

---

[146] Within six years (1836) Joseph Bosworth had been won over; within twelve the Philological Society had been formed (1842). In the colossal introduction to his *Dictionary of the Anglo-Saxon Language* (1838), Bosworth conceded to Rask's and Grimm's systems. (The preface to this had been written in 1836.) In the text Bosworth had decided upon Roman type, which Kemble and Thorpe had employed and argued for (see Aarsleff, *Study of Language,* 205-6). This is significant because of the part Bosworth played in the war between the New and Old Saxonists. Bosworth is supposed to have had a hand in a pamphlet against Kemble, titled *The Anglo-Saxon Meteor; or Letters in Defence of Oxford, Treating of the Wonderful Gothic Attainments of John M. Kemble, of Trinity College, Cambridge* (Kemble had written previously that the ignorance prevailing at Oxford in matters Anglo Saxon would never be tolerated at Cambridge). Grimm wrote to Kemble: "Dem pamphletisten, sei es nun sicher Bosworth oder wer immer, haben Sie durch erwähnung seiner abgefeimten luge zuviel vorschub geleistet; ich denke er wird schweigen, und venigstens in dem halben dunkel bleiben" (Hans Gürtler and Albert Leitzmann, eds., *Briefe der Brüder Grimm* (Jena, 1923); cited in Aarsleff, *Study of Language,* 204).

[147] Kemble had been lecturing on Anglo-Saxon in 1834 when, in a review of Thorpe's *Analecta Anglo-Saxonica* in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (New Series, I, 391-93), he called the Anglo-Saxon professors "at one of our universities" "idle and ignorant scholars" (Aarsleff, *Study,* 195-6). Sharon Turner's popular, three-volume *History of the Anglo-Saxons from the Earliest Period to the Norman Conquest* (1799-1805) helped to resuscitate interest in Old English; Ingram, John Josias Coynbeare, and Thomas Silver all sat for a term in the Rawlinson chair at Oxford and published on Anglo-Saxon but had no acquaintance with philology. Bosworth's *Elements of Anglo-Saxon Grammar* (1823) paled in comparison to Rask's *Angelsaksisk Sproglaere* and showed no signs of his knowing Grimm's *Deutsche Grammatik.* For a survey of this material and the debates between the old and new Saxonists, see Aarsleff, *Study of Language,* 167-210.

would be merely childish" (Aarsleff, *Study of Language,* 169). It was of course a society and not a university which conceived, proposed, and carried out the plan for the *OED*--a project impossible in England prior to the importation of Continental philology. Cambridge did have a lectureship in Anglo-Saxon as early as 1640, but this was short-lived, and the university did not establish a chair until 1867--at Bosworth's bequest; in Oxford's Rawlinson chair, established 1795, there sat a lineage of unextraodinary scholars. German universities, on the other hand, had led Europe in philological scholarship for some time. Göttingen's liberality reached back to its inception in 1736; there and at Halle philology was built on the model of the great theological seminar. German education prepared students for their own scholarship and teaching--not, by contrast, for their curacies and bishoprics. Aarsleff contends that it was in

> Germany philology became the central academic discipline--"philology" in the German sense as the historical knowledge of human nature or in August Boeckh's comprehensive definition "die Erkenntniss des Erkennten," i.e. no less than the study of the history and knowledge of all human thought and activity.[148]

It is perhaps Aarsleff's most important insight that the German seminar could be seen as the ghost which inhabited the work of the *New English Dictionary* (as the *OED* was first called). It was the model used by the Etymological Society of Cambridge, the fruit of whose labors the Philological Society of London inherited, and whose method it immediately perceived as necessary for its own program. What England most needed was Germany--a thought which had occurred to Coleridge.

Language was being reclaimed. More particularly, a close alliance was being formed between philology and Christianity.[149] Archbishop Trench, to whom goes credit

---

[148] *ibid.*, 180.

[149] Earlier in the century chemistry had served as a model for both mind and language, because they were taken together. This was perhaps

> the key to Tooke's persistent influence. Impressed by the success of Newtonian science, his age was eagerly trying to convert mental philosophy into a branch of natural philosophy, encouraged by the simple schemata of Hartley's association of ideas, Priestley's and Bentham's pleasure-pain principle, and etymology with its exploration of the "causes of language" . . . . Chemistry--the

for the initial impetus behind the *New English Dictionary*, represents perhaps the most tightly braided strands of philology and Christianity, particulary in his popular works on language in which he did not hesitate to say that Christianity is ineradicably fraught with questions of language. Trench believed that stewards of the Church needed to understand

---

> youngest product of natural philosphy--came into prominence during the years that elapsed between the publication of the first and second volumes of the *Diversions*. It immediately gained the strong hold both on the popular and the scientific imagination which Coleridge so greatly deplored in 1819 in his lecture on "Dogmatical Materialism." Chemistry afforded a powerful analogue to the study of language and the philosophy of mind, and it soon became their much admired model. (Aarsleff, *Study of Language*, 88-9)

(Elie Halévy reminds us that Bentham "had always been keenly interested in the problems of chemistry: in his correspondence with his brother Samuel he devoted more space to them than to the problems of law or politics; and it was as a student of chemistry, not as a social reformer, that he made the acquaintance of Priestley in 1775; in 1783 he published a translation of a German work on applied chemistry." See *Growth of Philosopic Radicalism*, 23-4.)

Geology had been employed in the service of ante-diluvian history by those who wanted to save the Genesis account, and when geology could no longer corroborate Moses, language stepped in, preserving the Creation-Fall paradigm by maintaining that the primitive state of man was civilized, not barbarous, and that language had been a divine gift, not a human invention. Two works in particular gave suppport to the story of the Tower of Babel and also served, earlier in the century, to promote good philology. Cardinal (to-be) Wiseman's *Twelve Lectures on the Connexion between Science and Revealed Religion* appeared in six English editions between 1835 and 1859. Two of the lectures on the "Comparative Study of Languages" claimed that "this science" confirmed the "Mosaic account of the dispersion of mankind." Another work, Reverend W.B. Winning's *Manual of Comparative Philology, in which the Affinity of the Indo-European Languages is Illustrated, and Applied to the Primeval History of Europe Italy, and Rome*, carried a good bit of philology along with it, albeit in the service of religion. "Both Wiseman and Winning were convinced that comparative philology gave proof of the divine origin of language and of the biblical account of the Babylonian Confusion" (Aarsleff, *Study of Language*, 208-9). These two works indicate a close and less agreeable alliance formed between Christianity and philology in England.

But Robert Chambers's *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (1844) had proposed that the original state of man was barbarous (a gauntlet thrown down far less offensive, it now seems, than the book's inherent racism: *"The leading characteristics, in short, of the various races of mankind, are simply representations of particular stages in the development of the highest or Caucasian type"*; see Chambers, *Vestiges* [New York: Humanities, 1969], 307). Chambers affirmed the common stock of nations based on the evidence from philology. He knew Bopp but seems to have got most of his philology from Wiseman (286-7). He held that civilization depends on outward conditions, that man invented language because he was physiologically suited so to do (313).

The reaction to this notion by Adam Sedgwick, William Whewell, and J.C. Hare was a distinctly anti-materialist project. See Aarsleff, *Study of Language*, 224-5: Sedgwick took exception in "Natural History of Creation," which appeared in the *Edinburgh Review*, lxxxii (July, 1845), 3; Whewell's *Indications of the Creator* (1845) argued against any version of language causation that smacked of material explanations. Whewell's *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (1844) intimated a tradition in which Barfield himself would participate--a tradition which suggested that material sciences could not take us where language studies could. From the start of *Guesses at Truth* the brothers Hare demonstrated the extent of their nuance, asserting baldly what Maurice never would: that "Man without religion is the creature of circumstances; Religion is above all circumstance, and will lift him up above them" (1).

the wealth of moral teaching which language contained and with which ministers needed to be familiar, and he took seriously his duty to guard what he elsewhere referred to as Coleridge's "citadel of the moral being."[150] The link between philology and Christianity also represents the decidedly anti-Utilitarian moment of the *OED*. Trench himself, though he did not join the Society until 1857, had already published, along with his *Notes on the Parables of our Lord* (1840), two other works: *On the Study of Words* (1851) and *English Past and Present* (1855); all of these took a strong anti-materialist stance.[151] It is not a curiosity of history that Trench had provided the impetus for the new dictionary.

vi

Keats had hoped for a "system of Salvation which does not affront our reason and humanity."[152] Benjamin Jowett had said that the "Christian religion is in a false position when all the tendencies of knowledge are opposed to it. Such a position . . . can only end in the withdrawal of the educated classes from the influences of religion."[153] Coleridge

---

[150] Letter to Kemble, August 1828 (Trench, *L&M*, 9).

[151] Trench's anti-nominalist stance was clear in *Notes and Parables of our Lord:* "they belong to one another, the type and the thing typified, by an inward necessity; they were linked together long before by the law of a secret affinity." Citations are from the 12th ed. (New York: Appleton, 1865), 19. Julius Charles Hare, too, had complained of the cacophony of the Utilitarians, Bentham especially, who "seemed desirous to throw back language also into a chaotic state" (*Guesses at Truth,* 149); and again, Bentham shares with Hobbes the

> same shrewdness of practical observation, the same clearness of view, so far as the spectacles they have chosen to put on allow them to see,--the same fondness for stringing everything on a single principle. Both have the same arrogant, overweening, contemptuous selfconceit. Both look with the same vulgar scorn on all the wisdom of former things, and of their own. Both deem they have a monopoly on all truth, and whatever is not of their own manufacture is contraband, (147-8)

and so on, not stopping short of insults of an even more personal nature. Here again the contrast to Maurice, who admitted of Bentham's acute intellect, is evident.

[152] Letter to J.H. Reynolds, 3 May 1818; also to George and Georgiana Keats, 14 Feb. to 3 May, 1819; see *The Letters of John Keats*, ed. Hyder E. Rollins, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard, 1958), i, 278-9, 282; ii, 103.

[153] Benjamin Jowett, "On the Interpretation of Scripture," in Frederick Temple, et al., eds., *Essays and Reviews* (London: Parker, 1860), 374; also Harding, 115-16.

said "if Christianity is to be the religion of the world . . . so true must it be that the book of nature and the book of revelation, with the whole history of man as the intermediate link, must be the integral and coherent parts of one great work" (*CW*, v, 113). Biblical stories, according to *The Statesman's Manual,* are

> the living *educts* of the Imagination; of that reconciling and mediatory power, which incorporating the Reason in Images of the Sense and organizing (as it were) the flux of the Senses by the permanence and self-circling energies of the Reason, gives birth to a system of symbols, harmonious in themselves, and consubstantial with the truths, of which they are the *conductors.* (*CW*, vi, 29)

It hardly needs saying that Coleridge's versions of irony emerge in places different from those in which readers after, say, Kierkegaard or Nietzsche are accustomed to looking for it. But Paul de Man, in accusing such symbolists as Coleridge of "ontological bad faith," in a real and valuable way proves himself the emblem of the post-structural reader, the materialist of language.[154] Coleridge, somewhat like Blake, could conceive of the deposit of religion as a grand imaginative *mythos.* He advanced an imaginative comprehension, a *Verstehen,* of the spirit and mindscape of Christianity. In the nineteenth century it was just such and only such an understanding that could obtain. Coleridge advanced it with a profoundly scrupulous moral ontology, grounded in the Trinity and manifest in the I-Thou, and with a palpable devotion to liberty. His Leibnizian sympathies put him at odds with the tradition he faced handed down from Locke;[155] unqualified philologically to object to Tooke, he objected in the end on philosophical grounds. Holding strongly to a *logos* semantic, and aligning himself with Milton in maintaining that body and spirit are "different

---

[154] Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," in Charles S. Singleton, ed., *Interpretation: Theory and Practice* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1969), 194; see especially 176-82 and 191-209.

[155] Those sympathies are explicit in his lecture on German Philosophy (1819; *Philosophical Lectures*, 368-391) and implicit in the lecture on Dogmatical Materialism, especially as regards sufficient reason: "for after the watch maker has placed the watch in its due positions, he looks to that power from within, belonging to all, the gravity which itself, of course, can never be the result of any mechanism; for if you explained it by a subtle fluid, for instance, you would be asked the cause of that sublte fluid gravitating, and you must have another, and another, and at last you would be asked, by what logic you connect power within, or why a thick body should be dull, and spirits of wine light and even intellectual. These were answers to no purpose" (357).

modes, or degrees in perfection, of a common substratum,"[156] Coleridge had room to develop a theory of language and a Trinitarian theology in which the ancient denomination "consubstantial" meant *inter alia* that Locke could not be right about the sign.[157] This amalgam of moral sensibilities, of a language grounded in sufficient reason, of liberty, made him in the eyes of his best followers "the true sovereign of modern English thought," to use Hare's locution.[158] He put Maurice in a truly vatic position (occasion enough for suspicion, but outside the scope of this study) not only as a Trinitarian theologian but also as a social theologian; he gave to Trench a confidence in the harmony of signs and signifiers. In short, he kept alive a version of the "given" *Natursprache* which withstood the pressure from comparative philology when the philosophical version of language handed down from Locke had been discredited. In short, he hurled the Romantic mind into the middle years of the century, saving it for an age troubled by the encroachment of science, and saving the age as well. His push, his straining for unity survived in a new kind of Englishman--in an Englishman cupping his ear toward the Continent, an Englishman with a latitudinarian outlook and a new intellectual take on that thing the best part of which is derived from reflection on the acts of the mind itself.

---

[156] *ibid.*, 350. Coleridge's touchstone in Milton was *Paradise Lost*, V. 469-488, in which we find "Till body up to spirit work," also used in *BL*, chapter xiii.

[157] Among the many instances in which Coleridge used the ancient denomination, we do well to remember that it applied to more than just words and symbols, as in this passage from the *Aids To Reflection*: "Herein the apostle places the pre-eminency, the peculiar distinguishing excellence, of the Christian religion. The ritual is of the same kind, (homousion) though not of the same order, with the religion itself. It is not arbitrary or conventional, as types and hieroglyphics are in relation to the things expressed by them; but inseparable, consubstantiated (as it were), and partaking therefore of the same life, permanence, and intrinsic worth with its spirit and principle (*CW*, ix, 31).

[158] John Sterling, *Essays and Tales*, ed. J.C. Hare, 2 vols., (London: Parker, 1848), vol. i, xiv.

TWO

The Popularists on Language from Trench to Barfield

From the way in which Boswell and Johnson write of their fits of melancholy, it seems that they had just reached a point at which they could not be sure, from their feelings at any rate, whether their common malady was physical in its origin or purely mental.

—Owen Barfield, *History in English Words*

Those not sympathetic to Barfield might find the epigraph "typical." For it was a complaint registered against his early works that too few examples were given in defense of some rather large claims, that too much was hoped for in one broad stroke.[1] Typical, then (perhaps), in light of the complaint, but, less pejoratively, emblematic: it intimates Barfield's perpetual theme; intimates that his mind, like Coleridge's tended toward the vast and infinite; intimates that, like Emerson, he slighted the circumstance. The epigraph *is* emblematic (if also typical) of the book it comes from in all of its ambition and impatience.

History in English Words (1926) has two parts, the first of which ("The English Nation") attempts to show that a good bit of material history can be excavated from words themselves. The second and longer part ("The Western Outlook") attempts to show that a good bit of *mental* history can be excavated from words themselves. But more than this, the book attempts to show that the mental history waiting there to be had in the historical

---

[1] This in fact was an objection raised by Raymond Williams in his (mostly) unfavorable review of the second edition of *Poetic Diction*. See *English* 9:52 (Spring, 1953), 147-48. The editions referred to here are *History in English Words* (1926), Great Barrington: Lindisfarne, 1985 (hereafter, *HEW*); *Poetic Diction* (1928) Middletown: Wesleyan, 1973 (hereafter, *PD*).

study of words also reveals something about human consciousness, namely, that it has evolved and that self-consciousness is, in fact, a late arrival in human history.

> It has only just begun to dawn on us that in our own language alone, not to speak of its many companions, the past history of humanity is spread out in an imperishable map, just as the history of the mineral earth lies embedded in the layers of its outer crust.[2] But there is this difference between the record of the rocks and the secrets which are hidden in language: whereas the former can only give us a knowledge of outward, dead things--such as forgotten seas and the bodily shapes of prehistoric animals and primitive men--language has preserved for us the inner, living history of man's soul. It reveals the evolution of consciousness. (18)

The book was important intellectually; it gave Barfield a grounding for the development in his next book of the nature of myth, metaphor, and imagination in ways hitherto unattempted by an Englishman. More importantly, it allowed him to challenge the assumptions of (primarily) Max Müller, whose "logomorphism," as Barfield called it (reading logical notions about language back into pre-logical times), served and still serves as one of the greatest misconceptions about the history of language--and about which I will have more to say in the next chapter.

The argument of *History in English Words* can be summed up in the following excerpt from it:

> The consciousness of "myself" and the distinction between "my-self" and all other selves, the antithesis between "myself," the observer, and the external world, the observed, is such an obvious and early fact of experience to every one of us, such a fundamental starting-point of our life as conscious beings, that it really requires a sort of training of the imagination to be able to conceive of any different kind of consciousness. Yet we can see from the history of our words that this form of experience, so far from being eternal, is quite a recent achievement of the human spirit. It was absent from the old mythological outlook; absent, in its fullness, from Plato and the Greek philosophers; and, though it was beginning to light up in the Middle Ages, as we see in the development of Scholastic words like *individual* and

---

[2] The geological metaphor is telling, used previously by Trench (*On the Study of Words*, 95), as is "map," later used by Raymond Williams, whom I shall take up in the next chapter. In Trench's day philology had taken geology as its model, and both were used in support of religious doctrine. For further discussion of this, see Aarsleff, *Study of Language in England*, 207-8; 217-18; 232; see also the Rev. Professor Sayce's address to the Philological Society (18 May 1888) in *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 1888, esp. p. 24. The *Transactions of the Philological Society* (originally--i.e., 1842-54--*Proceedings*), published since 1854 without volume number, have been reprinted by Swets and Zeitlinger N.V., Amsterdam, 1968-70.

> *person*, yet the medieval soul was still felt to be joined by all sorts of occult ties both to the physical body and to the world. Self-consciousness, as we know it, seems to have first dawned faintly on Europe at about the time of the Reformation, and it was not till the seventeenth century that the new light really began to spread and brighten. (169-70)

To anyone acquainted with the writings of Rudolf Steiner the suggestion here of an evolution of conciousness does not seem particularly novel. This is no startling revelation, for not only is Steiner's influence on Barfield evident at every turn in Barfield's books; it is at every turn acknowledged. This evolution was Steiner's perpetual theme.[3] But what, if any, are its other sources? The somewhat unspectacular discovery here is that Henry Bradley (1845-1923) and Logan Pearsall Smith (1865-1946) were also very influential.[4] It is a fact of some notice that insofar as this evolution is suggested in words themselves Barfield stands at the end, not at the beginning, of a tradition. Barfield's widely-spread disciples have too often attributed a greatness to the master that cannot properly be said to belong to him.[5] I acknowledge the somewhat unpleasant task of pointing out the derivative nature of his early work.

---

[3] See, e.g., *Romanticism Comes of Age* 2nd ed. (1966; Middletown: Wesleyan, 1986), 7-21; 72; hereafter, *RCA*.

[4] "Unspectacular" because Barfield said in the "Afterword": as regards history and outlook in words, "Trench led the way with his little book *On the Study of Words*, which is interesting, both for itself and because the Archbishop was the first to attach as much or more importance to the semantic than to the etymological side of his subject. . . . I do not know if anyone has hitherto attempted to treat the subject chronologically and systematically, apart from one solitary English writer, Mr. Pearsall Smith. To his invaluable little book, *The English Language* (Home University Library), I am indebted throughout, not only for very much of my material, but also for many extremely fruitful suggestions as to the best way of dealing with it. I have also made extensive use of two essays ('English Words Abroad' and 'Four Romantic Words'), printed in *Words and Idioms* (Constable). . . . Henry Bradley's *The Making of English* is practically indispensable" (222-3)--all this, however, after the fact, and in the company of many other books which seem to have had very little influence comparatively. As these are very nearly the extent of Barfield's acknowledgements, and as his pioneering is sometimes assumed by his more devout followers, I have made it my tedious business to bring to the surface a thorough and accurate account of Barfield's debt.

[5] Barfield often suffers from too much dotage. Thus the editors of *A Barfield Sampler* (Jeanne Clayton Hunter and Thomas Kranidas; Albany: SUNY, 1993) tell us that "The intellectual vision of Owen Barfield, like his life, spans most of the twentieth century. In the acuity and rigor of his analysis, in the breadth of the materials he encompasses, Barfield is unequalled among his contemporaries" (1). Ignoring the tradition leads to too much admiration by Barfield's disciples on the one hand and to too little appreciation for him on the part of those more *au courant* after the linguistic turn on the other.

The purposes of this chapter, then, are two: one is to situtate Barfield in the tradition to which he belongs; the other is to foreground Barfield on language, myth, and imagination. The first, admittedly, is a pedestrian affair the purpose of which is to show how unoriginal Barfield was; so there are several passages in parallel announcing quite on their own their striking similarities. The second, also somewhat pedestrian, calls attention to what in Barfield is unique. Both are necessary: on the one hand, Barfield accomplished very little; on the other, he reacted on the accomplishments of the tradition with remarkable singularity, and his reaction proved to be crucial to the version of Romanticism he was to spend a lifetime spinning out.

Back, then, to the epigraph: it is emblematic of an utterance possible only after the labors (to begin where I left off in the previous chapter) of Richard Chenevix Trench, Otto Jespersen, Henry Bradley, and Logan Pearsall Smith. They are all Barfield's forerunners in the English popularist tradition, though Smith, naturalized in 1913, was American-born and Jespersen was a Dane. It was these four in particular who made Barfield on language possible. In *On the Study of Words* (1851) Trench had suggested the value of contemplating words singly; Bradley and Smith had gone and done likewise, making extensive use of Trench's etymologies. And these latter two provided Barfield with most of his raw material on the one hand and with the broader rubrics of his structure on the other. The great difference in the "moment" of each writer is the fact that by the time Barfield came to write, the final court of appeals on etymology, the *OED*, was nearly completed.[6] Trench had no such storehouse;[7] Bradley joined the editorial staff of the *OED*

---

[6] The *OED* was finished in 1928. When Bradley publishd *The Making of English*, only *A* through *R* (minus *M*, *N* and *P*) had appeared. He himself, between the years 1901 and 1923 (the year of his death), had editorial charge over *L*, *M*, *S-Sh*, *St*, and *W-We*. When Barfield was writing *History in English Words* twenty four letters had been completed.

[7] In his *Select Glossary of English Words Used Formerly in Senses Different From Their Present* (1859; London: Routledge, 1906) Trench said, "Seeing that I have had some share, though a small one, in the suggestion of a new English Dictionary to be published by the Philological Society, I may state that I considered it became me to use no portion whatever of the materials which are being collected for it in the

in 1889 (thirty eight years after Trench produced *On the Study of Words*) and was then appointed senior editor in 1915, eleven years after his book *The Making of English* (1904) appeared. Smith's etymological stock came in no small measure from Trench and Bradley and passed through him to Barfield. Jespersen's *Progress in Language* (1894) also passed through Smith to Barfield, though it was not nearly as important to the former as to the latter. Jespersen's *Progress in Language*, a book both on and in English, was absolutely necessary for Barfield's later positioning, especially in *Poetic Diction*. It was in *Poetic Diction* that Barfield developed more fully the incomplete arguments in *History in English Words,* which was partly a pilfered, partly an original, but finally and on some things an unsatisfactory book--a book which needed to be followed by something very like *Poetic Diction*, as of course within two years it was.

i

The popularist tradition on language in the period after comparative philology had been imported in England begins with Richard Trench, whose claim on our attention has more to do with his being the forefather of the *OED* than with his being a popularist so-called. Even so, by the time he came to give his famous paper, "On Some Deficiencies in our English Dictionaries," to the Philological Society of London in November of 1857,[8] his reputation was well-established. *On the Study of Words* (1851) went to nineteen editions by 1886 and *English Past and Present* (1855) went to fourteen editions by 1889; both have been through several reprintings.[9] American editions of *On the Study of Words*,

---

composition of this volume. . . . Of my citations, I believe about a thousand in all, I may owe some twenty at the most to existing Dictionaries or Glossaries" (xiv-xv). The primary "existing" dictionary was the creation of Tooke's disciple, Charles Richardson.

[8] Hereafter, "Deficiencies"; Trench delivered his address on November 5 and 19; see *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 1857.

[9] For further discussion, see Aarsleff, *Study of Language in England*, 235.

based on the English ninth, exceeded twenty.

The direct influence Trench had on the tradition came from his impressive collections of etymologies, particulary in *On the Study of Words*,[10] but also in *English Past and Present* and his *Select Glossary of English Words Used Formerly in Senses Different From Their Present* (1859). Trench's knowledge of Tooke and his debt to Coleridge,[11] tellingly juxtaposed in his preface to the first edition of *On the Study of Words,* was not the book's least notable feature:

> Whatever may be Horne Tooke's shortcomings (and they are great) whether in details of etymology, or in the philosophy of grammar, or in matters more serious still, yet, with all this, what an epoch in many a student's intellectual life has been his first acquaintance with the *The Diversions of Purley.* And they were not among the least of the obligations which the young men of our time owed to Coleridge, that he so often himself weighed words in the balances, and so earnestly pressed upon all with whom his voice went for anything, the profit which they would find in so doing.[12]

---

[10] *On the Study of Words* was originally a series of lectures to the divinity students in the Diocesan Training School in Winchester. In the lectures Trench, with characteristic power and clarity, impressed on his students the importance of a broad knowledge of words; and, he told them, "you will not . . . find it a hard and laborious task to persuade your pupils of this" (26). Trench's influence was not limited to his books (*English Past and Present* was also originally a series of lectures, this time given to students at King's College, London). It bears keeping in mind that Trench had been Rector of Itchenstoke from 1845 to 1856. In 1846 he was appointed Professor of Divinity, and then later of Exegesis, at King's, London. In 1856 he became Dean of Westminster, in 1863 Archbishop of Dublin. In his days at Trinity he had shown some promise as a poet and, especially in his letters, had given an early indication of his abiding English chauvenism. It was perhaps his deep respect for both his nation and its language which, together with his early poetic impulses, created in him the love for and the sense of the power of English endemic of his books and which accounted in part for his wide influence. Trench's particular English-ness, having that thick amalgam of national and religious (to include a strong anti-Roman Catholic) sentiment, could not have hurt his wide appeal: "It is the anti-national character of the Romish system, though I do not in the least separate this from its anti-scriptural, but rather regard the two as most intimately cohering with one another, which mainly revolts Englishmen; as we have lately very plainly seen; and if their [Trench's students' students] sense of this should ever grow weak, their protest against that system would soon lose nearly all of its energy and strength. Now here, as everywhere else, knowledge must be the food of love. Your pupils must know something about England, if they are to love it" (243).

[11] Note also Trench's fondness for organic metaphors: The power to make language is similar "to the growth of a tree springing out of, and unfolding itself from, a root, and according to a necessary law--that root being the divine capacity of language with which man was created" (14).

[12] x-xi. Or again: "I will quote a word or two from Coleridge. They bear on the matter at hand. He has said, 'In order to get the full sense of a word, we should first present to our minds the visual image that forms its primary meaning.' What admirable counsel is here. If we would but accustom ourselves to the doing of this, what vast increases of precision and force would all the language which we speak, and

The ambiguous "In matters more serious still" gave Trench the moral high ground and italicized the fact that he was not only working out of a strong sense of Coleridgean moral obligation but also standing in direct opposition to Tooke's and Bentham's materialism: the first paragraph of the first lecture in *Study of Words* recommends the contemplation of words "singly"--which Tooke had done and which Bradley, Smith, and Barfield would do after him--but the reason for the recommendation is that within the words "there are boundless stores of moral and historic truth" and they "relate to highest spiritual things" (1). Then, in his lecture "On the Morality in Words," he said:

> Some modern "false prophets" who would gladly explain away all such phenomena of the world around us as declare man to be a sinful being and enduring the consequences of sin, tell us that pain is only a subordinate kind of pleasure, or, at worst, that it is a sort of needful hedge and guardian of pleasure. . . . [But] pain *is* punishment; so does the word itself, no less than the conscience of every one that is suffering it, declare.[13]

Neither is there any end to Trench's asserting that the relation between words and things is not arbitrary: "We all of us, whether we have given a distinct account of the matter to ourselves or no, believe that the words which we use, some at least of them, stand in a more or less real relation to the things which they designate--that they are not arbitrary signs, affixed at random, for which any other might have been substituted as well" (22). Or again, reminiscent of Coleridge, there is "a reality about words . . . they are not merely arbitrary signs, but living powers" (27).

Among Trench's estimable achievements is the notable fact that his work was done

---

which others speak to us, obtain; how often would that which is now obscure at once become clear; how distinct the limits and boundaries of that which is often now confused and confounded" (34). Note also Trench's juxtaposing Coleridge and the Unitarians: religious words, "as Coleridge has well observed, are never inert, but constantly exercise an immense reactive influence on those who employ them, even as they diffuse around them an atmosphere, which those who often hear them used unconsciously inhale. The so-called Unitarians, when they claim by their name to be asserters of the Unity of the Godhead, claim that which belongs to us by quite as good a right as to them, nay, by much better; for belonging of fullest right to us, it does not properly belong to them at all" (117).

[13] The word itself declares it because pain, says Trench, "is the correlative of sin," and "there can be no reasonable doubt [that] it is derived from 'pœna'" (*Study of Words*, 60).

almost *ex nihilo*, for if it be objected that he did *not* usher in the English popular tradition (he knew the Germans had been doing this for some time), that Tooke's *Diversions* and Charles Richardson's *Study of Language* inaugurated it, then it must also be registered that these were all Trench had to go on--except, additionally, for Richardson's dictionary,[14] which was as much a piece of guess-work as Tooke's was bad epistemology and etymology. Trench's enormous catalogue of words and etymologies is capital enough; his slim margin of error is an astonishing testament to his linguistic knowledge.[15] And when one comes to his famous address to the Philological Society and notes, incidentally, the suggestion for the first time among Englishmen that a dictionary ought to contain *all* the words in the language,[16] one is amazed at the range of Trench's reading and the breadth of his conception of a modern dictionary, for until then there existed nothing to resemble a dictionary as we conceive it. Dictionaries before Trench were built on the limited scope and purpose of the lexicon (originally to list and translate uncommon words).[17]

Of the seven main deficiencies he outlined, the fourth was perhaps the most important: "Important meanings and uses of words are passed over; sometimes the later alone given, while the earlier, without which the history of words will be often maimed and incomplete, or even unintelligible, are unnoticed."[18] Perhaps it is too obtuse to mention,

---

[14] *New Dictionary of the English Language* (1835); "In 1817 Coleridge had been engaged to superintend the publication of the *Encyclopedia Metropolitana*, to which he would, among other things, contribute 'for the first time, a Philosophical and Etymological Lexicon of the English language.'" When Coleridge failed to produce his lexicon, Richardson assumed responsibility (Aarsleff, *Study of Language in England*, 250).

[15] The edition edited by A. Smythe Palmer (London: Routledge) notes the necessary corrections to Trench's errors.

[16] "If, therefore, we count it worthwhile to have all words, we can only have them by reading all books; this is the price we must be content to pay"; see "Deficiencies" (*Transactions of the Philological Society*, 1857), 69.

[17] See James A. H. Murray, *The Evolution of English Lexicography* (c. 1900; College Park: McGrath, 1970).

[18] "Deficiencies," 3; cf. Trench's early inclinations about a historical dictonary: "I am persuaded that a volume might be written which would have few to rival it in interest, that should do no more than indicate, or, where advisable, quote the first writer or the first document wherein new words, or old words

but apart from a dictionary that registers the changes in word-meaning, Barfield on language is not possible. So when Trench makes mistakes--as, for example with "heaven": "to heave" (*Study of Words*, 224; from Tooke, *Diversions of Purley*, 353; 367)--Barfield can go to the final court of appeals and get it right--heaven: vault, sky, canopy (*HEW*, 57).

It is certain that Trench was a powerfully suggestive writer to Barfield, though intellectually quite unsatisfactory.[19] But Trench, in Wordsworthian fashion, had discovered the riches that lay "hidden in the vulgar tongue of our poorest and most ignorant" (3), that there was latent poetry in single words--"language is fossil poetry" (30) --that poets extend "the domain of thought and feeling" (150). Barfield surely had a similar response to words contemplated singly, and certainly Trench's experience--"that for many a young man his first discovery of the fact that words are living powers . . . has been like the dropping of scales from his eyes" (*Study*, 1)--was also Barfield's, who, looking back at the years of his writing *History in English Words* and *Poetic Diction*, said, "What impressed me particularly was the power with which not so much whole poems as

---

employed in a new sense . . . have appeared (*On the Study of Words*, 134); also *English Past and Present* (London: Macmillan, 1881): "It would be a manifest gain to possess a collection, as complete as the industry of the collectors could make it, of all the notices in our literature which serve as indications of the first appearance of words before unknown" (176). Trench also suggested here that changes in meaning be dated.

[19] As when, for example, "this 'Ah,' this 'Alas,' these deep and long-drawn sighs of humanity" as in "'Affliction,' 'Agony,' 'Anguish,' Assassin,' 'Atheist,' 'Avarice'" testify to "needed" verbal inventions (50). One wishes to ask the Dean of Westminster about *Akathist* and *Ave Maria* and *Anna*, the grandmother of our Lord. This example can be situated among some of the more fantastic speculations on grunts and sighs from which language was said to have descended. I leave a survey of theories on language origin aside, though the question of origins was lively in the second half of the nineteenth century, especially in Max Müller. His ideas are condensed and can be found, together with a survey of originary theories, in the 1872 and 1873 annual addresses to the Philological Society by its president, Alexander J. Ellis, in *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 1873-4, esp. 10-35 and 248-52. I will be treating this in the next chapter only insofar as it relates to Müller's "roots of speech" and Barfield's (after Jespersen's) rejecting it. It is sufficient to note, because by now the *Transactions of the Philological Society* merit our attention for the most part as a collection of artifacts of philological history, that most of the papers on origins delivered at the Society dealt with them in a narrowly analytical, not theoretical, way. There was a fair amount of attention given to the idea of roots and monosyllables, which were essential parts of Müller's machinery and which testify to his enormous influence. Jespersen's contribution, which Barfield desperately needed, was an exposure of the logical impossibilities of roots and monosyllables.

particular combinations of words worked on my mind. It seemed there was some magic in it; and a magic which not only gave me pleasure but also reacted on and expanded the meanings of the individual words concerned" (*RCA*, 9). But whereas Trench's ability to reflect on language stopped with a vague notion of "Language as an Instrument of Thought" and an inkling that as civilization advances, word-meaning, for the sake of precision, narrows, Barfield's ability to reflect stopped at nothing less than a "theory of knowledge."[20] That is to say, Barfield reflected on this in the broader context of "The Effects of Poetry" itself (the title of chapter two in *Poetic Diction*). Even as poetry expands consciousness, so first encounters with the living powers of words expand consciousness.[21] Trench knew something was happening to him; Barfield set out to find out what exactly it was.

---

[20] *PD*, 14; "On Language as an Instrument of Knowledge" was the title Trench originally gave to Archdeacon Wilberforce for a lecture Trench hoped to deliver at the Diocesan Training School (see Trench, *L&M*, i, 275). The lecture turned into five and later became *On the Study of Words*.

The "narrowing" of meaning is an idea Trench advanced in his seventh lecture in *English Past and Present*; it is a fair representative of the extent of Trench's theoretical skills. Two lectures earlier, on the "Diminutions of the English Language," Trench suggested that such words as fall out of use tend to be more concrete; it is an "advance of refinement" that words are "dismissed, which are felt to speak too plainly" (221). Trench's remarks are little more than descriptive, though to Barfield they must have been loaded, highly ponderable. What does it mean, beyond precision of expression, that abstract words, or abstract senses of words, survive?

The evidence of Barfield's knowing and using this particular book is not so persuasive as is the case with his knowing and using Bradley's and Smith's, as I am about to show. But apart from the mere likelihood of his knowing it there is a curious though faint similarity in the treatment Chaucer receives from both. Trench says "Chaucer is not merely as near, but much nearer, to us than he was felt by Dryden and his contemporaries to be to them" (157). The residue of Barfield's admiration for Chaucer and his moderate scorn for the Restoration poets is not a contrast one has to go searching for in Barfield. The similarity is faint, as I said, but see, e.g., Barfield's discussion of the word *ruin* (*PD*, 111-126).

[21] In *Poetic Diction* Barfield would go so far as to claim that pidgin English could have this effect on us. The reason is that it introduces us to a mode of consciousness with which we are unfamiliar.

A reviewer of *History in English Words* said of its first section that, "though it contains nothing new, [it] is interesting, compact and sound."[22] He was right about its containing "nothing new" but did not know the half of what he was saying.

Henry Bradley's *The Making of English* appeared near the turn of the century. His concern, like Trench's, was "to give some idea of the causes by which the more remarkable changes in the language were brought about, and to estimate the effect which these changes have had on its fitness as an instrument for the expression of thought" (10-11). Or again, "The object of the book is to give to educated readers unversed in philology some notion of the causes that have produced the excellences and defects of modern English as an instrument of expression" (vii).

Anyone who reads Bradley's *The Making of English* and who has also read Barfield's *History in English Words* will have that vague feeling of having been here before. For example, concerning the conversion of Great Britain to Christianity (sixth and seventh centuries), Bradley writes, "the people of England . . . adopted a considerable number of Latin words, chiefly signifying things connected with religion or the services of the church. Among those which are still part of the language are *bishop, candle, creed, font, mass, monk, priest*" (58). Barfield duplicates parts of the list and expands it: "The Latin and Greek words which entered our language at this period are concerned for the most part with the dogma and ritual of the Church; such are *altar, candle, clerk, creed, deacon, hymn, martyr, mass, nun, priest, psalm, shrine, stole, temple,* and many others" (51). This may seem coincidental if the finished *OED* were at the hands of both writers,

---

[22] Edward Shanks, "Strong Language," *The Saturday Review* 141:3665 (23 Jan. 1926), 95.

but when Bradley was writing in 1904 the dictionary (of which he was now an editor) had been completed only through the letter *R* (excluding *M* , *N*, and *P*). Four pages later Bradley, on French imports, says that

> Readers of *Ivanhoe* will remember the acute remark which Scott puts into the mouth of Wamba the jester, that while the living animals--*ox, sheep calf, swine, deer*--continued to bear their native names, the flesh of those animals as used for food was denoted by French words, *beef, mutton, veal, pork, bacon, venison.* The point of the thing is, of course, that the "Saxon" serf had the care of the animals when alive, but when killed they were eaten by his "French" superiors.

Barfield, three pages later, writes:

> For the Saxon neatherd who had spent a hard day tending his *oxen, sheep, calves,* and *swine*, probably saw little enough of the *beef, mutton, veal, pork,* and *bacon*, which were gobbled at night by his Norman masters.

Bradley continues:

> We may perhaps find a similar significance in the French origin of *master, servant, butler, butter, bottle, dinner, supper, banquet.* . . . The system of gradation of titular rank was of continental origin, and the individual titles are mostly French, as *duke, marquis, viscount, baron.* There is one notable exception; the foreign *count* (Old French *conte*) was not adopted, because the native *earl* had come to have nearly the same meaning; but it had not been the English custom to give ladies titles corresponding to those of their lords, and hence for the wife an earl the French title *countess* had to be used. (62-3)

Barfield follows:

> *Master, servant, butler, buttery, parlour, dinner, supper,* and *banquet* all came over with William, besides the names of our titular ranks, such as *duke, marquis, viscount, baron,* and *countess.* The French word "comte" was evidently considered to be equivalent to the one existing Anglo-Saxon title, *earl*, with the result that *count* never became an English rank. But since it had not been the Saxon custom to give ladies titles corresponding to those of their lords, the word *countess* was able to fill an important gap. (54-5)

It appears that while he was writing, Barfield had Bradley open in front of him. But then Bradley had Trench open:

> it may be remembered that Wamba, the Saxon jester in Ivanhoe, plays the philologer . . . [and] that the names of almost all animals so long as they are alive, are thus Saxon, but when dressed and prepared for food become Norman . . . for the Saxon hind had the charge and labour of tending and feeding them, but only that they might appear on the table of his Norman lord. Thus "ox," "steer," "cow," are Saxon, but "beef" Norman; "calf" is Saxon, but "veal" Norman; "sheep" is Saxon, but "mutton" Norman. (*On the Study of Words*, 99)

But where are *earl* and *countess*? On the previous page: they appear first, not second, in Trench, suggesting at the very least that Barfield worked less closely out of him than out of Bradley. That would, of course, have been the wiser move, given Bradley's affiliation with the dictionary.[23]

Or again, on how words shorten, Bradley: the origin of *culprit*

> is to be found in the strange corrupt Norman French once used in our courts of justice. When a prisoner had pleaded "not guilty," the reply made on behalf of the Crown was "culpable; prest." This meant "(he is) guilty, (and we are) ready (to prove it)." In the reports of criminal cases the phrase was commonly abbreviated *cul. prest*, and afterwards corruptly *cul. prit*. Then in some way, not very clearly understood, it seems to have come about that the clerks of the Crown, modelling their procedure on the pattern set in the written reports, fell into the practice of using the syllables *cul prit* as an oral formula. (108)

Barfield:

> *culprit*, which was used in court down to the eighteenth century, has an interesting history of its own. In former days, when the prisoner had pleaded "Not Guilty," the Clerk of the Crown would open proceedings by saying "Culpable: prest," meaning that the prisoner *is* "guilty," and I am "ready" to prove it. In the official records of the case this formula was abbreviated, first to "cul-prest" and afterwards to "cul-prit," until later clerks formed the habit of running the two words together. (62)

On borrowings made by mistake, Bradley, giving credit to James Murray (editor of the *OED*):

> *derring-do* . . . was taken from Spenser by Sir Walter Scott, and through his use of it has become one of the favourite words of modern chivalric romance. It originated from a passage in which Chaucer says that Troilus was second to no man in "dorring do [*i.e.*, is daring to do] that longeth to a knight." The passage was paraphrased by Lydgate in his Troy-book, and in the early editions of that work the word *dorring* was misprinted as *derrynge*. Not unnaturally, Spenser mistook *derrynge doe* for a substantive . . . and employs it frequently. The blunder enriched the English language with a happily expressive word. (159)

Barfield:

---

[23] Moreover, Trench's etymological errors, few though they are, do not make their way into Barfield's books. I've noted above this example: *heaven* "the perfect of 'to heave' and is so called because it is 'heaved' or 'heaven' up" (*On the Study of Words*, 224), Barfield: *heaven* is Teutonic and "had hitherto denoted a 'canopy'" (*HEW*, 51).

> *Derring-do* . . . is interesting because it originates in a mistake made by Spenser about Chaucer. He had described how Troilus was second to nobody in "derring do that longeth to a knight"--that is to say, "in daring to do that which belongs to a knight"--or, in Cornish idiom, "that which a knight 'belongs to do.'" It is easy to see the nature of Spenser's error. The mysterious substantive *derring-do* (desperate courage), which he created and used several times, is not found again until Scott's *Ivanhoe*.[24]

Again, this might seem to be a coincidence--except for Bradley's "second to no man" and Barfield's "second to nobody," the use of "substantive" by both, and the curious inclusion not only of Chaucer and Spenser, who made the mistake in the first place, but also of Sir Walter Scott.

Or again, on the nautical terms borrowed from the Dutch, Bradley: "That the Dutch were once our masters in nautical matters may be learned from the terms *aloof, avast, boom, dock, hull, skipper, orlop, flyboat, euphroe, rover,* and many others" (72). And Barfield, on "our long-standing and not always creditable nautical relations with the Dutch":

> From the fourteenth to the seventeenth century Dutch sea words continued to trickle into the language, the fourteenth seeing the arrival of *bowsprit* and *skipper*, the fifteenth of *freight, hoy, keel, lighter, pink, pump, scout, marline,* and *buoy*, the sixteenth of *aloop, belay, dock, mesh, reef, rover,* and *flyboat*, while the seventeenth century, when Van Tromp nailed his broom to the mast, the Dutch fleet sailed up the Medway, and William of Orange sat upon the English throne, gave us *avast, bow, boom, cruise, cruiser, gybe,* and *keelhaul*.[25]

Or again, on Greek borrowings, Bradley: "Nearly all the words that English owes to the Greek language, indirectly as well as directly, were originally scientific or technical" (71). Barfield: "The number of technical terms of art and literature is particularly noticeable, and it was now that the foundations were laid of that almost automatic system whereby a new Greek-English word is coined to mark each advance that is made in science, and especially in technics" (67-8).

---

[24] 212; on *derring-do*, cf. Smith, *The English Language* (New York: Henry Holt, 1912), 116-17.

[25] *HEW*, 70; see also Smith, *Words and Idioms* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1925), 15, and *The English Language*, 192-3; also Trench, *English Past and Present*, 13.

Or again, on Latin borrowings, Bradley: "The Latin *castra*, for instance, became, under the form *ceaster*, the Old English word for a Roman fortified town, and it survives in the place-name Chester, and in the ending of many other names such as Winchester, Doncaster, Leicester, and Exeter" (58). Barfield: the Latin words owing to the "Romanizing of Britain" include "the form of 'castra' (a camp) . . . which survives today in *Chester* and in the ending of many other town names such as *Winchester, Lancaster, Gloucester*" (50).

Or again, on Anglicized Latin borrowings, Bradley: "The fourteenth century monk who wrote *ayenbite (of inwyt)* for 'remorse (of conscience)' did not succeed in inducing any other writer to use his new word: the Latin-French synonym was felt to be better for its purpose" (84). Barfield: "nor did the fourteenth-century author of a book, which he called the *Againbite of Inwit,* have any academic horror, as far as we know, of the new Latin borrowings *remorse* and *conscience"* (65).

Here, though, marks the significant difference between Bradley and Barfield, for whereas Bradley seldom got beyond the curiosity of etymology, Barfield began to reflect on its consequences for thought. So, for example, on "word-making" in Bradley, but on "outlook" in Barfield, we encounter a slight modulation in emphasis on the word *sport:*

> [Bradley]: No word now sounds more thoroughly English than *sport*, which has, indeed, been adopted from English into foreign languages; yet it is a shortening of *disport*, which is a word of French origin. To "disport oneself" is, literally interpreted, "to carry oneself in a different direction" from that of one's ordinary business; and hence *disport* and *sport* came to mean amusement or pastime. (107)

> [Barfield]: By the sixteenth century . . . that peculiarly English characteristic, the love of sport, had already begun to make its mark on the language. *Sport* itself is an abbreviation of "disport," a French word meaning "to carry oneself in a different direction from that of one's ordinary business." It is interesting to observe how both the form and meaning of the English word have diverged from their origin, and how they have since been reborrowed into French and most of the other languages of Europe.[26]

---

[26] 68; cf. Smith, *Words and Idioms,* 28-9 (written after Bradley's book but before Barfield's).

