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THE EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT OF
SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE
STUDIED IN THE LIGHT OF
HIS OWN TIMES

by

Eric Daniels

Thesis submitted in part
fulfillment of the
regulations for the Degree
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Abstract

THE EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT OF SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE STUDIED IN THE LIGHT OF HIS OWN TIMES

E. Daniels

IN each age there has arisen a small number of thinkers who have analysed the prevailing philosophies of their age and who have formulated educational principles which if followed would lead to an ideal valued by such thinkers. Yet educational thought is often coloured by social, political and even economic considerations. In their turn such considerations are themselves effected by world events.

Consequently the early part of this thesis examines the broad effects upon thinking which took place at the time of the French and Early Industrial Revolutions. A man such as Coleridge was alive to the fact that old traditions were being questioned as a new and mechanical philosophy came into being. He looked to thinkers of his age for guidance on the nature and indeed the rights of man.

The thoughts of such men as Descartes, Locke and Hartley each had their formative effect in turn. Yet we see how by intuition and self examination, Coleridge was able to see the limitation of the line of thought of which they are representative figures. Due in part to his own education and the wide and varied reading which he undertook and due also to his knowledge of

scientific progress as well as literature he was able to see the dangers of arid materialism which he saw in the world around him. In common with other romantics he was a protagonist of the imagination and intuition. He saw that those who appealed to reason or the intellect only were considering only a part of man and that any true basis for education should consider the 'whole' nature of man.

In accordance with this idea of the whole man Coleridge saw the value of an education which took into account the child's sense of wonder and fed this sense with works of true imagination. Any system which did not take account of this would stifle any potential in the child. The child would learn much for itself, it was the teacher's responsibility to aid the learning till ultimately all knowledge was seen as one organic unity.

As Coleridge developed these views so his appreciation of the educational practice of his time changed. He was an early advocator of Bell's Monitorial System but he later saw its severe limitations. His interest in the relationship between Church and State led him to write about an ideal in which the Church had responsibility for the nation's learning and was seen as the leaven which leavened the lump of society. Coleridge's writings of the whole nature of man and the value of the unconscious and of introspection are shown to be prophetic of much later psychological theory. In particular the similarity to later Gestalt psychology

is noted.

Finally, since Coleridge was critical of Utilitarian philosophies, the thought of several later nineteenth century thinkers is examined. The similarity between some of Coleridge's and Matthew Arnold's ideas can hardly be coincidental, and John Stuart Mill, perhaps best known as an ardent Benthamite also recognised much of value in Coleridge's thought.

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INTRODUCTION

IN recent years there seems to have been a growth in the study of the works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Naturally, much of the interest has centred upon the literary front as Coleridge is probably known chiefly as a poet and a critic. Most students in English faculties have their attention drawn to the Biographia Literaria as a study in literary criticism, and his criticism of Shakespeare is valued as an aid in the study of the plays.

Yet Coleridge wrote a vast amount on many other topics and much of this work has only recently been brought to light. As a man of the early nineteenth century, he was keenly interested in scientific developments and for a lifetime pursued the study of philosophy in all its aspects. His reading was phenomenal and in his later years he was acknowledged as the 'Sage of Highgate'.

His reputation as a poet is probably based on three or four poems written within a short space of time when he was a young man. These poems are world renowned, whilst much of his other poetry is rarely consulted. However, his prose writings fill several volumes, but rarely exist as completed works in themselves. His writings on philosophy are often of a fragmentary nature and yet repay patience in study many times over.

Coleridge is perhaps best known as the friend of Wordsworth and Wordsworth has the wider reputation. The friendship lasted

over most of a lifetime and the influence which the two had upon each other will probably be never truly evaluated. The friendship thrived upon the differences inherent in their characters. A study of the two lives reveals crossing yet dissimilar paths. Coleridge who contracted an unfortunate marriage, and whose emotional life was such a turmoil contrasts with the apparent placidity of his friend. Coleridge also suffered from extreme ill health and his resort to opium is well known.

These facts may in some way account for the fragmentary nature of much of his writing, but his interest in philosophy and the political life of his age was constant. He took great note of political and scientific events and he showed great concern in his adult years for the path which National life was taking. Such events as the French Revolution had a traumatic effect upon many of the Romantic poets and Coleridge was no exception.

The years following the French Revolution and the changes in National life which accompanied the stirrings of Industrial growth and the growth of materialism plunged Coleridge deep into speculation. On analysing the causes of revolution and change he was led to analyse the philosophy of the preceding age. With this he seems to have found dissatisfaction and was led to develop a philosophy which he based upon a different concept of the nature of man. Throughout his writings on

philosophy one again and again meets references to the importance and the nature of Education which is necessary for the amelioration of mankind.

Coleridge wrote no one work upon education but scattered throughout his philosophic speculations one meets short but relevant statements sometimes written as marginalia and notes. Taken together there develops a coherent and lucid thought. It is the aim of this study to collect this thought together and show how it was the product of an unusual and brilliant mind led to think deeply upon philosophy and the nature of man by the growing materialism apparent in the times in which he lived, a materialism which gave rise to a philosophy which he abhorred.

Chapter I

THE AGE OF COLERIDGE, 1772-1834

General Background

THE turn of the century saw Samuel Taylor Coleridge in his twenty eighth year, yet he is recognised as a man of the nineteenth century tradition. There can be little doubt that some of the events which took place in his life must have had a formative influence upon his thinking. He was born at the end of the Augustan age, an age in which the old established and seemingly unchangeable order of things which had existed since the glorious revolution of 1688 was accepted almost without question. He was born in an age, when despite widespread poverty there was little protest over social and economic injustices or indeed many signs of class hostility. The aristocracy and the educated were complacent with political and social achievements; property and privilege were accepted principles. Writers and artists were intimately integrated in the sophisticated and urbane society. Sharing in a commonly acceptable culture and traditions, their work reveals their satisfaction with the age's ideals; they particularly dealt with the conduct of man in society, the reform of morals and the refinement of manners.

Yet by the end of Coleridge's life some of the old assumptions were in the process of being questioned. Probably this was inevitable as some changes in the way of national life had begun. Between 1760 and 1831 the population had increased from $6\frac{1}{2}$ to $16\frac{1}{2}$ million people and the growth of our present day

towns had begun. Both in agriculture and industry scientific developments were coming to man's aid and the processes known as the Industrial and Agrarian Revolutions had begun. The growth of the towns brought with it much that was unlovely and Coleridge was led to write in "Frost at Midnight" -

"For I was reared

In the great city, pent midcloisters dim,

And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars.

But thou, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze

By lakes and shores....."¹

Yet, as a result of the growth of towns and the application of newly developed methods of farming, the land patterns that we know today were in the process of creation.

The people of this country were still for the main part divided into two distinct elements, the rich and the poor, but the life span of Coleridge saw the emergence of a new and growingly important middle class of manufacturers with aspirations of their own. The diverse interests of the aristocracy and the poor had been preserved for centuries past, but due to the emergence of this new element in society and improving communications and the quicker spread of news, the age had tensions of its own; tensions heightened by the events of the French Revolution and the following wars.

The tensions of the various elements in society are

1. Coleridge, Frost at Midnight, Lines 51-55

probably best illustrated by a consideration of the government and religion of the country of that time.

How was England governed? The King, George III, had come to the throne in 1760 with several ambitions only to meet with opposition unknown by any government since the Revolution of 1688. He was opposed firstly by the Great Landowning Whig families - the Rockinghams, Newcastles, Temples - who had ruled England in the days of the first two Georges. George III had unexpectedly resumed many of the royal powers which former kings had tended to relinquish, and at the same time he had attacked the oligarchic powers of the Whig families, thus arousing the opposition of the aristocracy. In reply they had formed unusual alliances with lower elements in English Society. An unlikely situation had arisen whereby the spokesman for Whig opposition to the new royal domination of parliament was a man of middle class origins, the lawyer Edmund Burke.