Whereas Bradley speaks of the word "literally interpreted," Barfield is curious about the divergence of "form and meaning." The modulation is a quarter-pitch at the most, but it is a modulation.

There are other indications. Barfield borrows his examples on the Bible from Bradley, but again his emphasis differs. Whereas Bradley attends to a catalogue, Barfield attends to poetry. Bradley: "To Coverdale we owe the beautiful combinations *lovingkindness* and *tender mercy*; Tindale gave us *long-suffering* and *peacemaker*." Bradley's interest as a lexicographer obtrudes: "This last is identical in etymological meaning with the *pacificus* of the Vulgate; but the Latin word had become current in the sense of 'peaceable,' so that its literal meaning was obscured" (153). And Barfield:

> And just as lyrical devotion to the Virgin Mary and to the infant Jesus had helped to evolve a vocabulary which could express, and thus partly create, a sentiment of tenderness towards all women and young children, so we seem to feel the warmth of human affection, as it were, reflected back into religious emotion in such creations as Coverdale's *lovingkindness* and *tender mercy*, Tindale's *long-suffering, mercifulness, peacmeaker*, and *beautiful* (for it was he who brought this word into general use[27]), and in many of the majestically simple phrases of the Authorised Version. (131-2)

Barfield situated this in his chapter "Devotion." Certain religious sentiments were possible because certain poetic sentiments--toward the Virgin, for example--were already in place. It was part of Barfield's task to show that European sensibilities differed from those of Greece and Rome by reason of a Christian poetic vocabulary. A poetic tradition made possible a religious consciousness when it came time to translate the Bible into English:

> Thus, when Tindale and Coverdale came to make their translations of the Bible in the sixteenth century, they found ready to their hand a vocabulary of feeling which had indeed been drawn in the first place from the austerities of the religious life, but which had in many cases acquired warmer and more human echoes by having been applied to secular uses. (131)

Thereafter--later it was a feature of Shakespeare's vision--language used exclusively for

---

[27] cf. Bradley: "*beautiful* is not known to have been used by any writer before Tindale" (153).

religious purposes was applied metaphorically to people.

> The ideal atmosphere of gracious tenderness which was the contribution to humanity of the Middle Ages was to some extent realized by the Elizabethans. The women towards whom it was directed became less and less mere ecclesiatical or poetical symbols. . . . The Blessed Virgin is partly supplanted in men's hearts by the virgin Queen. . . . And we can hardly help holding Shakespeare partly responsible for what is going foreward when we find him writing 'the devout religion of mine eye' and making Richard III implore Ann to 'let the soul forth that adoreth thee'--where the words *religion* and *adore* are both applied to humanity for the first time, as far as we know, in English Literature. (155-6)

And here, by the way, are examples of the breadth, of the ambition (to say nothing of the insight), of *History in English Words.*

Here also the difference between Barfield's appropriation of the raw material and Bradley's, from whom he lifted it, obtrudes. More than that, a whiff of the unequivocal rises on the air. Barfield has turned to his reflection on what all this means for human consciousness. Tracing its growth through the literature allows us to understand it

> more perfectly and feel it more fully when we have thus unravelled it. But not to realize that with the appearance of a poetic tradition which can give rise to such a poem as "I sing of a maiden' something quite new, something with no perceptible historical origin, enters into humanity, is to cultivate a deaf ear to literature, and to mistake quite as grievously both the method and the object of understanding history. (132)

One might argue whether the dilettantish tone is desireable. The bravery seems a bane. Bradley admitted "the custom of adopting Latin words at secondhand--through French. But whereas he demurred--it is "often difficult or impossible to determine whether an English word of Latin origin came into English immediately from Latin or through the medium of French" (65-6)--Barfield did not: "whoever introduced, let us say, the word ***heredity*** in the nineteenth century went through the instinctive process of deriving from the Latin 'hereditare' an imaginary French word, 'heredité,' and converting the latter into ***heredity.*** It is usually done when we wish to borrow a new word from Latin" (58). Or again, Bradley says

> It might well be expected that in any notice of the literary Makers of English a large place must be given to Chaucer. And indeed there can be no doubt that his writings

> had a powerful influence on the language; but it is singularly difficult to prove this by definite examples. (157)

Barfield:

> A modern poet, looking back on that time, can scarcely help envying a writer like Chaucer with this enormous store of fresh, unspoilt English words ready to his hand and an unlimited treasury across the channel from which he could pick a brand-new one whenever he wanted it.
>
> > *Thou hast* deserved *sorer for to smart,*
> > *But* pitee *renneth soone in* gentil *heart.*
>
> Here are three Norman French borrowings, three fine English words with the dew still on them, in two lines. It was the May morning of English poesy. (56-7)

While Barfield has avoided the burden of proof, his method goes some distance in showing the difference between what an editor of the *OED* does in one book on language and what an aspiring poet does in another.

If such a thing exists, Barfield's copy of *The Making of English* might one day be fruitfully perused. His borrowings from Bradley are significant, even problematic in a truly Coleridgean sense. But they also serve to show what an imaginative mind can do with historical raw material.

iii

The case of Logan Pearsall Smith is interesting in the genealogy established here. He understood that a modulation in thought had taken place and that the semantic shifts in words contemplated singly bore witness to this. But it is only by contrast to Barfield that we see how abortive Smith's response finally was.

That Barfield investigated Jespersen and, later, Anatole France may be due to Smith's recommending them in his preface to his collection of previously published essays, *Words and Idioms* (1925), where he also mentions a debt to Bradley. The nautical terms examined in Smith's first essay, "English Sea Terms" (1912), were first suggested by

Bradley and belong under the general rubric of borrowed words in which these two men and Barfield as well were interested.[28] Bradley, like Trench, had stated an interest in semantic changes for their effect on English "as an instrument for the expression of thought" (11); Smith had hoped for a second lifetime to compile from the *OED* "a history of all the more important terms by which men have designated, not only their discoveries, but also their thoughts and feelings" (*Words and Idioms*, viii). Both statements anticipate Barfield's commitment to the evolution of consciousness; the difference is that whereas Smith and (especially) Bradley did little more than register the differences and changes of thought, Barfield asked what it meant for the relationship between the knower and the known. Smith turned finally to an examination of "certain terms of aesthetic criticism with which our language has enriched the vocabulary of Europe"; Barfield attempted to establish an aesthetic criticism of responsive reading.

In a discussion of the word *genius* in *History in English Words* Barfield's quip, "This little word [genius], on which a whole chapter might be written," more than suggests to those familiar with the popular tradition the name Logan Pearsall Smith, who did in fact write a whole chapter on the word *genius* in his then well-known "Four Romantic Words" (1922). One cannot help feel that the entire Barfield project, suggested only four pages into his first book--namely, that "language has preserved for us the inner, living history of man's soul. It reveals the evolution of consciousness" (18)--was first suggested to him by Smith. The evidence of borrowing is no less obvious than it is in the case of Henry Bradley.

A comparison of Smith's and Barfield's treatments of the primitive Aryan vestiges in our languages goes some distance toward showing not only how indebted Barfield actually was; it also shows how much more imaginative he was in his treatment of these

---

[28] There was also a mutual interest in English words abroad; see *HEW*, 79-82; see also *Words and Idioms*, 28-65.

words and how much more lively in his writing.

On the word *committee*, for example, Smith:

> In one great word which had been adopted from English into almost all the languages of the world--in the word *Committee*, we find an embodiment of this English spirit of free association, and the method by which these self-governing groups manage their affairs. . . . But to whatever accident of history, or special quality of race, England owes its free associations, and the special morality and type of characer which makes them possible--the spirit of give and take, of "playing the game," the voluntary submission of the individual to the group--it is in these qualities . . . that will be found the most original manifestations of the national genius." (64-5)

Barfield:

> And it may be that in such important loan-words as *club* and *freemason* and *sport*, but, above all, in *committee*--that boring but sensitive instrument for maintaining the balance as between individual and associative personality--we can perceive the Englishman's secret: his power of voluntary co-operation, and his innate understanding of the give-and-take it requires. (81)

Barfield then goes on, this time acknowledging his debt to Smith, to discuss the England that other countries must have seen as it began to interact with the European community. Acknowledged or not, the debt is large: from words abroad

> we can re-create, as Mr. Pearsall Smith has pointed out, something of the curious England which was "discovered" about the middle of the eighteenth century by the rest of Europe . . . we can stride across the Italian stage in our top boots and our *redingote*, a moody and spleenful English *milord*, liable to commit suicide at any moment. (81)

Smith, a few pages earlier than the ones cited above, had mentioned "the English *milords*, who began to appear on the Italian stage, Mylord Runebif, Lord Stunkle, Lord Wilk . . . more spleenful and eccentric than their French relations" (54)--this on the heels of a growing European knowledge of "English spleen, English melancholy," known all over the continent as inhabiting men "universally believed to be in the habit of committing suicide" (49-50).

Or again, in the context of sports, Smith's first example:

> Among XVth Century hawking words may be mentioned *rebate*, which meant to bring back to the fist a 'bating' hawk; to *allure*, from the older lure (of obscure etymology), an apparatus for recalling hawks, and to *rouse*, used first for the

> hawk's shaking its feathers. *Haggard* is a somewhat later word, and being used of a wild hawk, has been derived from the French word for hedge, *haie*; but this etymology is doubtful." (189)

And Barfield's first example in the context of sports:

> Of the older sports, hawking has given us *allure, haggard, rebate,* and *reclaim.* The Latin 'reclamare' had meant to cry out against' or 'to contradict'; it was only in hawking that it acquired its present sense of 'calling back' from the cries that were uttered to summon the hawk back to the wrist. *Allure* is from the old *lure*, an apparatus for recalling the birds, and *haggard* is a word of obscure etymology which was used of a wild hawk. (68-9)

Again, it is not so much an incidence, or coincidence, of there being a common stock. The topic is borrowed, the first example is a duplicate, the word *apparatus* is obvious and intrusive, as is "obscure etymology," and for "fist" Barfield gives us "wrist."

On the primitive Aryan civilization from which we have surviving linguistic derivatives, both mention the domestication of certain animals, the living in huts and on certain foods, and the evidence that the Aryans were not only nomadic but had a particular distaste for the labor required of agrarian life. In the course of fewer than three pages Smith says,

> The words *wheel, nave, axle, yoke,* and a root from which our *wain* and *wagon* descend, are regarded a proof that wheels had been invented, and that the Aryans travelled in carts drawn by cattle. . . . *Door* is a very ancient word; *timber* is derived from an Aryan root. Our word *mead* is found in many Aryan languages, and shows that this primitive people possessed a drink made from honey. . . . *night* and *star*, *dew* and *snow*, *wind* and *thunder*, *fire* and *east*, are primitive terms, or ones that descend from early roots."[29]

Barfield:

> *Axle, nave, wheel, yoke,* and a common word for "waggon" have convinced people that they once moved form place to place in a kind of primitive caravan, running probably on solid wheels (for there is no common word for "spoke"). . . .

---

[29] 131-3; about four pages later Smith says, "Our *mere*, which is still used in poetry and which forms the first part of the word *mermaid*, corresponds to the Latin *mare*, from which we derive our borrowed word *marine;* and *salt* and *fish* are terms common to the European group" (137). Barfield, after an interval of about three pages, says *mere* "is still used poetically of inland waters, and in the word *mer*maid, while its Latin form "mare" is equally familiar. . . . From the distrubution of this word among the Aryan nations, together with similar equations such as *fish* and *piscis*, we can deduce that these two groups of travellers had already separated before either of them reached the seaboard" (33).

> *timber* is connected with the Greek root "dem-" (demein). . . . In addition to the somewhat prosaic words from which we have attempted to derive information, it is pleasant to us to think of these ancestors of ours already uttering to one another in that remote past great and simple words like *fire, night, star, thunder, and wind,* which our children still learn to use as they grow up. (30-31)

The only borrowing out of sequence here is *mead*, and that is because Barfield has gone straight to the tap a page earlier:

> There is little doubt . . . that our Aryan ancestors knew how to get drunk. The liquor, made principally of honey, with which they sent themselves to bed, appears to have been frought with such sweet associations that no branch of the Aryan family, however far they went upon their travels, could forget it. The Angles and Saxons brought this *mead* into our country, and the word occurs in Dutch, Icelandic, Danish, Swedish, German" [etc]. (29)

They move on in parallel fashion: the influence on language of the Romans calls the same words to Barfield's attention as to Smith's, and for the most part in the same order--*pile, camp, drake, mile, wall, kitchen, kettle,* and *dish*--to name only a few (Smith, 146-8; Barfield, 43-4). Smith turns his attention immediately to ecclesiastical terms, as does Barfield, both suggesting the Greek *kuriokon*, rather than *ekklesia* (which the Latin Church adopted), as the source of *church*.[30]

Or again, on the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons, the language is very similar. Smith: "From the Roman civilization of Britain, which they destroyed, and from its Celtic inhabitants, whom they massacred or enslaved, they received, if we are to believe what language tells us, practically nothing" (153). Barfield: "Recent as the memory of that civilization must have been when the Angles and Saxons arrived, they seem to have learnt nothing from it.[31]

Aside from the overt borrowings--of material, structure, and strategy alike--and if more evidence be required, there are strong reverberations in certain dominant ideas, as in the words *energy* and *struggle*: As regards *energy*, Smith says, "But from the point of

---

[30] Smith, 150; Barfield, 44; also Trench, *On the Study of Words*, 101.

[31] After these two passages both Smith and Barfield immediately mention a notable exception, *castra*, and its survival in *Chester*, as in *Manchester*, etc.

view of vocabulary, the XVth Century marks a pause. England, exhausted and demoralized by its disastrous conflicts abroad in France, and by the wars of the Roses at home, had little energy to devote to the higher interests of civilization" (188). Barfield echoes:

> Apart from the adoption of a few Latin words, changes seem to have been few and insignificant during the fifteenth century, and we may assume that, for the first half of it at any rate, the Hundred Years' War was occupying too many of our energies to leave much time for cultural growth. (63)

As for *struggle*, Smith:

> We should find that many of our commonest notions and most obvious distinctions were by no means as simple and as self-evident as we think them now, but were the result of severe intellectual struggles carried on through hundreds of years; and that some of the words we put to the most trivial uses are tools fashioned long ago by old philosophers, theologians, and lawyers, and sharpened on the whetstone of each other's brains. (187)

This notion of an intellectual *struggle* seems to have been an idea Barfield found wildly attractive, echoing it as he does quite often. Thus, contrasting the "outer" occupation of Roman thought and life with the "inner," more abstract occupation of Greek thought and life, Barfield imports Smith's theologians and philosophers and says:

> Wherever we turn in our language, we have only to scratch the surface in order to come upon fresh traces of Rome and of her solid achievements in the world. With Greece, however, it is different. It was not the outer fabric of a future European civilization which the Greeks were building up while their own civilization flourished, but the shadowy, inner world of human consciousness. They were helping to create our "outlook." We shall see a little later how the language which is used by the theologians, philosophers, and scientists of Europe was the gradual and painful creation of the thinkers of ancient Greece. (40)

Elsewhere: *quality*

> is used by most educated people every day of their lives, yet in order that we should have this simple word Plato had to make the tremendous effort (it is one of the most exhausting which man is called on to exert) of turning a vague feeling into a clear thought. (18-9)

And once more, on the logical quibbles of the Schoolmen, Barfield writes, "Nobody who understands the amount of pain and energy which go to the creation of new instruments of

thought can feel anything but respect for the philosophy of the Middle Ages."[32]

The closest similarity can be found in a comparison between the opening words of Smith's last chapter and the opening words of Barfield's first chapter, which, additionally, reveals fairly persuasively the fact that the entire scope and all the boundaries of *History in English Words* were suggested to Barfield by Smith. Smith's chapter is titled "Language and Thought"; his "if . . . then" structure and his use of the word *forgery* are notable: "If we were given what purported to be a transcript of a medieval manuscript, and should find in it words like *enlightenment* or *scepticism*, we should not hesitate to pronounce it a glaring and absurd forgery" (214). And Barfield:

> If somebody showed us a document which he said was an unpublished letter of Dr. Johnson's, and on reading it through we came across the word "telephone," we should be fairly justified in sending him about his business. . . . Now suppose that there had been nothing about telephones in the letter, but that it had contained an account of a thunder-storm. If in describing the stillness just before the storm broke the writer had said that "the atmosphere was electric," we could still be fairly positive that he was not Dr. Johnson. . . . [I]n Johnson's time it [*electric*] simply was not used in that way. . . . Or again, supposing the letter had said nothing about a storm, but that it had described a conversation between Garrick and Goldsmith which was carried on "at high tension," we should still have little hesitation in pronouncing it to be a forgery. (15-16)

Only a little familiarity with Barfield is needed to have a sense of what must have been his excitement in reading Smith's last chapter as well as in the several invitations in that chapter for someone to take the ideas further.

Trench had been used by Bradley and Smith; Barfield had made more than good use of all three, Bradley and Smith in particular. But a quick glance at the structural rubrics of their books suggests as incestuous an intellectual relationship among them as is imaginable only among Victorians and their progeny. Trench suggested to Bradley and Smith, before Barfield, structural possibilities for books on language. In addition to

---

[32] *HEW*, 140; on the intellectual labors of Medieval Scholasticism, Smith quotes Maitland: "Law was the point where life and logic met" (187). Barfield cites the same passage (62). Both have just given the etymology of *premises*.

writing on the "Poetry in Words" and the "Morality in Words" he provided relevant lectures the titles of which were

VI On the History in Words
VII On the Rise of New Words

Bradley's *Making of English* looks like this in outline:

I Introduction [on the similarities and differences in English and German]
II The Making of English Grammar
III What English Owes to Foreign Tongues
IV Word-Making in English (cf. Trench, ch. VII)
V Changes of Meaning[33]
VI Some Makers of English

Smith's:

I The Origins of the English Language (cf. Bradley, ch. I)
II Foreign Elements (cf. Bradley, ch. III)[34]
III Modern English
IV Word-Making in English (cf. Bradley, ch. IV; Trench, ch. VII)
V Makers of English Words (cf. Bradley, ch. VI)
VI Language and History--The Earliest Period (cf. Trench, ch. VI)
VII Language and History--The Dark and the Middle Ages (cf. Trench, ch. VI)
VIII Language and History--The Modern Period (cf. Trench, ch. VI)
IX Language and Thought

The *first* portion of *History in English Words*, though it owes a great deal of its content to Bradley, owes its structure mostly to Smith (and, indirectly, to Trench, ch. VI):

I Philology and the Aryans
II The Settlement of Europe (cf. Smith, ch. VI)
III England Before the Reformation (cf. Smith, ch. VII)
IV Modern England (cf. Smith, ch. VIII)

Even Barfield's first chapter is derived from both Smith and Bradley. Its only real distinctive mark is the brief sketch Barfield gives of the phonetic base of philological studies in the nineteenth century.

Thus it was that, in an otherwise favorable but partly irrelevant review of *History in English Words,* the reviewer mentioned above said,

---

[33] cf. Trench, *English Past and Present*, ch. VII: "Changes in the Meaning of English Words."

[34] cf. "The English Element in Foreign Languages" (1919) in *Words and Idioms.* This is the "fresh ground" (to use his own locution) which Smith broke and of which Barfield also made limited use.

> Mr. Barfield's title does not quite describe the scope of his book, which is, besides, so arranged as somewhat to obscure its real purpose. The first and shorter part outlines, in a somewhat elementary manner, what we can discern of the history of the English race, from its remotest Aryan origins, in the English language as we now have it. This, though it contains nothing new, is interesting, compact and sound.[35]

Though it contains nothing new is, in some respects, an extraordinarily kind remark. And given that the reviewer, for reasons not easy to understand, later mentions the name Logan Pearsall Smith, it is an extraordinarily naïve remark. *History in English Words* was, no doubt, a fresh piece of writing--vigorous, and full of verve. And so it remains. But it was in large part a borrowed piece of writing, of which Smith's *The English Language* was the chief source.

Smith's last chapter, "Language and Thought," together with his essay "Four Romantic Words" from *Words and Idioms,* may be said to have been the springboard for all of *History in English Words.* It was in these two essays by Smith that Barfield's imagination was caught by the possibilities of tracing consciousness in the vicissitudes of language. To these and their relation to the *second* part of Barfield's *History in English Words* I now turn.

iv

In 1924 Smith published "Four Romantic Words" as a tract for the Society for Pure English.[36] That Barfield knew this essay he himself acknowledged.[37] The four words--

---

[35] See n. 22; for other reviews, mostly favorable, see *Booklist* (Chicago) 23 (Nov. 1926), 64; *Boston Transcript,* 4 Sept. 1926, 4; *Literary Review* (New York), 11 Sept. 1926, 13; *New Statesman* 26 (1926), 23 Jan. 450; *History* 13 (1928), 47-8.

[36] In the preface to *Words and Idioms* (1925) Smith said, "I must, however, be careful to point out that although two of the essays in this volume were first printed in the publications of that Society [for Pure English (S.P.E.)], I cannot of course claim its approval for all the suggestions I have put forward; they are made on my own responsibility, and are without any other endorsement" (ix-x). The two essays are "English Idioms" (1922) and "Four Romantic Words" (1924). The wording of the disclaimer from the preface has that ironic whiff of compulsion about it; Smith is rather denying any close affinities with the

romantic, originality, create, and *genius*--are four of the eight Barfield lists at the head of his last chapter, the title of which is "Imagination." *Genius* would become a favorite of Barfield's in other books and essays. Again, the rhetoric and the illustrations, especially of the words *romantic* and *imagination*, closely parallel Smith's own. Both situate their discussions in the larger continental matrix of the *Sturm und Drang.* Smith begins by asking why there has been no need until the middle of the seventeenth century to form an adjective on the noun *romance.* He suggests that words and the ideas that inhabit them develop at a different pace.

> The label . . . forms a centre of attraction for other vague perceptions which group themselves about it; and it is only by a long and tentative process of collective thought that the various aspects of the phenomena described become more apparent, and the label or name acquires more definite meanings. Our word *romantic* is a conspicuous instance of this process. Its appearance in the middle of the seventeenth century is an indication of a change in human thought, and marks the moment when that change had become obvious enough to need a term to express it. (69-70)

This was evidence to Smith that language, with the aid of the Reformation, had become self-conscious. *Romantic* first meant "like the old romances" and then became a term not of approbation but of scorn, of anything not validated by the stamp of reason. So, says Smith, it was the need "to mark the contrast between the truth of nature and the falsehood of romance which first brought into use this famous adjective" (72). Smith illustrates: "'Can anything,' Bishop South asks, 'be imagined more profane and impious, absurd and indeed romantic?'" (72). Barfield illustrates: "'Can anything,' asked Bishop South, 'be imagined more profane and impious, absurd and indeed romantic?'" (210). Later, as the age of Dryden waned (after the "Elizabethan adolescence" as Barfield put it), *romantic*

---

idea of pure English than respecting the wishes of the S.P.E. that he take sole responsibility for his opinions.

[37] In addition to the Afterword to *History in English Words*, by 1966 and in the introduction to *Romanticism Comes of Age*, Barfield acknowledged his debt in more specific terms: "The adjective *romantic*, as Mr. Pearsall Smith pointed out long ago, was originally applied in a pejorative sense to persons like Don Quixote whose heads were supposed to be filled with the old Romances, of which they had absorbed too many" (14).

suggested the scenes of gothic, as to some less subtle minds today it still does of Romantic, literature, finally establishing itself as a term antithetical to *classicism*.

Until now Smith had only suggested a shift in consciousness. It is necessary, he said, to note the evolution in the regard for *originality* and *create* in order to locate the changing position of the poet and his relation to the natural world. He located the culmination of his discussion in the word *genius*, which in classical Latin meant "primarily a person's tutelary god or attendant spirit" (95) but which has ultimately, in part by contrast to *talent*,

> been much enriched by the modern conception of the unconscious self. Although many psychologists would not now accept, without considerable qualifications, the earlier notion of the Unconscious as the abiding-place of genius, and the source of inspiration, yet they would probably all agree that something analogous to the conscious processes of thought, which may go on beneath awareness, and reveal itself to it in a sudden uprush, probably plays an important, and possibly a dominant, role in what we call inspiration and the creative activity of genius" (112-13).

The shift Smith intimated in this essay could also be located, as he himself saw, in the word *inspiration*. But his more profound reflections on the shift came later, in his chapter "Language and Thought" in *The English Language*. Whereas earlier and not very spectacularly he had tried to join the debate on genius and talent, the direction of which Eliot had already fixed in such formulas as "a continual extinction of personality" and such illustrations as an oxygen chamber full of platinum and sulpher dioxide,[38] in "Language and Thought" Smith began to see the consequences of what he had noticed earlier. It was this essay which most certainly ignited Barfield's imagination.

Smith's chapter began, as I've noted, with a paragraph on the critical method of locating internal evidence as it relates specifically to word-meaning. Barfield repeated this in the opening pages of *History in English Words*. Smith then proceeded to warn how apt

---

[38] T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), *Selected Essays* (1932; New York: Harcourt, 1950), 7.

we are to "read back modern conceptions into old words, and [claiming] it is one of the most difficult mental feats to place ourselves in the minds of our ancestors, and to see life and the world as they saw it" (216). Reading back "modern conceptions" Barfield would later call "projecting post-logical thoughts back into a pre-logical age," or "Logomorphism" (*PD*, 90); Smith's "mental feat," he would call the "gentle art of *unthinking*" (*PD*, 134; also 133, 206). Taking as his test of a word's common semantic currency the number of other words formed on it, Smith proceeded to survey a number of words from the Middle Ages on, which suggest new arrivals not only in the lexical stock of English but, more importantly, in the common deposit of human consciousness. On the rise of words which suggest a mechanistic model of the universe (Barfield wrote a chapter on "Mechanism" in *HEW*), Smith says

> It is a commonplace to say that the dominant conception of modern times is that of science, of immutable law and order in the material universe. This great and fruitful conception so permeates our thought, and so deeply influences even those who most oppose it, that it is difficult to realize the mental consciousness of a time when it hardly existed. But if we study the vocabulary of science, the words by which its fundamental thoughts are expressed, we shall find that the greater part of them are not to be found in the English language a few centuries ago; or if they did exist, that they were used of religious institutions or human affairs; and that their transference to natural phenomena has been very gradual and late. (218)

Such instances are *regular*, once used in monasticism in opposition to *secular* but now used to denote the way the natural world goes about its business, and *law* (*lex naturae* or *naturalis*), once used to denote the "law of God implanted in the human reason for the guidance of human conduct" (220) but later transferred to matter itself, which *obeys* certain laws of nature. The transfer, as Barfield himself pointed out soon after, consists of a small rhetorical achievement--the exchange of one metaphor for another--although it does indicate a shift in "outlook" and an increase in man's ability to think abstractly.[39] Even the past as a thing to be known rather than felt is a late arrival, Smith says, due in large part to the

---

[39] See, e.g., *HEW*, 165.

Reformation.[40] If we were to strip ourselves of our own outlook, which means stripping ourselves of the words which have become so much a part of our common assumptions about how the world works, we might be able to "enter into the spirit and popular consciousness of the Middle Ages" (230). The world would be governed not by impersonal law

> but expressing supernatural purpose, and subject to constant supernatural intervention. The sense of past and future, the looking before and after of modern times, the historical sense, which makes the past so different from the present, and fills our minds with speculations and ideals for the future, would drop from us. (230-31)

Instead of inhabiting a universe of regular mechanical process, instead of seeing the planets as moving merely by reason of their physical property to do so, we would inhabit a universe of "unchanging creation, formed in a moment out of nothing, and destined to end as suddenly as it began,"[41] and the *heavenly bodies*, as opposed to *planets*, would interest us insofar as they affect human destiny and influence our personalities. But even saying as much means unthinking *influence* and *personality*, stripping them of their history as words, stripping them of their achievements as abstract concepts which, *qua* abstract concepts, betray our very ability to abstract ourselves from our environs--even as there came a time when the old Romances, as objects now of scrutiny, could at a given time transform from mere thing-hood into a qualifying quantity (*romantic*). We would be able to speak at length of the "practical uses of things . . . but words to describe their qualities, apart from their uses, would be almost entirely wanting" (232). To want the words is to want the consciousness, the awareness of the concepts which inhabit them. Then, in a passage which must have seemed highly provocative to Barfield, Smith intimated a certain

---

[40] cf. Barfield: "while the nineteenth century spent itself prodigally in multitudinous endeavours to know what the past was, it is now possible for us, by penetrating language with the knowledge thus accumulated, to feel how the past is" (*HEW*, 25).

[41] 231; cf. Barfield: "Let us try, for a moment, to realize with our imaginations as well as with our intellects the world in which our fathers dwelt--a world created abruptly at a fixed moment in time, and awaiting a destruction equally abrupt" (*HEW*, 168).

ambivalence about the achievements of the modern:

> It is this practical or utilitarian spirit which would probably most oppress us; and our minds would feel imprisoned in the small box of the medieval universe, with its confining spheres, its near, monitory stars, and didactic animals. And yet, should we thoroughly enter into the atmosphere of that time, and find mankind and ourselves, not the temporary and accidental inhabitants of a remote planet, but standing at the center of a universe whose unifying principle was not mechanical law, but justice and divine grace, and whose end and purpose were the fulfilment of human destiny, we might feel that our life had gained a dignity and a gravity which modern science has taken from it; and that in the spiritual, and not in the natural world, was to be found, after all, the true home of the human soul. (232-33)

Smith considered this, grand as it is, trite in comparison to another "late fruit of daring thought" (234), namely, the emergence of the individual, the "I" as a separate entity of consciousness, not merely another soul within a unidividuated Aristotelian construct whose identity hung upon being *lost* or *saved.* The sense of personality, Smith said, "is one of the latest developments of human thought"--a notion Barfield could hardly help but be interested in and about which he wrote an entire chapter.[42] Smith called it "the discovery of the inner life and feelings" (243), due in part to Protestantism's emphasis on personal piety and personal religious experience but mostly to the "great revolution in philosophy when, in the XVIIth Century, Descartes turned the world inside out, and defined the activity of consciousness, the certainty of the thinking self, as the most immediate fact of existence" (243-44). *Consciousness*, according to Smith, first appeared in 1632, and Locke gave it philosophical impetus by describing it as "perception of what passes in a man's own mind" and by minting the compound *self-consciousness.* *Subjective* is as good an emblem as we have of this discovery of the inner self: whereas once it meant "'existing in itself' it took on the meaning of 'existing in consciousness or thought'" (245). Or again, whereas once objects in themselves were *boring* or *interesting*, now it is we who are either *bored* or *interested.* "This change is a subtle and yet an important one; it is due to our increased self-consciousness, and our greater sense of the

---

[42] "Personality and Reason" (chapter IX), *HEW.*

importance of the inner world of feeling" (248). The feeling that an evolution of consciousness might be traceable in language itself was surely crossing Barfield's mind as he first read these words of Smith's.

And then it was as if Smith's narrative itself were giving Barfield his own commission: "Our account of these developments of modern thought, the growing sense of individuality and self-consciousness, has been necessarily somewhat hurried" (249). But Barfield's account, though also hurried in its own way, would be book-length. Or again, "When anything becomes important to us it finds its name; and in the history of these names in the English language can be traced many changes in English life, many developments of thought, which would yield a rich reward to patient and careful study" (251), which indeed it did. They are the words Smith ends with and the sentiments Barfield begins with.

A whole chapter might be written on *genius*, Barfield had said (208), and his knowing that Smith had already done so suggests that it needed re-writing, that it needed to be taken further. And Barfield proceeded to spend a lifetime trying to do so.[43]

v

Having shown that Barfield's first important book contained a great deal of borrowed material, suggesting by the way that his place in the popular tradition is toward the end, I now turn to what in Barfield was in fact new.

The project Barfield proposed for himself in "The Western Outlook," that is, in part two of ***History in English Words***, was nothing less than an account, in fewer than two

---

[43] For some of the more concise statements, especially as regards *genius*, see chapter three in *Speaker's Meaning* (Middletown: Wesleyan, 1967) and the essay "Imagination and Inspiration" in *The Rediscovery of Meaning* (Wesleyan, 1977).

hundred pages, of man's passage from a mythological consciousness to abstract intellectual thought. The task was to show how mythology gave way to philosophy and religion, to show how medieval thought and the turning of the religious sense inward was important to the larger transition from Greek and Roman to modern European thought, to show how thus aided by an increasing religious self-consciousness completed by the Reformation the modern sense of a mechanical universe emerged, and then, finally and tentatively, to show how the Romantic movement was a last, noble attempt to keep mechanism from an absolute accession. The strokes were broad and the attempt noble. The result was not an essential Barfield book; it was an early sketch for a later canvas.

Words, says Barfield, are the "solid materials" of the "intangible inner world" of consciousness (85-86). For example, *panic*, as solid material,

> enables us to realize that early Greeks could become conscious of this phenomenon, and thus name it, because they felt the presence of an invisible being [the god Pan] who swayed the emotions of flocks and herds. And it also reveals how this kind of outlook changed slowly into the abstract idea which the modern individual strives to express when *he* uses the word *panic*.[44]

Thus, "the farther back language as a whole is traced, the more poetical and animated do its sources appear, until it seems at last to dissolve into a kind of mist of myth" (87-8). That is to say, "what may be called the soul-qualities" of "the natural phenomena make a more vivid impression at this time than their outer shapes and appearances" (88). Such a moment of human consciousness, Barfield says, can be described, loosely, as "mythological" as opposed to "intellectual thought" (88). When, for example, our earliest ancestors looked up at the "blue vault" of the sky "they felt that they saw not merely a place, whether heavenly or earthly, but the bodily vesture, as it were, of a living Being. And this fact is still extant in the formal resemblance between such words as *diary* and *divine*" (89):

---

[44] 86-7; suggested by Trench, *On the Study of Words*, 132.

> The English words *diurnal, diary, dial* are derived from the Latin "dies" (day), while *journal* comes to us, via the French language, from the same word. . . . As far back as we can trace them, the Sanskrit word "dyaus," the Greek "zeus" (accusative "dia"), and the Teutonic "tiu" were all used in contexts where we should use the word *sky;* but the same words were also used to mean *God."* (88)

The Romans, ever practical, made less of their mythology than the Greeks, and "soon there was a god, or part of a god, for every object and every activity under the sun, and when the empire was founded, each emperor, as he died, automatically became a divinity" (93). With mythology thus attenuated and with Christianity making assurances about false gods on the one had and the unknown god on the other, the

> classical gods and goddesses faded so slowy into the thin air of abstract thought that the process was hardly perceived, but the Nibelungs and Valkyries, the Siegrieds and Fafnirs of Teutonic myth, were doomed while they were still alive. Thus our fathers beheld the death of Baldur with their own eyes, and were awake during the twilight of the gods.[45]

Here the workings-out were as unsatisfactory as might be allowed a man in his mid- to late-twenties. But they were decisive. They did establish a course. That Barfield had not done enough with myth in this chapter is evident by his writing another in *Poetic Diction*, in which his definition of myth would benefit from its opposition to Max Müller's. Philology and mythological criticism were twin siblings of the nineteenth century. One remarkable feature of Barfield's treatment of myth was his resistance to its more visible critical trends, which of couse began to peter out some twenty years later when Bultmann unknowingly showed what their logical conclusions were. A second feature, notable in

---

[45] *HEW*, 96; cf. Trench, *On the Study of Words*: in the New Testament *interpreter* is "directly derived from and embodies the name of Hermes, a heathen deity, and a deity who did not, like Woden, Thor, and Freya, pertain to a long extinct mythology, but to one existing at that very moment in its strength" (132-33). It is not to Barfield's particular credit that what was surely a dazzling initial fascination with Nietzsche went no further than this paragraph, and it is telling that the story seems to have made its impression on Barfield not in an original form so much as through Wagner (see Edith C. Batho's review of *HEW* in *History* 13 (1928), 47-8; but see also *PD*, 87). There is some evidence that Barfield read the Nietzschean corpus, or a good part of it, about the time of the first World War, and there is little doubt that if he did it caught fire in his mind, especially with the prospect of early death so palpable. But Barfield seems never to have been cut out for scepticism and irony, and the knowable animus of language got a stronger hold.

History in English Words but not as clearly as in *Poetic Diction*, was his ablility to situate myth historically without having to think that its narratives were the mistakes of naïve men. (I will have more to say abouth this in the next chapter.)

Roman practicality and the increasing tendency in Greek thought to make thought itself the object of thinking marks the decline of myth and the rise of philosophy and religion on the crest of learning broadly conceived.

> Rome turned instinctively to the external, Greece to the inner world as a vehicle for the expression of her impulses. And just as "learning" for the Roman gradually came to mean "learning to be a soldier," so the ordinary Latin word for "teacher" (doctor) is now applied most commonly to a teacher of physical health. . . . What the Roman felt about the whole business of book-learning and disputing is indeed conveyed to us clearly enough by the meaning of the Latin "schola," from which we have taken *school.* But to a Greek all this had been merely the natural way of spending his spare time. "Schole" was the common Greek word for "leisure." (100-01).

Greek writers as early as Pythagorus refer to the ancient wisdom of the Egyptians, from whence the Greeks "may well have taken the seeds of abstract thought" (101), since Egypt had "mapped out the stars in constellations" and since "we are told by Aristotle that the Egyptians 'excelled in mathematics'" (103). Then Barfield suggests, in words highly evocative of Rudolf Steiner with whose works he had been acquainted for three years,[46] that if there were a philosophy among the Greeks as we conceive philosophy--that is, as wisdom "unadorned by myth" (103), then it was a religious phenomena--that it was religiously secretive, built of "*Mysteries*, which were evidently felt by them to lie at the core of their national and intellectual life," known only to *initiates* and "guarded so jealously and under such heavy penalties that we still know very little about them."[47] The shedding of myth and the rise of philosophy and religion is less an intellectual triumph than

---

[46] According to Lionel Adey, Barfield had already joined the anthroposophical movement. He had also read, "in English, Steiner's *Philosophy of Spiritual Activity, Occult Science*, and various lecture-cycles on the Gospels," and most probably The *Way of Initiation* (a.k.a *Knowledge of Higher Worlds*); see *C.S. Lewis's "Great War" with Owen Barfield* (British Columbia: Victoria, 1978), 12-13.

[47] *HEW*, 103; cf. Trench, *On the Study of Words*, 132.

. . . than what? Than a "shedding," as of a garment, than the developing of an "outlook," a stepping outside the narrative life of myth to examine thought itself, for the Greeks, far-reaching in abstract thought, begin to make thinking itself an object of thought. Plato's *idea*, no longer the mere "form or semblance" of a thing, though not quite what it is to us, "began to make it possible for us to get outside our thoughts and look at them, to separate our 'ideas' about things from the things themselves" (106). The permutations of Plato are inestimable, for it was his doctrine of spiritual types that made possible the contemplation of the eternal by the transient---"that love for a sensual and temporal object is capable of gradual metamorphosis into love for the invisible and eternal" (107). We know this and do it because, by means of the New Testament and the Prayer Book and our literary heritage Plato has come down to us. The great accomplishment of the poetry of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance has been the mediation of Platonism, the contemplation of the divine by means of the mundane.[48]

Except that "there came to the 'Academy' where he taught a young man from Stagira" (108), and whereas

> Plato had concentrated his intellectual effort on mapping out what we should now call the 'inner' world of human consiousness . . . Aristotle turned to the acquisition of knowledge about the outer world of matter and energy--that is to say, that part of the world which can be apprehended by the five senses and the brain. (108)

Barfield contended, and contends, that the difference between Plato and Aristotle "can hardly be exaggerated": [49]

> in Aristotle's imagination the two worlds, outer and inner, met and came into contact in quite a new way. The mind was, as it were, put at the absolute disposal of matter; it ceased to brood on what arose from within, and turned its attention outwards. The result of this was, of course, an enormous increase in the amount of

---

[48] See especially *HEW*, 107-8.

[49] *HEW*, 108; Barfield held firmly, as perhaps he had to, to a "great divide" in European philosophy between Plato and Aristotle. Such broad constructions were necessary to Barfield's method and to his matter. "Great divide" is the somewhat scornful phrase of C.S. Lewis who, more playfully, threatened to "explode it in a footnote" (Lewis, letter to Barfield, 24 Jan. 1926, Wade Collection (Wheaton College); cited in Adey, 11; see also Adey, 125, n. 11).

> knowledge concerning the material processes of the outer world. But that was not the first result. For, curiously enough, the first result was a pronounced hardening and sharpening of the mind's own outlines. Struggling to fit herself, as into a glove, to the process of cause and effect observed in physical phenomena, the mind became suddenly conscious of her own shape. She was astonished and delighted. She had discovered *logic*. (109)

(One gets a sense for how rapidly Barfield moves. And yet one also gets a sense, at least here, of how provocative such rapidity allows him to be.) Platonic *analogy* is in decline; Aristotelian *analysis* is in ascendancy. But a concept is taking shape; both philosophy and religion are made flesh, so to speak, for not only is the mind aware of her shape: Word and Reason have co-inhabited a word. The Stoics

> were the first to make the progressive incarnation of thought in audible sound a part of the creative working of God in the world; and it is to them accordingly, with their deep sense of the divine significance of words and their origin, that we owe the word *etymology*, the first half of which is composed of a poetical Greek adjective meaning "true." Though he had never heard of Christianity, Philo, importing into the theory a certain Semitic awfulness, actually called this mysterious "logos" the "only-begotten-son." (117-18)

And of course it is not long after that a man appears who unites to the idea of *incarnation* an utterance said originally to have come from a burning bush.[50]

After discussing in a chapter entitled "Devotion" the struggles of the Schoolmen to liberate individual thought and at the same time, in context of ecclesial authority, to fear it, Barfield turns his attention to the scientific revolution.[51] Barfield begins chapter VII, "Experiment," with the relation of the zodiac to classical and medieval mathematics. Chaucer's *Treatise on the Astrolabe* (1391) gives us such words as *almanac, equinox,*

---

[50] The Johannine *logos* never ceased to intrigue Barfield. An explication of it would require a lengthy excursus on the concept of revelation. See n. 65; see also "Philology and the Incarnation" in *The Rediscovery of Meaning.*

[51] The "Devotion" chapter, which examines the words *passion, lady, love-longing, conscience, inquisition, authority, individual,* and *influence,* is a fascinating but inadequate performance, as for example in Barfield's cursory treatment of the Realist/Nominalist debates. The chapter had to be written so that Barfield would not be accused of supposing that after Aristotle's death his successor, Francis Bacon conveniently arrived. Barfield's claims here are not so problematic as they are thin, and because the chapter is not necessary for a fair explication, and because I have touched on it above, I pass it over, except for what I shall say on the four humors.

horizon, meridian. I quote at length:

> Such words show us that the Europe of the Dark Ages had been experiencing once more what the ancient scientists had known. Its learned men had been marking down recurrences of natural phenomena and orienting themselves on the earth by dividing its face up into imaginary rings and segments. For such purposes they had found Latin and Greek terms ready to their hand. . . . It is probable that, with the use of these words, there came for the first time into the consciousness of man the possibility of seeing himself purely as a solid object situated among solid objects. . . . It is true that the astronomy of Plato's time had been intimately connected with arithmetic and geometry; but Plato's "number" and his geometry do not appear to have been quite the abstract sciences which these things are today. What we call their "laws" seem to have been felt, not as intellectual deductions, but rather as real activities of soul--that human soul which, as we saw, the philosopher could not yet feel to be wholly separate from a larger world Soul, or planetary Soul.

And then, in a somewhat stirring passage also benefitting from that rapidity, transacted by a mind which seems to see the forest but not so much the trees, Barfield prepares us for a similar claim he will soon be making about himself, about ourselves:

> Is it too fanciful to picture to ourselves how, drawn into the minds of a few men, the relative positions and movements of the stars gradually developed a more and more independent life there until, with the rise in Europe first of trigonometry and then of algebra, they detached themselves from the outside world altogether? And then by a few great men like Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Newton, these abstract mathematics were re-fitted to the stars which had given them birth, and the result was that cosmogony of infinite spaces and a tiny earth in which our imaginations roam today? (144-46)

For example, the semantic shifts in such words as *weight, mass,* and *gravity* betray a revolution in outlook "not difficult to perceive and yet not easy to realize,"[52] first taken from the contemplation of matter and then "re-fitted." Another example Barfield gives, following the example of Smith (*The English Language*, 219-20), is *lex* or *law*. Bacon first used *lex* in application to nature, though the sense of *obedience* to laws passed through a stage of more, not less, obedience to divine imperative down to our abstract sense of

---

[52] 147; a page later Barfield qualifies the grasping of attraction at a distance as a familiar enough thing "to the ordinary, untrained imagination" (148). From the start the training of imagination became a recurring theme. (It had been key to Steinerian education.) One cannot appropriate prior modes of consciousness apart from training the imagination to do so; see also *PD*, 86-7.

obeying th

the ones us

semantic c

the form s

dispute

intellectua

(150-51

Barfield s

mathemat

toward

The great

from the in

used "to d

obeying the law of, say, gravity.[53] Barfield's illustrations do not take him very far outside the ones used by Smith in "Language and Thought," though again he reflects on the semantic changes with quite a bit more flair: "How far Francis Bacon was responsible for the form subsequently taken by scientific thought will probably remain a matter of dispute. . . . As with Aristotle, so with Bacon, it is impossible to say whether his own intellectual volume displaced the great wave or whether he merely rose upon its early crest" (150-51).

Impossible or not, the dawn of mechanism has risen:

> "Every cause of a cause is cause of thing caused"; and we soon find the philosophers seeking through a "chain" of causes for that First Cause, which they identified with the Almighty. By the nineteenth century this thought-system of an abstract causality, brought about by means of abstract "laws," lay, like an empty house, ready to be taken over by a new owner. The new owner was mechanism. "The great abstract law of mechanical causality" (mechanische Kausalität), wrote Haeckel in 1899, "now rules the entire universe, as it does the mind of man. It is the steady, immutable pole-star, whose clear light falls on our path through the dark labyrinth of the countless separate phenomena." (192-93)

Barfield says the relation between mechanics and physiology resembles that between mathematics and astronomy cited above. This is the news about ourselves he was working toward:

> We drew from our own bodies, it would seem, the sense-experiences of force and pressure and the like, on which mechanics are based; then we externalized them in tools and machines, and turned them into abstract "laws"; finally, we proceeded to re-apply the "laws" to the familiar objects from which we had first extracted them, and the result was that we turned our previous notions of these inside out. (193)

The great apotheosis of mechanism is the mechanical self. Whereas Plato induced the outer from the inner, science induced the inner from the outer. And as *vitalism* and *vitalist* are used "to distinguish those who held that life, as such, had any purpose or significance,"

---

[53] One might fruitfully ask, as Barfield later did, what the quantifiable gain here is: attempts to describe the world "from its own point of view instead of from the point of view of divinity or of human souls" causes one "to reflect that the success achieved is really only a relative one" (165). We may think, for example that lying, as a concept, is a strict abstraction. But abstraction is built upon the solid cement of the concrete, and it is not long before we are talking about prevarication--that is, about plowing outside the furrow, or in crooked lines. And thus to talk is to begin to wonder. Or else to be dead.

so, perhaps, "it is a curious remark that the erection within men's imaginations of this severely mechanical framework for themselves was accompanied by, and may have been partly responsible for, an increase in their sense of self-consciousness. The more automatic the cosmos, apparently, the more the vital ego must needs feel itself detached" (197). It is a trick, this "must needs feel itself detached," but it is a good one, an interesting one, ponderable. For until the close of the eighteenth century, *Autonomous* is not used of individuals, but only of "states and societies" (198); the absolute value of the individual consciousness which Christianity helped to bring about, particulary in the Reformation, wedded to a mechanical paradigm of the cosmos, seems, ironically, remote "from the Christian vocabulary of the human and social virtues--*charity, lovingkindness, mercy, pity*" (200).

Then Barfield suggests this is lamentable:

> we are constrained to ask a little sadly what had become of a certain sunny element, a supressed poetic energy, a wonder and a wild surprise, which lurks in the former words, but somehow--with all our respect for them--not in the latter. And for light upon this question we must turn to yet another group of words--small, yet of such far-reaching implications as to demand a final chapter to themselves. (200)

These words, three of which we've seen in Smith, were to be art, fiction, *creative*, *genius*, *romantic*, fancy, imagination, dream. That "sunny element" would come from the imagination in the doctrines of the Romantic poets.

Barfield wrote his last chapter with Smith's "Four Romantic Words" open in front of him, for it contains the choicest of Smith's ideas and a few additional ideas that appear to be Barfield's own. The tracing of *romantic*, *creative*, and *genius*, together with the words surrounding them, all belonged to Smith before they belonged to Barfield. An initial discussion of *art* and *fiction* helped Barfield lead into *romantic* as an adjective and shed a little light on poetry and criticism as new intellectual endeavors in the seventeenth century

(poetry being separable now from other crafts).[54]

> *Fantasy* and *imagination* are both found in Chaucer in the sense of "a mental image or reflection," or more particularly "an image of something which either has no real existence or does not yet exist." After the Renaissance Shakespeare suddenly transfigured one of the two words in one of those extraordinary passages which make us feel that genius is indeed something more than earthly:
>
> > *And as imagination bodies forth*
> > *The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen*
> > *Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing*
> > *A local habitation and a name.*[55]
>
> In such a passage we seem to behold him standing up, a figure of colossal stature, gazing at us over the heads of the intervening generations. . . . That mystical conception which the word embodies in these lines--a conception which would make imagination the interpreter and part creator of a whole unseen world--is not found again until the Romantic Movement has begun. (213-14)

The allusion to Wordsworth is the place where Barfield launches into his suggestive but airy utterances on the glories of Romanticism--lines which point him toward the labor he would occupy himself with the rest of his life, but lines which, in Emerson's phrase, announce regions of undiscovered thought, for Barfield had not yet really discovered them. There is no real sense that Barfield, though he introduces the famous distinction between fancy and imagination, knows Coleridge well yet, no recognition (for example) that the Shakespeare passage cited above suggests an active faculty somewhat preliminary to Coleridge's esemplastic power. So we read, "It was in the philosophy of the Lake School that the perception of Nature--that is to say of all in Nature that is not purely mechanical--depends upon what is brought to it by the observer. Deep must call unto deep" (216), but we get only an intimation of what this might mean for the labor of the book except that it somehow stands, as Coleridge said, in opposition to the "mechanical regularity," that it is at odds with "organic form" (217). Barfield was announcing a discovery (perhaps to

---

[54] i.e., art "as a separate, unrelated activity, something which can be distinguished in thought from a 'craft,' a 'trade,' or a religious ceremony, [and which] seems to have first sprung into being" (202)

[55] The lines from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are the same Smith cites in "Four Romantic Words" (*Words and Idioms*, 74); there are other duplicate citations from Dryden, Hobbes, and (as shown above) Bishop South.

himself)--that his own mind was forged on the anvils of Romanticism, that "it is in the philosophy and poetry of Romanticism that we first feel a true understanding, not indeed of the process itself, but of the results of that process, which has been traced in this book under the name of 'internalization'" (217). He then turns to "that most heartrending of all poems" in which we are told that we receive but what we give. It is, of course, the place to turn, as in chapter four I shall turn, but it is a more euphoric than precise response Barfield makes to it:

> And this re-animation of Nature was possible because the imagination was felt as creative in the full religious sense of the word. It had itself assisted in creating the natural forms which the senses were now contemplating. It had moved upon the face of the waters. For it was "the repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation"--the Word made human (218),

which all sounds very clever, as perhaps it did to Coleridge's readers (though he grounded it more thoroughly in several different texts), but what exactly does it mean? *Poetic Diction* would be clearer, as it most certainly had to be, on *myth*, *metaphor*, and *imagination*. Barfield situated it--in part over the years--epistemologically, but still had not worked out his theory of perception, though by the end of his life he had.

The mood of *History in English Words* had that lament of a glory passing away from the earth (and indeed Barfield seems closer here to Wordsworth or even de la Mare than to Coleridge). But there was also an indictment:

> When we reflect on the history of such notions as *humour, influence, melancholy, temper,*[56] and the rest, it seems for the moment as though some invisible sorcerer had been conjuring them all inside ourselves--sucking them away from the planets, away from the outside world, away from our own warm flesh and blood, down into the shadowy realm of thoughts and feelings. There they still repose; astrology has changed to astronomy; alchemy to chemistry; today the cold stars glitter unapproachable overhead, and with a naïve detachment mind watches matter moving incomprehensibly in the void. At last, after four centuries, thought has shaken herself free. (143).

Why "naïve"? Barfield was working his way toward the assertion that the push and pull

---

[56] cf. Smith, *English Language*, 172-4.

version of knowledge, the modern scientific model of the universe, is a later but not necessarily "truer" version. For Barfield guarded himself well against chronological snobbery, nor did he regard the pre-scientific as ignorant.[57] He, even more than Smith, could read the literature of the Middle Ages with a believing mind. To Barfield, earlier paradigms of the world were not so much paradigms, as we would now call them, as they were pieces of a narrative. He confessed that "the general relation between language and myth is, as the word *myth* (Greek 'muthos'--narrative speech) suggests, almost unfathomable" (97). But "narrative" manages to take us some distance into the past. The modern outlook is an "outlook" properly speaking, but even to suggest that a prior mode of consciousness was, by contrast, an "inlook" (though doing so correctly situates man at the perimeter looking "in" to the heavens) is still to miss the point. The diction is not so accurate, and perhaps something like "inlive" is more serviceable: it strips "inlook" of the self-consciousness it gets by association with (but which properly belongs only to) "outlook." What Dante *lived in* as a narratable world, we *look at* as a chartable universe. To one the universe is a story; to the other it is a tinker toy. So we speak, Barfield says, not of truth and error, but of what is earlier and later (176). This is significant. There have been many who did, and will be many more who will, write about the errors of the medieval mind. Barfield was showing that *errors* is the wrong word.

---

[57] The designation "chronological snobbery" is Lewis's, with whom Barfield was butting heads at this time, and meant for Lewis's rationalism that no idea prior to the Enlightenment could be relevant. Lewis said, "Barfield was beginning to overthrow my chronological snobbery"; see *Surprised By Joy* (1955; New York: HBJ, 1984), 212-13.

Though there is little by way of biographical information on Barfield, and though his own resistance to more recent historicisms (to say nothing of materialist criticism)[58] prevents our getting much of a glimpse at the outer, rather than the inner, forces at work on him, it might be worth bringing to bear in a short excursus some features of Barfield's life at the time of his early writings.

Barfield was educated at Highgate, where the dead Samuel Taylor Coleridge lies, and it is significant to note Barfield's assessment of the place: "My recollections of Highgate School are on the whole happy ones. I was on the 'classical,' as opposed to 'modern,' side, and have always been grateful for the classical education I was given, which was fairly professional since e.g. it extended to not merely reading, but actually *writing*, Greek verse."[59]

Barfield won a scholarship to Oxford in 1916, but having reached military age in 1917 he enlisted in the Signals unit of the Royal Engineers (now the Royal Corps of Signals) and received a commission as a wireless officer in 1918. The armistice saved him from going abroad, and about this time he met C.S. Lewis. The two of them soon after developed the practice of reading (mostly Greek plays) together and became engaged in what they called their own "Great War," admirably examined by Lionel Adey in *C.S. Lewis's "Great War" With Owen Barfield.* Barfield matriculated at Wadham College,

---

[58] Adey says Barfield denies "Marxian or Freudian reductiveness, the derivation of human imagination and reason from the 'foul rag-and-bone shop' of the appetites" (61). It is noteworthy, and will in part be taken up in the next chapter, that Barfield failed to find a way to put materialist critiques to good use. That a man could launch his career on the heels of the first world war, resume it on the heels of the second, and spend the whole of it tracing the rise of habitual abstraction, all with a blind eye to Feuerbach's and Marx's inversions and with a deaf ear to the reverberations of commodification, is surely a piece of perpetual perplexity, though not, certainly, as it bears on his being marginalized. Sometimes one reaps what one doesn't sow.

[59] Personal letter, 8 Dec. 1993; Barfield won the same Greek prize--and the last given at Highgate--that Gerard Manley Hopkins won.

Oxford from 1919 to 1923, taking a first in English in 1921 and removing to nearby Long Crendon to do the work that earned him his B.Litt. and that later became *Poetic Diction* (1928). He published his first poem, "Air-Castles," at age nineteen;[60] in 1923 his poem "Day" appeared in *The Best Poems of 1923*, and in that same year T.S. Eliot accepted his short story, "Dope," for *Criterion*. In 1925 Barfield published his first book, *The Silver Trumpet*, and followed it the next year with *History in English Words*: all of this, and *Poetic Diction*, before he was thirty.[61]

Despite Eliot's accepting "Dope" and otherwise admiring Barfield's later work,[62] Barfield developed an early resistance to Modernism, and it is within the context of his distaste for literary fashion in the early part of the century that we must situate and try to understand the nature and argument of not only his early books but of his entire career. Two years after Eliot had published *The Wasteland* Barfield wrote to him, "I am a little tired of literature which can do nothing but point out ironically that there is nothing much going on but disintegration and decay."[63] And Barfield never really managed to develop an

---

[60] *Punch* 152 (14 Feb. 1917), 101; according to the editors of *A Barfield Sampler* the poem was written while Barfield was still at school; see *A Barfield Sampler*, 3.

[61] Barfield said that during the years he worked on *History in English Words* and *Poetic Diction* he was "not engaged in any regular occupation. For six or seven years," he says, "I was a gentleman of leisure." By the time *Poetic Diction* came out, Barfield had no fewer than forty two publications, including essays and reviews but many of them poems and mostly in *The London Mercury* and *The New Statesman*. Among the books reviewed was Logan Pearsall Smith's *English Idioms* (1923; later collected in *Words and Idioms*); Barfield had also begun to publish in *Anthroposophy*. During this time he revived his Greek and Latin and learned Italian in order to read Dante. He also read the late Platonic *Dialogues* ("which are not about ethics but more about the nature of perception"), Aristotle's *De Anima*, and had begun, by 1923, to read Rudolf Steiner. This amalgam of intellectual activity had convinced him of the inadequacy of translations from Greek and Latin. "They [the translators] were talking about abstractions. Plato wasn't." See *The Evolution of Consciousness*, ed. Shirley Sugerman (Middletown: Wesleyan, 1976), 11.

[62] Eliot helped Barfield publish *Saving the Appearances* (1957) and spoke favorably of *Worlds Apart* (1963); see *Barfield Sampler*, 17.

[63] Quoted in *Barfield Sampler*, 6; on the exchange of letters between Barfield and Eliot, see Thomas Kranidas, "The Defiant Lyricism of Owen Barfield," *Seven: An Anglo-American Literary Review* 6 (1985), 23-24. The language in this letter anticipates such later despairing utterances as these from the 1970s (in which there is certainly some unintentional irony): after discussing Schelling on myth Barfield, in a half-page aside, says, "I must remark here, since I have referred to Schelling, who (I suppose) is not much read today, and is probably regarded by most philosophy students as having been 'written off' in some

affinity with modernism exceeding his great affection for the poetry of Walter de la Mare. Thus, elsewhere and with greater scorn for the poets of his generation, he said "ironical is a word which may cover a multitude of sins. There has been in the last fifty years or so a great deal of ill-natured or at least highly sophisticated irony going about." It is no small wonder, then, that Barfield has tried neither to account for this distaste materially nor situate it historically. There is, as I've said, evidence that he read Nietzsche sometime near the outbreak of the war; how much the war mattered to him intellectually is question worth asking.[64] His fiction and poetry are severely critical of industry and technology, and his aesthetic sensibilities were always more closely allied to Romanticism than to the poetry of his own or his parents' generation. His critique of science presently conceived is no secret to those who have read his works. It should be pointed out that, as he put it,

> I was brought up definitely without religious beliefs and there was in fact something of a bias against them. There was certainly an anti-clerical atmosphere . . . [and] when I first began to think about such things as literature and art and religion, I had no background to speak of and my mind was a kind of tabula rasa. . . . It was rather important that it [traditional religious upbringing] wasn't there, when it comes to the early books I wrote. . . . It was in fact a very common word in my family, that someone was "affected." I was led to see myself too in

---

way, that it depresses me when I hear it said, or implied, that we have passed on from Descartes to Kant, from Kant to the post-Kantians . . . and of course it depresses me especially when the writing off is done by people who perhaps have not themselves read a line of the discarded material" (1970). Or again, "as I put it in *Saving the Appearances*, until 'the idols are smashed,' we shall go on with the cosy old twentieth-century image of history as meaningless and absurd, and therefore of life itself as meaningless and absurd. How tired I am of it: how I should like to see it beginning to be replaced by the image of history as a process of transition from original to final participation" (1972); see *The Rediscovery of Meaning*, 28 and 215.

[64] See also n. 45. In a letter dated 24 Nov. 1993 I asked Barfield to address himself to the topic of the first world war and how it affected his ideas. He replied in a letter dated 8 Dec. 1993: "I was 14 years old, when the war was first declared, so I can't really be said to have *had* any 'ideas' about it. My family's attitude was neither chauvenistic nor condemnatory. 'Worried' is the only word I can think to describe it." It is perhaps also worth noting--I should at least include this for the sake of objectivity--that when I interviewed Barfield at his home in Forest Row in August of the same year he said he had never read Nietzsche but always thought he should have. I think this must surely have been a faulty recollection of the sort a ninety four year-old man must be allowed: his letters to me have suggested his having forgotten any previous correspondence between us, which may of course be attributed to my being forgettable. Yet there is one letter written to me on 27 July 1993, but it is dated 1933. I think internal evidence from books is more trustworthy in this case than internal evidence from memory.

> those terms and I suspected anything in the nature of what seemed like powerful emotional experience, in terms of such things as poetry, as being a kind of self-deception. I had to justify to myself, so to speak, before I could feel confident that I wasn't being an affected ass. (*Evolution of Consciousness*, 4-5)

Barfield's religious conversion began somewhere around 1924 or 1925, though he did not receive the sacrament of Baptism until 1948. It is not without some significance, then, that Barfield's religious awakening coincided with his poetic awakening. Lyric poetry especially, like spiritual science when he first encountered it, had an "effect . . . independent of belief," since, as he said previously, "I had been brought up as an agnostic" (*RCA*, 13, 9). And as *Poetic Diction* was written out of a kind of criticism which can only be described as aesthetic and private, still the various forces at work on him between the years of 1914 and 1928 help in some measure to account for the kind of thinker Barfield became. There is a fairly good chance of getting Barfield wrong if we fail to realize that his spirituality (I use the term for its breadth) was more a poetic and epistemological necessity than a set of assumptions.[65]

---

[65] It would take some time and space to situate two of Barfield's important statements on this very fact. One is from an essay titled "Meaning, Revelation and Tradition in Language and Religion" (*Missouri Review* 5:3 (1982), 117-28; originally presented 9 April 1981 for the University of Missouri Paine Lecture Series in Religion). The other, previously mentioned (n. 50), is "Philology and the Incarnation." Briefly, both work from the fact of Barfield's initial fascination with the *logos* of the fourth Gospel and with his working through the nature of revelation, particularly, the certainty he had come to that words are symbols of *thoughts* and that as such need incarnational nomenclature if there is to be any talk about them. The *logos* was not just an attractive and catchy lead to the crowning achievement of the New Testament. A Johannine *logos* is necessary for thought. And so, speaking of himself in the third person, Barfield said he felt obliged, in the words of the latter essay, "that if he had never heard of it through the Scriptures, he would have been obliged to try his best to invent something like it as a hypothesis to save the appearances" (*Rediscovery of Meaning*, 236), even though, in the words of the former essay, "I certainly had no intention of accepting on faith anything I couldn't understand. I happened not to have been brought up that way" (117).

One important feature Trench, Bradley, and Smith all shared, more remarkable for Trench in his moment than for the others in theirs, is that none of them lamented the semantic changes each made it his business to study. None of them carried a bias against change or felt it a fall from grace; each in his own degree understood the boons of it. The amorphous conceptual edges each saw in the more "poetic" past, residual even in Barfield's first performance, became the distinct lines dividing the "poetic" and "prosaic" which Barfield sketched in his next book and which were confirmed in him by Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West*.[66] In short, Barfield accounted for the "poetry in words" Trench felt but never quite got right.

Powerful as Spengler was to the early Barfield, Otto Jespersen's *Progress in Language* was, by contrast, *important*.[67] For even though Barfield's mentors went so far (and for Trench it was quite far indeed) as not to object to semantic changes, Jespersen went even farther in objecting to the idea--doctrine, really--that language was subject to continual entropy. The Dane gave English the validation Smith and Barfield needed for what they wanted to do with it. "No language," Jespersen said, "is better suited than English to the purposes of the student who wishes, by means of historical investigation, to form an independent opinion on the life and development of language in general" (1). Jespersen set himself up against the impetus of the tradition represented by Schleicher--a

---

[66] New York: Knopf, 1926 (vol. I), 1928 (vol. II); originally *Der Untergang des Abendlandes, Welthistorische Perspektiven* (Munich: Beck'sche, 1922). Barfield became familiar with Spengler as *Poetic Diction* was being revised for the press (see *PD*, 12-3). The burden, then, of demonstrating the influence is as pointless as under different circumstances it would be colossal. It is burden enough to read *Decline of the West*, but doing so is quite enough if affinities are all one is are after. At every turn Spengler is doing in forty pages what Barfield is doing in forty words. See, for example, Spengler on the "grades of the consciousness" (i, 54) or the problems of translation: "'Nephesh' is not 'animus' and 'atman' is not 'soul,' and what we consistently discover under our label 'will' Classical man did not find in his soul-picture *at all*" (i, 304).

[67] 1894; London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1909.

tradition

decay. S

structure

of freed

at the da

account,

are throu

ausgemac

N

on synthe

argument

error of w

the Hegel

the fundar

whom

re
fe
Re

That is, a

regarded

Th

early year

strict adhe

problemat

immutable

tradition which and a representative who held that language was in a constant state of decay. Schleicher had been, in Jespersen's phrase, "the first master builder of that lofty structure, the Arian 'ursprache'" (4) but he had adhered too strictly to a Hegelian doctrine of freedom to notice that Language and History are not successive periods. Since language at the dawn of historical times was flexional, any change thereafter must, on Schleicher's account, be loss: "linguistic history means decay of languages as such, subjugated as they are through the gradual evolution of the mind to greater freedom" (8). "Das ist ausgemachte wahrheit" (8).

Not so, according to Jespersen. Analytic and syntactic languages are improvements on synthetic, inflected languages. Schleicher's Hegelian devotion might have been argument enough for Schleicher himself, but a principal and more obvious cause of the error of which Schleicher was the emblem, according to Jespersen, was "not really due to the Hegelian train of argument," for "the same view is found as early as Bopp," and "it is the fundamental belief, more or less pronounced, of many other linguistic speculators" in whom

> reasoning is summoned to arms in defence of results arrived at by instinct. And the feeling underlying this instinct, what is it but a grammar-school admiration, a Renaissance love of the two classical languages and their literatures? (9)

That is, a modern word with its narrow meaning (compare *had* with *habaidêdeima*) was regarded as "mutilated and worn relic of a splendid original" (11).

There were, course, a great many unfounded assumptions about language in the early years of philological labor, including a resilient and abiding respect for Hebrew, a strict adherence to the Creation/Fall paradigm as applicable to language, and, equally problematic, a belief in language as a natural phenomenon subject as other phenomenon to immutable laws of nature--an assumption quite understandable given the great strides made

by comparative philology, particularly Grimm's Law.[68] But Jespersen's simple contribution, which also proved to be crucial, was to ask what the evolution to syntactical languages--what, for example, English--meant for *thought*.[69] One might marvel at the efficiency of inflected languages, particularly Greek, but to prefer inseparable notions collected into one word over the ability "to express certain minute shades of thought" in several words is to turn a blind eye to the "comparatively late growth in the individual as well as in the race" to grasp "abstract notions" (24-5)--a sentence that no doubt meant a great deal to Smith and even more to Barfield. Philologists registered losses in grammatical forms without registering the gains in intellectual units. So when Schleicher likened language to a statue "that has been rolling for a long time in the bed of a river till its beautiful limbs have been worn off, so that now scarcely anything remains but a polished stone cylinder with faint indications of what once it was," Jespersen responded by saying, yes, but look what a "serviceable . . . rolling-mill" you have. The question was intellectually utilitarian: "which would then be the better,--a rugged and unwieldy statue, making difficulties at every rotation, or an even, smooth, easy-going and well-oiled roller?" (11).

Jespersen's approbation of English was impetus enough for Smith and Bradley to do what they did and for Barfield to follow. The greater importance for Barfield didn't emerge until *Poetic Diction*, in which, as part of his argument against Max Müller's "roots of speech," he posited the *holophrase:* like the words of inflected languages standing between us and even earlier "words," the "holophrase" consisted of unindividuated

---

[68] "Language is to Schleicher," Jespersen says, "a natural object, just as much as a plant is. And if you object that language is nothing but human action and has no material existence, he will answer by defining language in an entirely materialistic way as the result, perceptible through the ear, of the action of a complex of material substances in the structure of the brain and of the organs of speech with their nerves, bones, muscles, etc." (12).

[69] "Jespersen's contribution" is accurate enough, yet it was suggested to him by others, whom he mentions; see, e.g., 14-17.

meanings.[70] This was absolutely crucial to Barfield's argument: words had to shorten, not lengthen, if consciousness could be said to have evolved. I will have more to say about this in the next chapter.

viii

The gene of Coleridge's consubstantial sign survived in Trench's insistence that words are not arbitrary but living things. It was recessive in Trench, to be sure, but it survived at least as a suggestion and became part Barfield's inherited code. Though by *History in English Words* he was aware, however dimly, of his own Romanticism, it was not until *Poetic Diction* that Barfield became aware of how necessary to the Romantic organism the living sign is.

It might be objected, especially by those unsympathetic to what I have said about Barfield in this essay, that such a chronology, such an evolution, is absolutely false, since Barfield himself says that the two books were written "more or less contemporaneously" (*RCA*, 12). One can only answer this, aside from noting that two years separate their appearing, by recurring to the books themselves. One, the first, is an intellectual exercise consisting mostly of the kind of summarizing a young mind finds necessary as it gets its bearings, the borrowed features of which become the established intellectual furniture of the other, the second, which is no mere exercise, no piece of note-taking. It is a true essay. One might say that even as Barfield was realizing that "Romanticism had a philosophy as well as a literature" (*RCA*, 10), such a realization called not only for an

---

[70] See, e.g., Jespersen's conclusions about the Bantu languages, in which the "development of grammatical signs and categories has gone on indirectly and through a shortening of longer word-forms, and not through an extension of shorter words by means of formal elements"; these "results go dead against a great many of those explanations of the origin of Arian [sic] forms which have hitherto been given by philologists" (59). Again, "Linguistic evolution seems constantly to display a tendency to shorten words" (343).

experience with the literature but also for a rigorous reflection on it. Such is the difference between *History in English Words*, 1926, and *Poetic Diction*, 1928, to which I now turn.

THREE

Barfield and the Opposition:

Versions of Coleridge from I.A. Richards to Raymond Williams

Einstweilen, bis den bau der welt
Philosophie zusammenhält,
Erhält sie das getriebe
Durch hunger und durch liebe.

–Schiller

Imagine, then, by miracle, with me,
(Ambiguous gifts, as what gods give must be)
What could not possibly be there,
And learn a style from a despair.

–William Empson

. . . the most interesting Marxist position, because of its emphasis on practice, is that which defines the pressing and limited conditions within which, at any time, specific kinds of writing can be done, and which correspondingly emphasizes the necessary relations involved in writing of other kinds.

–Raymond Williams

The institutional shadow out of which *Poetic Diction* (*PD*) emerged was cast by the Ogden-Richards collaboration, *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923), and five years after its appearance a young Barfield announced that "no really profound study has yet been made of *meaning*" (*PD*, 60). It was a bold claim for a young man in his twenties who not only held no academic post but who, outside of guest lectureships some thirty years later, would never be an academic. It was also a claim, in context, that would in no small measure define Barfield, for it was against I.A. Richards and the positivists of language (as Barfield

called them) that he would continue to define himself and from whom he would take his departures.

That this is evidence of Barfield's later parochialism is, no doubt, true. Ogden and Richards had at least acknowledged that across the chanel there was a man named Saussure, "a writer regarded by perhaps a majority of French and Swiss students as having for the first time placed linguistic upon a scientific basis" (4). But Barfield, at the time of *Poetic Diction*, had only a small set of enemies: Richards, Max Müller, Michel Bréal, and Anatole France. After *Poetic Diction* the enemies were cast in the general nomenclature of "linguistic analysis" (*ROM*, 13). The scattered essays that appeared toward the middle part of the century were solid evidence that Barfield had little patience for the structuralist theories sharing his moment, though it is true and needs keeping in mind that at that particular "moment" Barfield was engaged in his thirty years of law practice and that when he came out "linguistic analysis" was about to be turned in Olympian fashion on second-order discourse as well: the Author had only eight years left to live. It is a case of the somewhat unfortunate facts, and it would at least be interesting (though it is finally unimaginable) to know what Barfield would have done with Roland Barthes and the flurry of aporia that followed him, no less than what he would have done with Richards, had Barfield been an academic from the 'thirties on. His career such as it was consisted of a series of near-misses, of his ship passing others in the fog. But even so--and this needs admitting--there is a whiff of wilful abnegation rising from Barfield, an unwillingness to plunge into what Conrad called the destructive element. It was mutual, to be sure--the institutional red flags going up at each incantation of Rudolf Steiner. Barfield's removal from institutional discourse is there as a fact for us to do with it what we will: he did not enter the arena. This is not a judgment of the arena or of the exigencies of its construction. It is only the case, and the mystery of Barfield's marginalization is, in this sense, no mystery. After *Poetic Diction* Barfield went to the bar and remained there for nearly thirty

years, producing during those years a piece of psychological evacuation, *This Ever Diverse Pair* (1950), and his *Hauptwerk* (so designated by Elmar Schenkel), *Saving the Appearances* (1957).[1] The work on language was relegated to various essays especially during the 'sixties and 'seventies. It was important work, essential to Barfield's development and larger arguments, a necessary supplement to *Poetic Diction*, but it did not venture much further into the enemies' country. Book-length work on language had ended.

But there are ironies, and the more severe ironies of his institutional marginalization emerge only in the history of Cambridge English and the versions of Coleridge that obtained therein from Richards to Raymond Williams, whom A.C. Goodson has designated as "the most original of Coleridge's modern inheritors."[2]

Among the Coleridgeans who harbor their own favorite Coleridgeans, this judgment invites interrogation--from the admirers of Geoffrey Hill no less than from the admirers of Barfield: Hill has been keen to the social imbeddedness of language, to the costs of "beauty" and the complicities of evil in the structures of grandeur, whereas Barfield has tended to sound more like a pure aesthete, an admirer of the Keats promised by the letters, and an advocate of a theoretically distilled sense of beauty.[3] Coleridge was

---

[1] Barfield says the pressures of his professional life brought him to the brink of a nervous breakdown, which he averted in his quasi-autobiographical novel, *This Ever Diverse Pair*, published under the pseudonym G.A.L. Burgeon (London: Victor Gollancz, 1950; rpt. London: Floris, 1985; see *Barfield Sampler*, 4-5). It was in *Saving the Appearances* (London: Faber & Faber, 1957) that Barfield worked out his theory of perception. Schenkel's designation comes from "Ein besuch bei Owen Barfield," *Inklings-Jahrbuch* 6 (1988), 181-5.

[2] *Verbal Imagination* (Oxford, 1988), xv.

[3] Regarding Hill, I am thinking of such poems as "Ovid in the Third Reich" and "An Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture in England." Regarding Barfield, I say "has tended to sound" partly because of the responsive aesthetic which *Poetic Diction* begins with--a criticism the validity of which it is no part of my purpose to assess here. Perhaps it is useful to attend to commentary on both Hill and Barfield from the pen of the same critic: Hill's "moral, political, and linguistic consciousness has been educated at length in Coleridge's prose, with its refusals to divide and specialize the languages of cultural intelligence, and its passion for desynonymizing the impacted vocabularies of moral relationship; and he is perhaps the greatest master since STC of the workings of the defecated reason"; see R.K. Meiners, "'Upon

as keen to his own diction and definitions as perhaps anyone writing prose since him: Hill's is among the most scrupulous prose styles imaginable, whereas Barfield's caution has always centered on the broader structures of, say, polarity and the Coleridgean dictum that one may distinguish so long as one does not divide.[4] One harbors one's own favorite Coleridgeans. In context Goodson's judgment is astute, and, so far as the tradition of Cambridge English goes, it is most certainly a correct one. Richards completely missed the point of Romanticism as the last great epistemological stand *against* science. There was no room for Coleridge's theology in Empson's inn, and while this is true for Williams's as well, Williams understood, perhaps singularly, the value of Coleridge for writing in society--understood the significance of Coleridge's shifting his "weight from his poetic to his critical foot," in Goodson's idiom (xvii), and he certainly carried on the Coleridge tradition of considering words "singly," as Trench said. The contest for whose Coleridge is best remains valuable for as long as Coleridge seems worth knowing and makes his entrances in mediated form.

It is the ultimate purpose of this essay to propose a way of getting Williams and Barfield on the same page. It is a proposal that cannot be finished until the end of the next essay, or before pitting Barfield against Müller, Richards and Empson, but it is a proposal

the Slippery Place'; or, In the Shit: Geoffrey Hill's Writing and the Failures of Postmodern Memory" in James Acheson and Romana Huk, eds., *Contemporary British Poetry and Poetics* (Albany: SUNY, forthcoming). On Barfield's *What Coleridge Thought*: "Nothing remotely like it on Coleridge has ever been done" (175), and "No one has, I think, ever *begun* to talk of Coleridge in this way" (176)--both of which are high praise indeed, but not so relevant to the point at hand as the recognition of what polarity meant not only to Coleridge (it "runs through every phrase of Coleridge") but also to Barfield: "there can be very few readers--perhaps none at all--who will understand anything like the range of implications which polarity carries for Barfield . . . [and] the whole of Barfield's work" (180); see R.K. Meiners, [review]*What Coleridge Thought* in *Criticism* 15:2 (1973), 174-182.

[4] On Barfield's caution with polar opposites as "generative of each other," and on the imperative that we "can and must distinguish, but there is no possibility of dividing them," see *What Coleridge Thought*, 36. Hill's guarded prose is, I think, the most obvious fact *of* it, and it has invited scorn, as perhaps the mockery in these titles indicates: William Logan, "The Absolute Unreasonableness of Geoffrey Hill," in James McCorkle, ed. *Conversant Essays: Contemporary Poets on Poetry* (Detroit: Wayne, 1990), 34-47; also Stephen T. Glynn, "'Biting Nothings to the Bone': The Exemplary Failure of Geoffrey Hill," *English* 36:156 (1987), 235-64; the titles of both essays echo two of Hill's in *The Lords of Limit* (Oxford, 1984).

worth the effort of an *essay* in the less current sense of the word. Barfield was interested in what Coleridge thought to the neglect of a certain, more current species of "history," Williams to the neglect of . . . what? One might reasonably, knowing the peril, resort to old categories: Barfield slighted the material, Williams the ideal. Less perilous but more sobering: to suggest that Williams and Barfield are co-winners of the contest is to say something indeed about the expanse of Coleridge's mind.

i

Richards's ascendancy was both a predictable and an anomalous thing. To generalize for the sake of context: the greater European backlash against positivism in the late nineteenth century, marked one might say by the subterranean "drives" in Freud and "processes" in Marx, stands in notable contrast to the native and abiding British empiricism in Cambridge at the turn of the twentieth century. One thinks also of Henry Adams's ironies and the "pathetic paradox in the fact that the year of Nietzsche's madness--1889--coincides with the time at which his work, after two decades of public neglect, first began to find wide acceptance."[5] By the turn of the century Positivism had seen both its good and its bad days; the modernist moment can be seen as something like the jury withdrawn into chambers. *The Meaning of Meaning* shares the moment of Freud's *The Ego and the Id* (1923), which was the last chapter of his basic writings and the turning-point of both his physical and intellectual life.[6] In the same year the Vienna Circle was drawn around Bertrand Russell, whose *Principia Mathematica* a decade earlier had marked a revival of

---

[5] H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society* (New York: Random House, 1958), 34.

[6] Freud underwent radical surgery in 1923, which prolonged his life another sixteen years and allowed him to turn his attention to society and religion in such books as *The Future of an Illusion*, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, and *Moses and Monotheism*. See Hughes, *Consciousness and Society*, 394.

Positivism in analytic philosophy. Logical positivism had announced its presence, the emblem of which was Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921): henceforth, he announced, mysticism and scepticism, though not irrefutable, have no place in a "scientifically conducted philosophical investigation"; the proper method of philosophy would be to state "the propositions of natural science" (Hughes, 399). Russell himself was of course at Cambridge when *The Meaning of Meaning* appeared, and he is never far beneath its surface both as a contrary presence and as a kindred spirit. He, too, along with Richards, was a highly suggestive underwriter for Empson.[7] Russell, along with G.E. Moore, had effectively turned against Hegelian idealism, and Cambridge was primed for Richards, as John Paul Russo notes, to usher "the spirit of Cambridge realism into semantics and literary criticism," to "set down an original criticism on first principles, not on tradition."[8]

Predictable, then, but also anomalous: by 1922 T.S. Eliot, in full possession of *Criterion*, was sounding his critical themes--in Mulhern's words, "the elevation of seventeenth-century poetry and demotion of the standard luminaries of the nineteenth, the attack on the critical 'impressionism' and expressly 'classical' stress on 'traditionality' and 'impersonality' in poetry."[9] The short-lived *Calendar of Modern Letters* participated, as would *Scrutiny*, in a version of the Arnoldian project, the former especially concerned that "the properly 'classical' discipline of criticism had lapsed into a subjectivism that was especially flagrant in the writings of its irresponsible and aesthetically reactionary academic

---

[7] See, e.g., *The Structure of Complex Words* (1951; London: Chatto & Windus, 1964), 389-90; 421-2.

[8] Russo, "I.A. Richards in Retrospect," *Critical Inquiry* 8:4 (1982), 743-760; 743.

[9] Francis Mulhern, *The "Moment" of Scrutiny* (London: NLB, 1979), 16.

exponents."[10] Leavis would become, *inter alia*, for good and ill, one of those reactionary exponents, initially lamenting with Richards that poetry had "ceased to matter" and later objecting to Richards's commitments to psychology.[11] The easy commerce of the old and the new turned out to be, as Icarus discovered, a difficult thing: Coleridge figured into Eliot's further-reaching "tradition" as "the greatest of English critics, and perhaps the last," and Richards regarded him as a "semasiologist," a forerunner for the gospel of the "most central insipient science of the future."[12] Eliot and Richards, each in his way preserving Coleridge, had made it new, the former in such voices as Prufrock's and the latter in making reading an act of social redemption. But Leavis, in developing his "tradition," drained Coleridge with the bathwater, in part because Coleridge was mediated for him by both Richards and J.S. Mill. And what Leavis took from Eliot was the realization that poetry had to develop "along some other line than that running from the Romantics": this was Eliot's "peculiar importance" (*NB*, 25). Even so, for all Leavis's anti-Romanticism, whatever his faults in taking up such a stance, he made more sense than Richards. Richards wanted Coleridge *and* behaviorism--a commitment Barfield turned into an either/or; even a reader as sympathetic as Russo confesses that Richards "played the

---

[10] Mulhern, 18; it is not my purpose to examine the pressures exerted on the "aesthetic criticism" of the period. Richards, in *Coleridge on Imagination* (New York: Harcourt, 1935; hereafter, *CI*), would quote Coleridge--"Could a rule be given from *without*, poetry would cease to be poetry, and sink into a mechanical art" (140)--but fail to see that it was on exactly this point he diverged from Coleridge; *taste* would be the victim. Or as Goodson puts it, "Taste in the old sense will be shorn of its aspiration to a standard" (22). Barfield would quote Coleridge--"Poetry is the best words in the best order"--and try to save aesthetic criticism from *mere* taste. His lament anticipated Richards: "Without some such ground plan all criticism, all theorizing on the problems of poetic diction, all speculation as to what was or was not beautiful or justifiable in the poetry of the past, and, above all, all attempts to apply such theories to the poetry of the present, must peter out in expressions of personal taste"--a "cat and dog business" that "needs a little fresh air" (*Poetic Diction*, 58-9). Williams, in *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford, 1977), would accept "taste" as a category of bourgeois culture (48).

[11] Leavis, "What's Wrong With Criticism," *Scrutiny* 1:2 (1932), 134; ten years later Leavis would begin *New Bearings in English Poetry* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1942; hereafter, *NB*) with the same theme: "Poetry matters little to the modern world" (5); see also Goodson, *Verbal Imagination*, 34.

[12] Eliot, *The Sacred Wood* (1920; New York: Methuen, 1972), 1 and Richards, *CI*, xi-xii, respectively.

psych
endure
indust
Camb
faith u
fit the
Mean

matin
naive.
Hartm
was W
It is a
noted
discri
the ar

Again,
But th
someti
a gener

Hollande

York: V

psychological card to the limit" ("I.A. Richards in Retrospect," 744); Leavis could not endure this. The suspicion that the *Calendar* and *Scrutiny* directed toward science and industrialization is suggestive of how freighted Richards was, how enormous a presence in Cambridge refashioning, how anomalous he seemed to those trying to save poetry. His faith in the future, his ability to affirm progress amid post-war English consciousness--both fit the historical curiosity that the one evening in which he and Ogden mapped out *The Meaning of Meaning* fell on November 11, 1918.

It is no part of my design to participate in a mutiny against Richards or, after the mutiny, try to salvage treasures from the wreck. To do one or the other may be equally naïve, and both are irrelevant anyway. It is a thought worth returning to, that, in Geoffrey Hartman's reading of Richards, "responsibility begins with the ability to respond."[13] This was Wordsworth's theme before it was Richards's, and Richards's before it became ours. It is a durable if problematic part of our critical apparatus and should be. Richards rightly noted that poetry can increase "our command of life, our insight into it and our discrimination of its possibilities."[14] This is, if utilitarian, also moral. It is Rilke before the archaic torso of Apollo:

> denn da ist keine Stelle,
> die dich nicht sieht. Du mußt dein Leben ändern.[15]

Again, I participate in no mutiny, except perhaps against stances of critical indifference. But this does not answer the question of authoritative response, and the answers Richards sometimes gave by now make us nervous: "With Coleridge we step across the threshold of a general theoretical study of language capable of opening to us new powers over our

---

[13] Hartman, "The Dream of Communication" in Reuben Brower, Helen Vendler, and John Hollander, eds., *I.A. Richards: Essays in His Honor* (New York: Oxford, 1973), 158.

[14] *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924; New York: Harcourt, 1928), 235; hereafter, *PLC*.

[15] "Archaïscher Torso Apollos," *Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke*, ed. Stephen Mitchell (New York: Vintage, 1989), 60.

minds comparable to those which systematic physical inquiries are giving us over our environment" (*CI*, 232). The Benthamic residue, in spite of Empson's sensible validation (for "sensible people"), can sound agreeable until the irony of pondering the "greatest good" breaks through: to what does "good" refer?[16] It is then starkly anomalous that the old High Seriousness and "the best strictly neurological principles in postwar England" could be part of the same man's mental ensemble, though it does help to explain the grand mistake that *Coleridge on Imagination* is. I contend here that this mistake can be seen a little more clearly for what it is when it is held up next to Barfield.

Richards caught a whiff of the critical aromas wafting in from Continental sources, and this gave his project something of a raised profile in comparison to Leavis's dogged pursuit of a narrow English trail and all its contempt for Romanticism at precisely the moment when Romanticism, at least on Barfield's reading, needed to be understood, if not believed.[17] But what Richards shared with Eliot, Leavis, Barfield--with the whole moment of Modernism--was, as Goodson points out, "a general cultural problematic: poetry under pressure from science" (12). Cambridge English was itself an answer to the cultural problematic: a new Tripos for the modern humane discipline in the context of a University whose scientific tradition was already very strong. But Richards's devotion to behavioral psychology and mechanical linguistics meant that poetry would be absorbed into science. This judgment invites reproof, but in contrast to Barfield's treatment of the *poetic* and *prosaic* it deserves reflection: the commitments of both men owe something to Coleridge's

---

[16] See Empson, "The Hammer's Ring" in *I.A. Richards: Essays in His Honor*, 75; on Richards and the "purely emotive use" of "good" see *The Meaning of Meaning*, 125ff.

[17] Ogden and Richards perceived seven different approaches to meaning: "the Grammatical (Aristotle, Dionysius Thrax), the Metaphysical (The Nominalists, Meinong), the Philological (Horne Tooke, Max Müller), the Psychological (Locke, Stout), the Logical (Leibniz, Russell)[,] the Sociological (Steinthal, Wundt) and the Terminological (Baldwin, Husserl). From all these, as well as such independent studies as those of Lady Welby, Marty, and C.S. Pierce, from Mauthner's *Kritic der Sprache*, Erdmann's *Die Bedeutung des Wortes*, and Taine's *De l'Intelligence*, the writers have derived instruction and occasionally amusement" (*Meaning of Meaning*, ix).

"species of composition, which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its *immediate* object pleasure, not truth."[18] The epithet *immediate* never ruled out poetic "truth." Barfield knew this, but Richards lighted upon what he saw as a categorical distinction and got snagged on the epithet. Thus he "invited dismissal,"[19] but proved durable. The future belonged to semasiology as a "science." Metaphor, as Ricoeur demonstrated later, would still be a mere ornament of discourse, and so poetry would remain an ornamented text.[20] Imagination would have no cognitive value, and the last casualty would be Coleridge himself.

The distinction in *History in English Words* between what is earlier and later on the one hand and what is true and false on the other sufficiently suggests that there could be no fellowship with the Locke-Müller-Richards tradition. But a positive program had not been installed, and so this became the purpose of *Poetic Diction*.[21] Barfield set out to write a history of meaning not from a rational but from a poetic point of view. Dimly aware of Coleridge's logic, and following Hegel (perhaps at Jespersen's suggestion), Barfield established a polar opposition between the *poetic* and the *prosaic* and took as an epigraph

---

[18] *BL*, ii, 10; cf. Hartman: "Richards, instead of confronting the base-superstructure split in society (Marxist terms respected by Empson) or the potential conflict between popular and high art (Leavis) concentrates on a methodological rather than sociological dichotomy: that of poetry and science, or of the two uses (poetic and scientific) of language" ("The Dream of Communication," 161-2).

[19] Goodson, 11; the most forceful early "dismissal" came from D.G. James, *Scepticism and Poetry* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1937).

[20] Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: TCU, 1976), 49.

[21] "Became" may be applied in more than one sense. The book as we now have it, leaving aside its purpose, has evolved over the years from a description and analysis of "the author's own aesthetic and psychological experiences . . . when he first began to enjoy poetry" (11) in accordance with the first preface (1927), to nothing less than a "theory of knowledge" (14) in accordance with the second preface (1951). In the Afterword of 1972 Barfield spoke "finally, not of the 'enemies,' of whom, incidentally, I am thoroughly tired, but of 'friends' instead. There are many of them, and even at the time I was writing the book there were very many more than I knew" (214). Barfield then went on to discuss those who shared his basic theses and to re-emphasize the distinction between the poetic and the prosaic which the book in part set out to establish: the prosaic "is not the opposite of poetry, but its contradiction, which is the 'enemy'" (225).

these lines from Coleridge's most celebrated chapter:

> 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 whole world of intelligences with the whole system of their representations to rise up before you.[22]

The dim sense of Coleridge's binarism which possessed Barfield to select this passage serves as a suitable irony. *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923) was common currency, as was *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924). *Coleridge on Imagination* was another seven years away. Barfield himself was in possession of Coleridge on imagination--that is, he had a sense of what it would mean to him in later books. But he did not get it down with much clarity. It was already clearer in Barfield than it had been for Coleridge in *Biographia* (Coleridge had the more difficult task of creating both the vocabulary and the context), but it was not yet securely installed. Barfield's comments in the two Prefaces (see n. 21) suggest significant modulations not only in emphasis but in awareness. Thus Empson, writing in 1951 (the same year as Barfield's second Preface), took exception to Barfield's lament of our "prying rationalism" that is "gradually destroying" our once "magnificent rich words."[23] Empson could not be expected to have agreed with *Poetic Diction*, but that is

---

[22] *Poetic Diction*, 13; *BL*, i, 297; On the poetic and the prosaic: "The expression of thought tends . . . to become more and more mechanical or prosaic" (Jespersen, *Progress*, 353); "The prosaic side of life has only been capable of calling forth short monosyllabic interjections, howls of pain and grunts of satisfaction" (*ibid.*, 355-6); "In opposition to this rationalistic view I should like, for once in a way, to bring into the field the opposite view: the genesis of language is not to be sought in the prosaic, but in the poetic side of life" (*ibid.*, 357); cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Fine Art*: "The poetry of ages in which the prosaic spririt is already developing is essentially distinct from that of primitive epochs, among peoples whose imagination is still wholly poetic" (cited in *PD*, 111). The difference in Barfield between the *poetic* and *prosaic* has its roots in the ancient difference between *poiên* and *páschein*, that is, *do* and *suffer*. The poetic "conducts *an immediate conceptual synthesis of percepts*" (*PD*, 191) and as such is anterior to the prosaic or rational, reflective principle, which alone treats of subjective ideas. It is by means of the poetic that meaning is "given," whether in imagination or inspiration, whereas it is by means of the prosaic that meaning is desynonomized, making imagination possible. Imagination as a post-prosaic, post-rational power, conducts by means of metaphor another synthesis and thus returns us to the poetic. In an age of full-self-consciousness, then, the poetic and prosaic are not irreconcilable but mutually contingent: "to take the Poetic really seriously is . . . not to slang the Prosaic, and with it the whole world of science and technology. . . . It is to begin work on the interpenetration of the two by seeking to overcome in a man's own experience what Coleridge termed the 'outness' of the phenomenal world" (*PD*, 223).