A startling reversal of the policies of George III and his ministers was suffered when the American colonists rebelled against taxation. Strong efforts to suppress this rebellion failed, resulting in the loss of the American Colonies and the formation of the Independent American Union. This, in turn, was followed by the long and costly French wars. Even at home, opposition to the king came in an unusual form in the adventures of John Wilkes, who had gained the loyalty of discontented lower middle classes and town mobs. By new, and

popular methods of agitation, petitions to King and Parliament, through associations and public meetings, he had proved himself a thorn in the flesh of the King. However, it proved to be a thorn which the King was able to do very little about.

As the years went by the King suffered from recurrent fits of madness, till in 1811 his son became Regent and eventually the disreputable George IV. Although there was some sympathy for the ageing and ailing monarch it can be said that the kingship itself was at a low ebb.

As the monarchy lost prestige and power, Parliament and the Prime Ministers whose power rested on parliamentary support tended to gain a measure of power. During the French war the younger William Pitt as Prime Minister became something of a national hero. However, following his death in 1806 he was followed by men of a less heroic mould. The political parties were still led by the aristocracy and the gentry of England, with a small leaven of rising commercial, business and manufacturing men. The majority of the aristocrats had been brought up in a gentler and more static age and seemed to be at something of a loss when faced with the more overt expressions of discontent often shown by the masses. This can be seen in the measures taken after the war when there was a fear of the spread of French "Jacobinism" among the masses. Policy at this time varied between piecemeal reform and savage repression. Measures such as the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act and

action taken against the Luddite rioters show the lack of confidence in these years. In Parliament there was no settled party system at this period and prime ministers walked a veritable tightrope to keep a majority using patronage to excessive proportions. Throughout the country the squires and Justices of the Peace maintained a despotic rule.

Since the franchise was dependent largely upon property and ancient custom, i.e. 'Freeholders of land worth forty shillings a year', the actual representation gave rise to many anomalies, some small villages returning members whilst in large towns there might be no representation. However, one feature was changing. It had been customary for many seats to be returned unopposed, but now at succeeding elections many seats were contested as more and more people voted according to conviction. This in itself reveals a growing public opinion, perhaps due to increased literacy and the large increase in newspapers at this period. Yet we must not forget that prevailing eighteenth century theory still held the ground, that it is property and not people which ought to be represented in Parliament.

"Only the growing movements of Radicals held that men should have votes as men and as citizens, and not as the owners of specified quantities of landed property. And Radicals, for the moment, were associated with Jacobins - the revolutionaries of France who had

brought war to England and so much misery to Europe."²

If we consider the House of Lords, we find that some changes had taken place, but they can hardly be called reform. Due to the efforts of George III, the traditional stronghold of the Whig aristocracy had become a Tory stronghold. The house was now much larger, having some 360 members including some merchants and manufacturers. Since in the cabinet the peers often outnumbered commoners this was an important development.

The Tory Party was identified with opposition to radical movements and to political reform, it was indeed a union of those who were opposed to Jacobinism. It remained the party of the Church of England, of continuity and tradition in government. It owed much to the spirit of Pitt and indeed to Edmund Burke, whose *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) was its bible.

The Whigs on the other hand shared many of these principles, but there was a difference. Since they were supported by the Protestant Dissenters and many of the rising merchants and manufacturing interests along with the banks, they sought gradual reform of the system of government, and of the social and legal system. It was their aim to lessen the old power and privileges of landed interest. In fact Lord Brougham did

2. D. Thompson - England in the Nineteenth Century, p.12.

indeed introduce Radical techniques through popular agitation and county and parish meetings. Probably the Corn Law of 1815 acted as something of a stimulus to this movement, for this saw the formation of Union Societies and Associations, particularly in the North of England. Their cry was taken up in such journals as William Cobbett's Political Register. Here indeed was an early stirring of public opinion which formed a driving power for reform achieved later in the century.

What of religion in the country? The established church was of course the Church of England. However, due to abuse and neglect, the influence of the church in social life at this period was small, confined as it was to the aristocracy and the rural areas.

"The churches actually in existence were empty; and a clergy devoid of conscientiousness or zeal had an interest in their remaining empty. Their work was the easier. But even had they been all filled, they would certainly have been insufficient to hold even a small minority of the population of England. Since 1688 neither bishops nor parsons had given a thought to the need of adapting the system to the increase of population and its altered distribution. Therefore the distribution of bishoprics and parishes was treated in the same fashion as the distribution of constituencies"³

3. E. Halevy, History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century, Vol. I, p.399

The church had not yet awoken from her slumbers.