[23] *The Structure of Complex Words*, 375.

not the point: Coleridge on polarity was not fully behind it, as Empson's reading may suggest. He called *Poetic Diction* an "excellent book," but maintained that "in the main . . . Mr. Barfield's view simply needs to be cleared away" (375). The six or so pages he devotes to discussing Barfield--six or so pages more hearing than Barfield ever got from Richards or Williams--demonstrate that Empson was not merely unsympathetic; he missed the argument altogether, as his quip on later "wicked scientific words" indicates (380). But it was not until the Afterword of 1972 that Barfield fully emphasized the necessary polar co-dependence of the poetic and prosaic.[24] This was a consequence of his now mature sense of Coleridge's "two contrary forces": *What Coleridge Thought* had appeared the year before. Whether a stronger grounding in Coleridge would have mattered to Cambridge English is *Tischsprache*. That it might have is at least an occasion for pause.

The point, then, is that in 1928 Coleridge on imagination was still an embryo to Barfield. Or if not, then at the least its relevance to perception was not explicitly established.[25] I have said that the euphoric turning to Coleridge in *History in English Words* was insufficiently realized: there was no real sense that the repetition in the finite mind was a mark of the creative act of perception itself; it was an intimation. In *Poetic Diction* the law of polarity had been pushed to the front, but that it required further

---

[24] One might argue--I will not push it here--that the purpose of *Poetic Diction* was to draw attention to a necessary reinstatement of the poetic, for as Barfield himself put it,

> The fundamental difference between logical and poetic mind (which has very little to do with the fashionable contrast between Poetry and Science) will appear farther in the course of this book, wherein I have myself attempted to sketch the way in which a poetic understanding would approach the problem. I have, however, made no attempt to write what I should so much like to see written --a true, poetic history and philosophy of language. On the contrary, it has been my object to avoid . . . entering deeper into the nature of language than is absolutely necessary, in order to throw on "Poetry," in the usual literary sense of that word, the kind of light which, I think, needs to be thrown. (63)

[25] Before *What Coleridge Thought*, Barfield's most precise statement on Coleridge came in a lecture, "The Philosophy of Samuel Taylor Coleridge," which he had delievered to the Anthroposophical Society at its headquarters (the Goetheanum, Dornach, Switzerland) in 1932, "the inchoate and skeletal" nature of which made Barfield "rather ashamed" (*RCA*, 23). But this did not appear in print until the 1944 edition of *Romanticism Comes of Age*, which was published by the Rudolf Steiner Press.

comment in 1972 suggests its inadequate handling in 1928. Empson's reaction is the kind of misreading one might expect of Empson, whose mathematical intellect was no doubt affronted by the anti-scientific thrust of *Poetic Diction*, which Empson, at the time of *Structure of Complex Words*, could only have known in its first edition. But with Coleridge attenuated in Barfield, with Barfield at odds early on with Richards, and with Barfield outside the institution, the door was open for Richards to proceed with the job of getting Coleridge wrong, which of course he did.

ii

Ogden and Richards had commitments to late nineteenth-century assumptions about language, the emblem of which was their distinction between the emotive language of poetry and the referential language of science. This was Max Müller's before it was theirs.[26] The scientific study of meaning, though it was variously manifest in the nineteenth century, also passed through the popular influence of Müller: this, too, was his before it was Ogen's and Richards's. From the start of his *Lectures on the Science of Language* Müller said that languages "supply materials capable of scientific treatment."[27] Müller had in fact built his notion on the development of language on a Darwinian model of evolution from lower, simpler forms to higher, more complex forms. This was a necessary accessory to his assumption that language developed from roots of speech,

---

[26] See, e.g., the "President's Annual Address for 1873" to the Philological Society; Alexander J. Ellis mentions Müller's "lectures at the Royal Institution (22 and 29 March, and 5 April, 1873) on what he termed 'Mr. Darwin's Philosophy of Language.'" Ellis says Müller separates language "into two domains, emotional and rational." See *Transactions of the Philological Society* (1873-4), 249.

[27] *Lectures on the Science of Language*, 2nd series (London: Longmans, 1864), 1; hereafter, *Science*; I retain Müller's method of italicizing the names of authors instead of their book titles. Müller was a lecturer on language at both Oxford (where he was also the first Professor of Comparative Literature) and at the Royal Institute in London in the 1860s and 1870s.

themselves developing from sense impressions.[28]

It is true Müller agreed with Leibniz (as, with psychological modifications, did Richards[29]), that the way to understanding mind is through understanding language: "the two are inseparable," and "without a proper analysis of human language we shall never arrive at a true knowledge of the human mind." Quoting Leibniz, he said that "languages are the best mirror of the human mind, and that an exact analysis of the signification of words would make us better acquainted than anything else with the operations of the understanding" (42). But otherwise Müller followed Locke, of whom he said "Few philosophers have so clearly perceived the importance of language in all the operations of the human mind, few have so constantly insisted on the necessity of watching the influence of words on thought, as *Locke* in his Essay concerning Human Understanding" (334). Müller especially followed Locke on the notion that words are signs for complex ideas. As the wit, as opposed to judgment, functions for "the assemblage of ideas, and putting those together with quickness and variety, wherein can be found any resemblance or congruity (66), so (quoting Locke, and oblivious to the significant changes since Locke implied by "wit") men "in their thinking and reasoning within themselves, make use of words, instead of ideas, at least when the subject of their meditation contains in it complex ideas."[30] Thus the Greek "*Logos* is derived from *légein*, which, like Latin *legere*, means, originally, to gather; what we cannot allow the animals is precisely this "reason, literally, gathering, a word which most rightly and naturally expresses in Greek both speech and reason" (63). It

---

[28] See *Science*, 305-10; on Müller's various commitments to the so-called "ding-dong," bow-wow," and "pooh-pooh" theories of origin, see Aarsleff, *Study of Language*, 229-30.

[29] The "principle of the mind," according to *Principles of Literary Criticism*, is a "growing order" (50), and the poet's task is an emblem of this principle: his selections outwit "the force of habit" and from his "simplified but widened field of impulses he imposes an order" (244); cf. Russo, "I.A. Richards in Retrospect": "Language recorded the closest approximations of the mental search for order" (759).

[30] *Science*, 71; so, too, Bréal, "How Words Are Organized in the Mind" (1884), *Beginnings of Semantics*, ed. & trans. George Wolf (Stanford, 1991): "Words have meaning for us only as signs of ideas" (150).

was this same "quickness" (and "dispatch"), it should be noted, that Tooke made such extensive use of.[31] Müller also followed Locke on the language of sense impressions, going the additional step of confusing the sense impression with metaphor:

> Thus, the fact that all words expressive of immaterial conceptions are derived by metaphor from words expressive of sensible ideas was for the first time clearly and definitely put forward by Locke, and is now fully confirmed by the researches of comparative philologists. All roots, i.e., all the material elements of language, are expressive of sensuous impressions, and of sensuous impressions only; and as all words, even the most abstract and sublime, are derived from roots, comparative philology fully endorses the conclusions arrived at by Locke." (338; Müller then quotes Locke on sensible ideas.[32])

The problem for Müller was that such a language sets traps for the reason. So fables grow up "under the charm of language." For example, *nothing* comes from *nihil*

> and means "not a thread or shred," [and so it] was perfectly correct to say "I give you nothing," i.e., "I give you not even a shred." Here we speak of a relative nothing; in fact, we only deny something, or decline to give something. . . . But by dint of using such prases over and over again, a vague idea is gradually formed in the mind of a Nothing, and *Nihil* becomes the name of something positive and real. People at a very early time began to talk of the Nothing as if it were something; they talked and trembled at the idea of *annihilation*--an idea utterly inconceivable, except in the brain of a madman. *Annihilation*, if it meant anything, could etymologically--and in this case, we may add, logically too--mean nothing but to be reduced to a something which is not a shred--surely no fearful state, considering that in strict logic it would comprehend the whole realm of existence, exclusive only of what is meant by shred. (345-6)

Now Müller had divided his lectures into two parts, one devoted to "the body or the outside of language," that is, its sounds, origin, growth, and the other to "the soul or the inside of language," which would also require inquiring into "some of the fundamental principles of

---

[31] *Diversions of Purley*, 14; Aarsleff notes that the following passages in Tooke's copy of Locke's *Essay* (III. v. 7, 10) are heavily underlined and bracketed: "The use of Language is, by short Sounds to signify with ease and dispatch general Conceptions"; "Though therefore it be the Mind that makes the Collection, 'tis the Name which is, as it were, the Knot, that ties them fast together." Tooke's copy is in the British Museum; it was the fifteenth edition (London, 1760); see Aarsleff, *The Study of Language*, 51. Müller says that both Locke and Tooke would have given us very different books had they lived after the moment of comparative philology, even though "there are no books which, with all their faults--nay on account of their faults--are so instructive to the student of language as *Locke's* Essay and *Horne Tooke's* Diversions" (338).

[32] "*Spirit*, in its primary signification is breath," etc.; see above, pp. 13-14.

Mythology, both ancient and modern" (42-3). When he came, then, to the case of *nihil*, he said that "there is as much mythology in our use of the word Nothing as in the most absurd portions of the mythological phraseology of India, Greece, and Rome," all of which can be ascribed to "a disease of languge," where language "has reached to an almost delirious state, and has ceased to be what it was meant to be, the expression of the impressions received through the senses, or of the conceptions of a rational mind" (347). Or again,

> Whenever any word, that was at first used metaphorically, is used without a clear conception of the steps that led from its original to its metaphorical meaning, there is danger of mythology; whenever those steps are forgotten and artificial steps put in their places, we have mythology, or, if I may say so, we have diseased language, whether the language refers to religious or secular interests. (358)

Müller's commitments were to language as an accurate picture of the mind (after Leibniz) and to originary sense impressions (after Locke). Thus it is only when the metaphors built on words, which are themselves built on sense impressions, are taken literally that mythology becomes a possibility. That is, language creates myth,[33] and a "mythic period" is as possible today as it was long ago, though not as likely.

> There is a time in the early history of all nations in which the mythological character predominates to such an extent that we may speak of it as the mythological period, just as we might call the age in which we live the age of discoveries. But the tendencies which characterize the mythological period, though they necessarily lose much of that power with which, at one time, they swayed every intellectual movement, continue to work under different disguises in all ages, even in our own, though perhaps the least given to metaphor, poetry, and mythology. (357)

The French linguist Michel Bréal shared this notion: "To speak of the life of language, to call languages living organisms, is to use figures of speech which may help us to understand, but which lead to pure fantasy if taken literally,"[34] and it was precisely on

---

[33] Later, on the Indian designation of a shellfish as "sea-vegetable" (so that it could be eaten during Lent), "I believe it was language which first suggested this myth" (549).

[34] Bréal, "The History of Words" (1887), *The Beginnings of Semantics*, ed. & trans., George Wolf (Stanford, 1991), 152. Bréal was professor of Comparative Grammar at the Collège de France from 1866-1905. His *Semantics* (1900; less commonly known with its subtitle, *Studies in the Science of Meaning*; from the French original, *Essai de sémantique*, 1897) was widely infuential in inaugurating the study of meaning, or semantics (a word of his coining). Barfield knew it well and disapproved of it. George Wolf says that "Saussure's *Cours de linguistique générale*, which has generally been taken to be the *fons et origo*

this point that Ogden and Richards expressed their disappointment in Bréal's constant resorting to "loose metaphors," as for example, when he said that substantives "contain" truth (3). But Ogden and Richards, no less than Müller and Bréal, did not merely assume language could be treated scientifically. They also fell prey to their own criticism (which they claimed was not merely "captious")--as for example in the passage immediately following their critique of Bréal: "It is impossible to handle a scientific matter in such metaphorical terms, and the training of philologists has not, as a rule, been such as to increase their command of analytic and abstract lanugage" (4). One could begin by pointing to *handle*, *training*, *increase*, *command*, even *analytic* and *abstract*.

Bréal's complaint here struck at the heart of Müller's version of science--later in the essay he remarked on Müller's "brilliant paradox that linguistics should be grouped among the natural sciences" (172)--because Müller, like Schleicher, conceived of language as an organism developing on its own, according to certain laws. Bréal had his own brilliant paradox: his emphasis was that speakers are in charge of language changes, even though elsewhere, in Darwinian fashion, he needed to assume uniformity to save his theories on language.[35] But it was not Barfield's program to establish any scientific model of language development. The first order of business was to get metaphor right, and this required nothing less than an attack on the whole tradition from Locke to Müller to Richards; Bréal,

---

of modern linguistics, may owe more than was previously thought to what H. Aarsleff, echoing Meillet, has called the 'French school of linguistics'" (*Beginnings of Semantics*, 1). Bréal seems to have shared the sentiments of the Société Linguistique (formed 1866) which, in the second clause of its statutes, forbade speculation on language origins. He states often that speculation about origin is beyond the scope of the science.

[35] "The parent language whose contours we can make out undoubtedly developed under the same conditions as have modern languages"; see "Indo-European Roots" (1876), *Beginning of Semantics*, 94. It would become part of Barfield's critique of science to show how necessary uniformitariansim is to modern science and to point out that uniformitarianism is a very convenient and necessary *assumption*, but an assumption nonetheless; see especially "The Coming Trauma of Materialism," *ROM*, 191; see also *What Coleridge Thought*, ch. xi ("Coleridge and the Cosmology of Science"): Barfield's reading of Coleridge centers here on the fact that uniformitarianism, no less than a mind/matter dichotomy, is only speculative, not empirical.

too, would be a victim. None of them, Barfield would claim, knew what to do with the semantic co-presence of "spirit" and "wind," for example, in *pneuma*. Indeed, Bréal's reaction was, so what?[36] Müller's claims were emblematic of the assumptions Ogden and Richard brought with them to *The Meaning of Meaning*, and they emerged in *Coleridge on Imagination*[37] as well as in the modernist movement in New Testament hermeneutics. They were emblematic of the chronological snobbery from which Barfield worked so hard to emancipate himself. The tradition claimed that only by eliminating the possibilities of taking metaphors literally can we emancipate ourselves from the dangers of mythology. It was another way of saying metaphors have to go.

The primary objective, then, was to overthrow Max Müller. Barfield began with the obvious--that the "most conspicuous point of contact between meaning and poetry is *metaphor*," and that the first fact of etymological experience is the discovery that language, in spite of all its abstract terms, "is apparently nothing, from beginning to end, but an unconscionable tissue of dead, or petrified, metaphors" (63). But only *apparently*, and thus we are "tempted to infer that, as language grows older, it must *necessarily* become richer and richer as poetic material":

> Thus, from the primitive meanings assumed by the etymologist, we are led to fancy metaphor after metaphor sprouting forth and solidifying into new meanings--vague, indeed, yet evocative of more and more subtle echoes and reactions. From being mere labels for material objects, words gradually turn into magical charms. Out of a catalogue of material facts is developed--thanks to the efforts of forgotten primitive geniuses--all that we know today as poetry. (66)

Locke, Müller, Shelley, Emerson, Vico--all of them posited a metaphorical period, an infancy of the language in which, as Shelley said, all its users were poets. "Even today it

---

[36] See "How Words are Organized in the Mind" (1884), *Beginnings of Semantics*, 150.

[37] Chapter VIII, "The Boundaries of the Mythological," advances the same "projection" theory of myth that *Poetic Diction* rejects. Richards argues that myth is a structure of co-ordination. Thus science is a "specialized type of myth" (174); granting Richards his definition, there can be no argument. But a good word is lost. I will consider Richards on myth below.

remains a moot point among the critics whether the very first extant poet of our Western civilization has ever been surpassed for the grandeur and sublimity of his diction" (68). But can it really be said to have been like this? For

> if language had indeed advanced, by continual accretion of metaphor, from roots of speech with the simplest material reference, to the complex organism which we know today, it would surely be *today* that every author is a poet--today, when a man cannot utter a dozen words without wielding the creations of a hundred named and nameless poets. (69)

The most pointed question is, how can language be said to have *evolved* "from simplicity and darkness to complexity and light" *and at the same time* be said to have *devolved* from the richness and splendour of a great metaphorical period in which every speaker is a poet? How is it possible to have it both ways? Since Locke's time this contradiction has been held "by most people who have troubled to write on the subject" (72);

> how is it arrived at? In this way: (i) The theorist beholds metaphors and similitudes being invented by poets and others in his own time. (ii) Examining the more recent history of language, he finds many examples of such metaphors having actually become a part of language, that is to say, having become meanings. (iii) Delving deeper still into etymology, he discovers that all our words were at one time "the names of sensible objects," and (iv) he jumps to the conclusion that they therefore, at that time, had no other meaning. From these four observations he proceeds to deduce, fifthly, that the application of these names of sensible objects to what we now call insensible objects was deliberately "metaphorical."
>
> In other words, although, when he moves backwards through the history of language, he finds it becoming more and more figurative with every step, yet he has no hesitation in assuming a period--still further back--when it was not figurative at all! (73)

So Müller posits his metaphorical period: first there is a period of no metaphors at all, then there is a period when all is metaphor--because someone had to borrow *spiritus* to talk about the principle of life within himself--then, because man became so increasingly stupid as to take his metaphors literally, myth arose from language. The picture, then, is of man evolving, devolving, and then evolving again--of language being literal, then metaphorical, then literal again, and then finally abstract. Barfield says,

> there is, indeed, something painful in the spectacle of so catholic and enthusiastic a scholar as Max Müller seated so firmly on the saddle of etymology, with his face set so earnestly toward the tail of the beast. He seems to have gone out of his way

> to seek for impossibly modern and abstract concepts to project into that luckless dustbin of pseudo-scientific fantasies--the mind of primitive man. (74)

This recurs to the thesis of *History in English Words*; Müller has pushed

> to a conclusion as logical as it is absurd a view of mental history, which, still implicit in much that passes muster as anthropology, psychology, etc.--even as ordinary common sense--might easily prejudice a understanding of my meaning, if it were ignored without comment.
>
> The truth is, of course, that Max Müller, like his predecessors, had only been able to look at meaning and the history of meaning, from one imperfect point of view--that of abstraction. (*PD*, 75)

Even as Müller's view of language had consequences for his view of myth, so Barfield's did. But as myth was inadequately treated in *History in English Words*--as a period out of which emerged religion and philosophy--here it is situated as that into which meaning itself was poured. Müller said language preceeds myth; Barfield reverses the order. It is important for an understanding of Barfield on meaning to understand this very reversal. That following Barfield to his conclusions hereafter stretches the usual constraints is certain. Still, the reversal is important. Myth becomes what Emerson somewhere called an original relation to the universe; from myth language is "given" its meaning. To understand Barfield on myth is to understand how thoroughly unsuited he was for the modernist project. Myths could not be mistakes or diseases; meaning itself could not, ultimately, be constituted. The whole movement in language begun by Locke's protest against the Adamic view of language and culminating in Structuralism's assumption that the sign is arbitrary, passing as it did through the various scientific biases of Müller, Bréal, and Richards, to name only the most obvious interlocutors (Saussure is not mentioned by name), Barfield challenged in one small book.

Müller had distinguished between radical and poetic metaphors, the latter being those assigned by poets ("frailty, thy name is woman"). But the former, a radical metaphor, is "when a root which means to shine is applied to form the names, not only of the fire or the sun, but of the spring of the year, the morning light, the brightness of

thought or the joyous outburstof hymns of praise"--what we might now call an archetype. "Ancient languages are brimful of such metaphors, and under the microscope of the etymologist almost every word discloses traces of its first metaphorical conception" (*Science*, 353-4).

The distinction between radical and poetic metaphors was useful to Barfield, though he denied the notion of a "first metaphorical conception." It was here that Barfield resumed his abortive discussion of myth in *History in English Words*. It was here also that he put Jespersen to use. Müller's radical metaphors were built on the fabled Indo-European roots, the originary monosyllabic sounds. Barfield called this a notion which, "from a grammatical point of view . . . has been hopelessly discredited" by Jespersen himself, whose examples Barfield borrows.[38] Aside from a grammatical interrogation, the semantic approach to language also discredits roots, theoretically defective as they are for the same reason the metaphorical period is: the further back we go the longer our words get and the more general their meanings until, suddenly, they cease to be long and semantically broad altogether and are instead composed of short monosyllables with single meanings. "The theorist insists," says Barfield, "on starting, as it were, from both ends at once" (78). So when Müller says *spiritus* meant *wind* originally and was later transferred metaphorically to mean *spirit*,

> all that can be replied to this is, that such an hypothesis is contrary to every indication presented by the study of the history of meaning; which assures us definitely that such a purely material content as 'wind,' on the one hand, and on the other, such a purely abstract content as 'the principle of life within man or animal' are both *late* arrivals in human consciousness. Their abstractness and their simplicity are alike evidence of long ages of intellectual evolution. (80-1)

The solution Barfield offered is that older words from which *spiritus* and *pneuma* come did not mean breath, wind, or spirit, but had their own "old peculiar meaning, which has since, in the course of the evolution of consciousness, crystallized into the three meanings

---

[38] *PD*, 78; *habuerunt* (*PD*, 77-8); *had, habaidêdeima* (Jespersen, *Progress*, 10-11).

specified" (81).

The Johannine discourse evokes a suitable response--that "this is an hard saying; who can hear it?" It cannot but be true that Barfield has lost many readers at this very point, for it is the crux--it is crucial. But Müller's hypothesis--that myth is a disease of language--*is* a weak logical construct. Barfield's answer to the problem of myth comes from a very unlikely place indeed. The question is, where do these multiple meanings come from if it is granted that they are not metaphors? Barfield suggests that "these poetic, and apparently 'metaphorical' values were latent in meaning from the beginning" (85). And the unlikely place he turns to is the *Advancement of Learning*: "Neither are these only similitudes, as men of narrow observation may conceive them to be, but the same footsteps of nature, treading or printing upon several subjects or matters" (86). This is a mere hint at mythology, but it is a hint at mythology nonetheless. Müller's radical metaphors, like archetypes, are the remnants of myth, of meanings which were "given" by nature. "Not man was creating, but the gods--or, in psychological jargon, his 'unconscious'" (*PD*, 102-3).

> Men do not *invent* those mysterious relations between separate external objects, and between objects and feelings or ideas, which it is the function of poetry to reveal. These relations exist independently, not indeed of Thought, but of any individual thinker. . . .[39] The language of primitive men reports them as direct perceptual experience. The speaker has observed a unity, and is not therefore himself conscious of relation. But we, in the development of consciousness, have lost the power to see this one as one. Our sophistication, like Odin's has cost us an eye. (86-7)

> *Figure* and *figurative* . . . may justly be applied, owing to the perceptual meanings first manifest in consciousness. Not an empty "root meaning to shine," but the

---

[39] The phrase "not indeed of Thought" is never satisfactorily worked out in *Poetic Diction*. The reader may wish to consult an essay titled "Dream, Myth, and Philosophical Double Vision" (1968): "if not only ordinary consciousness but all consciousness has been occasioned by a sentient organism, then the origin of myth would have to be sought in something like arbitrary invention ... [like] Max Müller's theory of a disease of language." But if the single body "is not the ultimate source of consciousness, if it conditions ordinary consciousness but is itself the product of an antecedent extraordinary one, then it follows, as a matter of course, that myth is not merely analogous to dream, but is a parallel manifestation" (*ROM*, 26).

> same definite spiritual reality which was beheld on the one hand in what has since become pure human thinking; and on the other hand, in what has since become physical light; not an abstract conception, but the echoing footsteps of the goddess Natura--not a metaphor but a living Figure. (88-9)

Poets, then, do not so much grasp the before-unapprehended relationships Shelley spoke of, but restore forgotten relationships. And then, in two sentences which anticipate the entire scope of *Saving the Appearances*, Barfield says "For though they were never yet apprehended, they were at one time seen. And imagination can see them again."[40] It is possible to see how Barfield could be misunderstood here, especially by Empson, who assumed Barfield was just another expositor of the language-fallen-from-grace idea. But there is no claim made here in *favor* of the mythological: relations were *seen*, not *apprehended.* Indeed, they cannot be apprehended until they are no longer *felt.* Their restoration is the evidence of final participation. Poetry verifies what myth suggests: that the tree of life is much older than the tree of knowledge (90).

The thesis of *History in English Words* then takes on a vaguely Coleridgean form. Barfield is not so much interested in calling this the evolution of consciousness as the emergence of the rational from the mythic, or the prosaic from the poetic. These are the poles between which the whole world was promised to rise up before us. A history of language as told

> not from the logician's, but from the poet's point of view . . . would see in the concrete vocabulary which has left us the mythologies[,] the world's first "poetic diction." Moving forward, it would come, after a long interval, to the earliest ages of which we have any written record--the time of the Vedas in India, the time of the Iliad and Odyssey in Greece. And at this stage it would find meaning still suffused with myth, and Nature all alive in the thinking of man. (93)

Meanwhile, rationality has dawned, and the meaning of words begins to divide into

---

[40] *PD*, 87; I refer here, and will again shortly, to what Barfield calls "final participation." It is hopeless to attempt a definition of it here, though I will turn to it in the next chapter. It can be cast in terms of restoring to the notion of a "collective unconscious" a "collective conscious," which is the phenomenal world that is half-perceived, half-created. See *Saving the Appearances* (1965; Middlown: Wesleyan, 1988), 133-141.

"hitherto unknown antitheses, such as those between truth and myth, between prose and poetry, and again between an objective and subjective world; so that now, for the first time, it becomes possible to distinguish the *content* of a word from its *reference*" (94). The life-blood begins to drain out of old instinctive meanings, which themselves are now beginning to be transfused with a kind of abstract concept, as for example Plato's *Idea*--not a fully abstract notion but an early indication that meanings are no longer given by Nature from without but, instead, are forged within, as the plight of the words *genius* and *inspiration* testify. In the myth-making period, myths "were not the arbitrary creations of 'poets,'" much less the disease of language or metaphors mistakenly taken literally,

> but the natural expression of man's being and consciousness at the time. These primary "meanings" were given, as it were, by Nature, but the very condition of their being given was that they could not at the same time be apprehended in full consciousness; they could not be *known*, but only experienced, or lived. At this time, therefore, individuals cannot be said to have been responsible for the production of poetic values. Not man was creating, but the gods--or, in psychological jargon, his "unconscious." (102-3)

Thus metaphor, insofar as it is true, replaces the given meanings; it is a real creation, but it is a creation in the sense of re-creation, as "registering as *thought*, one of those eternal facts which may already have been experienced in perception" (103). It warrants keeping in mind that Barfield situates this in a broader context of aesthetic response: we cannot appreciate or feel or experience poetry apart from our being in full possession of the rational principle. Poetry awakens in us a lost mythic consciousness by means of the aesthetic experience of a felt *change* of consciousness. In this sense the function of poetry is much greater indeed than has hitherto been conceived, for it calls us to a final consciousness by allowing us a glimpse of human consciousness prior to the full self-consciousness which is the most obvious fact of every-day experience--which, indeed, Descartes took as his ground of certainty. It has been supposed, as the discussion of Empson indicates, that Barfield was advocating a turning *back* of the clock. But this is not so. Final consciousness--what later he would elaborate upon and call "final participation"--

is not a retrieval of the mythic but a self-conscious recovery of it:

> Where then does the modern poet find again this poetic principle that is dying out of language? Where? Nowhere but in himself. The same creative activity, once operative in meaning without man's knowledge or control, and only recognized long afterwards, when he awoke to contemplate, as it were, what he had written in his sleep,[41] this is now to be found within his own conscousness. And it calls him to become the true creator, the maker of meaning itself. (107)

Or, the before-unapprehended relationships in Shelley's *Defense* were not yet apprehended because they could not be until man awoke to full consciousness (and so in a sense they were forgotten relationships), "they were at one time seen. And imagination can see them again." (87). What escaped Müller and Richards was not only that metaphor and poetry have a purpose beyond the rousing of emotion. Somewhat more tragically--and it was a mistake made by philology in general--what escaped them was the fact that "the creation of metaphor can only be predicated of a community in which the prosaic is already flourishing" (142).

Barfield approached this another way thirty-two years later in an important essay titled "The Meaning of 'Literal'" (1960). Indeed, he made several attempts to clarify the difficult notion of "given" meanings and the necessity of prosaic predication, but nowhere so exoterically as in this essay. The strategy initially was to adopt the terminology of the opposition, so he accepted Richards's distinction between *tenor* and *vehicle* and borrowed a passage from Bentham: "to every word that has an immaterial import, there belongs, or at least did belong, a material one." It is clear, then,

> that the words of this "immaterial" language, of which Bentham speaks, are, or were at one time, what we have been calling *vehicles*, with an immediatley physical reference, but having as their *tenor* the "immaterial" language. Or, avoiding the technical terms, it is clear that they were used *figuratively*. Are we equally justified in saying that they are, or were, use *metaphorically*? Was the figurative import always created by a definite mental act of substitution?

In some cases, certainly. "But the facility with which, from a few such cases [e.g.,

---

[41] cf. n. 39 (on "Dream, Myth, and Philosophical Double Vision").

scrupulus], the general inference has been drawn that all immaterial language came about in this way is remarkable. Bentham, Herbert Spencer, Max Müller all take this long jump in their stride" (*ROM*, 36). If the inference is correct, then all our nouns that have only an immaterial meaning--for example (they are Barfield's) *transgression, supercilious, emotion* --also have this discernable history behind them:

> a first stage, in which they had an exclusively literal meaning and referred to a material object; a second stage, in whch they had concomitant meanings; a third stage, in which they had a substituted meaning, though the original one had not quite vanished; and a fourth and final stage, in which their meaning has again become (though much altered) exclusively literal. (*ROM*, 37)

In the intermediate stages there are both a tenor and a vehicle. In the first and last there are only literal meanings, one "born" and the other "achieved" (*ROM*, 38-9). Barfield claims that our "thinking about the achieved literal is based on a tacitly assumed analogy with the born literal. We assume that it is not the natural, simple nature of a noun to be a vehicle with a tenor, because nouns [we assume] did not begin that way." They became, for a time, to be used as vehicles with a tenor, but only on account of "human fancy in metaphor-making" (*ROM*, 39). The point of attack is the assumption that the born literal meaning is all there was at the start. It includes another: that a metaphor can emerge from a wholly literal world. Whether you are an explicationist and believe that immaterial meanings can be expressed literally, or an implicationist and believe they cannot, in either case you go wrong. For in the first case your literal explication of the first metaphor is predicated on your previous experience with immaterial meanings, in which case the first metaphor is not a first metaphor, and the problem regresses *ad infinitum*. And in the second case, though this infinite regressing is avoided, it is required that a tenor be supplied "without the help of any verbal vehicle" (*ROM*, 40). The rising of "a sort of immaterial something" has no agency. All that are available are labels, none of which has "any immaterial overtone at all. That is an essential condition; for otherwise they would not be literal," but instead vehicles already carrying a tenor. You must, then, substitute an

existing word with its exclusively literal meaning for "the sort of immaterial something." And this is impossible. "It is impossible to believe, because consciousness and symbolization are simultaneous and correlative." That is the crux. It *is* possible to believe that a growing awareness of the sort of something which we today mean by *spirit* was inextricably linked with a new use of the word for *wind.* But it is *not* possible to believe that up until then the word for wind was "semantically aloof" from the "sort of something" that we now understand to be *spirit.*[42] For if

> there was no prior, no "given" affinity betwen the concept "wind" and the other immaterial concept of "spirit," the latter concept must have been originally framed without the aid of any symbol. It must moreover, as tenor, have been separable from its vehicle when it acquired one. The first of these two consequences is, in my view, epistemologically untenable on several grounds; but it is enough that the second is pointedly inconsistent with just the "implicational" type of metaphor which is the only one we are any longer concerned with, since the explicational type has already been shown to be incompatible with born literalness. If, on the other hand, there *was* any prior affinity between the concept of *wind* and the other (immaterial) concept, then the word must already, from the moment of its birth, have been a vehicle with a tenor. (*ROM*, 40-1)

Of course this means that words *do* refer, and it is on precisely this point that, with Coleridge behind him, Barfield would not budge. He argued this elsewhere in a critique of positivism as, in the twentieth century, it was applied to language:

> The older positivism proclaimed that man could never know anything except the physical world-mechanism accessible to his senses. The twentieth-century variety--variously known as "logical positivism," "linguistic analysis," "the philosophy of science," and so on--goes further and avers that nothing can even be said about anything else. Language is meaningful only insofar as it communicates, or at least purports to communicate, information about physical events, which observation can confirm or disprove. The ground is cut away from beneath the feet of any idealist interpretation of the universe by a new dogma, not that such an

---

[42] This does not mean that metaphor is not the birthplace of meaning *for us*, but the point is to avoid logomorphism. Thus: "It is not impossible that new meanings should make their first appearance as metaphor. On the contrary in our time it is the common way. Discovery, consciousness itself, and symbolization go hand-in-hand. But we must remember that metaphors and symbols today are created by minds already acquainted with figurative language as a normal mode of expression. What we are trying to imagine now is the first metaphor in a wholly literal world. And that does imply precisely this primitive and verbally unsupported notion of the 'sort of something' which I have tried to depict. But it is impossible to believe that things happened in this way" (40).

interpretation is untrue but that it cannot be advanced.[43]

In fact *nothing* can be advanced, and it was modern analytic philosophy that pushed the issue to its logical conclusion, revealing the "mental predicament which the acceptance of positivism has always really implied."[44] So for Barfield the choice is plain: "Either we must concede that 99 per cent of all we say and think (or imagine we think) is meaningless verbiage, or we must--however great the wrench--abandon positivism" (24). But doing so must necessarily change our ideas not only about language but also about nature. Language "by definition (that is to say, by virtue of its very nature as language) does point beyond itself" (13).

> Thus, when I.A. Richards long ago distinguished the "emotive" language of poetry from the "referential" language of science, and insisted that the semantic function of emotive language is not to make statements but to arouse emotion, he overlooked the fact that emotive language arouses emotion precisely because it is taken to refer to something. . . . This, then, is the difficulty which the operators within the tendency are always up against, and which they seek to evade by inventing various new and cautious formulation of a depressingly self-contradictory nature. We hear them fastidiously manipulating such terms of art as "nonobjectifying language," "symbols without meaning," "self-reference," and so forth.[45]

For Barfield, then, meaning is built into the structure of the universe. Positivists and idealists are on equal ground, for the Positivists "oscillate between a somehow pregnant conviction that language does not "refer" and the necessity, which arises as soon as they open their mouths, of assuming that it does." Thus,

> We owe the existence of language to the fact that the mental images, into which memory converts the forms of the outer world, can function not only as signs and reminders of themselves but as symbols for concepts. If this were not so, they could never have given rise to words--which make abstract thought possible. If we

---

[43] "The Rediscovery of Meaning" (1961), *ROM*, 13.

[44] *ROM*, 13; Coleridge was indeed behind Barfield on this point but came at it from a different angle, as this quip from *The Friend* suggests: "Long indeed will man strive to satisfy the inward querist with the phrase, laws of nature. But though the individual may rest content with the metaphor, the race cannot. If a law of nature be a mere generalization, it is included ... as an act of the mind. But if it be other and more, and yet manifestable only in and to an intelligent spirit, it must in act and substance be itself spiritual; for things utterly heterogeneous can have no intercommunion" (*CW*, iv, 511).

[45] "Language as Discovery" (1973), *ROM*, 132.

> reflect on this fact unprejudiced by any positivist assumptions, we must conclude that this symbolic significance is inherent in the forms of the outer world themselves. The first metaphors were not artificial but natural.
>
> In other words, the positivists are right in their conclusion that if (they would say "because") nature is meaningless to the human mind, most language is also meaningless. But the converse is equally true that, if language is "meaningful," than nature herself must also be meaningful. (*ROM*, 15)

Barfield then stands, as he often does, with Emerson: "It is not only words that are emblematic; it is things which are emblematic." (*ROM*, 26)

The only conclusion according to Barfield, then, is that born literalness is a "historical fallacy"--that Locke, Müller, Richards, and everyone else, in other words, were wrong. "Literalness is a quality which some words have achieved in the course of their history; it is not a quality with which the first words were born." This is the case of the material no less than of the immaterial: *heart* for the physiologist is no less achieved than *spirit* for the theologian. "Whatever else the word literal means, then, it normally means something which is the end-product of a long historical process" (*ROM*, 41). Of course this puts the "linguistic analysis" back on the *terra firma* it wishes to say does not exist. Again, "if language is 'meaningful,' then nature herself must also be meaningful" (*ROM*, 15).

When in *Poetic Diction* Barfield comes, then, to discuss the creation of meaning in metaphor, he is obliged to comment on the efforts of Odgen and Richards:

> A book appeared recently called *The Meaning of Meaning*. The authors of this work wrote . . . that "it is impossible thus to handle a scientific matter in metaphorical terms." The reader is thus confronted with a long and clever book on Meaning, the authors of which have never managed to grasp its essential feature--the relation to metaphor. . . . The authors of *The Meaning of Meaning* have never practiced the gentle art of *unthinking*, though it is one for which the subtlety and agility of their intellects must, as a matter of fact, make them peculiarly fitted. As a result, they are absolutely rigid under the spell of those verbal ghosts of the physical sciences, which today make up practically the whole meaning-system of so many European minds. This may seem a strong expression; yet surely nothing but a kind of enchantment could have prevented two intelligent people who had succeeded in writing a treatise some four hundred pages long on the "meaning of meaning," from realizing that linguistic symbols have a figurative origin; a rule from which high-sounding "scientific" terms like *cause*, *reference*, *organism*, *stimulus*, etc., are not miraculously exempt! That those who profess to eschew

> figurative expressions are really confining themselves to one very old kind of figure, might well escape the ordinary psychological or historical writer; it usually does; that it should escape the specialist in Meaning is somehow horribly tragic. And indeed the book is a ghastly tissue of empty abstractions.

Failing as Müller and Richards did to understand the imaginative power behind figurative language, they were forced to apply logical thought to a pre-logical age. Doing so cost Odin his other eye as well.

C.S. Lewis arbitrated the point between Barfield and Ogden-Richards in an essay titled "Bluspels and Flalansferes: A Semantic Nightmare."[46] Given that Ogden and Richards were just as metaphorical in their handling of scientific topics as Bréal, the question according to Lewis becomes, do we have to remain conscious of the metaphor in order really to signify or really to know what we are saying? Lewis's polemic first brings us to the point where we cannot claim independence from metaphors:

> where we were promised a freedom from metaphor we were given only a power of changing the metaphors in rapid succession. The things he speaks of he has never apprehended literally. Yet only such genuinely literal apprehension could enable him to forget the metaphors which he was actually using and yet to have a meaning. Either literalness, or else metaphor understood: one or other of these we must have; the third alternative is nonsense. But literalness we cannot have. The man who does not consciously use metaphors talks without meaning. We might even formulate a rule: the meaning in any given composition is in inverse ratio to the author's belief in his own literalness. (*SLE*, 262)

We soon discover, Lewis says, that we only apprehend through metaphor, and that "he who would increase the meaning and decrease the meaningless verbiage in his own speech and writing, must do two things. He must become conscious of fossilized metaphors in his words; and he must freely use new metaphors" (263). The former depends on knowledge, the latter on imaginative ability. Lewis agrees then for the most part with Barfield.

---

[46] Lewis first delivered the essay as a lecture at Manchester University. The essay is a good entry into the debate Barfield tried to establish with Richards; it was first published in *Rehabilitations and Other Essays* (London, 1939); citations here are from Lewis, *Selected Literary Essays* (*SLE*), ed. Walter Hooper (Cambridge, 1969).

But his own instability on these matters obtruded here. He did not *fully* agree with Barfield's thesis in *Poetic Diction*:

> it must not be supposed that I am in any sense putting forward the imagination as the organ of truth. We are not talking of truth, but of meaning: meaning which is the antecedent condition both of truth and falsehood, whose antithesis is not error but nonsense. I am a rationalist. For me, reason is the natural organ of meaning. Imagination . . . is not the cause of truth, but its condition.[47]

But he was unable to shake himself of its grip. In a sense he re-opened his and Barfield's debate of the 1920s:

> It is, I confess, undeniable that such a view indirectly implies a kind of truth or rightness in the imagination itself. I said at the outset that the truth we won by metaphor could not be greater than the truth of the metaphor itself; and we have seen since that all our truth, or all but a few fragments, is won by metaphor. And thence, I confess, it does follow that if our thinking is ever true, then the metaphors by which we think must have been good metaphors. It does follow that if those original equations, between good and light, or evil and dark, between breath and soul and all the others, were from the beginning aribtrary and fanciful--if there is not, in fact, a kind of psycho-physical parallelism (or more) in the universe--then all our thinking is nonsensical. But we cannot, without contradiction, believe it to be nonsensical. And so, admittedly, the view I have taken has metaphysical implications. But so has every view. (265)

iii

In both of the previous chapters I have alluded to the New Testament criticism of Rudolf Bultmann, suggesting its relevance to Barfield on language. It is in some ways an emblem of the whole problem of myth. And, at the very foundation, regardless of the expositor, the problem is always the same: the relationship of metaphor to both meaning and mythology--they are in fact indistinguishable for Barfield--has never been properly grasped. Indeed, philology and mythological criticism (they were coeval), as well as

---

[47] *Selected Essays*, 265; the basic arguments of *Poetic Diction*, it will be remembered, were sharpened *against* Lewis. See Lionel Adey, *C.S. Lewis's "Great War" with Owen Barfield* (British Columbia: Victoria, 1978).

hermeneutics itself, ought in many ways to be seen as belonging to the matrix of concerns operating here.[48]

Idealism accepted myth as the garment that the spirit of Christianity had at one time put on, but at the same time it affirmed that abstract philosophy should be and would become the new garment . This bond between revelation and philosophical idealism began to erode under the currents of New Testament rationalist exegesis in higher criticism: idealism under pressure from existentialism. The *terminus ad quem* of this mythological hermeneutic, this battle between idealism and existentialism, was Bultmann's *New Testament and Mythology* of the early 1940s, the roots of which reached back to the nineteenth-century pre-occupation with the historical Jesus and the reaction against which marked a renewed interest in myth.[49] Bultmann's essay was, finally, a remarkably naïve effort, taking as it did certain faulty assumptions about transcendence, and certain misunderstandings about figuration, to their logical conclusion (and thus making it both

---

[48] cf. Barfield, "Language and Discovery" (1973): "It is not less obvious that the topic of symbolism, and particularly of symbolism in language, will be felt to have an important bearing on the interpretation of religious documents including the Old and New Testaments" (*ROM*, 131). In this particular essay Barfield pits "linguistic analysis" against "a more nebulous body of thinkers" (which includes Barfield himself), who nonetheless, aside from "abusing each other," have tended to arrive at a similar conclusion: it is impossible to distinguish "the 'meaning' of language from language itself" (130). The argumentative approach, directed at Wittgenstein's language games, comes from physics: "quantum theory is one instance of an attempt to organize an escape from imprisonment in language, instead of sitting still and contemplating the inside of the prison wall. For it is fairly clear that quantum theory, since language games do not launch rockets, is more than just one more language-game. Yet at the same time it really is 'nonobjectifying language.' For 'the description of quantum theory *is* quantum theory'" (137; internal quotes from David Bohm). The essay is an example of Barfield's commitment to make the esoteric exoteric, to try to get at the subject/object and the sign/signified problems from several different angles. Physics itself problemates the notion that language is bound to the prison house of its own self-referentiality.

[49] Bultmann's text is in the casebook *Kerygma and Myth* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961; first published as *Kerygma und Mythos*, 1951). On renewed interest see, for example, Austin Farrer's response: "If because Biblical images draw unfamiliar fields of experience, it is accidental and must be met largely by the substitution of familiar images, not (if you like to say so) by demythicization but by remythicization" ("An English Appreciation" in *Kerygma and Myth*, 215); see also Giovanni Miegge, *Gospel and Myth in the Thought of Rudolf Bultmann*, trans. Stephen Neill (1956; Richmand: John Knox, 1960), esp. ch. 1.

historicist, in limited sense, and modernist). What is perhaps most interesting about it is that the Ogden-Richards project, minus the Bible, was nearly the same thing--with the notable exception of course that there was less at stake, that the cow was not so sacred, in the Cambridge of the 1920s.

Bultmann claimed that the "real purpose of myth is not to present an objective picture of the world as it is, but to express man's understanding of himself in the world in which he lives. Myth should be interpreted not cosmologically, but anthropologically, or better still, existentially" (10). St. Paul, according to Bultmann,

> shares the popular belief of his day that the Spirit manifests itself in miracles, and he attributes abnormal psychic phenomena to its agency. But the enthusiasm of the Corinthians for such things brought home to him their questionable character. So he insists that the gifts of the Spirit must be judged according to their value for 'edification,' and in so doing he transcends the popular view of the Spirit as an agency that operates like any other natural force." (21)

The Apostle was clear: new life "must be appropriated by a deliberate resolve," not lived as if by the power of an outside spiritual force: "The possession of the Spirit never renders decision superfluous. 'I say, Walk by the Spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh' (Gal. 5.16). Thus the concept 'Spirit' has been emancipated from mythology" (22). Bultmann assumes (as does Richards) the "shell" or "husk" and "content" distinction that characterizes the whole hermeneutic, a major part of which is to do away with such metaphorical utterances in the first place--hence Bultmann's attempt to retain the *kerygma* and eliminate, where necessary, the *myth*.[50] Thus, mythology is "the use of imagery to express the other worldly in terms of this world and the divine in terms of human life, the other side in terms of this side" (10). The point is to do away with the imagery.

---

[50] See *Meaning of Meaning*, 42; cf. Ernst Lohmeyer, "The Right Interpretation of the Mythological," *Kerygma and Myth*: "the mythological thought of the New Testament is abandoned like an empty and useless husk as it was in the early days of the Enlightenment" (125); "It is always tempting to peel off the historical shell and extract the pure and fruitful kernal, but, as with any tradition, that is to do violence to the inner and unbreakable unity in which permanent truth and historical form are combined in myth as in other things" (127); on the language of myth and science, see also p. 131-2.

But this returns to the grudge Ogden and Richards bore Bréal, as Lewis pointed out. Freedom from metaphor is an impossibility; "divine transcendence is expressed as spatial distance"; the objection is really to transcendence, and metaphor is the indirect object. One of Bultmann's interlocutors pointed out that this gets us no further than the initial question: "has the invisible ever been made visible, and if so, where?"[51] Bultmann's escape from myth is an impossible attempt to escape from metaphor. Transcendence cannot be expressed except in "picture language derived from the world of space and time" (50), and the New Testament has offered its own reading tips: Christ is "the image of the invisible God" (50). Bultmann is right--that myth should in fact be interpreted cosmologically, anthropologically, *and* existentially; the *proviso* on Barfield's account is that the exigencies of consciousness must obtain in each. Otherwise the mistakes will always be the same: Richards's projection theory (*CI*, ch. viii) turns out to be no different from Bultmann's "real purpose of myth": "to express man's understanding of himself in the world in which he lives." This, according to Barfield even as early as *History in English Words*, is a failure to acknowledge an evolution of consciousness; it is to be guilty in other words of logomorphism. It leads to a view of myth that assumes its production in an age in which the prosaic is already flourishing and will ultimately lead to an inadmissible separation of tenor from vehicle.

One's understanding of myth, then, turns on one's understanding of metaphor. One's understanding of metaphor turns on one's ability to recognize that metaphors can only be predicated of a community in which the prosaic is already flourishing. One's understanding of the prosaic is predicated on one's ability to understand that consciousness has evolved. Even as the fact that "matter" as an expression or manifestation of "spirit" depends on full possession of the Cartesian split between extended and thinking *res*, so the

---

[51] Julius Schniewind, "A Reply to Bultmann," *Kerygma and Myth* (50).

idea of imagination as the faculty crossing the threshold between the two forms of *res* can only be fully known once the axe has dropped between them. Myth and metaphor, then, belong to two different historical epochs, flourish in two wholly different cosmologies. Myth criticism as Bultmann conceived it--and he conceived it thoroughly in keeping with all the philological speculation available--depends upon an *uncrossable* chasm: according to Barfield, the fallacy is that

> myths all sprang from the illusion that the threshold can be crossed by the human mind, or could at one time be so crossed. But [since] the threshold is in fact immutable and eternal myths must be scrapped.[52]

They are scrapped because they are judged from the perspective of an *assumed* absolute dichotomy between "inner" and "outer"--judged, in other words, on the premise that they sprang not only from an ignorant, pre-scientific consciousness but from an ignorant, pre-scientific and full *self*-consciousness as well. Thus, on Barfield's reading,

> to be incapable of discriminating between these two different sorts of relation between "within" and "without' is, in my view, to be incapable of forming a satisfactory concept of revelation in *any* sense, and whether occuring in the present or in the past. One recalls how the failure to do just that has bedevilled anthropology, psychology, and through them theology, wth the purely spatial concept of a "projection" of the within upon the without: a concept which rapidly became the basic hypothesis for all interpretation of ancient traditions and records coming under the head of myth or religion, including of course the Jewish and Christian Bible.

The result is always the same. One finds it in Müller, Richards, and in Bultmann, whom I take as a typical expositor of what Barfield claims is ultimately untenable. It assumes the exclusion of any possibility that revelation has come from *without*:

> when we are confronted with it [revelation], in past tradition, we assume that, however it purported to come from without, it must in fact have come from within. And since we haved already preempted the meaning of within and without to a merely spatial parameter,[53] we assume (again more often implicitly than explicitly)

---

[52] "Imagination and Inspiration" (1967), *ROM*, 118.

[53] cf. Bultmann: "Man's knowledge and mastery of the world have advanced to such an extent through science and technology that it is no longer possible for anyone seriously to hold the New Testament view of the world--in fact, there is no one who does. What meaning, for instance, can we attach to such phrases in the creed as 'descended into hell' or 'ascended into heaven'? We no longer believe in the

that it must have been a product, or figment, of the brain.[54]

All of this is to say this much and no more: Barfield's refusal in *Poetic Diction* to admit of a Kantian unknowable grew unequivocal over the years. That he did not enter the arena is there, as I have said, as a fact. Even here, in the essay quoted immediately above, there is no specific engagement of hermeneutics or myth criticism beyond the occasional mentioning of Freud and Jung. There it is. I do not judge the strategy. But there is a gauntlet there to be picked up, and it has not been picked up. The implications for Barfield's critique of myth are fairly extensive. It is something like the despotism of the eye, as Coleridge put it, that allows them to be ignored. And they have been ignored, even in places where they might have been put to good use--in, say, Paul Ricoeur's symbolic or Northrop Frye's archetypal criticism.[55] And here perhaps Barfield's anti-modernism is most clear, for he seems never to have meant for his own criticism to become "the true function of literature"--especially not with the popular *proviso* that it be "implied rather than argued" and "limited to *irony*."

> Irony for many was the perfect answer. Nearly perfect for I.A. Richards; quite perfect for Cleanth Brooks. Not only was the unavoidable element of reference to life outside literature disinfected, so to speak, by a simultaneous detachment from it, but a pervasive tone of irony--unrelated, unparticularized irony rather than irony about anything--had the protective advantage of making no claims. It was almost synonymous with literature's awareness of its own limitations. ("Concept of Revelation," 231).

By the late 'seventies and early 'eighties there is a legitimate bewilderment to be had over

---

three-storied universe which the creeds take for granted" (*Kerygma and Myth*, 4).

[54] Barfield, "The Concept of Revelation" (1979), *Anglican Theological Review* 63:3 (1981), 229-239; 234.

[55] I have mentioned that Müller's "radical" metaphors--what Barfield calls "given" meanings--provide linguistic impetus to archetypes. There is no space here to pursue this or to pursue the relation of Barfield to Ricoeur's theory of metaphor. It must be sufficient for now to note that there is sufficient internal evidence that Ricoeur's debt is larger than he admits. In *The Rule of Metaphor* (1975; Toronto, 1977) Barfield is referred to only as cited in another writer. Yet the concept that metaphor is the birthplace of meaning was Barfield's before it was Ricoeur's, and this leaves aside the more interesting epistemological commitment in Ricoeur that "the symbol gives rise to thought": see Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (1967; Boston: Beacon, 1969), 347-57, especially on "forgetfulness and restoration" in the symbolism of modernity (349).

the examples of Richards and Brooks. That is a point. These are hardly the masters of suspicion. But it seems to me that dissatisfaction with irony is not so much at stake here, at least now, as is the fact that irony, to be irony worth its salt, should be aware of all the hecklers around it. A refusal to be polemical requires not only polemic but a touch of cowardice. Whatever one's reticence concerning Barfield, one cannot accuse him of being yellow. I mention it as an aside with no intention to pursue it: it seems ponderable the extent to which irony flows when metaphor ebbs (--a risky, problematic, and ridiculously sweeping statement which poets at least back to Donne would dispute). Again, no pursuit. Both are occasions to say one thing and mean another, modes of each other no doubt but rhetorically different. Barfield's critique of the Locke-Müller-Richards genealogy comes down to the question of whether metaphor has ever *really* been understood. Perhaps the more excellent way is to mean all the possibilities even when it is impossible to do so, if indeed (as Geoffrey Hill reminds us) our word is our bond.

iv

Nearly a third of *Poetic Diction* in its original form consisted of appendices, the greater part of which Barfield devoted to situating his ideas against Locke and Kant. Nearly ten per cent of the book as it now stands consists of the Preface to the Second Edition, in which Barfield says the enemy changed over the years from Locke and Kant to Hume and the Humean scepticism inhabiting language theorists from Structuralism on. But the primary enemy, still, was Richards:

> I must first mention a theory of the nature of language, popularized by Dr. I.A. Richards since this book appeared, though a good deal less is heard of it today. This is the division of meaning into the two classes, "emotive" and "referential." The language of science, it is said, may be veridical, because the words it uses have a "referent," that is, they refer to something real. But the figurative language of poetry has no referent, its sole function is to arouse emotion and it is therefore without veridical significance.

> If the following pages show anything at all, they show that this doctrine, if it could be believed, would write off as emotive and without veridical significance practically all the abstract words in our language . . . including, naturally, such words as *meaning, verify, emotive and referential.* (15)

It was only by recurring to Coleridge that Barfield could fight the epistemological and phenomenological battle intimated but not fully realized in *Poetic Diction*. The palpable enemy was Locke: his ghost was there in Richards no less than in Müller no less than in the Tooke-Bentham tradition it was Coleridge's business to wage war against. But Locke had not completely thrown out *a priori* mental properties, and although on Barfield's reading Kant, for all his contempt of Locke, effectually clenched for the Western world certain premises intially marked by Locke's project "which make it so difficult for Western thought to grasp the true nature of inspiration,"[56] still the ultimate enemies could not be said to be either Locke or Kant. Kant had placed the forms of perception between the knower and the *Ding an sich*, but Positivism, founded on Humean scepticism, had gone a step further: the positivists of language had "substituted syntax for the forms of perception, and scrapped the things as otiose" (19). Hume, then, was the real enemy of imagination: man as a knower is a passive recipient; on such a view of mind is the "edifice of physical science is erected" (17)--a branch of learning in Locke's day which, as "the newcomer, required a foundation in philosophy . . . [though] since then the two have

---

[56] *PD*, 184; here Barfield followed Steiner in *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity* "in detecting an unacknowledged influence far wider still" (*PD*, 184). Kant took as given the subjectivity of the individual, which on Barfield's account is "at the bottom of what I have called 'Logomorphism.'" Barfield's accusation is that Kant began "not from *thinking*, but from *Kant thinks*." Such subjectivity precludes any reading of myth or consciousness as Barfield attempted in *Poetic Diction* (see esp. 192-6; see also n. 39).

> Thinking must never be regarded as a merely subjective activity. Thinking transcends the distinction of the subject and object. It produces these two concepts just as it produces all others. When, therefore, I, as thinking subject, refer a concept to an object, we must not regard this reference as something purely subjective. It is not the subject, but thought, which makes the reference. The subject does not think because it is a subject, rather it conceives itself to be a subject because it can think. The activity of consciousness, in so far as it thinks, is thus not merely subjective. Rather it is neither subjective nor objective; it transcends both these concepts. I ought never to say that I, as individual subject, think, but rather that I, as subject, exist myself by the grace of thought. (from Steiner, *Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*, cited in *PD*, 209)

changed places" (18). Here we come to the heart of Barfield's lament. The Logician, he claimed, seeks to reduce meaning and can "only evolve a language whose propositons would *really* obey the laws of thought by eliminating meaning altogether" (131). Barfield did "not think it too sweeping to say that the doctrines of linguistic analysis, or as it has sometimes been called, Logical Positivism, are no more than an extensive gloss on this principle" (16). For even as science continued to reduce matter to smaller and smaller particles until it had reduced matter to nothing but impressions, so linguistic analysis did away with the referent: "There are only descriptions, only the words themselves, though it 'happens to be the case' that men have from the beginning so persistently supposed the contrary that they positively cannot open their mouths without doing so" (19). Linguistic analysis, to Barfield, was Wittgenstein's apotheosis: logical propositions are mere tautologies. Barfield's retort endures: the "attempt to dismiss the palpable by writing off as tautologous the language in which it is affirmed is surely one of the strangest that has ever bemused a vigorous mind" (21).

The heart of the heart of the lament was perceptual, and Richards's accepting the absolute division between emotive and referential was emblematic of the triumph of a false epistemology. *Poetic Diction* tried to save poetry by claiming that "not only poetry, but an understanding of the nature of poetry and of the poetic element that is present in all meaningful language, is of vital importance" (25). For, "just as the study of law was once a valuable exercise for other purposes besides the practice of law, so today the study of poetry and of the poetic element in all meaningful language is a valuable exercise for other purposes than the practice or better enjoyment of poetry" (29). Here is where Coleridge was most needed and where he again was passed by. In Appendix III Barfield referred to the "famous distinction between Fancy and Imagination," but went no further than to say Coleridge saw the "accidental, merely *personal*, nature of the synthetic metaphors of fancy, and yet was conviced of the concrete reality of others" (210)--a notice germane to the

distinction Müller raised between radical and poetic metaphors, as well as to the question of the arbitrary sign had Barfield so named it. But he hadn't, and the notice was otherwise irrelevant. Thus by the time he penned the Preface to the Second Edition and attempted to explain that the study of poetry "is of vital importance," he had realized that the "secondary imagination can be our pointer to the primary" (29), because by now he had formulated more clearly in his own thinking the role of primary imagination in perception itself. The study of poetry is an act of the rational principle; it leads to the conclusion that whatever meaning exists as an object of reflection has come about by means of the poetic:

> Logic can make us more precisely aware of the meaning already implicit in words. But the meaning must first of all be there and, if it is there, it will always be found to have been deposited or imparted by the poetic activity . . . [for] the poetic, as such, does not handle terms; it makes them. (31)

The great end to the study of poetry, ultimately and not a little ironically, is what in Coleridge was an abortive distinction: "as the secondary imagination makes meaning, so the primary imagination makes 'things.' There is no other thinghood" (31).

By 1950, the date of the second Preface, Barfield had launched his attack on any version of knowledge pretending to "penetrate the veil of naïve perception" without accepting in practice "that the mind first creates what it perceives as objects." Science "insists on dealing with 'data,' but there shall no data be given, save the bare percept. The rest is imagination. Only by imagination therefore can the world be known" (28). Thus the quip, "there may be an age of which the characteristic response is to deny imagination" is, finally, quite gently put--especially in so polemical a Preface. And yet gentle or no, it is in forcible juxtaposition:

> If anyone were inclined to doubt that ours is such an age, the degree of acceptance which the admittedly able and informed critical writings of Dr. I.A. Richards have won for themselves should be enough to satisfy him to the contrary. For in the *Principles of Literary Criticism*, *Coleridge on Imagination*, and elsewhere Dr. Richards has sought no less than to define imagination in terms of a philosophy of Behaviourism--when it is precisely the fact of imagination which makes Behaviourism at once untrue and dangerous. (34)

Barfield had had two opportunities to beat Richards to Coleridge on imagination. In neither book was the project fully realized.

By 1950 the assimilation of Coleridge was complete. All that was left to do was write a book with the somewhat presumptuous title *What Coleridge Thought*, but that was more than twenty years away. Nearing at this time the end of the solicitor's career that had taken the place of the academic one he had hoped for, Barfield was primed for a different version of perception from the prevailing one, especially since the war to end all wars had recently been followed by an even bigger one, which had featured its own peculiar ending:

> No doubt the experience of the outside world as something "which goes on by itself," and appears to have lost all connection with human imagination, was burnt into many modern poets by the combined violence and passivity of trench warfare; and today the objectized nothing, which scientism supposes at the base of the phenomenal world, is taking shape as the spectre of nuclear fission and scientific warfare on a world-wide scale. Some "habit of mind"! the empiricist may well object, with a chuckle; and it is no part of my case that push-and-pull empiricism is weak or ineffectual, only that it is, like other giants, ignorant. The possibility of man's avoiding self-destruction depends on his realizing before it is too late that what he let loose over Hiroshima, after fiddling with its exterior for three centuries like a mechanical toy, was the forces of his own unconscious mind. (35-6)

v

> There are ideas, and ways of thinking, with the seeds of life in them, and there are others, perhaps deep in our minds, with the seeds of general death. Our measure of success in recognizing these kinds, and in naming them making possible their common recognition, may be literally the measure of our future.

These two sentences might well have come from the same urgent pen as the one which wrote the paragraph preceeding them. But the pen is equivocal enough by its use of "perhaps," by using "general death" instead of immanent "self-destruction." It does not mean the writer was unequivocal. He was, and in some books even "coldly angry and implacable." It means only that the writer was a different man.

For Raymond Williams was a very different man from Barfield, if men be judged

by their books. "Coldly angry and implacable" is the phrase Terry Eagleton used to qualify the one book of Williams's that is perhaps the most difficult to qualify: *The Country and the City*, a book which, whatever it does, does not always show Williams to be as sensitive a reader of poetry as Barfield was.[57] Indeed, Barfield persistently differentiated between *poetic* and *prosaic*, whereas Williams was concerned for other reasons to call into question this very dichotomy.[58] Yet it is perhaps in *The Country and the City* that one finds Williams's deepest opinions on "the tumultuous development" of industry (182), a sentiment that is never far beneath nearly every line that Barfield wrote. One might note as a mere curiosity that Barfield was educated at Highgate in the company of Coleridge's crypt, and that Williams occupied rooms at Jesus, Cambridge, where Coleridge lodged. It is less an accidental pleasantry, but not less pleasing, that Coleridge found "few pursuits more instructive and not many more entertaining . . . than that of retracing the progress of a living language for a few centuries, and its improvements as an organ and vehicle of thought, by desynonymizing words,"[59] and that both Barfield and Williams belong to a Coleridge tradition for doing just this, one for philosophical and the other for material

---

[57] On "coldly angry and implacable," see Eagleton, ed., *Raymond Williams: Critical Perspectives* (Boston: Northeastern, 1989), 6; hereafter, *RW: CP*. The judgment that Williams was not "as sensitive a reader of poetry as Barfield was" is the sort one had better be prepared to explain. It is not necessarily a hierarchical so much as a comparative judgment, though one might legitimately say that when Williams finds what he is looking for in a poem he, too, sometimes turns a blind eye to what *else* is there. An example of this--conveniently an example of his being "coldly angry" as well--is his reading of Herrick's "A Thanksgiving," a poem about which he can feel only "anger" when the point, it seems, is gratitude; see *The Country and the City* (Oxford, 1973), 72-3; but see also Williams, *Writing in Society* (1983; New York: Verso, 1991): "*The Country and the City* ... sets out to identify certain characteristic forms of writing about the country and the city, and then insists on placing them not only in their historical background--which is within the paradigm--but within an active, conflicting historical process in which the very forms are created by social relations which are sometimes evident and sometimes occluded" (209); the unidentified block quote at the head of this section is taken from the epigraph to Terry Eagleton, ed., *Raymond Williams: Critical Perspectives* (Boston: Northeastern, 1989).

[58] See, e.g., *Writing in Society*: "It is remarkable, in a persistently narrow critical tradition, that the contrast between verse and prose can be made as if it were self-evidently a contrast between the 'imaginative' and the 'prosaic'" (73).

[59] *Philosophical Lectures*, ed. Kathleen Coburn (London: Pilot, 1949), 368-69.

purposes, both of which may rightly be said to have been Coleridge's. Barfield, on the heels of World War I (during which he was in the Signals unit of the Royal Engineers), said that in words "the past history of humanity is spread out in an imperishable map"; Williams, on the heels of World War II (during which he was in the Royal Corps of Engineers), said patterns in word-changes "can be used as a special kind of map by which it is possible to look again at those wider changes in life and thought to which the changes in language evidently refer."[60] Both saw language as a kind of battleground, the one interested in the "tremendous effort" of mind that goes into "turning a vague feeling into a clear thought," (*History*, 18-19), and the other, to use Eagleton's idiom, in words as "sites of historical struggle, repositories of political widsom or domination" (*RW: CP*, 8). And yet whereas the one concerned himself with a time prior to the written record when a word had its "own old peculiar meaning" (*PD*, 81), the other confessed that "original meanings of words are always interesting. But what is often most interesting is the subsequent variation" (*Keywords*, 21). The one claimed that the "true story" of a given time "is the story of its mental and emotional outlook" (*History*, 77), the other the story of its "social and intellectual issues" (*Keywords*, 16). Yet again, both took words "singly," as Coleridge had, and both took exception to the Cambridge man considered to be Coleridge's true heir, Barfield by calling his book on meaning a "ghastly tissue of empty abstractions" (*PD*, 135), Williams, more mildly, by saying he did not "share the optimism, or the theories which underlie it, of that popular kind of inter-war and surviving semantics which supposed that clarification of difficult words would help in the resolution of disputes and class struggles" (*Keywords*, 24). And then there is the matter of "marginality." I have

---

[60] Barfield, *History in English Words*, 18; Williams, *Culture and Society: 1780-1950* (1958; New York: Columbia, 1983), xiii; hereafter, *C&S*. Writing an introduction in 1982 for the Morningside edition (1983) Williams said that he began *Culture and Society* "in the post-1945 crisis of belief and affiliation" (xii); for a discussion of how *Culture and Society* was the early manifestation of Williams's interest in words considered singly, see Williams, *Keywords* (1976; New York: Oxford, 1983), 11-15.

mentioned the recent judgment of a critic who sees Williams as "Coleridge's most original modern inheritor"--this "despite his institutional marginality," when marginality "might almost be regarded as essential to the role."[61] The institutional margin is no less home to Barfield than to Williams, perhaps moreso.

The essential similarity is also, substantively, the essential difference. There is something iconoclastic and urgent in both projects, something of that impassioned critical stance that sets them apart especially, say, from their Structuralist and New Critical contemporaries. We have seen emblems of it in both already--in Barfield's noting that the "possibility of man's avoiding self-destruction depends on his realizing before it is too late that what he let loose over Hiroshima, after fiddling with its exterior for three centuries like a mechanical toy, was the forces of his own unconscious mind," and in Williams's warning that "our measure of success in recognizing these kinds [of ideas, both good and bad], and in naming them making possible their common recognition, may be literally the measure of our future." Goodson, discussing Williams, has hit upon the essential similarity:

> Williams's semasiology began then as a critical semasiology, concerned to dismantle a familiar vocabulary as a way of exposing the social, intellectual, and especially the political history of a dominant way of thinking. The negative function of his analytic eased the evidential burden. For what he had typically to demonstrate was not the precise semantic development of key words, but how their institutional abuse dissimulated a material history. (*Verbal Imagination*, 69)

"Dismantle" is the point. The differences of "dismantling" are appreciable and should not be overlooked. It was no part of Barfield's scheme to look for political vicissitudes in the history of words. Particular material exigencies were almost altogether elided, and this is his peculiar failure as a reader of Coleridge. Even Maurice, who was confronted in person by the Utilitarians, did not over-react to their spiritual negligence by dismissing out of hand

---

[61] The judgment is A.C. Goodson's: "If Coleridge's name stands for anything now, it should stand for the possiblities of this sort of marginality" (*Verbal Imagination*, 59-60).

their social critique. His place as a true Coleridgean is marked by his keeping his eyes raised and his feet firmly on the ground; Barfield inherited the one characteristic and Williams the other. But the point, at least now, is the concern "to dismantle a familiar vocabulary." Both Barfield and Williams made dismantling their purpose.

Culture and Society: 1780-1950 shares with *History in English Words* certain similarities. It is, doubtless, a patient book in ways both of Barfield's early books should have been. Williams complained that *Poetic Diction* would have been "very much better" if Barfield "had found room for more actual discussion of poems."[62] It would be foolish to complain that Williams lacked examples; indeed, on some pages *Culture and Society* looks to be a collection of block quotes--what Williams protectively called "a series of statements by individuals" (xix). *Culture and Society* is also, as its dates suggest, an ambitious thing, though not quite so ambitious as to span the development of consciousness from the Egyptian mathemeticians Aristotle wrote about to Coleridge and Wordsworth. Yet it is a book born of thinking about words "singly," and by virtue of this very fact it is aligned with a whole tradition. "I feel myself committed to the study of actual language," Williams said: "that is to say, to the words and sequences of words which particular men and women have used in trying to give meaning to their experience" (*C&S*, xix). When he returned in 1945 from the war to Cambridge, the one word which troubled Williams most was *culture*. The following year he took a job in adult education, and two years later Eliot came out with *Notes Toward the Definition of Culture* (1948)--a book, said Williams, "I grasped but could not accept" (*Keywords*, 15). Eliot's book rescusitated Williams's interest in *culture*, and by 1956 he had pursued the matter in *Culture and Society*, intending

---

[62] Williams, review of *Poetic Diction*, second ed., *English* 9:52 (1953), 147-8; 148. The attention Williams gives Barfield amounts to only two paragraphs, and the review is somewhat unfair and uncharacteristically biting, though Williams does say that if "there is anyone who has been theoretically influenced by Mr. I.A. Richards, Mr. Barfield's book should be given as a useful antidote." Then he adds, "Antidote, however, like poison, is not food" (148).

to publish an appendix with short essays on the history of sixty related words. The publisher wanted the book shortened, and so the appendix was omitted. It later became *Keywords*, the introduction to which tells us this whole history. And the whole history is Williams's commitment to the notion that semantic shifts occur "in real circumstances" (*Keywords*, 24) and that, in reaction to the tradition at Cambridge, reading and living are two different things.

It became characteristic of Williams, beginning with his departure from the conservative giants taken up in *Culture and Society*, to remain nonetheless a careful reader of them. Thus, "if Eliot is read with attention, he is seen to have raised questions which those who differ from him politically must answer, or else retire from the field" (227). For example, Williams citing Eliot's *The Idea of A Christian Society* on the "crisis of feeling in September 1938":

> It was not a disturbance of the understanding: the events themselves were not surprising. Nor, as became increasingly evident, was our distress due merely to disagreement with the policy and behavour of the moment. The feeling which was new and unexpected was a feeling of humiliation, which seemed to demand an act of personal contrition, of humility, repentance and amendment; what had happened was something in which one was deeply implicated and responsible. It was not, I repeat, a criticism of the government, but a doubt of the validity of a civilization. . . . Was our society, which had always been so assured of its superiority and rectitude, so confident of its unexamined premiss, assembled round anything more permanent than a congeries of banks, insurance companies and industries, and had it any beliefs more essential than a belief in compound interest and the maintenance of dividends?

A careful reader is of course different from a sympathetic one (and the working-class child has concerns different from those of a banker's son): Williams's comment is (merely) that this "belongs, quite evidently, to the tradition" (228), and it goes some distance in explaining his final critique. For although Eliot suggests that in a state of disintegration such as occurs in industrial society "physical improvement can be no more than secondary" (in Williams's paraphrase, 229), Williams finds no alternative "proposal" in Eliot (230). For the chapel radical there is nothing constructive, then, in the high-church sounds of

"contrition" or "repentance"--nothing, at least, worth comment--and his subsequent judgment of *Notes Toward the Definition of Culture* is that it also lacks what, according to Williams, Eliot's literary criticism has always possessed: "specificity, not only of definition, but of illustration" (231). Not altogether sympathetic, then, but still careful. Williams again: "Answer, or else retire from the field" may or may not have been a kind remark. That Williams and Eliot were at odds needs no comment, and this is no place to judge intention. But I do not think it was "kind" so much as it was respectful of Eliot--whom Williams "grasped but could not accept"--as an an heir of Coleridge distinctive from Arnold: Culture in Williams's reading of Eliot is, commendably, a "whole way of life," assuring us that "the version of life which industrialism has forced on us is neither universal nor permanent" and that we have "the 'whole arc' of human possibilities to choose from, in life as in the documents" (233).

What Williams rescued here from Eliot--"in life as in the documents"--is an important theme, important especially for Williams's critique of the institutional tradition of which he became a part. Richards's emphasis on response is a

> kind of servility towards the literary establishment. . . . But the idea of literature as a training-ground for life *is* servile. Richards's account of the inadequacy of ordinary response when compared with the adequacy of literary response is a cultural symptom rather than a diagnosis. Great literature is indeed enriching, liberating and refining, but man is always and everywhere more than a reader, has indeed to be a great deal else before he can even become an adequate reader; unless indeed he can persuade himself that literature, as an ideal sphere of hightened living, will under certain cultural circumstances operate as a substitute. 'We shall then be thrown back . . . upon poetry. It is capable of saving us.' The very form of these sentences indicates the essential passivity which I find disquieting. (251)

The attention here even to rhetorical voice puts Williams beside other favored Coleridgeans and speaks persuasively of his being a careful and serious reader--as does the fact that there remained in Williams a sense of ironic admiration:

> There is an element of brutality in Richards's famous protocols, in which an assured taste and competence were challenged by the absence of the informing signs and tips. And it does say a lot for that generation who shared the experiments with him that the devastating actual results were accepted, learned from and drawn

> on to stimulate a new emphasis on close and precise and specifically challengeable reading. That remarkable emphasis is by any standards a major educational contribution. (*WS*, 182-3)

And yet in Williams's judgment, Richards did disservice to criticism by conceiving of it as a combination of analysis and evaluation, by turning it into a process of reading properly leading to a pronouncement of merit.

> It is easy to see how the two were originally thought to cohere. Richards's theory of language and of reading was based on a notion of trainable individual competence which had the desirable effect of ordering and harmonizing mental impulses. Meanwhile, the version of Literature which he shared with others was in terms not only of a "storehouse of recorded values" but of these as especially indicating "when habitual narrowness of interests or confused bewilderment are replaced by an intricately wrought composure." It could then be believed that analysis of the "intricately wrought" was necessarily integrated with that clarification of response which was "composure," which in turn was at the centre of a theory of value. (*WS*, 184)

Williams's commentary on this is rigorous. He calls it a "kind of liberal rationalism, deployed specifically in an acknowledged crisis of culture and belief and offering 'the values of Literature' as, literally, the way to save us" (184). This did not accord with Williams's own experience of reading: "to read actual works of literature is to find many things other than 'intricately wrought composure.'" In fact it is to find "every kind of position and valuation, of belief and disbelief, of resolution and disturbance and settlement and conflict and disorder." Richards had secured a new abstract absolute in the "trained and discriminating reader," the reader positioned "beyond all other conditions and experiences to this achieved and saving clarity and composure" (*WS*, 184). As a critical objective this could not endure, though as pretense, Williams knew too well, it did indeed endure:

> The virtues of a genuinely enlightening kind of analysis were confused and often overborne by a new stance in which literary criticism was offered as--and very locally believed to be--the central activity in all human judgment. That is why there was so much resistance, later, to work which was showing the diversity and conflicts of the social conditions of both writing and reading, and to work which was questioning, from linguistics, the simple autonomy of the text and, from psychology, the settled subjectivity of the individual reader. (*WS*, 185)

Williams's attention to the fact that "man is always and everywhere more than a reader" carried over into his critique of Leavis as well. For *culture* had modulated from Coleridge's "endowed order of clerisy whose business was general cultivation, and whose allegiance was to the whole body of sciences," through Arnold's remnant "composed of individuals to be found in all social classes," to Leavis's essential "literary minority." And the "decline from Coleridge's allegiance to all the sciences is unfortunately real" (*C&S*, 254). This is not to say that Williams himself could not feel quite at home with the notion, reaching back to Burke,

> that a society is poor indeed if it has nothing to live by but its own immediate and contemporary experience. But the ways in which we can draw on other experience are more various than literature alone. . . . To put upon literature, or more accurately upon criticism, the responsibility of controlling the quality of the whole range of personal and social experience, is to expose a vital case to damaging misunderstanding. English is properly a central matter of all education, but it is not, clearly, a whole education. (*C&S*, 255)

Later, Williams located the problem in a living person rather than in education:

> Leavis really believed, in ways that made him break with Richards at just this crucial point, that close reading and analysis of literature was the discovery and animation of the most central human values, and from that position he developed not an "intricately wrought composure" but at once a drastic discrimination and a militant assault in the whole field of culture and society. That he could do this only by converting the "storehouse of values" to a highly selective "great tradition," with Literature thus further specialized, adamantly refusing literary works which did not serve these purposes, is clear. (*WS*, 185)

Williams was well on his way rightly to making the whole cultural matrix of "English" problematic. Culture must always be extended

> until it becomes almost identical with our whole common life. When this is realized, the problems to which, since Coleridge, we have addressed ourselves are in fact transformed. If we are to meet them honestly, we have to face very fine and difficult adjustments. (*C&S*, 256)

Criticism had to move into "that full field" of "language in history" where "private reading" gave way to "actual writing and actual reading," a concept Williams qualified in one of his best (and there are many) sentence fragments:

> A newly active social sense of writing and reading, through the social and material

> historical realities of language, in a world in which it is closely and precisely known, in every act of writing and reading, that these practices connect with, are inseparable from, the whole set of social practices and relationships which define writers and readers as "authors" and "trained readers' who are assumed to float, on a guarded privilege, above the rough, divisive and diverse world of which yet, by some alchemy, they possess the essential secret. (*WS*, 189)

That Williams made it his business to de-center literature is a fact not difficult to account for historically. His context and his commitments called for it. Of his affiliations he said the "distance is entire, the intellectual conflicts absolute" (*WS*, 190), and it is precisely on this point that one might argue his absolute distance from Barfield, for Barfield, too, had assigned a kind of privilege to literature, to poetry in particular, as the best means of training the imagination to think not *about* history but back *into* history. But it is in fact on this point, on "history," that affinity is possible. It is true that when Barfield and Williams use the word "history"--both use it repeatedly--they mean different things. It is huge and abstract in Barfield, small (not trivial) and concrete in Williams; the grand picture of evolution in Barfield, particular material circumstances in Williams. But I do not think the distance is entire, and it is at least notable that the historical emphases in both are in no small measure announced from stances contrary to Cambridge English. Williams criticized Leavis's version of literary education by saying that in

> its weak version this has gone on, intellectually untroubled because in any case, until very recent times, this specific role fitted so well into the idea of a necessary and privileged humane university: an idea which, seeing dangers only from radicals and levellers, was eventually to find its assumption of privilege within a traditional social order undercut by the real social order that had come through not so much from the seventeenth as from the nineteenth century: a world of the open struggle of classes, including in education, and of the fierce priorities of industrial capitalism, with its very different ideas of what universities are for. (*WS*, 187)

In so criticizing Leavis he provided the important clues. Insofar as you identify your enemy you identify the moment the conflict began, whether it be the seventeenth or the nineteenth century or last Tuesday. For Barfield the great historical failure was more like a unanimous seventeenth-century approval of one Frenchman's absolute division between mind and matter, whereas for Williams the great historical failure was more like a

nineteenth-century disapproval of a French political ideal. That is, Barfield located the beginning of the end in an epistemological moment, whereas Williams located it in a political and economic moment. This, finally, is key to Romantic revaluations. For one it is primarily a desperate intellectual revolt; for the other it is primarily a disparate confluence of political liberty on the one hand and the economic consequences of that same intellectual triumph of two centuries prior on the other. And it may well be--it is worth considering--that an either/or critical stance places thought in the tradition of intellectual accomplishments since last Tuesday. That is as un-Coleridgean a position as is imaginable.

One might further object, claim that the distance is entire, by pointing to the fact that Willliams's de-centering of literature also meant a rigid positioning against the aesthetic. Indeed, it was not only that "literary theory cannot be separated from cultural thory" but that "we have to reject 'the aesthetic.'"[63] But the objection, if it is admissible, cannot be said to be nuanced in the way Williams's thinking about it in *Marxism and Literature* was (where the "rejection" comes from), and anyway it is a misreading. The Marxism Williams appropriated was in large part conditioned by Cambridge; the "categorical divisions between the 'referential' and the 'emotive'" ultimately "permitted a dissolution and specialization which for a long time prevented the basic issues of the unfinished argument about language from becoming focused within a single area of discourse" (*ML*, 33). So conditioned (that is, contextualized by Cambridge English), it had to come around to aesthetic response, which for Barfield served as the "phenomena" on which *Poetic Diction* was a meditation: the "initial phenomena are the author's own aesthetic and psychological experiences" (*PD*, 11). And, again, for Williams (as for Barfield) Cambridge was never far beneath the discourse:

> Art, including literature, was to be defined by its capacity to evoke this special response: initially the perception of beauty; then the pure contemplation of an

---

[63] Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford, 1977), 145, 156; herafter, *ML*.

> object, for its own sake and without other ("external") considerations; then also the perception and contemplation of the "making" of an object: its language, its skill of construction, its "aesthetic properties." Such response (power to evoke response) could be as present in a work of history or philosophy as in a play or a poem or novel (and all were then "literature"). Equally, it could be absent in this play or this poem or this novel (and these were then "not literature" or "not really literature" or "bad literature"). The specializing concept of "literature," it its modern forms, is thus a central example of the controlling and categorizing specialization of "the aesthetic." (*ML*, 150)

But Williams's emphasis throughout was on *range*:

> If we are asked to believe that all literature is "ideology," in the crude sense that its dominant intention (and then our only response) is the communication or imposition of "social" or "political" meanings and values, we can only, in the end, turn away. If we are asked to believe that all literature is "aesthetic," in the crude sense that its dominant intention (and then our only response) is the beauty of language or form, we may stay a little longer but will still in the end turn away. . . . But it is really much simpler to face the facts of the range of intentions and effects, and to face it as a range. All writing carries references, meanings, and values. To supress or displace them is in the end impossible. (*ML*, 155)

It is true then that "literary theory cannot be separated from cultural theory, though it may be distinguished within it" (*ML*, 145), and this is the thoroughly Coleridgean position.

A more telling instance of this nuance recurs to language itself and centers (again) on "history": "The key moments which should be of interest to Marxism, in the development of thinking about language, are, first, the emphasis on language as *activity* and, second, the emphasis on the *history* of language" (*ML*, 21). The interest here lies in Williams as a carrier of theory, as a compiler of Marxist ideas on language; what is noteworthy is the assemblage, the choices he makes. And as we proceed it is worth bearing in mind the fact not only of Williams's knowing and having reviewed *Poetic Diction* but also of his listing *History in English Words* in the "References and Select Bibliography" to *Keywords*.

The position Williams settles on in *Marxism and Literature* is a dialectic: "the *changing practical consciousness of human beings*, in which both the evolutionary and the historical processes can be given full weight, but also within which they can be distinguished, in the complex variations of actual language use" (*ML*, 43-4). En route to

this dialectical position he quotes from *The German Ideology*:

> Only now, after having considered four moments, four aspects of the fundamental historical relationships, do we find that man also possesses "consciousness"; but, even so, not inherent, not "pure" consciousness. . . . Language is as old as consciousness, language is practical consciousness, as it exists for other men. (*ML*, 29)

Williams omits what immediately follows this, namely, the assertion by Marx and Engels that "consciousness" is at first established against "other persons and things outside the individual who is growing self-conscious." This, at the very least, is language he has seen in Barfield. But according to *The German Ideology* the individual, however "growing" his self-consciousness may be, is not *emerging* from unself-consciousness: "At the same time it is consciousness of nature, which first appears to men as completely alien."[64] But in fact it cannot not "appear" at all until it has first been felt. Williams does not object to the evolutionary problem that language is the occasion of self-consciousness even though "nature" has always been "completely alien."

Then there is an intermediate discussion of Volosinov, who in the 1920s had considered "objectivist linguistics" from

> within a general Marxist orientation. . . . Thus drawing on the strengths of the alternative traditions, and in setting them side by side showing their connected radical weaknesses, he opened the way to a new kind of theory which had been necessary for more than a century. (*ML*, 35)

Volosinov had been interested in breaking down the mutually isolating "social" and "individual" emphases in linguistics, and he "argued that 'consciousness takes shape and being in the material of signs created by an organized group in the process of its social intercourse. The individual consciousness is nurtured on signs; it derives its growth from them; it reflects their logic and laws.'"[65]

---

[64] *The German Ideology*, ed. R. Pascal (1846; New York: International, 1947), 19; hereafter, *GI*.

[65] Volosinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1929; Cambridge: Harvard, 1986) , cited in *ML*, 36; it is beyond the scope of things here to take up the case of Bakhtin and the interesting similarities that exist between him and Barfield, or the possibility of his being a kind of mediator between Barfield's position and Williams's, which he surely is here. (*Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*

The final move was to turn to the psychologist and language theorist most critical of received versions of Marxism--a theorist who insisted on keeping the "human" separate from the "biological" and who was very much interested in the notion of language as the occasion of consciousness: to turn to Vygotsky's *Thought and Language* (1934):

> If we compare the early development of speech and of intellect--which, as we have seen, develop along separate lines both in animals and in very young children--with the development of inner speech and of verbal thought, we must conclude that the later stage is not a simple continuation of the earlier. *The nature of the development itself changes*, from biological to socio-historical.[66]

It is true Williams refused to push "history" in the speculative manner of Barfield.

Language of course developed at some point in evolutionary history, but it is not

---

clearly betrays Volosinov's discomfort with the popularity of Saussure among Russian linguists as well as Volosinov's insistence on a binary participation of the individual utterance--*parole*, in Saussure's diction--by those engaged in meaningful communication; see, e.g., 58-61, 67.) I am limiting myself to Williams's *appropriation* of other material, not to the other material itself. But it *is* one of the purposes here to emphasize the resiliency of the "consubstantial sign"--a historical fact which escaped Williams: "The pre-Socratic unity of the *logos*, in which language was seen as at one with the order of the world and of nature, with divine and human law, and with reason, had been decisively broken and in effect forgotten" (*ML*, 22). Even so Williams noted that this was not true of Bakhtin,who argued against "arbitrary" assignation of meaning (*ML*, 37). One might also note certain compatabilities with Lukács, for whom "Art offers its images as images, closed and real in themselves (following a familiar isolation of the 'aesthetic'), but at the same time represents a *human* generality: a real mediation between 'isolated' subjectivity and (abstract) universality; a specific process of the identical subject/object" (*ML*, 151). Williams, who persistently identifies categories materially and therefore at times narrowly, says the division between, say, creative and referential "depend, ultimately, on the characteristic bourgeois separation of 'individual' and 'society' and on the older idealist separation of 'mind' and 'world.' The range of writing, in most forms, crosses these artificial categories again and again" (*ML*, 148).

[66] *ML*, 43. Vygotsky is interesting in large part because of what Williams lets pass without comment. This includes Vygotsky's interest in "gradual individualization" (228) but also and more importantly his own recurring to Marx on consciousness but in the new dress of organic metaphor: "If perceptive consciousness and intellectual consciousness reflect reality differently, then we have two different forms of consciousness. *Thought and speech turn out to be the key to the nature of human consciousness.* If language is as old as consciousness itself, and if language is a practical consciousness-for-others and, consequently, consciousness-for-myself, then not only one particular thought bu' all consciousness is connected with the development of the word. . . . The word is a direct expression of the historical nature of human consciousness. Consciousness is reflected in a word as the sun in a drop of water. A word relates to consciousness as a living cell relates to a whole organism, as an atom relates to the universe. A word is a microcosm of human consciousness" (256). It is somewhat remarkable that these sentences of an almost Coleridgean origin go without remark altogether. Citations from Lev Vygotsky, *Thought and Language*, ed. & trans. Alex Kozulin (1934; Cambridge: MIT, 1986).

> only that we have virtually no information about this;[67] it is mainly that any human investigation of so constitutive an activity finds language already there in itself and in its presumed object of study. Language has then to be seen as a persistent kind of creation and re-creation: a dynamic presence and a constant regenerative process. (*ML*, 31)

In not pushing the speculative, Williams may be said to be thin here, affirming that "of course" language developed "in evolutionary history." That language is constitutive is true; that the door is shut to intelligent linguistic archeology is by no means given. There could have been a startling connection made between Barfield's evolutionary thesis and the Marxist strategy of identifying consciousness and recurring to "abstraction." A startling, then, but not a forced possibility: that in the dialectical progression from an evolutionary (biological) to a historical (social) view of language there is a place for Barfield, especially given the emphasis on consciousness in Williams's choices from Volosinov to Vygotky's reiteration of Marx and Engels: that language and consciousness develop coevally. As in language so in thought so in material history. It was a lost opportunity. There is no pleading ignorance on Williams's behalf, no denying a theoretical opportunity: "Since all situations are dynamic, such practice is always active and is capable of radical development. . . . To write in different ways is to live in different ways. It is also to be read in different ways, in different relations, and often by different people" (*ML*, 205).