However, if the church was sleeping, Non-conformity was growing apace. The first enthusiasm of Methodism had settled and had made its appeal to middleclass and working elements alike. It has been suggested that the emotional character of dissent at this time did much to save the country from political revolution and that little progress was made by the English Jacobins because of their atheism. In fact, in *Table Talk* by Coleridge himself we read,

"It was God's mercy to our age that our Jacobins were infidels, and a scandal to sober Christians. Had they been like the Old Puritans, they would have trodden Church and King to dust, at least for a time."⁴

There must, of course, have been several other factors contributing to the indisposition of the English towards revolution. Woodward, in *The Age of Reform*, suggests that the democratic character of the nonconformist denominations had an important political effect in training their members in administration, self-government, and public speaking.

"Radicalism, trade-unionism, and, to a lesser extent, the chartist movement, owe much to this training; it is unsafe to regard it as diverting into religious

4. S.T. Coleridge, *Table Talk*, ii, p.68

channels an enthusiasm which might otherwise have turned to revolutionary politics. Chapel stewards and local preachers tended to be cautious-minded men, of good standing in their own circles, and not the type of which revolutionaries are made."⁵

This was the age of parties within the established church. The Evangelicals gave emphasis to the personal nature of religion and had the support of eminent philanthropists. They gave rise to considerable missionary activity. The High Church party had the support of orthodox Tory followers. They instigated much church building and took considerable part in the founding of the National Society. Between these two parties were the Latitudinarians or Broad Church party. This party was composed of an intellectual group who gained prominence in the later years as they took a liberal attitude in the agitation for administrative reform in the Church. During this period there was also a minority group of Roman Catholics denied full civic rights, whose number grew with the Irish immigration; but most of these were poor people who needed economic help rather than political help. It was only later in the nineteenth century that this group received full emancipation.

It would seem that the rich and poor in England each had their own separate religious provision. Indeed, the whole

5. Sir L. Woodward, The Age of Reform, p.503

of this social survey reveals that this was one nation with two societies at this period. There was indeed a third rising middle class, but as yet they were indeed a minority group watched with some apprehension by the aristocracy. The poor at last were showing signs of a true feeling of discontent with their lot in life. However, the ruling classes had not and could not have the necessary background or experience to cope fully with many of the changes taking place within the country. For a time at least, the gentle convergence of one class towards another was to be a very slow process.

Philosophical Background

IN order to consider the philosophical thoughts and beliefs which held sway in the early nineteenth century one has to look back over a period and to try to take account of all the various strands of thought which gained some importance within these years. The appeal of philosophers reaches only a small group, often an influential group, but it takes time for their doctrines to spread.

In any period in which new developments are taking place, many men will look for something permanent and lasting on which to pin their beliefs,

"Below the social stratum accessible to philosophic thought, or even to its remotest echoes, lay the great masses, agitated by rapid growth of material prosperity, increasing and multiplying so as to strain to the uttermost the powers of the old social framework and ready, as the recognised leaders of thought became incompetent, to listen to any who could speak with authority. For authority in some shape - the authority of sound reason, or the authority of blind tradition, or the authority of some powerful wielder of imaginative symbols - must always guide the masses of mankind."⁶

6. L. Stephens - English thought in the Eighteenth Century, I, p.72

Many then were looking for some form of authority. To whom did they look? Some saw authority in sensational or utilitarian philosophy. Others looked to the prevailing expressions of naturalism. It has been said that naturalism is,

"the view that denies to reason any spontaneous or creative function in the human constitution."⁷

This is of profound importance in understanding the general trend of romanticism.