The affinities between a Marxist and an "Objective Idealist" will not seem so initially outrageous if it is kept in mind that (i) Williams was careful from the start to

---

[67] Marxist commitments to labor narrowly conceived provided an attempt. Arguments on the "origins and development of language" might "have been reopened in the context of the new science of evolutionary physical anthropology. What happened instead was an application of the abstract concept of 'labour' as the single effective origin" (*ML*, 33). Even so, philological

> achievement has an ironic relation with Marxism. On the one hand it repeats an important and often dominant tendency within Marxism itself, over a range from the comparative analysis and classification of stages of a society, through the discovery of certain fundamental laws of change within these systematic stages, to the assertion of a controlling "social" system which is *a priori* inaccessible to "individual" acts of will and intelligence. This apparent affinity explains the attempted synthesis of Marxism and structural linguistics which has been so influential a phenomenon of the mid-twentieth century. (*ML*, 28)

distinguish among three common versions of "ideology," one of which he defined as "a system of illusory beliefs--false ideas or false consciousness--which can be contrasted with true or scientific knowledge" (*ML*, 55) and that (ii) he himself was not possessed of the scientific dogmatism out of which the initial Marxist critique of "consciousness," "false consciousness," and "abstraction" emerged. *The German Ideology's* identification of "ideas" as the fundamental error brought to bear a conception of "consciousness":

> Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process. . . . we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men. . . . The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material pemises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain semblances of independence. (*GI*, 14)

As much as there is here that rings of Williams's critique of the Cambridge tradition, Williams himself never denied that reading is part of the real life-processes or that men sometimes come to us "narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived" ("great literature is indeed enriching, liberating, and refining" [*C&S*, 251]). His comment on this passage is that it is "reasonable" to agree that "'ideology' should be deprived of its 'semblance of independence'" but that "the emphasis on consciousness as inseparable from conscious existence, and then on conscious existence as inseparable from material social processes, is, in effect, lost in the use of this deliberately degrading vocabulary" (59). It is an astute strategy that Williams turns immediately to a passage on human labor from *Capital* in which "the worst architect" is distinguished from the "best of bees" in that "the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality. At the end of every labour-process, we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the labourer at its commencement" (59). Williams's judgment is that

> Consciousness is seen from the beginning as part of the human material social process, and its products in "ideas" are then as much part of this process as material products themselves. This, centrally, was the thrust of Marx's whole argument,

> but the point was lost, in this crucial area, by a temporary surrender to the cynicism of "practical men" and, even more, to the abstract empiricism of a version of "natural science." (59-60)

Williams did not demur from criticizing Marxism on just this point. Art became a phantom or a reflex and was then consigned to ideology, whereas science was aloof: "Where speculation ends--in real life--there real, positive science begins. . . . Empty talk about consciousness ceases" (*ML*, 61). The distance was short, in Williams's opinion, from consciousness as inseparable from the material social process to a "new kind of abstraction"; it led to "simple reductionism: 'consciousness' and 'its' products can be *nothing* but 'reflections' of what has already occurred in the material social process" (61). The Young Hegelians considered the "products of consciousness, to which they attribute an independent existence, as the real chains of men." "Social liberation would come by a 'change of consciousness,'" and a change of consciousness by a change of material circumstances (64-5; GI 15). Williams's sympathies with the proletariat seem, at this juncture, much keener than Marx's: Williams allows that theoretical notions *do* exist "for the mass of men," and thus on his reading they are possessed of *"kind* of consciousness," whereas according to *The German Ideology* the specific advantage the proletariat has is that it is not conscious of theoretical notions. Williams, in short, was concerned to rescue consciousness for himself and the workers to whom he was fiercely loyal his whole life. But it had to be modified beyond the reductive, hard practicality of Marx's more glaring vulgarities. It is a resounding testimony of Williams's ability as a reader that his response to Richards was not so pendulous as to prevent his maintaining that "the task of a successful socialist movement will be one of feeling and imagination quite as much as one of fact and organization."[68]

Williams's critique of Marxist failures in *Marxism and Literature*, particularly of its

---

[68] Williams, "You're a Marxist Aren't You?" in *Resources of Hope* (London: Verso, 1989), 75-6.

commitments to scientific dogma, might have made possible a hearing for Barfield on consciousness itself. For it was consciousness itself as a creature subject to evolution that gave rise to abstraction. Abstraction then was *not* beside the point. Indeed, one might say the story of its development out of real material life-process is useful. However problemated certain versions of Marxism are as structures of meaning teetering on the precipice of abstraction itself, it is a valuable but lost insight that abstraction itself is an indication that meaningful material relations are fading--in language as in life. On this point Coleridge might well have been re-united in Williams and Barfield, but neither saw it, and anyway the notion carries with it other important commitments, re-definings of such things as "phantoms" and "reflexes." Barfield did not privilege aesthetic response through specific literary training: a particularly important premise of *Poetic Diction* is that the "felt change of consciousness" can be experienced by anyone, and even by means of pidgin English. But except for the addendum of the Second Preface and its strong warnings about bombs, it was a socially isolated thing. Williams detested the notion of privileged aesthetic response: a particularly important part of his Marxism was its English, specifically Cambridge, context and its latent warnings against literature as an isolated, full, human experience. But for all his mastery of writing as lived experience and social act, it passed him by that words are living educts of the imagination, that something lay beyond them. Coleridge attempted to privilege nothing, and Barfield himself noted that "in the long run neither evolution nor history will ever be fruitfully discerned unless they are contemplated as substantially one and the same process":

> My system, if I may venture to give it so fine a name, is the only attempt I know ever made to reduce all knowledges into harmony. It opposes no other system, but shows what was true in each; and how that which was true in the particular, in each of them became error, *because* it was only half the truth. . . . I wish, in short, to connect by a moral *copula* natural history with political history; or, in other words, to make history scientific, and science historical--to take from history its accidentality, and from science its fatalism. (*TT*, 12.9.1831, cited in *What Coleridge Thought*, 158-9)

The alleged death of God, like the alleged interment of ideology, has led to as much irresponsible thinking as the notion that the *ipsissima verba* are there for the taking in the red letters of the King James Bible. The dividing line between idealism and materialism is a mark not only of convenience but of obtundity. Livelier minds cross it, and it is they perhaps that are most concerned with "change," which was the Redeemer's point no less than Marx's. Alasdair MacIntyre may well have been right: "one cannot entirely discard either without discarding truths not otherwise available."[69] Klaus Bockmuehl most certainly was: Marxism is the most "vital doctrine of salvation in the secularized West."[70] This should force us into an examination of the failures of religion *as religion*, to be sure. But it should also suggest an examination of the failures of religion *as Marx knew it*, and as it happens he knew it like the cow knows the fly. This, specifically ("as Marx knew it"), is the point of contact for the narrative sketched here. Not that the interrogation should end in the pronouncement that Marxism is itself a religion. Marx's emphases on unity, his counterparts to original sin, the kingdom of God, salvation, redemption, and the apocalypse (to name a few) no doubt justify the pronouncement. But it tends to be so unspecific and ideologically overdetermined, if not knee-jerk, as to be useless. Rather, the interrogation must center on the Hegel-Feuerbach-Marx tradition as a species of mythological criticism. It is the buoyancy of existential reading.

Marxism reduced theology to anthropology in the so-called projection theory of Feuerbach, which emphasized the anthropomorphisms of religious discourse. The social

---

[69] *Marxism and Christianity* (New York: Schocken, 1968), vii; hereafter, *M&C*.

[70] *The Marxist Challenge* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1980), 12; originally published as *Herausforderungen des Marxismus* (Giessen and Basel: Brunnen Verlag, 1979).

character of the Trinity, then (as in Maurice), could have nothing to do with anything real except man's need to establish a divine paradigm of his own essence--for man's need, in other words, to create God in man's own image, whereas in Coleridge the Trinity was essential for thought and reality, for Mind and Life--indeed--for consciousness itself.[71] But this reducing the difference to a matter of anthropology simplified the very nature of a theology that had been increasingly secularized since the seventeenth-century. Hegel solidified a project of demystification: rationality had to replace myth and image; until religion extricated itself from myth, it would remain estranged. But the scheme remained wholly ideal, as the influence on Strauss's 1835 (-36) *Leben Jesu* testifies. As MacIntyre notes,

> Strauss's starting point is the typically Hegelian one that the idea of God-manhood, of humanity as the essential content of the divine does not depend for its perfection or reality on how far it was in fact realised in the person of Jesus: the perfection and reality of the idea are intrinsic to it as an idea. Historically Jesus was the first to introduce it to the minds of men: therein lies His glory. But the idea is independent of the person: herein lies the idealism of Strauss. The life of Jesus is mythical, and by myth is meant the clothing of religious ideas in historical form.[72]

This is where Marx himself faltered. Like Hegel and Feuerbach even moreso, he preferred the language of reason to that of myth. Anything that did not accord with the canons of rational *a priori* could not be affirmed. One might take MacIntyre's approach: carefully "work out *a posteriori* the different logics which govern different forms of speech . . . [because] one cannot *a priori* lay it down that it is rational for man to eat, to love, and to think, but not to pray" (86). Such an approach requires a useful and necessary distinction between the mythic and the rational. It is similar to but not nearly so rigorous as Barfield's argument with Müller, who shares the moment with Strauss and Marx. Barfield distinguished between the mythic and the rational not as modes of speech or discourse but

---

[71] For a discussion of the Trinity as promising a "differentiation between the various phases of divine consciousness" (197), see Raimonda Modiano, *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature* (Tallahassee: Florida UP, 1956), esp. 186-204.

[72] *Marxism: An Interpretation* (London: SCM, 1953), 32; hereafter, *Marxism*.

as modes of consciousness: we speak of "what is earlier and later, but not of truth and error" (*History in English Words*, 176). This is in fact a more existential position.

Marx's fundamental evasion came down to a matter of dealing with the historical Jesus: he condemned

> religion as Idealist. But religion is only idealist if its myth is a substitute for history. The gospel claims that in the person of Jesus myth became history, the ideal became real. Marxism insists upon treating Jesus' significance as being merely that of a representative or instance of revolt against class society. But to treat individuals as merely representative instances of more important entities was the basic error of Hegelian idealism. The whole point of Feuerbach's materialism is that it refuses to consider man in terms of abstractions, such as ideas or class-concepts. . . . In one sense, from the Christian point of view the fault of Marxism is that it does not carry its materialism far enough. (*Marxism*, 87-8)

Marx accepted (with modifications) Feuerbach's materialism while maintaining Hegel's paradigms, and this rendered his version of demystification problematic; he accepted Strauss and the Left-Hegelian view of Jesus as an abstraction, and this rendered his materialism problematic. If Marx depended on Christian paradigms, and if his notion of Christ remained idealistic, his critique of religion is quite frankly problematic. Marx "inherits through Hegel a Christian interpretation of history in terms of conflict and reconciliation. Is it possible," MacIntyre asks, "for him to reject the framework of myth in history and to maintain a philosophy of history as such at all?" (87). And what of a philosophy that considers Christianity to be unreal even when that philosophy itself "begins with the mythological vision of the good society which it finds in Christianity"? (88).

Engels had realized that ancient Christianity shared many points of contact with the labor movement, and Kautsky had gone so far as to affirm that at first Christianity saw itself accomplishing on earth a liberation of the oppressed (*Marxism*, 80). But Marx let questions of priority dissolve into ontology. Was his *consciousness* of religion determined

by his *being*, in accordance with Feuerbach's dictum which he readily adopts,[73] or do we take him at his word when he says that the criticism of religion is the beginning of all criticism? MacIntyre thinks that

> Marx begins with a critique of religion, which turns out to have social and economic consequences. . . . What the criticism of religion reveals is that the condition of human life is such that man has been forced to create an ideal world in order to make the real world tolerable. Marx's error is in thinking that you cannot have a religion which will be a redemption of this world and not from this world, without abolishing religion as such and treating the idea of God as a fantastic and ideal projection. (*Marxism*, 84)

In other words "being," for Marx, did not preceed "consciousness" when criticism began for the simple reason that religion had to go before criticism could begin at all: the critique "turns out to have social and economic consequences" (83).

I have used MacIntyre's critique for its dual sympathies and because it approximates Barfield on the distinction between the mythic and the rational: approximates, not repeats. Barfield's critique is singular and shows more forcibly than MacIntyre's that if the critique of religion is the starting point, that critique had better get myth right.

But MacIntyre is also suggestive for a narrative whose purpose is to get Barfield and Williams on the same page. Barfield did not follow Coleridge outside the realm of pure thought and into the arena of political and material discourse, and on this point he and Williams are in ways the inverse of each other. MacIntyre saw the radically monotheistic character of the gospel as containing an inherent atheism when any other than the true God is concerned: "Where he is not preached, atheism may be the one surviving fruit of the gospel" (12). Again, the rationalism of Marx inaugurated a "secularism and an atheism such as only a Christian culture can produce" (14). If these bear historical weight, what of

---

[73] In his *Theses on the Reform of Philosophy* Feuerbach writes: "The true relationship between thought and being may be expressed as follows: being is the subject and thought the predicate. Thought is conditioned by being, not being by thought"; see MacIntyre, *Marxism*, 34.

this proposition: "the two most relevant books in the modern world are St. Mark's Gospel and Marx's *National Economy and Philosophy*; but they must be read together" (*M&C*, 109)? The proposition seems to have been sanctioned by Williams himself, as his epigraph to this chapter suggests (*ML*, 204). Once more, STC:

> My system, if I may venture to give it so fine a name, is the only attempt I know ever made to reduce all knowledges into harmony. It opposes no other system, but shows what was true in each; and how that which was true in the particular, in each of them became error, *because* it was only half the truth. . . . I wish, in short, to connect by a moral *copula* natural history with political history; or, in other words, to make history scientific, and science historical--to take from history its accidentality, and from science its fatalism. (*TT*. 12.9.1831, cited in *What Coleridge Thought*, 158-9)

FOUR

Imagination and Polarity: Coleridge in Poetic Conversation

What is the source from which fancy springs--the head, or the heart? That is, from the nerves and senses alone, or more towards the other pole of the organism, where the breath meets the blood and the heart beats out of the blood into the future?

For [imagination] . . . modifies "sense" itself, that common sense, or koenaesthesis, which fancy must take, and leave, as it finds it. . . . It was because Wordsworth had so little idea of all this that he managed to make at once too much and too little of the difference between the two.

—Owen Barfield

My purpose in this final essay is to consider in a new way, and with a different wager on the results, the thesis of the "Dejection Ode":

> we receive but what we give,
> And in our life alone does Nature live.[1]

By now the lines are subject to inflation, though a case could still be made that they are in contention for the two most important lines in English poetry since the turn of the nineteenth century. They suggest the enduring post-epistemological dilemma, and to the most devout Coleridgeans they suggest its solution as well.

My purpose also is to bring to bear on the Wordsworth-Coleridge claim I made in chapter one--that Coleridge, not Wordsworth, is the prime mover of the English nineteenth century--the most relevant statements by Barfield from three of his later works, *Saving the*

---

[1] *CPW*, 365; citations from the verse letter version of "Dejection" are from *CL*, ii, 790-798; I will give page, not line, numbers for passages from the verse letter. All other citations from Coleridge's poetry are from *Complete Poetical Works* (*CPW*), ed. E.H. Coleridge (Oxford: Clarendon, 1912).

Appearances (1957), *What Coleridge Thought* (1971), and an essay titled, "Where is Fancy Bred?" (1968).

The heart of my essay will be a discussion of the four most important poems Wordsworth and Coleridge wrote in the conversational mode: "Tintern Abbey" as a response to "Frost at Midnight," and the "Dejection Ode" as a response to, as well as an underwriter for the later stanzas of, the "Intimations Ode." In my discussion I assume a substantial intimacy with the poems on the part of the reader, and as I suspend a final evaluation of them to the last few pages of the essay, I beg patience. It cannot be said that I have offered "readings" of these poems, mainly because a comprehensive reading of them cannot be accomplished in the space my essay occupies. That is something for whole books. It is almost enough that "readings" are less fun to write than to read were it not the case that they seem to have less and less to say to each other as scholarship becomes more and more commodified, and so seem increasingly impertinent. My method, rather, is to move as quickly as I can through the four poems with as much attention to the relevant themes *and* to other standard readings as is possible for the sake, finally, of suggesting this: that Barfield's peculiar appropriation of Coleridge on imagination and polarity--"Imagination is, or it is striving to become, the ultimate polarity of self and world experienced as such" (*WCT*, 90)--is crucial for our understanding of the fundamental difference between Wordsworth and Coleridge, whom we might (hoping for some truth spoken in jest) nickname *Sturm und Drang*.

i

In *History in English Words* Barfield quoted these lines from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*:

> And as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing

A local habitation and a name.

He took them as an intimation of a Shakespearian conception of the imagination, as a suggestion that Shakespeare himself

> transcends the flight of time and the laborious building up of meanings, and, picking up a part of the outlook of an age which is to succeed his by nearly two hundred years, gives it momentary expression before he lets it drop again. That mystical conception which the word embodies in these lines--a conception which would make imagination the interpreter and part creator of a whole unseen world--is not found again until the Romantic Movement has begun.[2]

The effusions were, as I've suggested earlier, less clear than euphoric. The pronouncements were vague: "It was the philosophy of the Lake School that the perception of Nature--that is to say of all in Nature that is not purely mechanical--depends upon what is brought to it by the observer. Deep must call unto deep."[3] Coleridge's claim in the "Dejection Ode"--that

> from the soul must issue forth
> A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
> Enveloping the earth-- (53-55)

suggested to Barfield a necessary "re-animation of Nature," a re-*vitalizing* possible in the nineteenth century

> because the imagination was felt as creative in the full religious sense of the word. It had itself assisted in creating the natural forms which the senses were now contemplating. It had moved upon the face of the waters. For it was 'the repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation'--the Word made human (218):

highly suggestive words to end a book on but a long way from anything like a satisfactory

---

[2] *HEW*, 214; see also "Where is Fancy Bred" (1968) in *ROM*: "One sometimes has an uncanny feeling that Shakespeare knew all about the birth of the Romantic Movement two hundred years or so before it happened" (90).

[3] *HEW*, 216; as a partial indication of the influence Barfield seems to have had on Stephen Prickett, cf. Prickett, *Coleridge and Wordsworth: The Poetry of Growth* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1970): "Does deep call to deep so that the genius of, say, Shakespeare strikes us as if it were a projection of our own selves writ large, and endowed with a universal significance . . . ?" (25). *History in English Words* is the only Barfield book Prickett cites in *Coleridge and Wordsworth*. Also, on Kant and the difference between "regulative" and "constitutive" ideas, see Barfield, *WCT*, 111 and cf. Prickett, "*Biographia Literaria*: Chapter Thirteen" in Deirdre Coleman and Peter Otto, eds., *Imagining Romanticism* (West Cornwall: Locust Hill, 1992), 8-9.

phenomenological or epistemological explanation of the role of imagination.

Poetic Diction was an attempt at such an explanation, against Locke and Kant on perception especially, but again it did not improve much on the specific role of imagination. The book was later (1951) designated by Barfield himself as "not merely a theory of poetry, but a theory of knowledge. It is as such," he said, "that it must be judged" (14). So judged, *Poetic Diction* may be said to have been an important step *toward* a theory of knowledge, a necessary preparation for *Saving the Appearances* (1957) and *What Coleridge Thought* (1971). But it remains in fact a theory of poetry.

It remains a theory of poetry because it did not succeed in setting down clearly the function of the imagination in perception itself; that it did not succeed is made clear by the *fact* of the later work. It is telling, and it was important, that the passage from chapter thirteen of *Biographia* that *Poetic Diction* opened with was not the famous distinction between Fancy and Imagination, or between Primary and Secondary Imagination. It was instead the passage suggestive of Coleridge's later devotion to the law of polarity:

> 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 whole world of intelligences with the whole system of their representations to rise up before you. (*BL*, i, 297)

The two forces, for Barfield the poetic and the prosaic, are the poles between which meaning runs.[4]

---

[4] They are not *perception* and *conception*, not *Wit* and *Judgment* as in Locke, who on Barfield's reading never distinguished between *percept* and *idea*. For, as Barfield says, "idea must already contain a conceptual element"; or again, neither *synthesis* nor *analysis* can be said properly to belong to the poetic. Both, rather, operate "*within* the sphere of of the rational" (190). Aristotle was thus correct to distinguish synthesis from knowledge, where synthesis

> is the beginning of error. It is the beginning of error because it is only the "putting together" of subjective "ideas." And this putting together can only come *after*, and *by means of*, a certain discrimination of actual phenomena--a seeing of them as *separate* sensible objects--without which the ideas themselves (general notions) could never have existed. The poetic principle, on the contrary, was already operative before such discrimination took place, and, when it continues to operate afterwards in inspiration, it operates *in spite of* that discrimination and seeks to undo its work. The poetic conducts *an immediate conceptual synthesis of percepts*. (*PD*, 191)

The closest Barfield came in the original text to a true Coleridgean sense of the repetition in the finite mind was his assertion that "The poetic conducts *an immediate conceptual synthesis of percepts* (*PD*, 191), with the addition that:

> Brought into contact with these by its partial attachment to some individual human brain and body, it meets--through the senses--the *disjecta membra* of a real world, and weaves them again into the one real whole; whence it was called--not perhaps very happily--by Coleridge *esemplastic* (191).

Barfield already followed Steiner here, to the near effect that idea = concept + percept: "the Kantian identifies idea with concept," even as Locke identified idea with percept,

> whereas the idea is, in truth--as Steiner has so well pointed out--a result which the concept brings about in uniting itself to the percept. It stands between percept and concept, and is the beginning of subjectivity. If the idea is thought, the concept is thinking. (195)

This was a mere intimation of what in the second Preface to *Poetic Diction* (1951) translated into what Barfield called the "Romantic revolt against the encroaching grip of scientism" (38). Herein lay the fundamental difference between Barfield's use for Coleridge and Raymond Williams's, for whereas Williams saw Coleridge as a model for writing in society, Barfield saw him as a model for writing against Cartesian cosmology. Or, as he put it in *What Coleridge Thought*,

> It will become apparent to anyone who has the patience to reach the end of this book that I find the relevance of Coleridge's thought to our time where he himself located its relevance to his own. It resides, above all else, in his radical critique of one or two major presuppositions, upon which the immediate thinking, and as a result the whole cultural and social structure of this "epoch of the understanding and the senses" (including supposedly radical revolts against it) is so firmly--or is it now infirmly?--established. As long as this is ignored, I doubt if he has much to say to us, whether as a philosopher or as a sociologist. It is partly for that reason, but partly also because my book is already, if anything, too long for its main purpose, that I have touched on his political theory only very briefly in the latter part of the last chapter.[5]

---

[5] *What Coleridge Thought* (*WCT*), 11-12; this seems an arguable exaggeration on Barfield's part: that STC so located 'relevance' is undeniable; that he limited himself to such 'location' or its implications simply is not the case. Thus the 'touching on his political theory only briefly.' On the "epoch of the understanding and the senses," see especially Barfield's discussion of the 'Understanding' in chapter eight: "Mere understanding--understanding conceived as unirradiated by reason--is a faculty man shares with the higher animals; in whom it is the further development of instinct" (97). 'Understanding' in Coleridge, as in

The "encroaching grip of scientism" flourishes in an "epoch of the understanding and the senses," and it "insists on dealing with 'data,' but there shall no data be given, save the bare percept. The rest is imagination. Only by imagination therefore can the world be known" (*PD*, 28). Prior to this pronouncement in the second Preface Barfield had relegated imagination to the narrower arena of poetry itself--had in fact developed more of a notion of Secondary Imagination in accordance with Coleridge's distinction. The claim for the Secondary Imagination was that it can only be predicated of the prosaic. It is only by means of the prosaic

> that the separate perceptual groups ("phenomena"), which metaphor is to combine or relate, could ever have become separate. Moreover, it is only by means of this same principle that the individual consciousnesses, which are assumed to have done the creating, could ever have come into being. For the rational principle . . . is above all that which produces self-consciousness. It shuts off the human ego from the living meaning in the outer world, which it is for ever "murdering to dissect," and encloses that same ego in the network of its own, now abstract, thoughts. And it is just in the course of that very shutting off that the ego itself stirs and awakes to conscious existence. (*PD*, 143)

Thus, the proper function of imagination is to restore to prosaic consciousness what was lost on waking up. Here Barfield modified both Shelley and Coleridge: it is *inspiration* that apprehends the hitherto unapprehended, and *Meaning* itself becomes divided into primary and secondary:

> Seeking for material in which to incarnate its last inspiration, imagination seizes on a suitable word or phrase, uses it as a metaphor, and so creates meaning. The progress is from *M*eaning, through inspiration to imagination, and from imagination, through metaphor, to *m*eaning; inspiration grasping the hitherto unapprehended, and imagination relating it to the already known. (141; my italics).

This passage from the text was serviceable for a theory of poetry, but not for a theory of knowledge. Thus in the "Preface to the Second Edition" Barfield recognized what he

---

Kant, is distinct from 'Reason' and a lower faculty than both 'Reason' and 'Imagination': "though reason is present *to* the understanding alone, it is present *in* the whole process of nature. This appears to contradict . . . the previous proposition that all reason is "above" nature; and that contradiction is perhaps the principal difficulty in the way of comprehending what Coleridge meant by it. It is one that is simply not removable, unless we are prepared to treat his whole cosmology as an *alternative* to the Cartesian dichotomy, and not simply as an interpretation of it" (95).

himself had almost perpetuated, that "with the single exception of Goethe, the doctrine of imagination died where it was born, in the garden of art and literature" (38). The work that lay ahead of him would have to center on Coleridge, who "fully grasped the part played by imagination in constructing not only the fictions of poets, but also the ordinary physical world which we speak of 'perceiving,' though in fact we half perceive (that is, receive through the sense-impressions) and half create it" (27). The distinct echo of "Tintern Abbey" here suggests a suitable starting point for this last essay: Coleridge in Poetic Conversation.

ii

It is well before proceeding any further, though, to be as clear as possible about Barfield's understanding of Coleridge on imagination.

On Barfield's reading, Primary imagination

> is an act, but it is an act of which we are not normally conscious. It becomes secondary, whether philosophically or poetically, when it is raised to, or nearer to, the level of consciousness and therewith becomes expressible. Whereas the only thing that could be called the "expression" of primary imagination as such is the familiar face of nature herself. (*WCT*, 77)

The "familiar face of nature herself" is what in *Saving the Appearances* Barfield called "collective representations"--that is, the world as it is represented to us and recognizable from one percipient to the other, whether the "represented" be a rainbow or a tree. Leaving aside the question of all that composes "matter," and leaving aside the question of whether we all experience the "same" matter--the same tree, for example (this is not a book on metaphysics, Barfield says), what we have to remember is "when we leave the world of every-day for the discipline of any strict inquiry, that, *if* the particles, or the unrepresented, are in fact all that is *independently* there, then the world we all accept as real is in fact a system of collective representations" (*STA*, 20). When Coleridge in the verse letter says

thou, my Love!
Art gazing, now, like me,
And see'st the Heaven, I see, (*CL*, ii, 791)

the Heaven--as the night sky and moon and stars--is a collective representation, whereas a hallucination would not be, since it is private.[6] Thus, while "imagination at its primary stage empowers experience of an outer world *at all*, at its secondary stage it both expresses and empowers experience of that outer world as the productive 'unity in multeity,' which results in a whole and parts organically related to one another" (*WCT*, 81).

Now it is true that Barfield said of *Saving the Appearances* that "This book is not being written because the author desires to put forward a theory of perception" (17), but to anyone familiar with his relation to Coleridge it is clear that the book assumes a Coleridgean doctrine of Primary Imagination as that which "empowers experience of an outer world *at all*," though the doctrine itself is not an isolated instance of Romantic perception: "On almost any received theory of perception the familiar world--that is, the world which is apprehended, not through instruments and inference, but simply--is for the most part dependent upon the percipient," and this is "true for any theory of perception I ever heard of--with the possible exception of Bishop Berekeley's" (*STA*, 21). The distinctive feature of the Romantic doctrine is that whereas "The Neo-platonic theory holds that man the artist is, in some measure, a creator. The Romantic conception agrees--but goes further and returns him, in this capacity, to Nature herself" (*STA*, 129).

Perhaps it is worth hearing from another critic who seems to have learned his Coleridge in part through Barfield: "What Coleridge claims here is that sense-perception is not a matter of passive response, but an active interplay between projection and receptivity in which the mind first *creates* its models of reality and then checks them against the stimuli

---

[6] I forbear addressing the question of whether "Heaven" is used here emblematically of something Sara Hutchinson *can* see, in contrast to what Sara Fricker, the other of the "two unequal Minds / [that] Meet in one House" where there is no "heart-nursing Sympathy," *cannot* see.

received."[7] This is for Coleridge a mostly unconscious act but still an imaginative act.

> Just as, according to Milton's Raphael, most humans can only reason discursively, so their creation is limited to sense-perception, whereas the artist, like an angel leaping intuitively to the constitutive truths of Reason, re-creates whole worlds of the imagination.
>
> This is as much a political as it is an aesthetic statement. In spite of what may seem a somewhat immodest haste to put the artist on the side of the angels, the argument is essentially anti-elitist and democratic. Echoing the egalitarian ideology of the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* twenty years before, Coleridge, like Wordsworth, is here insisting that, contrary to the belief of many German romantics, including Schelling himself, for whom the creative faculties of the artist *separate* him from the mass of mankind, they are rather part of a continuum with the basic powers of perception enjoyed by every human being. (12-13)

The dark or perilous side of Primary Imagination is that in an age of increased, specialized inquiry (such as our own) it implies the detachment of individuals, the isolation of one from another:

> There is no "science of science"; no unity of knowledge. There is only an accelerating increase in that pigeon-holed knowledge by individuals of more and more about less and less, which, if persisted in indefinitely, can only lead mankind to a sort of "idiocy" (in the original sense of the word)--a state of affairs, in which fewer and fewer representations will be collective, and more and more will be private, with the result that there will in the end be no means of communication between one intelligence and another. (*STA*, 145)

The peril for art, on Barfield's account--and it is quite clearly an anti-modernist stance--is that we have

> come at last to the point of realizing that art can no longer be content with imitating the collective representations, now that these are themselves turning into idols. But, instead of setting out to smash the idols, we have tamely concluded that nothing can now be art which in any way reminds us of nature--and even that practically anything may be art, which does not. We have learned that art can represent nothing but Man himself, and we have interpreted that as meaning that art exists for the purpose of enabling Mr. Smith to "express his personality." And all because we have not learnt--though our very physics shouts it at us--that nature herself is the representation of Man. (*STA*, 131)

In his *Essay on Poesy* Coleridge said that Genius must "master the essence, the *natura naturans*, which presupposes a bond between nature in the higher sense and the soul

---

[7] Stephen Prickett, "*Biographia Literaria*: Chapter Thirteen" in Deirdre Coleman and Peter Otto, eds., *Imagining Romanticism* (West Cornwall: Locust Hill, 1992), 12.

of man." It must acquire "living and life-producing ideas, which shall contain their own evidence, the certainty that they are one with the germinal causes in nature. . . . For all we see, hear, feel, and touch the substance is and must be in ourselves" (in *WCT*, 80). Such an intimate, conscious affinity with nature is a matter of raising what is unconscious to the level of consciousness, and this is "the genius in the man of genius," according to the *Essay on Poesy* (in *WCT*, 79). This, as I shall try to argue, is what Coleridge wins for himself in "Dejection"--a living, life-producing idea containing its own evidence, one with the germinal causes in nature.

One reason I have chosen to center on the three works of Barfield's mentioned above is that it is possible to see how the two earlier works were important exercises in preparing for *What Coleridge Thought*, even as indeed the whole Barfield corpus can be seen as an evolution--sometimes a lucky one. This is fairly plain in his understanding of the relationship among Primary Imagination, Secondary Imagination, and Fancy, and their collective relationship to evolving consciousness:

> [Imagination "dissolves and dissipates"] the same fixities and definites which fancy can only rearrange. Fancy is the *aggregating* power; it combines and aggregates given units of already conscious experience; whereas the secondary imagination "modifies" the units themselves. Moreover, in doing so, it shows itself to be "identical in the *kind* of its agency" with the primary imagination, on which all conscious experience is based. It is *one with* the primary imagination (that is, the seminal principle) in a way that fancy, distinguishingly, *is not*. For it modifies "sense" itself, that common sense, or koenaesthesis, which fancy must take, and leave, as it finds it.[8]

Aggregation is Fancy's "characteristic activity." But aside from this, it also has a "merely passive role." Coleridge's three chapters on Hartley speak of "the universal law of the passive fancy and the mechanical memory." Barfield says that

Schemes which promise an artificial memory, "in reality can only produce a

---

[8] *WCT*, 86; also, "The 'rules' of secondary imagination are, however, still 'the very powers of growth and production,' for that is what they were already at the primary stage, when they were simply the laws of nature. In other words, they are not rules at all, though critics had been trying to turn them into rules. They are powers" (*WCT*, 77).

> confusion and debasement of the fancy." And again, our fancy is "always the ape, and too often the adulterator and counterfeit of our memory." This linking of it with the *memory* indicates fancy's playing a part in the genesis of consciousness at an altogether earlier stage than literature could be concerned with. Besides "playing with" the fixities and definites that are given to it, fancy has evidently taken a hand in producing them--in rendering them the very fixities they are. (*WCT*, 86).

It is fairly clear that *History in English Words* and *Poetic Diction* had prepared Barfield to read Coleridge as his did--enabled him to notice that

> fancy has its proper and beneficent place in the genesis of consciousness as a whole and, particularly, in the conversion of perceptions into memories.[9] But it is easily debased. In its debased form it is, as *passive* fancy, more or less identical with precisely those characteristics of human perception, which it is the function of imagination (by modifying perception) to overcome, namely: "the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude," in consequence of which "we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not . . ." or, more shortly, "the lethargy of custom." The mind is in thrall to the lethargy of custom, when it feeds solely on images which itself has taken no active part in producing. But there is more to it than this. For the debasement of active fancy carries this process further. Where the mind deliberately *chooses* to feed only upon such images, there you have the debasement of active fancy; and there the lethargy of custom becomes that deliberate practice of reducing "the *conceivable* within the bounds of the picturable," at which Coleridge never tired of point his warning finger." (*WCT*, 87)

The ambiguity of fancy is that it is *not*, as imagination *is*, a power of growth and production, but a manipulator of fixities *and yet has at the same time helped bring about* the fixed-ness of things; their very "outness" is "an essential element" in the evolution from nature to consciousness to self-consciousness. Barfield's solution is nowhere explicit in Coleridge, though it is indeed implicit and can be explicated. One of the two opposing and contrary forces of polarity

> tends to expand infinitely, while the other strives to apprehend or *find* itself in this infinity," and again, from the previous Chapter XII, that "The intelligence in the one tends to *objectize* itself, and in the other to *know* itself in the object." Now

---

[9] The same may be said of *Saving the Appearances*: "as soon as unconscious or subconscious organic processes have been sufficiently polarized to give rise to phenomena on the one side and consciousness on the other, *memory* is made possible. As consciousness develops into self-consciousness, the remembered phenomena become detached or liberated from their originals and so, as images, are in some measure at man's disposal. The more thoroughly participation has been eliminated, the more they are at the disposal of his imagination to employ as it chooses. If it chooses to impart its own meaning, it is doing, *pro tanto*, with the remembered phenomena what their Creator once did with the phenomena themselves" (126-7).

> imagination is precisely an advance of the mind towards knowing itself in the object. We have seen also that it is characteristic of the relation of polarity that, although one pole, one force, cannot be without the other, yet there is always also a *predominance* of one over the other; further, that it is upon these varying and alternating predominances that all evolution, and indeed life itself, depends." (*WCT*, 89)

This would not be possible if both forces were not "literally *striving* for total ascendancy." Barfield asks, "Can we say that, in the case of fancy, or in some cases of it, there is an undue predominance of the (centripetal) force that seeks to apprehend or find itself by "objectizing"; whereas, in the case of imagination, the two forces are working in harmony, that is to say, with the necessary, but without any undue, predominance of the one over the other?" (*WCT*, 89).

> Imagination is, or it is striving to become, the ultimate polarity of self and world experienced as such. In its fullness that experience would be the reconciliation of the two forces, not their cessation. But the finite activity of poetry, like every other motion, still requires a predominance, however slight, of the one pole over the other. (*WCT*, 90)

I will be considering whether an "undue predominance" obtains in Wordsworth and Coleridge themselves.

Barfield's distinction in *Poetic Diction* between poetic and prosaic, and his attention early on to *polarity* instead of to Primary and Secondary Imagination defined in *exclusion* of polarity, occasioned his being able to understand imagination in just this manner. He had traced Coleridge's own steps, though somewhat independently, and it was this very tracing that suited him to understand Coleridge on imagination. The original polarity in *Poetic Diction* between the poetic and the prosaic, mutually contingent and simultaneously sustainable by means of the imagination, evolved in the end into what in *Saving the Appearances* Barfield called original (i.e., conscious) participation on the one hand and alpha- and beta-thinking on the other, also mutually contingent and simultaneously sustainable in "final participation," which is the "proper goal of imagination" (*STA*, 147)--

the reconciliation, not cessation, of the two forces.[10] It is not the least of the many provocative sentences in *Saving the Appearances* when Barfield, in typical cryptic fashion, announces that "There will be a revival of Christianity when it becomes impossible to write a popular manual of science without referring to the incarnation of the Word" (164)--when the relationship between participation and reflection cannot but be worn like spectacles before our eyes.

There is, then, in Barfield's account of Coleridge on imagination one very strong and unique feature which Barfield's own intellectual history made possible. This is the law of polarity which Barfield used as his epigraph in *Poetic Diction.* Take from imagination the law of polarity and imagination will fall. Take it in the context of polarity, and the diminutive thirteenth chapter expands in front of us. What is more, it becomes the grid through which Wordsworth and Coleridge must pass if we want to read off of it their essential difference.

Though Coleridge's definition of imagination is, as Prickett says, a "spectacularly unsuccessful definition," it is not inexplicable, and the better readers have by now

---

[10] It would be futile to attempt a full explanation of the relationship between original participation at one end of experience and beta-thinking on the other, and perhaps it would have been wise to have left the parallels between them and the polarity advanced in *Poetic Diction* unspoken. But it is necessary for an understanding of Barfield (no less than of Coleridge) to be clear on the importance of polarity. Original participation corresponds to the poetic, to the mythic period when meaning is "given," whereas alpha-thinking (thinking *about* the representations) and beta-thinking (thinking about *perceiving* and *thinking*) correspond to the prosaic or rational principle, which can only think about *meaning* because *meaning* has already been deposited. The ability to remind oneself that one still participates the natural world is possible only through beta-thinking, by which participation is raised from the unconscious to the conscious level and apart from which participation becomes immediately unconscious again. Now this is what Coleridge means when he says that primary imagination is perception, usually operating at the level of the unconscious. In Barfield "beta-thinking leads to final, by way of the inexorable elimination of all original, participation" (*STA*, 139), and in Coleridge the Imagination must be united to the Fancy, and especially the Reason to the Sense, in order for Mind in (as opposed to other than) Nature to be experienced as such by the power of imagination: "that reconciling and mediatory power, which incorporating the reason in images of the sense, and organizing (as it were) the flux of the sense by the permanence and self-circling energies of the reason, gives birth to a system of symbols, harmonious in themselves, and consubstantial with the truths of which they are the conductors" (*CW*, vi, 29).

succeeded in defining it for him.[11] But this much might be worth setting down: that primary imagination as "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," is no mere clever way of saying that phenomena depend on a percipient. It is much closer to Coleridge's sense to say that we create the natural world in the act of perception, and that such creation participates in the creative act of the *logos*: that we create is indicative of our being made in the image and likeness of God. The imagination is not, as for Blake, the body of the Redeemer. But it *is* the *imago dei*.[12]

iii

I described chapter one as "something of a gauntlet thrown down to those who go on believing that Wordsworth and not Coleridge was the prime mover of the English nineteenth century." The context of the claim was somewhat narrowly philological, pertaining to words considered "singly," though it was indeed Coleridge who offered the strongest resistance to the purely arbitrary sign, particularly on the basis of his claim that words stand in a consubstantial relationship to their signifiers; it was indeed Coleridge who thus revitalized and buttressed an adamic tradition it was Locke's primary concern to

---

[11] To my knowledge the best discussions are Prickett's "*Biographia Literaria*: Chapter Thirteen" (from which the above quote is taken [p. 4]) in Deirdre Coleman and Peter Otto, eds., *Imagining Romanticism* (West Cornwall: Locust Hill, 1992), 3-23, and Barfield's two chapters on "Imagination and Fancy" in *What Coleridge Thought* (Middletown: Wesleyan, 1972), 69-91, the former seemingly indebted to the latter; cf. also Prickett's essay and Barfield's "Where is Fancy Bred": Prickett: "students of English literature find that they are at least supposed to have heard of it [*BL*, ch. 13] (3); Barfield: "Every English, or American, or Canadian, or Australian university student of English literature, however poorly equipped, is bound to know *something* about Coleridge's famous distinction between 'imagination' and 'fancy' (*ROM*, 88); indeed, Prickett seems to be the one Coleridgean who has not only read the standard Barfield texts but also his essays from the 1960s, '70s, and '80's, the importance of which it was part of the purpose of my last chapter to make clear.

[12] But see Richard Tomlinson's contrary view in "The Primary Imagination Re-visited," *The Wordsworth Circle* 21:2 (1990), 81-85.

demolish. But in the larger context of poetry--of poetry great in both quality and quantity--the claim of Coleridge's primacy invites reproof. It is no part of my design to argue that Coleridge was the better poet, though it cannot be thoughtfully denied that the few great poems Coleridge wrote are as good as any of the trophies of English Romanticism. But perhaps I speak for a fair number of the confirmed Coleridgeans when I confess that Wordsworth often seems thin to me, especially in the intrusive and persistent presence of Coleridge. It is no doubt a prosaic rather than a poetic confession, but it is no less real for being so. Eliot's quip, that Coleridge was the greatest and perhaps the last of the English critics, understates, especially under the sway of Coleridge's prose, the prevailing sentiment: that since 1834 the feet carrying around a mind equal to Coleridge's have yet to walk the earth.

Within the last half-decade there have been gauntlets more intimidatingly thrown down, not the least of which are the 1989 biographies of Coleridge and Wordsworth by Richard Holmes and Stephen Gill respectively.[13] Both make fairly plain that Wordsworth was the greater beneficiary of the friendship, that the poet was more powerfully influenced by the philosopher than the other way round. This is especially borne out by Paul Magnuson's impressive book, *Coleridge and Wordsworth: A Lyrical Dialogue*, which preceeded the biographies by a year.[14] One might balk at the inclination to read the poetry of 1798-1800 as "one work" (4), especially in light of such impressive and perverse readings as Jan Plug's recent deconstructive pronouncement.[15] But under pressure from

---

[13] Richard Holmes, *Coleridge: Early Visions* (New York: Viking, 1989), esp. chs. 7 and 8; Stephen Gill, *William Wordsworth: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford, 1989), esp. chs. 4 and 5.

[14] Princeton, 1988.

[15] viz., that the "speechless infant" of "Frost at Midnight" actually "denies the possibility of conversation, in effect denying the realisation of voice," making it such that the poem, "like the other conversation poems, never fully achieves its status as such, for it is at best a one-sided conversation, speaking to one who neither understands nor responds." See Jan Plug, "The Rhetoric of Secrecy: Figures of the Self in 'Frost at Midnight'" in Tim Fulford and Morton D. Paley, eds., *Coleridge's Visionary Languages: Essays in Honour of J.B. Beer* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1993), 35; I would be inclined to suggest that Plug's judgments of "Frost at Midnight" seem better suited to such a poem as, say, Shelley's

Magnuson's argument, any such balking must in the end be a matter of mere diction or emphasis in argument, for he shows persuasively that such judgments as Norman Fruman's--"the influence of Wordsworth on Coleridge's flowering as a great poet is vastly, perhaps incalculably, more important than has hitherto been allowed"--are tottering.[16] Magnuson claims that it "was not merely Coleridge's sympathetic presence as reader or auditor" that influenced Wordsworth's early work (in this context, *The Prelude*), but "it was also the presence of Coleridge's poetry at the beginning of the work" (206). In short, Magnuson's reading is "a recognition that Coleridge's poetry was the prime influence on Wordsworth's from the first days of their association until the winter of 1799-1800, when Wordsworth began to describe himself as a self-generated poet" (10). Wordsworth's greatness, in other words, emerged when he came under the sway of Coleridge's poetry. Or to make the chronology plain,

> Coleridge was in 1798 and 1799 a more published and more public figure. Wordsworth had published only *An Evening Walk* (1793) and *Descriptive Sketches* (1793), which displayed, as Coleridge noted, true marks of genius but which Wordsworth recognized immediately as immature and awkward, and which he began revising shortly after publication. Coleridge had not only delivered public lectures on politics and religion and started *The Watchman*, he had also published two volumes of poetry, in 1796 and 1797. While Wordsworth had drafted some of his best poetry, he was incapable of bringing it to a form that satisfied him. As William Heath has phrased it, "after all, in 1795 when Coleridge had written 'The Aeolian Harp' Wordsworth was still working on such poems as 'Guilt and Sorrow,' an imitation of Juvenal (Satire VII), and translations from Catullus. 'This

---

"Mont Blanc," which stands in line with "Frost at Midnight" and "Tintern Abbey" but which, more than the other two, insists on keeping out all other voices:

> or did a sea
> Of fire, envelope once this silent snow?
> None can reply--all seems eternal now.
>
> —
>
> Thou hast a voice, great Mountain, to repeal
> Large codes of fraud and woe; not understood
> By all, but which the wise, and great, and good
> Interpret, or make felt, or deeply feel. (73-5; 80-3)

Shelley's control over all possible voices is most clear in the answer--"None can reply"--to his own question and in his authority on who the wise, great and good are; citation from *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Donald B. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers (New York: Norton, 1977), 91.

[16] Fruman, *Coleridge, The Damaged Archangel* (New York: George Braziller, 1971), 266, in Magnuson, 6.

> Lime-Tree Bower,' 'Frost at Midnight' and 'The Nightingale' all preceeded 'Tintern Abbey.'[17]

Such a perspective challenges not only the autonomy sometimes accorded Wordsworth but also the originality Wordsworth accorded himself: in Magnuson's phrase, "Wordsworth's claims of originality are a bit misleading and hide his earlier dependence upon Coleridge's philosophy, encouragement, and most important . . . Coleridge's poetry" (13).

Such analysis is as demonstrable as indifference to it is pervasive. My concern here is different, so I mention it as background. I want to make it more plain that the "fears of amalgamation" which serve as Magnuson's springboard appear, in retrospect, as unlikely as is conceivable--and which his book in great measure makes clear. The point on which this becomes plain is the nature of the "genial spirits," first used in Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" (on loan from Milton) and then in Coleridge's "Dejection." It was Coleridge's developing sense of "genial" as "creative" in its primary rather than its secondary sense that differentiated him from Wordsworth. This is not a judgment about Coleridge's admiration or adoration or dependence on Wordsworth or anyone else, nor is it a judgment about Coleridge's own shift from his poetic to his critical foot, though it is certainly related to that very shift.

iv

In the collection of essays dedicated to the memory of Pete Laver, the Dove Cottage librarian who died at age 36 of cardiac arrest on Scafell (where Coleridge wrote parts of his 1802 letter-journal to Sara Hutchinson),[18] Lucy Newlyn argues that there is a "disparity between, on the one hand, Coleridge's increasingly confirmed symbolic thinking, and, on

---

[17] Magnuson, 10-11; William Heath, *Wordsworth and Coleridge: A Study of Their Literary Relations in 1801-02* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), 169-70.