The English revolution of 1688 had given rise to new ideas, particularly in men such as Newton, Locke and Shaftesbury. If we trace back the thought which was prevalent in both the French and American revolutions we must arrive at statements on individual rights and natural liberty made by Locke. This thought had come back to us after being taken up by Rousseau. The advances in scientific thought in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, particularly as exemplified in the work of Newton, had given rise to a fixed view of the Universe. It was now seen as the great machine that worked by rigid laws of causation. Older, more superstitious explanations, which had called upon supernatural causes to explain natural happenings had now fallen into disfavour. Yet we must remember that the new explanation was never regarded as anti-religious. Locke had said,

7. Scoley: Ethics of Naturalism, p.10

"The works of Nature in every part of them sufficiently evidence a Deity."⁸

This was a natural conclusion when the universe was seen as mathematically concise, ordered and harmonious, a thing of beauty. It was indeed in keeping with the tenets of orthodox religious belief.

The whole tone of Newton's Principia (1687) lays emphasis on the fact that a master designer lay behind the order which was revealed in the universe. He saw that if reason and order were the principle behind the work of God, they could become the guiding principles of humanity.

This optimism was shared by others, notably Shaftesbury, who like the Seventeenth Century Cambridge Platonists, believed in the goodness inherent in man. He too saw the evidence of God in the whole order of the created universe. He enthused upon the divinity of nature in no uncertain terms :

"O Glorious Nature! supremely Fair, and
sovereignly Good! All-loving and All-lovely,
All-divine! Whose every single Work affords
an ampler scene, and is a nobler spectacle than all
which ever Art presented! O mighty Nature! Wise
Substitute of Providence! Impower'd Creatress!

8. Works, (12th Edition) Vol. 1, p.135

O Thou impowering Deity, supreme Creator! Thee
I invoke, and Thee alone adore."⁹

Although a hundred years was to pass before Wordsworth, the ideas which filled the later poet's mind were already alive. Shaftesbury's argument was that Nature was truly divine and man was Nature's greatest creation, and must therefore partake of this divinity. Through men's inner moral sense he is able instinctively to prefer and distinguish that which is right. His true religion should be founded upon nature rather than upon revelation. He also had an appeal for the Romantics in his belief in the similarity of man's aesthetic and moral senses. He felt that man's moral sense distinguished the goodness of a thing by its beauty, proportion and harmony.

Even though both Newton and Shaftesbury had some influence upon the philosophical thinking of their time, the influence of John Locke was far greater. From much of his writing originated later thoughts in many fields such as politics, religion and indeed psychology. He is probably responsible for much that went into the making of later revolutionary thought for he had written,

"Man being born, with a title to perfect freedom
and uncontrolled enjoyment of all the rights and
privileges of the law of nature... no one can be

9. Works (1727) Vol. II, p.370

put out of this estate and subjected to the political power of another, without his own consent."¹⁰

Strong words indeed, for the time, but Locke had a very strong feeling for liberty and human rights. He believed that no man-made agency such as a government had any power or right to interfere with the workings of divine nature.

One of Locke's merits is the fact that he raised many questions which men at a later date sought to answer. Questions which puzzled Berkely, Hume and Hartley and gave rise to English psychology have their origins in Locke. Previously, Descartes had championed the theory of innate ideas. This was attacked by Hobbes who had tried to relate the activities and content of the mind to sense experience, but he had not been entirely successful or convincing. Locke was far more effective in this task as he sought to show that ideas are the result of experience and are not inborn. His work Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690) is a philosophical attempt to use the methods of Newtonian science. He sought to give a mechanical explanation of laws which would account for the moral world just as Newton had accounted for the physical world.

Locke went as far as to reject completely the doctrine of innate ideas and postulated a theory which was completely

10. Treatise of Civil Government, book ii. Section 87

novel. He started by regarding the mind as a tabula rasa, a blank wax sheet on which ideas were printed by experience. The mind acquired these experiences from sensation and reflection. Through the senses, sense experiences are conveyed into the mind from external bodies and these produce perceptions. Thus, sensation is thought of as a mechanical physical process, giving rise to coherent and orderly impressions completely divorced from any action of the will, as Berkeley would also postulate. Berkeley indeed had an idea of his own on this when he thought that the origin of these sense impressions was God and this was a form of divine language, an idea not unlike that held by Wordsworth. Besides sensation, Locke says that there may be operating an inner sense namely reflection - thinking, reasoning or imagining - which enables the mind to have ideas about ideas. This is not merely subsequent to sensation but is an original power.

Later in developing the theory of association of ideas Locke suggested that although some ideas had a natural connection with others, other connections were effected by feelings and accidents of time, and this union was outside any control by reason. He developed this further by saying that those ideas lasted longest which were originally accompanied by pleasure or pain. This pleasure-pain principle obviously had great meaning for him for he wrote,

"What has an aptness to produce pleasure in us is what we call good, and what is apt to produce pain in us we call evil."¹¹

Yet, although he did give some thought to the work of the feelings, he felt that the ultimate guide was the reason; for truth could scarcely be approached through the passions or imagination. In the light of this belief he gave little credence to the powers of the imagination and he tended to regard the arts as trivial though pleasant. This is indeed a position which is far removed from that of the Romantics, who exalted the imagination and gave great prominence to the arts in the interests of man.

Associationism then, was introduced by John Locke but it was further developed by such men as Berkeley, the Revd. John Gay and Hume. But it is with David Hartley that we see it established as a firm doctrine. Hartley like many in the eighteenth century sought to equate the moral with the physical world and he had read both the Rev. John Gay and Newton, particularly his *Opticks* (1704). Hartley thought that association was the great explanatory principle and developed a theory to explain sensation by using Newton's theory of vibrations in the nerves. He maintained that this principle of association of ideas explained not only our mental processes,

11. Essay, II, 21.

but also the development of moral sense. Hartley repudiated Shaftesbury's statement that the moral sense was innate.

He said:

"Our Passions or Affections can be no more than
Aggregates of simple Ideas united by Association."¹²

This of course leads to the idea that by association we would pursue any activity which brought approval whilst avoiding any activity causing disapproval. Thus, in any learning situation the moral sense would stem from sensation and from the subsequent association of pleasure or pain. In the divine works of nature we have the most beneficent educational environment. Here man will of necessity improve morally by associating pleasure with the worthiest of objects and eventually attain a spiritual state in which God is felt as All in All.

Several later thinkers, notably Wordsworth, felt as Hartley did, that man could be made good by the action of Nature. At the end of the Eighteenth Century both Wordsworth and Coleridge believed for a time in many of Hartley's ideas relating to the sensation and association of ideas - in ideas such as simultaneous and successive association and the importance of association in recollection. Wordsworth also agreed with the notion that the sense of union with God is

12. Observations on Man (1749) Vol.I., p.368

often transferred into a sense of union with Nature, the works of God. Yet Wordsworth went further than Hartley when he believed in an inner creative ability of the mind. Hartley believed that all ideas are derived from sensation, and any ideas attributed to reflection were simply a residuum, the origin of which Locke himself failed to perceive correctly. The Romantics, of course, exalted the imagination and this was a power which to Hartley was trivial and synonymous with fancy. To Hartley the imagination or fancy is especially a feature of youth, after which it declines. To him, poetry and the arts had no place in the mature mind; the arts are proper to the 'early ages of the world'.

"..... if we consider Mankind as one great Individual, advancing in Age perpetually, it seems natural to expect, that in the Infancy of Knowledge, in the early Ages of the World, the Taste of Mankind would turn much upon the Pleasures of this Class."¹³

In spite of the contrary influences of such as Shaftesbury, the utilitarian thinkers, who resolved all human acts into a species of selfishness, exercised a considerable influence. Shaftesbury's earlier argument had maintained that good impulses were natural and divine. In Butler's view, virtue was dependent upon the exercising of conscience for the end

13. Observations on Man, Vol.I, p.431

of right conduct and not for the principle of promoting the greatest happiness of mankind. Nevertheless, a popular movement developed from Locke's conclusion that there were no

"innate practical principles"

except

"a desire of happiness and an aversion to misery."¹⁴
and these, he held, were appetites, not intellectual intuitions;

"Good or evil",

he asserted,

"are nothing but pleasure and pain....."¹⁵

Of the early utilitarians, the most significant were Hume, Bentham and James Mill. They maintained that pleasure was alone good and desirable for its own sake. They felt that by following the rule of seeking to achieve the greatest Happiness, the individual would distinguish the rightful action.