[18] *CL*, ii, 825-45; see also Holmes, 328-30.

the other, Wordsworth's entrenched literal-mindedness, that explains the growing divergence in 1802."[19] By 1802 the two were already "moving, intellectually and creatively, in opposite directions"(117), and the "private history" of "Coleridge's thinking about fancy and imagination, cryptically summarised in *Biographia*," found its most marked contrast in the very poetry Wordsworth was writing at the time, which is "overtly fanciful" (127). In 1802 Wordsworth had written appovingly of Fancy as (in Newlyn's phrase, 121) a "sort of loose associationism" that allows the poet to

> weave a web of similies,
> Loose types of Things through all degrees,[20]

whereas the difference between Fancy and Imagination had already begun to make itself clear to Coleridge in the profound difference he saw between Greek and Hebrew poetry--namely, that in accordance with the later but already-developing distinctions the one is merely fanciful but the other imaginative:

> It must occur to every Reader that the Greeks in their religious poems address always the Numina Loci, the Genii, the Dryads, the Naiads, &c &c--All natural Objects were *dead*--mere hollow Statues--but there was a Godkin or Goddessling *included* in each--In the Hebrew Poetry you find nothing of this poor stuff--as poor in genuine Imagination, as it is mean in Intellect-- / At best, it is but Fancy, or the aggregating Faculty of the mind--not *Imagination*, or the *modifying*, and *co-adunating* Faculty. This the Hebrew Poets appear to me to have possessed beyond all others--& next to them the English. In the Hebrew Poets each Thing has a Life of it's [sic] own, & yet they are all one Life.[21]

It is, of course, Fancy, according to *Biographia*, that deals with "fixities and definites"--with objects as objects, which are dead. It is just these "fixities and definites" Wordsworth had been occupying himself with when Coleridge, claiming that the *Preface* "is half a child of my own Brain," wrote to Southey disclaiming any amalgamation: "I am far from going

---

[19] "'Radical Difference': Wordsworth and Coleridge, 1802" in Richard Gravil, Lucy Newlyn, and Nicholas Roe, eds., *Coleridge's Imagination: Essays in Memory of Pete Laver* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1985), 117-128; 127.

[20] "To the Daisy," 10-11; Wordsworth, *Poems, in Two Volumes, and Other Poems, 1800-1807*, ed. Jared Curtis (Ithaca: Cornell, 1983), 238; all Wordsworth citations are from the Cornell Wordsworth unless specified otherwise.

[21] *CL*, ii, 865-6; in Newlyn, 123.

all lengths with Wordsworth":

> He has written lately a number of Poems (32 in all) some of them of considerable Length (the longest 160 lines) the greater number of these to my feelings very excellent Compositions / but here & there a daring Humbleness of Language & Versification, and a strict adherence to matter of fact, even to prolixity, that startled me / his alterations likewise in Ruth perplexed me / and I have thought & thought & thought again / & have not had my doubts solved by Wordsworth. (*CL*, ii, 830; Newlyn, 119)

Newlyn also cites the famous letter to Sothebey in 1802:

> Nature has her proper interest; & he will know what it is, who believes & feels, that every Thing has a Life of it's [sic] own, & and that we are all *one Life*. A poet's *Heart & Intellect* should be *combined, intimately* combined & *unified*, with the great appearances in nature--& not merely held in solution & loose mixture with them, in the shape of formal Similies. (*CL*, ii, 864; Newlyn, 120)

Wordsworth, in both theory and poetry, had failed on the distinction which was to become, and was already becoming, one of Coleridge's most important. Or, in Newlyn's phrase:

> Measured according to Coleridge's standards, which have remained the same in kind (if not in degree) since 1796, Wordsworth fails absolutely. By rights he should be in the company of Hebrew poets: that, Coleridge feels, is the status he deserves for his earlier writing. But the lyrics of 1802 are limited, and lacking in symbolic potential. They reveal, by implication, a new poet: one who is content . . . that things should be "decked out, as a mere play & license of poetic Fancy" (*CL*, ii, 866)--one who has more affinities with Bowles, the discarded hero, than with the great precursors in a symbolic tradition. (126)

Thus, Newlyn concludes, it is "the disparity between, on the one hand, Coleridge's increasing confirmed symbolic thinking, and, on the other, Wordsworth's entrenched literal-mindedness, that explains the growing divergence in 1802" (127).

She also suggests that Wordsworth's neglect of *The Recluse* on account of these poems of "daring Humbleness" confirmed Coleridge's belief that Wordsworth had lowered himself. It is perhaps on this point that the "radical difference" might be seen as even more radical, for if the account I offer of "Tintern Abbey" and "Intimations" is at all accurate, Wordsworth was no more capable of writing *The Recluse* apart from Coleridge's direct influence than Coleridge was capable of writing his *Logosophia* under the direct influence of laudanum. The question at hand centers on the "radical difference": what exactly is it,

and is it intimated in the four most important conversation poems?

Paul Magnuson says that the parallels between "Tintern Abbey" and "Frost at Midnight" "demand" that we read the one as a "response" to the other (169); moreover, "that the poem should have taken the form that it did cannot be accounted for except by the assumption that he [Wordsworth] wanted to respond to 'Frost at Midnight'" (170). Both have a "circular form based on the workings of memory."[22] Among the other similarities are the "silent and solitary present" and "renewed hopes for the future. Both refer to three distinct periods of life" (165). Both are addressed to another person--"a practice Coleridge developed in "Effusion XXXV." Among the differences: Coleridge and Hartley are always distinct, whereas Dorothy "becomes integrated into Wordsworth's own personal development." Wordsworth's poem "argues for an integration that "Frost at Midnight" could not completely affirm and implies a continuance from stage to stage that "Frost at Midnight" presented as difficult" (166). Each of these observations is clear enough to anyone familiar with the two poems. Magnuson's purpose in pointing them out is to argue that Wordsworth, to preserve individuality, "had to avoid locating his own beginnings as a poet in Coleridge's poetry and to locate them in his own childhood, but to do that he faced the problem of seclusion, which is precisely the problem that Coleridge himself faced" (172). Wordsworth, then, located the source of joy in himself, particularly in his own memory, rather than in the person addressed or a blessing conferred thereon. "Tintern Abbey," moreso even than *The Prelude*, may be the emblem of a poetry the subject of which is its own author. (Are we really to believe, for example, that things will be more dear both for themselves and for Dorothy's sake than for Wordsworth's own? But I will come to this shortly.)

---

[22] *Coleridge and Wordsworth*, 165. My own sense is that "Frost at Midnight" is distinct from "Tintern Abbey" by reason of its making *less* of "memory." Magnuson's judgment here is contextualized by Coleridge's entire Conversational mode: in relation to the other Conversation poems, "none used the model of memory so centrally" (165). I do not dispute this.

Wordsworth assumed a direction in "Tintern Abbey" different from the one Coleridge assumed in "Frost at Midnight." "Tintern Abbey" became a creed of memory, whereas Coleridge freed himself from memory and looked ahead to Hartley's future. It is true that Wordsworth attempted to manipulate "Tintern Abbey" so that it would look to Dorothy's future, but still the point was to provide her with food for future years by making her "memory" a suitable dwelling place for "all sweet sounds and harmonies."[23] The differing courses established in these two poems did not significantly change over the course of the years, which witnessed a growing separation between the two poets. The *annus mirabilis* was decisive as well as impressive.

In "Frost at Midnight" the ministry of natural forces is "secret," "inaudible," and the "extreme silentness" of the "calm" "vexes meditation," though such "solitude . . . suits / Abstruser musings." One might say that Coleridge already suffers his genial spirits to decay, except that by the time Wordsworth uses the phrase in "Tintern Abbey" it seems likely that it means something different from what it might have meant had Coleridge used it here, and it means something entirely different from what it *does* mean when he later uses it in "Dejection." The "sole unquiet thing" (16), which is the film on the grate, the "fluttering *stranger*" (26), begins as an object of what Coleridge would later call the aggregating power, which belongs to the fancy. But the fact of its having "dim sympathies with me who live" (18) means already that it is far more than a fixity and definite, a dead object. In accordance with the *Essay on Poesy*, "all we see, hear, feel, and touch the substance is and must be in ourselves"[24]; in accordance with the poem itself,

> every where
> Echo or mirror seeking of itself. (21-2)

---

[23] 142-3; Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads, and Other Poems, 1797-1800* (*LB*), ec. James Butler and Karen Green (Cornell, 1992).

[24] Coleridge, *Complete Works*, 7 vols., ed. W.G.T. Shedd (New York: Harper, 1884), iv, 333; hereafter, Shedd.

The fluttering stranger does not prove companionable according to this specification, but the moon and icicle to which it gives way do. In short, Newlyn's reading is correct: "The 'most believing superstitious wish' of childhood . . . was thus able to guide Coleridge from pure associationism into imagination. Fancy, in the process, had been exonerated."[25]

"Frost at Midnight" is concerned, so far as perception goes, with sound and sight. The owlet's cry comes twice--not *likely* an echo, since it is "loud as before" (3), but quite *possibly* an echo, if the silence is indeed "extreme." That is to say, the fact of the cry's being "loud as before" may have this purpose: to italicize that, if it is indeed an echo, the silence is indeed extreme. And if the silence is indeed extreme, the poet's relationship to the eternal language is more hard-won than his Babe's, who shall both

> *see* and *hear*
> The lovely shapes and sound intelligible
> Of that eternal language, which thy God
> Utters, who from eternity doth teach
> Himself in all, and all things in himself. (58-62; my italics)

The poet, who will later lament that he *sees*, not *feels*, must work for his companionable forms and sounds--as, for example, the fluttering stranger and "the poor man's only music"--that is, "the old-tower" bells, "Most like articulate sounds of things to come" (28-29, 33). But whereas the commitment to "things to come" proves right; the forms summoned by mere memory do not. They must "every where / Echo or mirror" (21-22) and seek of themselves. There is already in Coleridge that sense that "all we see, hear, feel, and touch the substance is and must be in ourselves" (Shedd, 333). So the search for a dominant image--one that will express the requisite reciprocity and contain "its own evidence, one with the germinal causes in nature"[26]--must continue.

Now if the essential difference between the Coleridge and Hartley is that the one

---

[25] 122; "Most believing superstitious wish of childhood," from the Quarto volume of 1798, became "most believing mind / Presageful" in the *Sybilline Leaves* version (1817).

[26] *Essay on Poesy*, in *WCT*, 80.

was

reared
In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim, (51-2)

and the other, learning "far other lore,"

shalt wander like a breeze
By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags
Of ancient mountain, and beneath the clouds, (54-6)

then the essential *similarity* is that both shall nevertheless *work* to understand the "eternal language" (60), the father by winning his way with fixities, the son by winning his way with the language itself. For Hartley will not have it easy either. "The Great universal Teacher" shall "mould" his "spirit," to be sure, but shall also, "by giving make it ask" (63-64). Hartley, too, will have to give to receive. Now where has the concept of *giving* appeared before? The "motion" of the fluttering stranger "in this hush of nature" (17; that is, in Coleridge's ear that is deaf to nature) "*Gives* it dim sympathies with me who live" (18). There is no more "mock study" (38), neither in the poet nor in his son. Reading now is real. But there is, still, the reciprocity, the emblem of which is not only

the clouds,
Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores, (56-7)

not only the

night thatch [that]
Smokes in the sun-thaw, (69-70)

but also, and especially, the

silent icicles,
Quietly shining to the quiet Moon. (73-4)

v

Exquisite as this ending is, Wordsworth, though he understood it imperfectly, expressed the reciprocity better in "Tintern Abbey," which Stephen Gill calls a *confessio*

fidei, the power of which "Wordsworth was never to surpass."[27] In fact Wordsworth expressed it better both in "Tintern Abbey" and in *The Prelude*. In the first, alluding to "Frost at Midnight's" concern with sight and sound, Wordsworth is

> A lover of the meadows and the woods,
> And mountains; and of all that we behold
> From this green earth; of all the mighty world
> Of eye, and ear, both what they half create,
> And what perceive. (104-8)

In the second he affirms what Stephen Prickett calls "fluid interplay":

> That is the very spirit in which they deal
> With all the objects in the universe;
> They from their native selves can send abroad
> Like transformations, and for themselves create
> A like existence, and, whene'er it is
> Created for them, catch it by an instinct;
> Them the enduring and the transient both
> Serve to exalt; they build up the greatest things
> From least suggestions, ever on the watch,
> Willing to work and to be wrought upon,
> They need not extaordinary calls
> To rouze them, in a world of life they live,
> By sensible impressions not enthrall'd,
> But quicken'd, rouz'd, and thereby made more apt
> To hold communion with the invisible world.[28]

But both "Tintern Abbey" and the early work on *The Prelude* were written under the influence of Coleridge, and the bulk of Wordsworth's poetry is not, in fact, concerned with the "fluid interplay."[29] It is interested in how Nature

> Doth make one object so impress itself
> Upon all others, and pervades them so
> That even the grossest minds must see and hear
> And cannot chuse but feel, (1805 *Prelude,* xii, 81-4)

---

[27] Gill, ed., *The Oxford Authors: William Wordsworth* (Oxford: Oxford, 1984), xiii.

[28] *The Prelude* (1805), xiii, 91-105; citations are from *The Prelude: 1799, 1805, 1850*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M.H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill (New York: Norton, 1979).

[29] Prickett, *Coleridge and Wordsworth*, 41-2; a particular reservation I have with Prickett's early book is that it tends not to distinguish between the two poets as fully as perhaps it should, certainly not as fully as his later books do. It is a tentative reservation, though, especially in light of one important and subtle distinction between giving and receiving in Coleridge and its inversion--receiving and giving--in Wordsworth (81).

or how

> Nature thus
> Thrusts forth upon the senses. (85-6)

This, ultimately, and in spite of "Tintern Abbey's" memorable confession of reciprocity, is more in keeping with the Nature we find in "Tintern Abbey."

Nature impresses herself--that is, Wordsworth receives the impress--differently at each of the successive stages intimated in "Tintern Abbey." That the man cannot experience what the child did is evidence not only that a certain loss has been sustained, which will be occasion for greater lament in "Intimations," but also that the raw experience of nature is no longer possible. Thought must supply something--an "interest / Unborrowed from the eye":

> For nature then
> (The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
> And their glad animal movements all gone by,)
> To me was all in all.--I cannot paint
> What then I was. The sounding cataract
> Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
> The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
> Their colours and their forms, were then to me
> An appetite: a feeling and a love,
> That had no need of a remoter charm,
> By thought supplied, or any interest
> Unborrowed from the eye. (73-84)

Wordsworth now receives the impress of Nature primarily by means of his memory. Memory is the activity which completes the reciprocity because, as in "Tintern Abbey," nature no longer "Thrusts forth upon the senses" (1805 *Prelude*, xii, 86): the "mountain-springs" now have the sound of "a soft inland murmur" (3-4)--that is, they have spent their initial power. There is no search, as in "Frost at Midnight," for a "companionable form"; the forms themselves themselves did the searching. They first "haunted" (78) the poet and now are objects of the memory.

It is not merely the easy power of "Tintern Abbey" that must have both amazed and discouraged such a mind as Coleridge's, whose hard-won lines in "Frost at Midnight"

amount only to about half of those in "Tintern Abbey." It is, additionally, Wordsworth's assuming the privileged role Coleridge hopes to provide for Hartley: the "cloisters dim" of Coleridge's childhood become the "din / Of towns and cities" (26-7) which Wordsworth endures because he has *already* "like a roe / . . . bounded o'er the mountains." The inversion is nothing less than an announcement to Coleridge that Wordsworth himself has already "learned [the] far other lore" (50) prepared for Hartley. The original relation to the universe, to use Emerson's phrase, which for Coleridge was limited to the sky and stars, Wordsworth has already experienced. This is effrontery.

So the turn to Dorothy--and on a virgin reading we are suprised to find she is even in the scene--allows Wordsworth to do two things: one is to duplicate Coleridge's benediction, a technique established in *Ancient Mariner*, and the other, if effrontery this be, is to dull the edge of the effrontery.

But there is so much joyous affirmation going on in the poem that the effrontery is eluded on most readings, and Wordsworth's resiliency is quite amazing:

> That time is past,
> And all its aching joys are now no more,
> And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
> Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur: other gifts
> Have followed; for such a loss, I would belive,
> Abundant recompence. (84-9)

The location of joy which later becomes a matter of dispute is here produced by a "presense," a "sense sublime / Of something far more deeply interfused" (95-6). What is it? It is not available "in the hour / Of thoughtless youth" (89-90): Wordsworth has learned to "look on nature" differently. Whatever it is, its "dwelling is [not only] the light of setting suns" (98) and a hundred other natural phenomena but also "the mind of man":

> A motion and a spirit, that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought. (100-102)

In Coleridgean epistemology that is what the mind itself is: thinking subject *and* object of thought--in short, the location of a great and necessary philosophical reunion. Later he will

make it the birthplace of the best language, which derives not from objects, as according Wordsworth's formula in the *Preface*, but from the mind turned on itself.

But does Wordsworth know what is going on at this point in the poem? According to what Coleridge thought by the time of their separation, the answer must be No, for he is a lover

> of all the mighty world
> Of eye, and ear,both what they half create,
> And what perceive,

but still he is

> well pleased to recognise
> In nature and the language of the sense,
> The anchor of my purest thoughts. (106-10)

Why does the subtle and supple reciprocity give way? Because Wordsworth's version of it depends on memory, not on the prime agent of human perception. This is made plain in the last verse paragraph, where the poet seems to want us to believe that Dorothy has become the subject of the poem when in fact he himself is still the subject--even, and especially, in the last line. The last verse paragraph is possessed of some extraordinary rhythms, especially in the long periods. It is great poetry. But it is also the mark of the radical difference. "Nature never did betray / The heart that loved her" (123-4; a line borrowed from Coleridge),

> for she can so inform
> The mind that is within us, so impress
> With quietness and beauty, and so feed
> With lofty thoughts, that (126-9)

nothing bad "Shall e'er prevail against us" or shatter our faith

> that all which we behold
> Is full of blessings. (133-5)

It never worked this way for Coleridge. Or, as Reeve Parker puts it, "at no point in his meditative poetry does Coleridge suggest that "outward forms" can supply the imagination with passion and life" (192). By the time Coleridge pared "Dejection" down to its final

form, the instinct of blessing the watersnakes unawares, rather than supposing that they themselves are "full of blessings," had been tried by reflection and *not* found wanting. So whereas in "Frost at Midnight" the

> silent icicles,
> Quietly shining to the quiet moon (73-4)

suggest that the secret ministry has no life of its own, in "Tintern Abbey" the poet allows that the moon will shine on Dorothy in her "solitary walk" (136) apart from any reciprocation. Among his "exhortations" that she will remember is one with a suggestive, if not telling, preposition:

> And let the misty mountain winds be free
> To blow against thee. (137-8)

She, too, is storing up "life and food / For future years." Her own

> wild ecstasies shall be matured
> Into a sober pleasure . . . [and her] mind
> Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms.

Above all, her

> memory be as a dwelling place
> For all sweet sounds and harmonies. (139-43)

Of course memory is one way to make the appearances one's own, but it is only the most obvious way, especially in an age of consciousness, which fancy has played a part in creating. Or, as Barfield put it,

> when creation has become polarized into conscousness on the one side and phenomena, or appearances, on the other, memory is made possible, and begins to play in all-important part in the process of evolution. For by means of his memory man makes the outward appearances an inward experience. He acquires his self-consciousness from them. When I experience the phenomena in memory, I make them 'mine,' not not by virtue of any original participation, but by my own inner activity. (*STA*, 155)

As was pointed out above, Barfield reminds us that

> fancy has its proper and beneficent place in the genesis of consciousness as a whole and, particularly, in the conversion of perceptions into memories. But it is easily debased. In its debased form it is, as *passive* fancy, more or less identical with precisely those characteristics of human perception, which it is the functon of

> imagination (by modifying perception) to overcome, namely: 'the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude," in consequence of which "we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not . . ." or, more shortly, "the lethargy of custom." The mind is in thrall to the lethargy of custom, when it feeds solely on images which itself has taken no active part in producing. But there is more to it than this. For the debasement of active fancy carries this process further. Where the mind deliberately *chooses* to feed only upon such images, there you have the debasement of active fancy; and there the lethargy of custom becomes that deliberate practice of reducing "the *conceivable* within the bounds of the picturable," at which Coleridge never tired of point his warning finger." (*WCT*, 87)

I do not suggest here that "Tintern Abbey" is a poem of mere fancy or memory. But it is more susceptible to "the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude" than "Frost at Midnight." Whereas Coleridge had established the precedent of turning resolutely away from the images of memory in "Frost at Midnight," and so avoiding what "is easily debased," Wordsworth turned resolutely toward them, making them in the end dear for their *own* sake and paving the road to idolatry. Where Coleridge was most susceptible to "selfish solicitude"--the "Dejection Ode"--he worked hardest not to give in to it.

vi

The "Intimations Ode" intimates not immortality but (in Emerson's phase) an original relationship to the universe.[30] It *asserts* immortality; it *intimates* original participation, and there can be no great wonder why Emerson called it the highwater mark of the century. Coleridge responded to the poem as it existed up *to* the fifth stanza, at which point, incidentally, the poem begins to get good. Through the first four stanzas the

---

[30] Wordsworth called himself a "worshipper of nature" in "Tintern Abbey." It is wise to resist any pantheistic reading. (He later said the phrase was "uttered incautiously.") So, too, when he says "we come / From God, who is our home" in the "Intimations Ode," it is wise to resist any rigid or even quasi-Platonic reading. (He later claimed the poem did not argue for the soul's pre-existence and denied any Platonic influence, as did Coleridge in *BL*, ch. 22.) "Intimations" certainly rings of a doctrine of the soul's pre-existence, but that is not what is going on in the poem, even as "Tintern Abbey" rings of God-in-everything but is about something else. Because it was in no small measure shaped by "Dejection" in the years intervening between the fourth and fifth stanzas, the "Intimations Ode" needs to be read primarily in the context of Coleridge's response.

form seems to give way to a certain measure of flippancy, such that whereas Wordsworth says

> The Rainbow comes and goes,
> And lovely is the Rose, (10-11)

Coleridge would never make such an assertion. Again, nowhere in Coleridge's poetry does he allow that outward forms have this life of their own.[31] At least as late as "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" (1797) Coleridge was still, on his own account, a Berkeleian:

> So my friend
> Struck with deep joy may stand, as I have stood,
> Silent with swimming sense; yea gazing round
> On the wide landscape, gaze till all doth seem
> Less gross than bodily; and of such hues
> As veil the Almighty Spirit when he makes
> Spirits perceive his presence. (37-43)

Prickett calls this one of Coleridge's "finest overt references to Berkeley and reminds us that Coleridge, in a footnote on these lines, wrote to Southey, "I am a Berkelyan." Prickett adds, "How long Coleridge was a 'Berkleian' is largely a matter of definition, and there is not much evidence that Wordsworth ever was."[32] If Coleridge would not even ejaculate incautiously about his chamber pot, then there is less evidence that he would be flippant about a rainbow of all "things," which we receive only by giving.

Coleridge's engagement was effective. Whereas in 1802 the poet is certain "That there hath past away a glory from the earth," after the intervening two years it is not so much the outer but the inner world that becomes the subject of "Intimations." Thus the poet raises his "song of thanks and praise"

> for those obstinate questionings
> Of sense and outward things,

---

[31] On the image of the rainbow in Romantic theory, and as an example of the merging of Coleridge and Wordsworth I am arguing against, see Prickett, *Coleridge and Wordsworth*, ch. 1; see also n. 25.

[32] *Coleridge and Wordsworth*, 12.

Fallings from us, vanishings. (143-6)

The subject of the poem has, not suprisingly, become the poet, the grammatical subject removing itself under pressure from the poetic irony:

I love the Brooks which down their channels fret,
Even more than when I tripped lightly as they.[33]

From the context it is clear that the poet, not the "Brooks," is the subject of these lines. By the end there is nothing so independent as a rainbow coming and going; instead,

The Clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober colouring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality. (199-201)

I do not propose to argue that this evolution could not have occurred apart from Coleridge's objections about "outward forms" in "Dejection." I merely note that it did.

That is one point. The other is to get the sense of a passage which echoes the "soft inland murmur" of the opening lines in "Tintern Abbey":

Hence in a season of calm weather
Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither. (164-7)

We have to get at the meaning of the "immortal sea" and those images which, like it, have been lost or have faded. The poem's sense of loss is overtly lapsarian:

But there's a Tree, of many, one,
A single Field which I have looked upon,
Both of them speak of something that is gone. (51-3)

Wordsworth is concerned here with the movement *through* life *to* knowledge--to that knowledge belonging to the "best Philosopher," the "Eye among the blind" whom Coleridge attacked in *Biographia*: the child, the

Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!
On whom those truths do rest,

---

[33] 195-6; note also the effect produced by the periodic structure of the last for lines. If lines three and four traded places with lines one and two, the sense would not be lost. What would be lost is the movement from the collective ("by which *we* live") to the individual ("To *me*").

Which we are toiling all our lives to find. (114-16)

In the context of the Child and the Tree it might be worth recalling what Barfield said in *Poetic Diction*: "Only when poesy, who is herself alive, looks backward, does she see at a glance how much younger is the Tree of Knowledge than the Tree of Life" (90). Wordsworth understands that there is a lost relationship, but he has things reversed, and this is Coleridge's point in *Biographia* chapter 22 when he asks in what sense a Child, any more than "a *bee*, or a *dog*, or a *field* of *corn*" (*BL*, ii, 140), can be considered a philosopher. Coleridge, in fact and as usual, asked exactly the right questions:

> what does it all mean? In what sense is a child of that age a *philosopher*? In what sense does he *read* "the eternal deep"? In what sense is he declared to be "*for ever haunted* by the Supreme Being? or so inspired as to deserve the splendid titles of a *mighty prophet*, a *blessed seer*? by reflection? by knowledge? by conscious intuition? or by any form or modification of consciousness?" (*BL*, ii, 138)

Coleridge's scrupulous attention to words and their uses would no doubt have required, for the sake of friendship, an equal and opposite patience in those whom he engaged, were it not the case that his scrupulous attention was tempered by his own great need to be liked. But when in the same chapter he reminds his readers of the "reasons on which I ground both the moral and intellectual importance of habituating ourselves to a strict accuracy of expression" (142), he is disclosing only what lay at the surface of his objection to the "Intimations Ode." Beneath it lay the matter of consciousness itself, which "by any form or modification" the child cannot be said to possess. And it is precisely on the authority of this objection that reading with Barfield's eye for intimations of consciousness, particularly for its evolution, becomes at once valid and useful. If the child cannot be said to be a philosopher, if he cannot be said to have the powers of reticulative consciousness, if, that is, the child cannot *reflect*, then his "consciousness," whatever it is, must be said to have been something quite different, something he has indeed lost, and the poem has of course shouted from the start that there has been some great loss somewhere, sometime.

The edenic evocation means that the poem can hereafter be more mythic and

universal than historical or local, and indeed it is. "Child" and "Man" can now be original and final, Abel and Zechariah. The evolution from childhood to manhood expands so that the Youth, "Nature's Priest," must travel "farther from the east" (71-2); "new-born Day / Is lovely yet" and juxtaposed to "The Clouds that gather round the setting sun," which

> take a sober colouring from an eye
> That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality-- (199-201)

no mere fanciful re-arrangement of fixities and definites. These are not local but cosmic symbols, not morning and night but the dawn and dusk of time. It is treacherous to speak of capitalization in Coleridge as in Wordsworth, in "Youth" and "Clouds" as here: "The Child is Father of the Man."[34] But it is not insignificant, especially if it can lift us beyond readings which tell us only that the poem is about change, or growing old, or growing up. And there is, of course, the epigraph: "Paulò majora canamus." Wordsworth's ode is not about the change of a single man but about mankind. The sense of loss which it is our burden literally to "figure out" is coming into focus, its edges becoming more clearly defined.

"We will not grieve" (182), the poet says in the penultimate stanza. From the commencement the fifth stanza, which belongs to 1804, the problem of "whither is fled the visionary gleam?" has been addressed. "Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting." And yet

> Not in entire forgetfulness,
> And not in utter nakedness,
> But trailing clouds of glory do we come
> From God, who is our home:
> Heaven lies about us in our infancy. (58; 62-6)

Even so, whereas the "Boy / . . . beholds the light" (68-9),

> At length the Man perceives it die away
> And fade into the light of common day. (75-6)

---

[34] Also in "My heart leaps up when I behold," in which *Rainbow* is capitalized but *heart* is not. (The eipigraph was not applied to the poem until 1815.) *Clouds* in not capitalized in "trailing clouds of glory."

What is the "light"; what is the "Heaven [that] lies about us in our infancy" (66)? What does it mean that we trail clouds of glory and that we are not abandoned to "forgetfulness" and "nakedness"? If we recall that Barfield assigns to the poetic activity of the self-conscious man the task of restoring forgotten relationships (a modification of what Shelley called before-unapprehended relationships), then it is not too difficult to see that what Wordsworth is struggling here to express in the image of the light which at length "die[s] away / And fade[s] into the light of common day" is self-consciousness. Nor is it difficult to see on the one hand the nature of Coleridge's objection and on the other the line at which he stopped and took it no further. To cross that line we must recur to Barfield. The two principles of the evolution of consciousness are (1) the tendency to split original, undivided meanings into their several latent meanings and (2) the tendency thereafter, "operative in individual poets," which enables them "(*tò poieîn*) to intuit relationships which their fellows have forgotten" (*PD*, 88). The self-knowledge Wordsworth is groping for in these powerful images, rhythms, and syntaxes, in his "trailing clouds of glory," in his more amorphous notions of "entire forgetfulness" and "utter nakedness," is a knowledge only won by an acute prosaic consciousness, a "Reality," as Barfield put it, "once self-evident, and therefore not conceptually experienced, but which can *now* only be reached by an effort of the individual mind" (*PD*, 88): the knowledge, that is, that the "poetic principle . . . dying out of language" can now be found

> Nowhere but in himself. The same creative activity, once operative in meaning without man's knowledge or control, and only recognized long afterwards, when he awoke to contemplate, as it were, what he had written in his sleep, this is now to be found within his own consciousness. And it calls him to become the true creator, the maker of meaning itself. (*PD*, 107)

An acute prosaic consciousness is precisely what Wordsworth lacked and precisely what Coleridge, perhaps in over-abundance, possessed. This is borne out in perhaps as clear a juxtaposition as is imaginable by the *Preface* of 1802 and its rebuttal in *Biographia*. An acute prosaic consciousness is also what the Child lacks but what the Man cannot help in

some degree possess, and since the evolution is from unself- to self-consciousness, the Child is Father of the Man.

The final evidence in the poem is still coming. We have in fact known glories, or else the "Inmate Man" would not "Forget the glories he hath known" (83-4). But he cannot entirely forget the *primal* relationship of which the light, the Heaven, and the clouds of glory are reminders. The relationship is lost, no doubt. But,

> Though nothing can bring back the hour
> Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;
> We will grieve not, rather find
> Strength in what remains behind;
> In the *primal* sympathy
> Which having been must ever be. (178-83; my italics)

Except for the "one delight" (193) the poet has relinquished, this is the last statement about what has been lost. And it turns out to be a "primal sympathy." And so,

> in a season of calm weather
> Though inland far we be,
> Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
> Which brought us hither. (162-5)

Our souls have sight when our genial spirits do not decay or fail. It is through imagination, though inland far we be, that we see. Or as Barfield put it, "the 'before-unapprehended' relationships of which Shelley spoke, are in a sense 'forgotten' relationships. For though they were never yet apprehended, they were at one time seen. And imagination can see them again" (*PD*, 87). The intimations are reminders, evidence that we do not live in "entire forgetfulness." Imagination is our means of recovery and recuperation.

I join those who believe that "Dejection" in its verse letter version is inferior to the ode.[35] This is not a judgment about its importance. For the reading I am trying to give the existence of the verse letter and the intermediate versions is very important indeed because it helps to show exactly what Coleridge won for himself in the revisions for Wordsworth's wedding day and *Sibylline Leaves* (1817). There have been solid arguments made for the superiority of the verse letter,[36] though such an opinion would seem to require a tolerance for certain rhymes begotten on emotional delirium, as when

> it weighs down the heart!
> To visit those, I love, as I love thee,
> Mary, and William, and dear Dorothy. (*CL*, ii, 794)

Here Wordsworth's creed of emotion recollected in tranquility might have been of some use to Coleridge. I make no argument about the *textus receptus*; Reeve Parker's judgment seems sound: Coleridge regarded the final version

> as an epithalamic gesture . . . offered to re-assure the Grasmere circle that he was capable of transcending the impulses toward despair and unseemliness that were so much responsible for the original letter and for the disturbing conduct, whatever it was, that precipitated that letter. (181)

I will be working with both the letter and the 1817 version.

It warrants keeping in mind that Wordsworth, too, at the writing of "Intimations," was not only suffering physical and financial illnesses which he thought might threaten his future as a poet, but that he was also feeling pressure from abroad: the marriage to Mary was certain but needed the assurance that things had been set in order with Annette Vallon

---

[35] e.g., George Watson, *Coleridge the Poet* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), 74-5; William Heath, *Wordsworth and Coleridge: A Study of Their Literary Relations in 1801-1802* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), 102.

[36] e.g., see John Beer, ed., Coleridge's *Poems* (London: Everyman's, 1974), 257; Humphry House, *Coleridge: The Clark Lectures 1951-52* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1953), 133-7

in France, with whom he had corresponded in February of 1802.[37] It is significant, then, as Magnuson notes, that whereas Coleridge's verse letter is built chiefly on the problems of personal affairs, Wordsworth had managed to supress his own problems in the first four stanzas of "Intimations."[38] In arguing the location of joy, in other words, Coleridge saw that his friend's genial spirits had not decayed. Wordsworth and Coleridge both had problems with two different women, but Wordsworth's poetry had not been overtly confounded by them. It was Coleridge, then, who introduced to the dialogue the problem of the "genial spirits" Wordsworth had first employed in "Tintern Abbey." This judgment is corroborated by Magnuson:

> Coleridge's verse epistle is about a failed marriage, and his earlier complaint that "my genial Spirits fail" makes clear that his analysis of loss is that these "genial Spirits" have been depressed by the "smoth'ring Weight" and by the "Ill Tidings" that "bow me down to earth." Genius is the gift of nature at birth.
>
> In 1802 Coleridge, not Wordsworth, introduces in the dialogue the idea that genius and imagination are naturally present at birth. (301)

What critics including Magnuson have been reluctant to do is see "genial Spirits" in accordance with the later formulation of primary, as opposed to secondary, imagination. Coleridge's complaint, they assume, is that his poetic powers are in decline--despite the creative profusion that the verse letter is. But the evidence of both the verse letter and the ode points to Coleridge's use of "genial" not in the poetic, secondary sense, but in the perceptual, primary sense. As I hope this discussion has already made clear, Coleridge had already begun to dispute Wordsworth's ideas on Fancy and Imagination. John Spencer Hill notes that for Coleridge the latter part of 1802 was "crucial . . . in the shaping of the theory of the Imagination"[39]--months (July to September) which, as Peter Larkin notes, are

---

[37] See Magnuson, 275, esp. n. 2.

[38] "In comparison to the presence of the very private and personal concerns in Coleridge's response to the opening stanzas, his verse letter to Sara Hutchinson, there is an absense of personal reference in Wordsworth's stanzas" (275).

[39] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Imagination in Coleridge*, ed. John Spencer Hill (London: Macmillan, 1978), 8.

"straddled by the *Letter to Sara Hutchinson* in April and the Ode's publication in October."[40] Stephen Prickett claims that "by 1802 Coleridge's study of Wordsworth's poetry had reached the point of formulating a distinction between Fancy and Imagination substantially the same as that advanced thirteen years later in the *Biographia*,"[41] and it has been noted already that Coleridge had distinguished between Fancy and Imagination in a letter to Sotheby in 1802. "Dejection" in both its verse and ode forms, and especially in the cloudy transition between them, should be seen as Coleridge's extraordinary and unlikely effort to wrestle primary imagination out of the grip of dejection itself.

Magnuson says of the verse letter that "Wordsworth is Coleridge's intended reader as much as she [Sara Hutchinson] is,"[42] and J. Robert Barth reminds us that "love" and its cognates appear twenty-one times in the letter whereas only "loveless" appears in the ode, and then only once (line 52).[43] If Magnuson is right about the letter, he is surely right about the ode. It is a point, and not one worth losing blood or pounding a pulpit over, but for the reading I offer it seems a reasonable stance, and I would add that even certain passages in the letter which do not make it into the ode, though they remain grammatically addressed to Sara, have an allusive connection to Wordsworth. I am not speaking of the "coronal" (*CL*, ii, 793) or the other more overt references but of the passages which refer to the previous *dialogue* with Wordsworth--of the "sky-gazing . . . 'ecstatic fit'" when Coleridge was "cloister'd in a city School," where "The Sky was all, I knew, of Beautiful" (791) and to which Wordsworth responded in "Tintern Abbey." The retention of such a passage might be meaningful to Sara, but Wordsworth has already seen it in "Frost at

---

[40] "Imagining Naming Shaping: Stanza VI of *Dejection: An Ode*" in *Coleridge's Imagination*, 193.

[41] *Coleridge and Wordsworth*, 154.

[42] 291; in a letter to Sotheby (19 July 1802) Coleridge calls the poem "that dejection to Wordsworth" (*CL*, ii, 815); STC's transcription of the poem alters the stanza which begins "O Lady! we receive but what we give" to "O Wordsworth!" The entire stanza is addressed to him (817).

[43] "Coleridge's Dejection: Imagination, Joy, and the Power of Love" in *Coleridge's Imagination*, 184.

Midnight" and responded. So it is removed. Coleridge also attempts to reveal the dishonesty of Wordsworth's ending to "Tintern Abbey":

> And tho' thy Robin may have ceas'd to sing,
> Yet need for *my* sake must thou love to hear
> The Bee-hive murmuring near,
> That ever-busy and most quiet Thing
> Which I have heard at Midnight murmuring. (792)

Here, unlike in "Tintern Abbey," the poet admits that nature as experienced by the woman addressed exists for *his* sake, and he does so with allusions to the previous dialogue in such words as "quiet Thing" and "Midnight." Again, the retention of such a passage might be meaningful to Sara, but to Wordsworth it is old debate. So this, too, is removed. All the bleeding lines go. The claim that "Change" is the most troublesome thing to the poet goes--as it should, for it is a lie. It is not "transientness" that is "Poison in the Wine" (794). What troubles the poet is much deeper--deeper even than that his genial spirits, according to Wordsworth's understanding of them, might fail, though indeed genial spirits are at stake. Wordsworth admitted that

> To me alone there came a thought of grief:
> A timely utterance gave that thought relief, (22-3)

whereas (in the same number of lines into *his* ode) Coleridge's "unimpassioned grief" can find "no natural outlet, no relief" (22-3). To the arguments that Wordsworth's "timely utterance" is a poem, perhaps "My heart leaps up," we might add--with the help of Coleridge's own gloss on the passage ("natural outlet," 790)--the possibility of what Wordsworth himself seems to think that utterance is: the "natural outlet" of the "cataracts [which] blow there trumpets from the steep" (25). In short, the difference is as it always has been: Wordsworth can read the face of nature whereas except by great labor Coleridge cannot. The timely utterance for Wordsworth is still the language of nature; it is Coleridge for whom the utterance is a poem, a "tender lay," as I will suggest below.

Reeve Parker begins his discussion of the Ode by recurring to the Preface to

Coleridge's *Poems* (1796):

> Coleridge argued for a salutary egotism in poetic composition, contending that the "communicativeness of our nature leads us to describe our sorrows" and that from this exerted intellectual activity "a pleasure results which is gradually associated and mingles as a corrective with the painful subject of the description." As we have seen, Coleridge thought that such egotistic conversation could be heuristic, especially in the heightened order of verse, and that the discovery toward which the poet won his difficult way was not only intellectual comprehension of the distress but also release of the mind's processive energies, the life that oppposed the death-in-life of melancholy solipsism." (181-2)

He reads the ode "in much the same context of moral theodicy that informs others of Coleridge's meditative poems, a context governing process from confusion and distress to willed resolution" (183). The "willed resolution," in the ode as in "Frost at Midnight," begins with a meditation on a superstition the terms of which "can sustain a different and more substantial creed."[44] In the cases of both of these poems the "imagery concerned with the eddying energies of the natural world" works with "subtle and ingenious cogency" (184). The difference is that even though at the outset of the ode "the state of dejection is associated with half-facetious receptivity to bardic superstition [as are the musings in "Frost at Midnight"] and with a desire for a violent consummation to rouse the spirit from without" ("oh! that even now the gust were swelling" and that its sounds

> Might now perhaps their wonted impulse give,
> Might startle this dull pain, and make it move and live, (15; 19-20),

still the poet's "distress here seems more acute, more massive, more extreme" (185). The indication of this, according to Parker, is the further extent to which Coleridge takes the image of the moon in the ode than the extent to which he takes the image of the fluttering stranger in "Frost at Midnight":

> In the elaborate *chiasmus* of lines 10-11, the "phantom light" spread over the "old" moon (that part of the moon turned toward the earth but not illuminated by the sun's direct rays) is what I.A. Richards has called "earth light," the shining on the

---

[44] Recall Newlyn's assertion, that "The 'most believing superstitious wish' of childhood . . . was thus able to guide Coleridge from pure associationism into imagination. Fancy, in the process, had been exonerated" (122).

> moon's surface of rays of sunlight reflected from the earth. Richards several years ago suggested what is surely the unstated thematic appropriateness of the moon-image: in our perception of the "phantom" earth-light swimming over the moon's shadowy surface, we are in effect receiving what we give. (185)

It is somewhat of a hair-splitting exception, but certainly this same receiving and giving was suggested by the fluttering stranger's giving way to the "silent icicles / Quietly shining to the quiet moon." The difference is that in the ode the bardic image is retained, not replaced.

Another hair-splitting exception, this time to Magnuson, is possible, perhaps necessary, but it cannot be taken without acknowledging Parker's provocative contextualization of the ode, first alongside Coleridge's description of his being "lounded" on Scafell, and second alongside the *Ancient Mariner.* As for the first :

> The sight of the Crags above me on each side, & the impetuous Clouds just over them, posting so luridly & so rapidly northward, overawed me / I lay in a state of almost prophetic Trance & Delight--& blessed God aloud, for the powers of Reason & the Will, which remaining no Danger can overpower us! O God, I exclaimed aloud--how calm, how blessed am I now / I know not how to proceed, how to return / but I am calm & fearless & confident / if this Reality were a Dream, if I were asleep, what agonies had I suffered! what screams![45]

Parker is right to suggest that the poet can forswear dejection by a "reassertion of 'Reason and the Will' in the face of tendencies in his mind and voice to give in to the indulgence of despair" (196). This is what in part allows Coleridge to pull out of dejection.

As for the second, the ode for Parker also belongs to the context of the *Ancient Mariner,* not only because it repeats the precedent of the final blessing, as Magnuson notes, but because the prose gloss points to mind's self-experience:

> "In his loneliness and fixedness he yearneth towards the jouneying Moon, and the stars that still sojourn, yet still move onward" . . . . Indeed, it would be hard to imagine a more suitable gloss to all of Coleridge's meditative verse, or, for that matter, to all his most characteristic thought. "Still sojourn, yet still move onward" suggests the movement of the imagination described in the *Biographia* as that of a water-insect winning its way "up against the stream, by alternating pulses of active and passive motion, now resisting the current, and now yielding to it in order to

---

[45] *CL,* ii, 842, in Parker, 195.