In Hume's Treatise of Human Nature (1738) we find another attempt to find a moral counterpart to Newton's Law of Gravitation. To achieve this he used the 'association of ideas' theory. We find him referring to such types of association as resemblance, contiguity and cause and effect.

14. Essay I, ch.iii, sect.3.

15. Essay I, ch.ii, sect. 4.

In Hume's view association was a synthetic activity obviating any need to probe the nature of the mind's activity. He dismissed the validity of judgement and selection, and believed that the main operation was chance association. The idea that reason was a dominant ruling force in life was utterly rejected by Hume who felt that it was our emotions, and not reason which prescribed human ends. One could not use reason to distinguish between good and evil, for such qualities are not invested in the objects and actions themselves but in the individual's subjective reaction. An individual could only distinguish between good and evil on the grounds that contemplating good brings him pleasure and approval, whilst contemplating evil brings him pain and disapproval. Hume believed that it is usually the strength of feeling which decides what is true or false.

As a result of experience we learn which actions bring pleasure and which pain, and in this learning process reason plays some part. However, all the complex passions have their origin in simpler states of feeling that have been associated with certain ideas. In sympathy or the pleasure or pain felt when contemplating the same in others, Hume saw a desirable human quality. He thought that out of this sympathy arises benevolence which aids right behaviour. This idea of sympathy is also felt by Adam Smith, to account for man's tendency to good actions, but he maintained that where utility operated,

it worked to facilitate sympathy.

Always Hume placed little dependence on any logical functions of the mind and emphasised how much depends upon the feelings, emotional and instinctive drives:

"Reason is and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them."¹⁶

Here we recognise a position similar to that of Rousseau and note a further germinal influence for English Romanticism.

With the aid of the Westminster Review, Bentham and his disciples such as James Mill made a political force of the utilitarian doctrine. Bentham constantly appealed to the principle of the greatest happiness of the greatest number as the measure of right and wrong.

As with Hume and Rousseau so with Bentham, Nature was the sovereign power. This sovereign power resided in man and his natural impulses and instincts. As a result, every man is the best judge of his own interests. He declared:

"Nature has placed mankind under the government of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we shall do."¹⁷

He believed that all human actions derived from this pleasure-seeking, pain-avoiding mechanism.

16. Works II, p.195

17. Principles of Morals and Legislation. Into opening passage

Bentham felt that utilitarianism or 'the greatest happiness principle' should not only be the criterion in morals, but also in politics, legislation and administration. What is happiness must also ultimately be left to the judgement of the individual concerned, for by his very nature he will pursue his own good if left to do so. It is interesting to note that at a time when stirring appeals based upon noble principles and man's abstract rights were made, Bentham preached the need for radical reform on rational grounds.

Despite the influence of the ideas of the utilitarians and associationist thinkers, the ideas born of the French Revolution had a dynamic impact upon many living at that time. English opinion was divided at all levels. Among the rulers many Tories and Traditional Whigs denounced the revolution, whilst the Foxites championed revolution and reform. The fall of the Bastille in 1787 prompted Fox to declaim "How much is it the greatest event that ever happened in the world! And how much the best!"

Behind much revolutionary thought lay the work of the French Republican Rousseau. His Contrat Social (1776) had developed the "Social Contract" of Locke into a revolutionary creed expounding liberty and equality. He wished to sweep away many of the accretions of civilisation which he saw as corrupt. Kingships should be swept away and government

based on the consent of those governed and the ultimate aim should be both political and moral equality.

The cause of revolution and the principles underlying it had its supporters in England. The ideas of Price and Priestley, both nonconformist leaders, had an effect upon later reform movements through the dissenters. A statement by Price puts the rational view of the nonconformists:

"I have lived to see 30 millions of people indignant and resolute, spurning at slavery and demanding liberty with an irresistible voice, their king led in triumph, and an arbitrary monarch surrendering himself to his subjects. And now, methinks, I see the ardour for liberty catching and spreading, a general amendment beginning in human affairs: the dominion of kings changed for the dominion of laws, and the dominion of priests giving way to the dominion of reason and conscience."¹⁸