> gather strength and a momentary fulcrum for a further propulsion. This is no unapt emblem of the mind's self-experience in the act of thinking." (190)

This is a perceptive connection. It could in fact be said that the verse letter dramatizes the process--that it is just this series of alternating pulses in the poem, receiving and giving--which allows the poet finally to win his way up the stream of dejection. Each "yielding" to the Grasmere circle, such as the passages containing "dear William's Sky Canoe" (791), or "that happy night / When Mary, thou, and I together were" (792), or "the few, we love, tho' few ye be" (796); each "yielding" to the private history of Coleridge's own impetuous, perhaps offensive behavior, as for example his "complaining Scroll" and the really quite horrible lines on Sara's reply

> (I read thy guileless Letter o'er again--
> I hear thee of thy blameless Self complain--
> And only this I learn--and this, alas! I know--
> That thou art weak and pale with Sickness, Grief, and Pain--
> And I,--*I* made thee so! [793]);

each "yielding" to his "own peculiar lot" of "house-hold Life / . . . [which] is, and will remain, Indifference or Strife" (794) because Coleridge happened to marry a woman he couldn't have a conversation with;[46] and especially the "yielding" to his "little Angel Children" whom he has "half-wish'd . . . never had been born" (because they turn "Error to Necessity"--that is, prevent his abandoning one Sara for another); each of these "yieldings" allows the poet "to gather strength and a momentary fulcrum for a further propulsion." The poet knows what he must do:

> And haply by abstruse Research to steal
> From my own Nature, all the Natural man--
> This was my sole Resource, my wisest plan. (797)

The point is to do it. Each departure in the verse letter from the problems of love are strokes the poet wins away from it as he grows into the realization that real problem at hand

---

[46] "Mrs. C.," Coleridge wrote to Southey on 29 July 1802, "never endures to look at her own mind at all," and "Never, I suppose, did the stern Match-maker bring together two minds so utterly contrariant in their primary and organical constitution" (*CL*, ii, 832).

is not Sara but his "shaping Spirit of Imagination." This is nowhere better dramatised than in those lines immediately leading up to and following the "shaping Spirit of Imagination." The poet has won for himself a momentary stay against his dejection in the stanza which begins, "'Tis Midnight! and small Thoughts have I of Sleep," most of which survives into the final version of the poem. He has just spoken of his childhood buoyancy, "bearing all things then, as if I nothing bore." It is here he gets an inclination of what *ought* to be his problem:

> Yes, dearest Sara, yes!
> There was a time when tho' my path was rough,
> The Joy within me dallied with Distress;
> And all Misfortunes were but as the Stuff
> Whence Fancy made me Dreams of Happiness;
> For Hope grew round me, like the climbing Vine,
> And Leaves and Fruitage, not my own, seem'd mine!
> But now Ill Tidings bow me down to earth,
> Nor care I that they rob me of my Mirth--
> But Oh! each Visitation
> Suspends what nature gave me at my Birth,
> My shaping Spirit of Imagination. (796)

The poet has gathered some strength by locating the problem, by refining an earlier complaint (also a surviving passage) that his

> genial Spirits fail--
> And what can these avail
> To lift the smoth'ring Weight from off my Breast?
> It were a vain Endeavour,
> Tho' I should gaze for ever
> On that Green Light that lingers in the West!
> I may not hope from outward Forms to win
> The Passion and the Life, whose Fountains are within! (791)

This is not, or it is not any more, a complaint about the production of poetry--not by the time we read about his "shaping Spirit of Imagination" and are faced with the fact that we have a fair amount of effusions to get through before we are done. The "hair-splitting" exception to Magnuson is this: he says: "To lose imagination is to lose one's genius, individual creativity. The entire verse epistle is troubled by that poetential loss" (303). Rather, it is to lose the conscious awareness that in "all seasons" (to use the language of

"Frost at Midnight") we are primary creators.[47] Notice, then, where Coleridge turns next. He is still winning his way upstream:

> I speak not now of those habitual Ills
> That wear out Life, when two unequal Minds
> Meet in one House, and two discordant Wills--

and then he quits, rests "to gather strength and a momentary fulcrum for a further propulsion":

> This leaves me, where it finds,
> Past Cure, and past Complaint,--a fate austere
> Too fix'd and hopeless to partake of Fear!
> But thou, dear Sara! (dear indeed thou art,
> My Comforter, a Heart within my Heart)
> Thou, and the Few, we love, tho' few ye be,
> Make up a World of Hopes and Fears for me. (796)

The *Sybilline Leaves* version of "Dejection," though it rearranges the surviving material significantly, retains the drama. The most significant revision is the placing in consecutive order the stanzas which become III ("My genial spirits fail"), IV ("O Lady! we receive but what we give"), and V ("O pure of heart! thou needest not ask of me / What this strong music in the soul may be"), followed by "There was a time, when though my path was rough" (stanza VI) and "Hence, viper thoughts, that coil around my mind" (stanza VII). By so placing stanzas VI and VII Coleridge does not save *all* the fire for the end, and so preserves the drama, while still finishing with a flourish of reciprocity and polarity:

> To her may all things live from pole to pole,
> Their life the eddying of her living soul. (135-6)

The poet begins to regain his genial spirits in the seventh stanza, where he turns from the "Wind, that rav'st without" (99) to the thinly veiled allusion to Lucy Gray. Parker shows persuasively that Otway's "tender lay" does not mean that "the poet, for all his self-analysis, is back at ground zero in hopeless melancholy" (201) but that "in the child's song

---

[47] Thus in *Saving the Appearances* "genial spirits" is always used by Barfield to mean *more* than poetic creativity; see, e.g., 137.

the tale is emblematic of a recovery of strength and imagination in the poet" (202). This is Coleridge's timely utterance, and it is not the language of nature, as Wordsworth interpreted the frost to be. It is a product of the Secondary Imagination, which as Barfield says, "can be our pointer to the primary,"[48] or which, as Prickett says, is linked typologically to the Primary "in a manner analogous to the Old and New Testaments: that is, that we only fully come to understand the unconscious activity of sense perception through the conscious activity of artistic creation" ("*Biographia Literaria*: Chapter Thirteen," 17). Parker concludes:

> To wish for his friend the joy that endows all things with a life eddying back to its source in her living soul is to wish for her the situation of the reciprocal flow of earth- and moon-light in the opening superstition, defined later as "we receive but what we give." And the tone of the stanza argues that the same eddying process involves the poet, whose blessing upon Sara, in the manner of that upon his infant son in "Frost at Midnight," is the means for release from his own acute distress. (208)

It is a triumph of the imagination that is hard-won. "The substance is and must be in ourselves." The bardic moon--the new moon with the old one in its lap--retained for the verse letter in the image of Mary's taking Coleridge's head into her lap but removed for later versions, proves to be "a living, life-producing idea containing its own evidence, one with the germinal causes in nature" (*Essay on Poesy*, Shedd, 333). Wordsworth had hoped to receive without the alternating pulses; Coleridge knew he could receive only what he gave. It is not only, then, a statement about the reciprocity of perception. It is a statement about the nature of the relationship itself: it is what Coleridge must expect if he hopes to get from the outward forms what Wordsworth seems to get without fighting the current. Coleridge's way is won against it; Wordsworth's by being carried with it. Coleridge's production comes of *Drang*, of an inner pressure; Wordsworth's of *Sturm*, an

---

[48] *PD*, 29; cf: "participation, as an actual *experience*, is only to be won for our islanded consciousness of to-day by special exertion. It is a matter, not of theorizing, but of 'imagination' in the genial or creative sense of the word, and therefore our first glimpse of it is commonly an aesthetic experience of some sort, derived from poetry or painting" (*STA*, 89; see also "genial," 137).

outer force.

viii

It is just Barfield's commitment to, perhaps habit of, observing things through the lens of polarity that makes such an approach to these four poems possible. My movement has been rapid and my strokes broad, in this essay as in the others, which no doubt is one of the effects of having Barfield's books present to the mind for so long. That it can be a bane as well as a boon I acknowledge. But since this affair is about what Barfield thought and about his importance to our critical stances, it is well in the end here to let him speak for himself, to account for why he himself was a confirmed Coleridgean.

Barfield understood that polarity is the context of imagination, not the other way round. This was the happy accident of *Poetic Diction*, where, instead of attempting in his late 'twenties to expound Coleridge on imagination (as Richards was about to do), he was considering the commerce of the poetic and the prosaic--was, in fact, tracing Coleridge unawares. Writing of Coleridge some forty years later he said,

> the basis of his philosophy, whether of imagination or of nature, is 'the Law of Polarity.' It may be compared with the *Naturphilosophie* of Schelling and his followers, though there are important differences. Here however the point is that one seems to see Coleridge reaching out, so to speak, across the gap between what I will loosely call the old *Phantasie* [49]and the new, seizing hold of the *Phantasie* which he found in such rich measure in Wordsworth, pondering deeply on it, taking long walks with Wordsworth and his sister, having long talks with Wordsworth, and--out of that intimate experience--excogitating and propounding what *Phantasie* is, or ought to be, now in this age of the consciousness soul. And here, too, of course, the intercourse was reciprocal; Wordsworth's poetry was immeasurably deepened by his contact with the mind and heart of Coleridge" (*ROM*, 89).

---

[49] The German *Phantasie* here (Greek: *phantasia*) refers to "a manifestation [of spirit] which the human being can arrive at by two opposite routes" (84); it is the word which for Coleridge required the desynonomy fancy and imagination, and it is Barfield's point to suggest that as *types* (not individuals) Wordsworth inclined toward the "manifestation" through fancy and Coleridge through imagination. It is a broad stroke the oversimplifications of which Barfield acknowledges

It cannot merely be said, as I have stated above, that Wordsworth was one thing and Coleridge another. In the essay, "Where is Fancy Bred?" (from which the above quote is taken), Barfield, borrowing the distinction between what Rudolf Steiner called the Goethe- and the Schiller-type poets,[50] says

> we must not make it a doctrinaire distinction; or, because Steiner has said of the Goethe-type, that "their soul-world appears like waking dreams," go about saying that Goethe in Germany and Wordsworth in England were poets of mere fancy--a sort of survival from the past--while Schiller and Coleridge were poets and philosophers of imagination and the future. It is the very last thing Coleridge himself would have said about Wordsworth, or Schiller (I imagine) about Goethe. In everything to do with polarity, we have to be able to distinguish--without crudely dividing. (*ROM*, 90)

But it may be said, as Barfield does say, that it was Wordsworth, "more than any other man, who restored to English people a *feeling* for Nature, the possibility of experiencing the face of nature as the countenance of a living being" (*ROM*, 86). But it was precisely because Coleridge turned the screws of so much beta-thinking to the "face of nature" herself that such an experience was lost on him. It was because he could not look her in the eyes without always being conscious of the fact that he was looking at *himself*--that the representations he beheld were possible *at all* because of his own primary imagination--that he was required to maintain of the outward forms that their fountains are within. Thus it was, as Barfield elsewhere put it, that "It was the dejected author of the *Ancient Mariner* who grasped the theory; but it was Wordsworth who actually wrote the nature-poetry" (*STA*, 130).

Both experienced what Barfield called the "self-consciousness of exclusion."

> To Wordsworth it was a real enough experience, certainly; but not tragically, or bitterly, real. Modern man (he found) as he grows up from childhood into

---

[50] From Steiner's *The Michael Mystery* (revised edition, London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1956), aphorisms dictated shortly before his death. In this book Steiner discusses two different relations to the spirit world, one *memory* and the other *conscience*, Goethe being a type of the first (in England, Wordsworth, according to Barfield) and Schiller being a type of the second (in England, Coleridge, according to Barfield).

> manhood, feels himself more and more cut off from the beauty, the meaning, the life of nature; though, as a young child, he could still feel himself a part of it. . . . Whereas, for Coleridge, the exclusion from any immediate experience of the spirit that meets us, disguised as the face of Nature, was more even than a tragedy. It was a lifelong agony. The *loss*, at an early age, of his 'shaping Spirit of Imagination,' as he calls it, was a misery to which he refers again and again, both in his letters and in his poetry--notably in the *Ode to Dejection.* And out of this very agony it was borne in on him that, in the present age, man can really only *receive* from Nature what he himself *brings* to her out of his own *Phantasie.*" (*ROM*, 86-7)

Because Coleridge could not read the face of nature the way his friend could, "he turned his powerful philosophic mind to the whole *problem* of *Phantasie* . . . so that he is generally accepted today as the greatest, and most creative, of English critics" (*ROM*, 88).

We get from Barfield an inclination, then, of the solution to the problem of Wordsworth and Coleridge: that they, themselves, work from two differing poles.

> They are both of them 'nature-poets' and both of them also 'mind-poets,' if the expression may be allowed. But for Wordsworth, although the sub-title of his longest and perhaps greatest poem is "The Growth of the Poet's Mind," it was nature that was the predominating factor in the polarity between mind and nature. He looked for, and found, inspiration in nature considered, or certainly *felt*, as another being altogether rather than as counterpoint to his own mind. Coleridge also looked for, and sometimes found, inspiration in the same way. But his was a mind in which the opposite factor predominated--which was more inclined therefore to consider, and certainly to *feel*, how
>
> > We receive but what we give,
> > And in our life alone does Nature live. (*WCT*, 90)

Thus, as Barfield points out, Coleridge's task in the *Lyrical Ballads* was to "transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth" whereas Wordsworth's was to awaken "the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom" and to direct the mind "to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us" (91).

But if Wordsworth and Coleridge are two poles, there remains one profound difference: that Coleridge had the subtlety of mind to attempt to achieve for himself and in himself that very polarity. What Wordsworth

> illustrated by his poetry for poetic experience Coleridge demonstrated in his thought for all experience: namely that the two cardinal points of poetry are such because they embody the two cardinal and constitutive principles of the human spirit itself,

> antagonists indeed and poles apart, yet still, and somehow in spite of themselves, two forces of the one power. (*WCT*, 91).

History in English Words, *Poetic Diction*, *Saving the Appearances*, all the exoteric essays of the middle part of the century, especially "Where is Fancy Bred?" were important steps in Barfield's process of coming to understand *What Coleridge Thought*.

My discussion of the conversation poems has been an attempt to illustrate this polarity, to show on the one hand that what Coleridge achieved *in poetry* was, by virtue of his "own peculiar lot" (not as a husband but as an individual and particular consciousness), more hard-won than what Wordsworth achieved by virtue of his, and on the other hand to account for the preposterous feeling the confirmed Coleridgean has when confronted by the solid and palpable fact of Wordsworth's great poetic achievements and his greatness as a poet:

> The images begotten by imagination are alive and creative, and have a sort of germinating power of their own. When true imagination is at work, the same power is operating in man as operated, in the Beginning, in the creation of the world; only now it flows from an individual mind, and in association with what Coleridge calls the 'conscious will.' Fancy and imagination are both needed for composing poetry (and, in a sense, imagination must work by 'irradiating' fancy); but the truly great poet is the poet of imagination rather than the poet of mere fancy." (*ROM*, 89)

CONCLUSION

In Youth and early Manhood the Mind and Nature are, as it were, two rival Artists, both potent Magicians, and engaged, like the King's Daughter and the rebel Genie in the Arabian Nights' Enternts., in sharp conflict of Conjuration--each having for it's [sic] object to turn the other into Canvas to paint on, Clay to mould, or Cabinet to contain. For a while the Mind seems to have the better in the contest, and makes of Nature what it likes; takes her Lichens and Weatherstains for Types & Printer's Ink and prints Maps & Fac Similes of Arabic and Sanscrit Mss. on her rocks . . . ; transforms her Summer Gales into Harps and Harpers, Lovers' Sighs and sighing lovers, and her Winter Blasts into Pindaric Odes, Christabels & Ancient Mariners set to music by Beethoven, and in the insolence of triumph conjures her Clouds into Whales and Walrusses with Palanquins on their Backs and chaces [sic] the dodging stars in a Sky-hunt! But alas! that Nature is a wary wily long-breathed old Witch, tough-lived as a Turtle and divisible as the Polyp . . . She is sure to get the better of Lady MIND in the long run, and to take her revenge too--transforms our To Day into a Canvass dead-colored to receive the dull featureless Portrait of Yesterday; not alone turns the mimic Mind, the ci-devant Sculptress with all kaleidoscopic freaks and symmetries! unto clay, but leaves it such a clay, to cast dumps or bullets in; and lastly . . . she mocks the mind with it's [sic] own metaphors, metamorphosing the Memory into a lignum vitae Escrutoire to keep unpaid Bills & Dun's Letters in, with Outlines that had never been filled up, MSS that never went farther than the Title-pages, and Proof-Sheets & Foul Copies of Watchmen, Friends, Aids to Reflection & other Sationary Wares that have kissed the Publisher's Shelf with gluey Lips with all the tender intimacy of inosculation!--Finis (CL, v, 496-7).

—Coleridge to Gillman, 1825

In the words of Raimonda Modiano, "Dejection" announces the end of Coleridge's "short-lived communion with the 'outward forms,'" whereas this "self-indulgent rhetorical spree" represents Coleridge's "complicated relationship with nature" and "constitutes a powerful testimony that nature remained an activating influence on Coleridge's works from the composition of 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' to *Aids to Reflection*."[1]

If Modiano is right, then nature complicated the relationship because Coleridge,

---

[1] *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature* (Tallahassee: Florida Sate UP, 1986), 2, 206; the letter to Gillman is also cited in Modiano, 206.

too, as we are, was born into a world where the absolute otherness of nature is the most immediate fact of existence, which for him industry did not, and for us technology does not, so much effect or bring about as etch in stone. This 'immediate fact' was the occasion for Coleridge's quest for unity, which he said he would make pilgrimages to the burning sands and deserts of Arabia to find. The quest as such is a feature which survived in F.D. Maurice, especially in his conciliatory attitude toward socialist movements (partially aligning him with such later Coleridgeans as Raymond Williams), and Archbishop Trench. Trench learned from Coleridge, as well as (if not more than) from Tooke, to contemplate words "singly." He remained committed to an adamic notion of language Coleridge had kept alive and refined. But whereas in Trench the commitment was theoretically naïve, it nonetheless influenced Barfield, who set out to make it sound, especially in response to the ideas on origin in Max Müller on the one hand and the dream of scientific discourse in I.A. Richards on the other. Barfield's working assumption, the foundation for all his future thought, was the consubstantial sign, which he accounted for by showing that (1) the changes in word-meaning intimate an evolution of consciousness, and that (2) the fact of evolution logically requires certain conclusions about language, one being that meaning is "given," traceable to a time when man suffered an original relationship to the universe--almost such as Emerson desired for himself and Wordsworth in the "Intimations" ode lamented as having passed away from the earth.

Barfield belongs then to a tradition of thinking about language, of contemplating words "singly." His place within the tradition is *not* unique in that a great deal of the labor necessary for his own reflections on language had already been done by Trench, Logan Pearsall Smith, and Henry Bradley, Smith going so far as to suggest that an evolution of consciousness can be traced in words and the changes in their meanings. Thus *History in English Words* was a necessary bit of note-taking which included only a small element of speculation, jottings for later books, *Poetic Diction* in particular (which is Barfield's first

important book), but also for *Saving the Appearances* and *What Coleridge Thought*. The early work helped Barfield later on to get Coleridge, so far as he took him, right.

But Barfield's place within the tradition *is* unique in that *Poetic Diction* announced an allegiance to Coleridge's quest for unity, but with the added feature of a theoretical acumen hitherto lacking among the Coleridgeans. The territory Barfield charted was marked and more clearly defined by the enemies he was lucky enough to have surrounding him. It was by them, particularly Max Müller and I.A. Richards, that he defined himself: Müller, because Barfield could not accept the "metaphorical period" of the distant past--a time and place inhabited by a race of mighty poets whose metaphors, when taken literally, gave rise to mythology, the disease of language; Richards, because Barfield could not accept the metaphor-free discourse *The Meaning of Meaning* attempted to advance. What was needed was a theoretical approach which took metaphor seriously. On Barfield's reading metaphor became a touchstone for the quest, the implement for restoring lost or fogotten relationships originally inherent in meaning as it was "giver.." From *Poetic Diction* and its pronouncements on words contemplated singly right to the end Barfield was true to the cause of getting things back together: subject and object, mind and nature, sign and signified. *Saving the Appearances*, in the Coleridgean fashion of bringing to consciousness the unconscious fact of creation in perception, attempted to restore participation to modes of consciousness predicated of the prosaic or rational principle (in the nomenclature of *PD*), or of reflection, of alpha- and beta-thinking (in the nomenclature of *STA*). *What Coleridge Thought* attempted to restore Coleridge to a readership possessed of what Barfield elsewhere called the "residue of unresolved positivism,"[2] and

---

[2] or "RUP"; see, e.g., *The Evolution of Consciousness*, ed. Shirley Sugerman (Middletown: Wesleyan, 1976): "*unresolved* positivism occurs when that [Cartesian] conviction, that imagination, that way of looking at mind and body remains in fact in a man's mind even though he may have in philosophical theory rejected or resolved it. For instance, someone like--well any of the subjective idealist philosophers of the nineteenth century. They wrote books which showed that that unbridgeable gulf was not really unbridgeable because it wasn't really there. Nevertheless in other things they said, when they

to show that Coleridge's relevance needs to be situated especially against the Cartesian mind / matter dichotomy, to show that STC's religious and mental energy is relevant as a super-errogatory act against the besetting sin of literalness.[3] I began with an epigraph from "Religious Musings":

> Believe thou, O my Soul,
> Life is a vision shadowy of truth. (395-96)

Important as this is for Coleridge scholarship--and it is *very* important (I dare say that the implications for life and morals are rarely realized[4])--it closes Barfield off to certain emphases in Coleridge which Raymond Willliams has most fully realized, namely, the value of writing in society, the value of a material touchstone for thought. This descends (though not directly) from a version of Coleridge more closely aligned with Maurice's, whereas Barfield's inheritance descends (directly) through Trench. The split goes to show the grand expanse of Coleridge's mind. That Raymond Williams and Owen Barfield can be seen as principal inheritors of Coleridge who yet have nothing to say to each other testifies to the extraordinary vision of Coleridge, his ability to keep everything going at

---

were referring to science or any particular subject matter other than philosophy, they would still assume it was there" (13).

[3] Wise enough in this instance to "walk warily," Barfield suggested that imagination and goodness enjoy a peculiar relationship, and that "this relation was the guiding intuition of that great, confused spirit--the very St. George of iconoclasm--William Blake, who held that Imagination is the cardinal virtue, because the literalness which supports idolatry is the besetting sin, of the age which is upon us" (*STA*, 161). Barfield was always more fond of quoting Coleridge on the "despotism of the eye" or the "age of understanding and the senses," though they are very like "Single Vision, and Newton's sleep" in Blake.

[4] See, e.g., Barfield's extension of the moral copula in the final chapters of *Saving the Appearances*:

> as men approach nearer and nearer to conscious figuration and realize that it is something which may be affected by their choices, the final participation which is being thrust upon them is exercised with the profoundest sense of responsibility, with the deepest thankfulness and piety towards the world as it was originally given to them in original participation, and with a full understanding of the momentous process of history, as it brings the emergence of the one from the other" (147);

et alibi: "But let us make no mistake as to the magnitude of the moral demand which is made on us. . . . The morality of imagination is subtle and deep and far-reaching--subtle above all, because imagination itself is still in its tender infancy" (161). This, I take it, is where Barfield is most relevant to *sound* environmental writing--where, indeed, the separation of sheep from goats begins and ends.

once, his awareness that one cannot say one thing without saying everything.[5]

The Coleridge heritage I have attempted to sketch in these pages can be seen as having been illustrated in Wordsworth's conversational mode. If the readings of "Tintern Abbey" and especially the "Intimations" ode are at all valuable, they are valuable insofar as they show that Wordsworth really did have an inclination of primal consciousness as Barfield conceived it. The "primal sympathies," intimated by the assertion that

> Not in entire forgetfulness,
> And not in utter nakedness,
> But trailing clouds of glory do we come
> From God, who is our home, (62-5)

have a peculiar Barfield ring to them: "Not in entire *forgetfulness*," because metaphor on Barfield's account is the site where lost or *forgotten* relationships are restored;[6] "not in utter *nakedness*," because the universe on Barfield's account was once *worn* as a *garment*;[7] and "From *God*, who is our home," not only because the universe was once a "living Being" but because at such a time meaning is "still suffused with myth, and Nature [is] all alive in the thinking of man" (*PD*, 93), because "thinking was not merely *of* Nature, but was Nature herself,"--indeed, because in the mode of consciousness predicated of such a time it is the *gods* who create: "Not man was creating, but the *gods*--or, in psychological jargon, his 'unconscious'" (*PD*, 103).[8]

Of course to believe that there is any real connection here, to accept that

---

[5] cf. "The Philosophy of Samuel Taylor Coleridge," *RCA*, esp. 146.

[6] "Thus, the 'before-unapprehended' relationships of which Shelley spoke, are in a sense 'forgotten' relationships. For though they were never yet apprehended, they were at one time seen. And imagination can see them again" (*PD*, 87).

[7] "But if we are to judge from language, we must assume that when our earliest ancestors looked up to the blue vault they felt that they saw not merely a place, whether heavenly or earthly, but the bodily vesture of a living Being" (*HEW*, 89).

[8] *PD*, 147; all italics mine; or again, Barfield on Müller's "radical metaphors": "Not an empty 'root meaning to shine,' but the same definite spiritual reality which was beheld on the one hand in what had since become pure human thinking; and on the other hand, in what has since become physical light; not an abstract conception, but the echoing footsteps of the goddess Natura--not a metaphor but a living Figure" (*PD*, 88-9).

Wordsworth's metaphors are not arbitrary but that they are in fact real *poetic* "intimations" and that Barfield's metaphors are real *prosaic* educts of the imagination, real living powers (and further, that the two have some occult bond[9]), is to have proceeded, as Barfield said of Coleridge, to the "somewhat unacademic extreme of making up our minds whether or not we must agree with something he said" (*WCT*, 142). It is to accept that Wordsworth could in fact see something, and that Barfield's critical approach not only allows but hopes for and almost requires such belief. It accepts that there are two principal but differing relationships to Nature, where Nature is by now is the spirit world disguised as phenomena, appearances, and that Wordsworth's was a more instinctive relationship--a kinship. He was able to read the face of nature herself.

But the reading, possessed of a certain predominance, cannot be altogether perfect, for it is a reading too much of the blood, too little of the brain. Very early in his intellectual career Barfield had realized that "the rational principle must be strongly developed in the great poet" (*PD*, 138). This is what Coleridge did in fact possess, and though his reading of the face of nature herself was mostly of the brain, at certain moments it was possessed of a balance, a cessation of predominance in polarity, and that is the heritage of Coleridge that Barfield made it his life-long business to investigate, explain, experience.

---

[9] For "a representation experienced as such is neither literal or symbolical; or, alternatively, it is both at the same time" (*STA*, 75). It is well to note that "occult" in Barfield, as in Steiner, retains its primary sense of "hidden." Barfield says, e.g., that final participation is the "proper goal of imagination," whereas any reverting to original participation "is the goal of pantheism, of mediumism, and of much so-called occultism" (*STA*, 147).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aarsleff, Hans. *From Locke to Saussure.* Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota, 1982.

---. *The Study of Language in England, 1780-1860.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 1967.

Adey, Lionel. *C.S. Lewis's "Great War" with Owen Barfield.* British Columbia: Victoria, 1978.

Allchin, A.M. "F.D. Maurice as Theologian." *Theology* 76:640 (1973), 513-525.

Allen, Peter. *The Cambridge Apostles: The Early Years.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1978.

Bain, Alexander. *James Mill.* London: Longmans, 1882.

Barfield, Owen. *A Barfield Sampler.* Ed. Jeanne Clayton Hunter and Thomas Kranidas. Albany: SUNY, 1993.

---. "The Concept of Revelation." *Anglican Theological Review* 63:3 (1981), 229-39.

---. *History in English Words.* 1926. Great Barrington: Lindisfarne, 1985.

---. "Meaning, Revelation, and Tradition in Language and Religion." *Missouri Review* 5:3 (1982), 117-128.

---. *Owen Barfield on C.S. Lewis.* Ed. G.B. Tennyson. Middletown: Wesleyan, 1989.

---. *Poetic Diction.* 1928. Middletown: Wesleyan, 1973.

---. *The Rediscovery of Meaning.* Middletown: Wesleyan, 1977.

---. *Romanticism Comes of Age.* 2nd ed. 1966; Middletown: Wesleyan, 1986.

---. *Saving the Appearances.* 1957. Rpt. 1965; Middletown: Wesleyan, 1988.

---. *The Silver Trumpet.* London: Faber and Gwyer, 1925; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968.

---. *Speaker's Meaning.* Middletown: Wesleyan, 1967.

---. *This Ever Diverse Pair.* Pseud. G.A.L. Burgeon. London: Victor Gollancz, 1950. Rpt. London: Floris, 1985.

---. *What Coleridge Thought.* Middletown: Wesleyan, 1971.

---. *Worlds Apart.* Middletown: Wesleyan, 1963.

Barth, J. Robert, S.J. "Coleridge's Dejection: Imagination, Joy, and the Power of Love." *Coleridge's Imagination: Essays in Memory of Pete Laver.* Ed. Richard Gravil, Lucy Newlyn, and Nicholas Roe. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985.

Beer, John. Ed. [S.T. Coleridge's] *Poems.* London: Everyman's, 1974.

Bentham, Jeremy. *Works of Jeremy Bentham.* 11 vols. Ed. John Bowring, 1838-43. Rpt. New York: Russell, 1962.

Blakesley, J.W. *Blakesley MSS.* Papers of J.W. Blakesley, owned by Mrs. C.G. Chenevix-Trench.

Bockmuehl, Klaus. *The Marxist Challenge.* 1979. Downers Grove: IVP, 1980.

Bopp, Franz. *Analytical Comparison.* Ed. E.F.K. Koerner. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1974.

---. "Analytische Vergleichung des Sanskrit, des Griechischen, Lateinischen und der germanischen Dialekte, welche die ursprüngliche Übereinstimmung ihres grammatischen Baues beweiset." Gottfied Seebode. *Neues Archiv für Philologie und Pädagogik.* 2:3, 51-80, 4.1-30. Hannover: Hahn, 1827.

Bosworth, Joseph [?]. *The Anglo-Saxon Meteor; or Letters in Defence of Oxford, Treating of the Wonderful Gothic Attainments of John M. Kemble, of Trinity College, Cambridge.* 1835.

---. *Dictionary of the Anglo-Saxon Language.* 1838. Ed. T. Northcote Tollor. London: Oxford, 1882-98.

---. *Elements of Anglo-Saxon Grammar.* London: Harding, Mavoi and Lepard, 1823.

Boulger, James D. *Coleridge as Religious Thinker.* New Haven: Yale UP, 1961.

Bréal, Michel. *The Beginnings of Semantics: Essays, Lectures and Reviews.* Ed. George Wolf. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1991.

---. *Semantics.* 1879. Trans. Mrs. Henry Cust. New York: Dover, 1964.

Brose, Olive J. *Frederick Denison Maurice, Rebellious Conformist.* Athens: Ohio UP, 1971.

Bultmann, Rudolf. "New Testament and Mythology." Bultmann, et. al. *Kerygma and Myth.* 1951. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961.

Butler, Marilyn. *Burke, Paine, Godwin, and the Revolutionary Controversy.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984.

Carlyle, Thomas. *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays.* 5 vols. London: Chapman, 1899.

Chambers, Robert. *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation.* 1844. New York: Humanities, 1969.

Christensen, Torben. *The Divine Order: A Study in F.D. Maurice's Theology.* Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973.

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.* Ed. Earl Leslie Griggs. 6 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1956-71.

---. *Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.* Gen. ed. Kathleen Coburn. London: Routledge, and Princeton: Princeton UP, 1969-.

---. *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.* Ed. Ernest H. Coleridge. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1912.

---. *The Complete Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.* 7 vols. Ed. W.G.T. Shedd. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1884.

---. *Imagination in Coleridge.* Ed. John Spencer Hill. London: Macmillan, 1978.

---. *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.* Ed. Kathleen Coburn. London: Routledge, 1957.

---. *The Philosophical Lectures of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.* Ed. Kathleen Coburn. London: Pilot, 1949.

---. *Poems.* Ed. John Beer. London: Everyman's, 1974.

---. *Unpublished Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.* Ed. Earl Leslie Griggs. 2 vols. London: Constable, 1932.

de Man, Paul. "The Rhetoric of Temporality." *Interpretation: Theory and Practice.* Ed. Charles S. Singleton. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1969.

Dickens, Bruce. *Two Kembles: John and Henry.* 1894. Cambridge: Cambridge, 1974.

Eagleton, Terry. Ed. *Raymond Williams: Critical Perspectives.* Boston: Northeastern, 1989.

Eliot, T.S. *The Sacred Wood.* 1920. New York: Methuen, 1972.

---. *Selected Essays.* 1932. New York: Harcourt, 1950.

Ellis, Alexander J. "President's Annual Address." *Transactions of the Philological Society.* 1873 and 1874. Rpt. Amsterdam: Swets and Zeitlinger N.V., 1968-70.

Emerson, Edward Waldo. Ed. *A Correspondence between John Sterling and Ralph Waldo Emerson, with a Sketch of Sterling's Life.* Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1897.

Empson, William. "The Hammer's Ring." *I.A. Richards: Essays in His Honor.* Ed. Reuben Brower, et. al. New York: Oxford, 1973.

---. *The Structure of Complex Words.* 1951. London: Chatto & Windus, 1964.

Engels, Friedrich and Karl Marx. *The German Ideology.* 1846. Ed. R. Pascal. New York: International, 1947.

Farrer, Austin. "An English Appreciation." Bultmann, et. al. *Kerygma and Myth.* 1951. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961.

Fruman, Norman. *Coleridge, The Damaged Archangel.* New York: George Braziller, 1971.

Findlater, Andrew. Ed., et al. *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind* (1829). 1869. London: Longmans, 1878.

Gallie, Roger D. *Thomas Reid and "The Way of Ideas."* Boston: Kluwer, 1989.

Gill, Stephen. Ed. *The Oxford Authors: William Wordsworth.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1984.

---. *Wordsworth: A Life.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989.

Glynn, Stephen T. "'Biting Nothings to the Bone': The Exemplary Failure of Geoffrey Hill." *English* 36:156 (1987), 235-64.

Goodson, A.C. "Coleridge on Language: A Poetic Paradigm," *Philological Quarterly.* 62:1 (1983), 45-68.

---. *Verbal Imagination.* Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 1988.

Grimm, Jakob. *Deutsche Grammatik.* 1870. Hildescheim: Georg Olms, 1967.

Grimm, Jakob and Wilhelm. *Briefe der Brüder Grimm.* Ed. Hans Gürtler and Albert Leitzmann. Jena, 1923.

Halévy, Elie. *Growth of Philosophic Radicalism.* 1955. Rpt. Boston: Beacon, 1966.

Hall, Marie Boas. *Robert Boyle on Natural Philosophy.* Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1965.

Hamilton, Alexander. Review. *Comparative Grammar* (Franz Bopp). *Edinburgh Review.* Vol. 33 (May 1820), 431-42.

Hamilton, Paul. *Coleridge's Poetics.* Stanford: Stanford UP, 1983.

Harding, Anthony John. *Coleridge and the Inspired Word.* Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queens, 1985.

Hare, J.C. and A.W. Hare. *Guesses at Truth.* 1848 ed. London: Macmillan, 1874.

Hartman, Geoffrey. "The Dream of Communication." *I.A. Richards: Essays in His Honor.* Ed. Reuben Brower, et. al. New York: Oxford, 1973.

Heath, William. *Wordsworth and Coleridge: A Study of Their Literary Relations in 1801-1802.* Oxford: Clarendon, 1970.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *Philosophy of Fine Art.* 1835. Trans. F.P.B. Osmaston. London: Bell, 1920.

Herder, Johann Gottfried. *On the Origin of Language.* Trans. Alexander Gode. Ed. Gode and John H. Moran. New York: Ungar, 1966.

Hill, Geoffrey. *The Lords of Limit.* New York: Oxford, 1984.

Hill, John Spencer. Ed. *Imagination in Coleridge.* London: Macmillan, 1978.

Holmes, Richard. *Coleridge: Early Visions.* New York: Viking, 1989.

House, Humphry. *Coleridge: The Clark Lectures 1951-52.* London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1974.

Hort, F.J.A. *Cambridge and other Sermons.* London: Macmillan, 1898.

Hughes, H. Stuart. *Consciousness and Society.* New York: Random House, 1958.

Hunt, Leigh. *Political and Occasional Essays of Leigh Hunt.* Ed. Lawrence H. Houtchens and Caroline W. Houtchens Columbia: Columbia UP, 1962.

---. "The Late Mr. Horne Tooke." *The Examiner.* 5 April 1812.

Hymes, Dell. Ed. *Studies in the History of Linguistics.* Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1974.

Iordan, Iorgu. *An Introduction to Romance Linguistics.* London, 1937. Trans. John Orr. Westport: Greenwood, 1970.

Jackson, H.J. "Coleridge, Etymology and Etymologic." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 44:1 (1983), 75-88.

James, D.G. *Scepticism and Poetry.* London: George Allen & Unwin, 1937.

Jespersen, Otto. *Progress in Language.* 1894. London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1909.

Jones, Sir William. *The Letters of Sir William Jones.* Ed. Garland Cannon. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1970.

---. *The Works of Sir William Jones.* 9 vols. London: G.G. & J. Robinson, 1799.

Jowett, Benjamin. "On the Interpretation of Scripture." *Essays and Reviews.* Ed. Frederick Temple, et al. London: Parker, 1860.

Keats, John. *The Letters of John Keats.* Ed. Hyder E. Rollins. 2 vols. Cambridge: Harvard, 1958.

Larkin, Peter. "Imagining Naming Shaping: Stanza VI of *Dejection: An Ode.*" *Coleridge's Imagination: Essays in Memory of Pete Laver.* Ed. Richard Gravil, Lucy Newlyn, and Nicholas Roe. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985.

Leavis. F.R. *New Bearings in English Poetry.* London: Chatto & Windus, 1942.

---. "What's Wrong With Criticism." *Scrutiny* 1:2 (1932), 132ff.

Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm. *New Essays on Human Understanding.* Trans. and ed. Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981.

---. *Philosophical Essays.* Ed. Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989.

---. *Philosophical Papers and Letters.* Ed. Leroy E. Loemker. 2nd ed. Dordrecht: Reidel, 1966.

---. *The Philosphical Works of Leibniz.* Ed. George Martin Duncan. New Haven: Tuttle, 1890.

Lewis, C.S. "Bluspels and Flalansferes: A Semantic Nightmare." *Selected Literary Essays.* Ed. Walter Hooper. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1969.

---. *Rehabilitations.* London: Oxford, 1939.

---. *Surprised By Joy.* 1955. New York: HBJ, 1984.

Locke, John. *Essay Concerning Human Understanding.* Ed. Peter Nidditch. Oxford: Clarendon, 1975.

Logan, William. "The Absolute Unreasonableness of Geoffrey Hill." *Conversant Essays: Contemporary Poets on Poetry.* Ed. James McCorkle. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1990.

Lohmeyer, Ernst. "The Right Interpretation of the Mythological." Bultmann, et. al. *Kerygma and Myth.* 1951. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961.

MacIntyre, Alasdair. *Marxism: An Interpretation.* London: SCM, 1953

---. *Marxism and Christianity.* New York: Schocken, 1968.

Magnuson, Paul. *Coleridge and Wordsworth: A Lyrical Dialogue.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 1988.

Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. *The German Ideology.* 1846. Ed. R. Pascal. New York: International, 1947.

Maurice, Frederick Denison. *Eustace Conway, or, The Brother and Sister.* 1834. 2 vols. Ed. E. Want. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1978.

---. *The Kingdom of Christ* (1838). 2 vols. London: James Clark, 1959.

---. *Lectures on Social Morality.* London: Macmillan, 1869.

---. *The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice, Chiefly Told in his Own Letters.* Ed. Frederick Maurice. 2 vols. London: Macmillan, 1884.

---. *Sequel to the Inquiry, What is Revelation?* Cambridge and London: Macmillan, 1860.

---. *Sketches of Contemporary Authors.* 1828. Ed. A.J. Hartley. Hamden: Archon, 1970.

---. *Theological Essays.* 1853. Ed. Canon Edward F. Carpenter. London: James Clarke, 1957.

McFarland, Thomas. *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition.* Oxford: Clarendon, 1969.

McKusick, James. "Coleridge and Horne Tooke." *Studies in Romanticism* 24:1 (Spring 1985), 85-111.

Meiners, R.K. "'Upon the Slippery Place'; or, In the Shit: Geoffrey Hill's Writing and the Failures of Post Modern Memory." *Contemporary British Poetry and Poetics.* Ed. James Acheson and Romana Huk. Albany: SUNY, forthcoming.

---. Review. *What Coleridge Thought* (Owen Barfield). *Criticism* 15:2 (1973), 174-82.

Miegge, Giovanni. *Gospel and Myth in the Thought of Rudolf Bultmann.* Trans. Stephen Neill. 1956. Richmond: John Knox, 1960.

Mill, James. *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind.* 1829. Ed. J.S. Mill, et. al. 1869. London: Longmans, 1878.

---. *The History of British India.* 3 vols. London: Baldwin, 1817.

---. "Tooke's Diversions of Purley." *Literary Journal* 1 (1806), 1-16.

Mill, John Stuart. Ed., et al. *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind* (James Mill, 1829). 1869. London: Longmans, 1878.

---. *The Autobiography of John Stuart Mill.* Ed. Jack Stillinger. New York: Riverside, 1969.

Modiano, Raimonda. *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature*. Tallahassee: Florida State UP, 1985.

Mulhern, Francis. *The "Moment" of Scrutiny*. London: NLB, 1979.

Müller, Max. *Lectures on the Science of Language*. 2nd series. London: Longmans, 1864.

Newlyn, Lucy. "'Radical Difference': Wordsworth and Coleridge, 1802." *Coleridge's Imagination: Essays in Memory of Pete Laver*. Ed. Richard Gravil, Lucy Newlyn, and Nicholas Roe. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985.

Newman, John Henry Cardinal. *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*. 1886. Ed. David J. DeLaura. New York: Norton, 1968.

Niebuhr, H. Richard. *Christ and Culture*. New York: Harper, 1951.

Ogden, C.K. And I.A. Richards. *The Meaning of Meaning*. 1923. New York: Harcourt, 1936.

Parker, Reeve. *Coleridge's Meditative Art*. Ithaca: Cornell, 1975.

Plug, Jan. "The Rhetoric of Secrecy: Figures of the Self in 'Frost at Midnight.'" *Coleridge's Visionary Languages: Essays in Honour of J.B. Beer*. Ed. Tim Fulford and Morton D. Paley. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1993.

Prickett, Stephen. "*Biographia Literaria*: Chapter Thirteen." *Imagining Romanticism*. Ed. Deirdre Coleman and Peter Otto. West Cornwall: Locust Hill, 1992.

---. *Coleridge and Wordsworth: The Poetry of Growth*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1970.

---. "Coleridge, Newman, and F.D. Maurice." *Theology*, 76:637 (1973), 340-349.

---. "Radicalism and Linguistic Theory: Horne Tooke on Samuel Pegge." *Yearbook of English Studies* 19 (1989), 1-17.

---. *Words and The Word*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986.

Reid, Thomas. *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*. 1785. Ed. A.D.Woosley. London: Macmillan, 1941.

Richards, I.A. *Coleridge on Imagination*. New York: Harcourt, 1935.

---. And C.K. Ogden. *The Meaning of Meaning*. 1923. New York: Harcourt, 1936.

---. *Principles of Literary Criticism*. 1924. New York: Harcourt, 1928.

Richter, Melvin. *The Politics of Conscience: T.H. Green and His Age*. London: Weidenfeld, 1964.

Ricoeur, Paul. *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*. Fort Worth: Texas Christian UP, 1976.

---. *The Rule of Metaphor*. 1975. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto, 1977.

---. *The Symbolism of Evil*. 1967. Boston: Beacon, 1969.

Rilke, Rainer Maria. *Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke*. Ed. Stephen Mitchell. New York: Vintage, 1989.

Rosenberg, Brian. "Etymology as Propaganda: A Note on Carlyle's Use of Word Origins." *English Language Notes* 24:3 (March 1987), 29-34.

Russo, John Paul. "I.A. Richards in Retrospect." *Critical Inquiry* 8:4 (1982), 743-760.

Sayce, Rev. "President's Annual Address." *Transactions of the Philological Society* 1888. Rpt. Amsterdam: Swets and Zeitlinger N.V., 1968-70.

Sanders, Charles Richards. *Coleridge and the Broad Church Movement*. New York: Octagon, 1972.

Sapir, Edward. "Herder's 'Ursprung Der Sprache.'" *Modern Philology* 5 (July, 1907), 109-142.

Schenkel, Elmar. "Ein Besuch bei Owen Barfield." *Inklings-Jahrbuch* 6 (1988), 181-5.

Schniewind, Julius. "A Reply to Rudolf Bultmann." Bultmann, et. al. *Kerygma and Myth*. 1951. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961.

Sedgwick, Adam. "Natural History of Creation." *Edinburgh Review*, lxxxii (July, 1845).

Seebode, Gottfried. *Neues Archiv für Philologie und Pädagogik* 2:3.51-80, 4.1-30. Hannover: Hahn, 1827.

Shanks, Edward. "Strong Language." *The Saturday Review* 141:3665 (23 Jan. 1926), 95.

Shelley, Percy Bysshe. *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*. Ed. Donald B. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers. New York: Norton, 1977.

Smith, Logan Pearsall. *The English Language*. New York: Henry Holt, 1912.

---. *Words and Idioms*. Boston and New York; Houghton Mifflin, 1925.

Smith, Olivia. *The Politics of Language, 1791-1819*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1984.

Spengler, Oswald. *Decline of the West*. 1922. 2 vols. New York: Knopf, 1926.

Steiner, Rudolf. *The Michael Mystery*. London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1956.

---. *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity.* Ed. Harry Collison. Trans. Prof. and Mrs. R.F. Alfred Hoernlé. New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1963.

---. *Occult Science.* 1915. Trans. Maude Monges and Henry B. Monges. Revised Lisa D. Monges. London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1972.

Stephen, Leslie. *The English Utilitarians.* 3 vols. New York: Putnam's, 1900.

Sterling, John. *Essays and Tales.* Ed. J.C. Hare. 2 vols. London: Parker, 1848.

---. *Sterling's Letters to Coningham.* Ed. William Coningham. 3rd ed. London and Bath: Simpkin, 1872.

Stewart, Dugald. *Collected Works of Dugald Stewart.* Ed. Sir William Hamilton. 11 vols. Edinburgh: Constable, 1855.

Sugerman, Shirley. Ed. *Evolution of Consciousness: Studies in Polarity.* Middletown: Wesleyan, 1976.

Taylor, Talbot J. "Which is to be Master?: Institutionalization of Authority in the Science of Language." *Ideologies of Language.* Ed. Talbot and John E. Joseph. London: Routledge, 1990.

Thorpe, Benjamin. *Analecta Anglo-Saxonica.* Londoon, 1834. 2 vols. London: Longmans, 1861.

Tomlinson, Richard. "The Primary Imagination Revisited." *The Wordsworth Circle* 21:2 (1990), 81-85.

Tooke, Horne. *The Diversions of Purley.* 1829 ed. Ed. Richard Taylor. London: William Tegg, 1860.

Transactions of the Philological Society. a.k.a. *Proceedings of the Philological Society* (1842-54). Rpt. Amsterdam: Swets and Zeitlinger N.V., 1968-70.

Trench, Richard Chenevix. *English Past and Present.* 1855. London: Macmillan, 1881.

---. *Letters and Memorials.* 2 vols. Ed. M. Trench. London: Kegan Paul, 1888.

---. *Notes and Parables of Our Lord.* 1840. 12th ed. New York: Appleton, 1865.

---. "On Some Deficiencies in Our English Dictionaries." *Transactions of the Philological Society.* 1857. Rpt. Amsterdam: Swets and Zeitlinger N.V., 1968-70.

---. *On the Study of Words.* 1851. Ed. A. Smythe Palmer. London: Routledge, n.d.

---. *Select Glossary of English Words Used Formerly in Senses Different from Their Present.* 1859. London: Routledge, 1906.

Turner, Sharon. *History of the Anglo-Saxons from the Earliest Period to the Norman Conquest* (1799-1805). 3 vols. 2nd. ed. London: Longmans, 1807.

Volosinov, V.N. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. 1929. Cambridge: Harvard, 1986.

Vygotsky, Lev. *Thought and Language*. 1934. Ed. and Trans. Alex Kozulin. Cambridge: MIT, 1986.

Want, Cleve. "Frederick Denison Maurice and Eustace Conway." *Anglican Theological Review* 54:4 (1972), 330-342.

Watson, George. *Coleridge the Poet*. London: Routeledge & Kegan Paul, 1966.

Wells, G.A. *Herder and After*. 's-Gravenhage: Mouton, 1959.

Whewell, William. *Indications of the Creator*. London, 1845.

Willey, Basil. *Nineteenth Century Studies*. 1949. Rpt. New York: Harper, 1966.

Williams, Raymond. *The Country and the City*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1973.

---. *Culture and Society: 1780-1950*. New York: Columbia, 1958.

---. *Keywords*. 1976. New York: Oxford, 1983.

---. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977.

---. Review. *Poetic Diction* (Owen Barfield). *English* 9:52 (Spring, 1953), 147-48.

---. *Resources of Hope*. Ed. Robin Gable. London: Verso, 1989.

---. *Writing in Society*. 1983. New York: Verso, 1991.

Winning, William Balfour. *Manual of Comparative Philology, in which the Affinity of the Indo-European Languages is Illustrated, and Applied to the Primeval History of Europe Italy, and Rome*. London: J.G. & E. Rivington, 1838.

Wiseman, Nicholas Patrick. *Twelve Lectures on the Connexion between Science and Revealed Religion*. 1835. London: J. Booker, 1836.

Wordsworth, William. *Lyrical Ballads, and Other Poems, 1797-1800*. Ed. James Butler and Karen Green. Ithaca: Cornell, 1992.

---. *Poems, in Two Volumes, and Other Poems, 1800-1807*. Ed. Jared Curtis. Ithaca: Cornell, 1983.

---. *The Prelude: 1799, 1805, 1850*. Ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M.H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill (New York: Norton, 1979.