Both Price and Priestley were spokesmen for the liberal dissenters in their condemnation of the existing order which satisfied neither the test of utility nor the test of abstract justice. Priestley, like Locke before him, believed that governments had a duty to promote the welfare and happiness of their people. If they failed to do this then natural

18. D.C. Somervell: English Thought in the Nineteenth Century, p.30

liberties must take the place of governments. Believing so ardently in liberty and the necessity of freedom for free thinking he dismissed such ideas as the Trinity, the Miraculous Conception and Original Sin as mere corruptions of Christianity. Though religious liberty and toleration was a main concern of Priestley, he sought political and civil liberty as a means to this end. He had such a strong belief in individual freedom that he was moved to quote Adam Smith in support of economic individualism and the removal of restrictions. Like Hartley, Priestley believed in progress and perfectibility and had enlarged on the theory of the association of ideas and in the belief of necessity in his own writings.

The message for the common people was carried by Tom Paine just as that of Priestley and Price had influenced the rational dissenters. Paine's basic belief lay in the equality of all men before God and hence every man had certain inalienable rights. Human equality was a law of Nature. The main premise of his book Rights of Man (1791) was that no generation can enter into a contract with King or government to bind its successors. This appeal to the theory of social contract was to justify revolution in answer to Burke's denunciation of revolution. He believed that government was a necessary evil and that the need for government diminished as society became more perfect. Democracy only could safe-

guard personal freedom and freedom of thought. Paine was notable for his radical demands which included parliamentary reform and the need for free education and employment for all, maternity benefits, old age pensions, provision for the sick, a graduated income tax, and agrarian and financial reform. Always radical in his outlook, in the Age of Reason (1792), Paine found the Christian idea of God incompatible with the deism revealed to man by external nature and his own conscience.

In 1793, William Godwin published his Political Justice at a time when English Jacobinism was causing a certain amount of panic and reaction. His writings were to influence a small but nevertheless influential group of young intellectuals, including Shelley, Wordsworth and for a time, Coleridge. He argued that government was an unnecessary evil which crushed man's moral development. He saw in existing systems the perpetuation of inequality, slavery and all that was wrong. He saw man as a simple reasoning machine, pure intelligence, whose reason was being fettered by political and religious institutions. Whilst such harmful systems must be abolished, Godwin deprecated the use of force. He felt that the means of liberation should be propaganda and persuasion, teaching the important truth that reason is the sole guide and abstract good the sole end of man. For knowledge of what will produce the happiest and greatest benefit to society one must rely on one's

individual assessment, ignoring traditional morality (which is a false guide), and irrelevant sentiments like gratitude which will interfere with the functioning of reason, - indeed the only true and absolute guide is reason. Wrong actions are the result of either faulty reasoning (error) or no reasoning (ignorance).

We note that Godwin, like Locke and Hartley believed that man is the creature of environment rather than heredity; he insisted:

"Man considered in himself, is merely a being capable of impression, a recipient of perceptions".¹⁹

Through sensation and by association, man could therefore reach perfection in a healthy and natural environment, once the restrictive laws and government had been abolished by persuasion. He thought an essential step forward was to bring about the equality of property, for the existence of extreme poverty alongside great wealth provoked crime. Godwin was a severe critic of the penal laws, believing that the aim should be the reformation of criminals rather than punishment. The belief that men are by nature equal also made him critical of a society in which the aristocracy had in many cases a wealth of unnecessary possessions whilst the poor lacked even necessities. The aristocracy perpetuated inequality. Yet he

19. Political Justice (1st Ed.) Vol. II, book V, Ch.8, p.452

frowned upon war and violence, saying that in human affairs violence could only be justified in repelling an invading enemy. For some time Coleridge and to a greater extent, Wordsworth, came to be influenced by Godwin's cry of equality and fraternity.

So far we have considered writers to whom the French Revolution acted as a spur, yet we must not forget that its principles had many critics who defended the existing order of things. Among these writers, Burke stands supreme. His thought became the philosophical justification for English reaction at a time when demands for reform and liberty were rapidly and insistently spreading. When the Tory Government was forced to repressive measures it was strengthened by Burke's Conservative philosophy. Burke argued strongly against those who saw corruption in aristocracy and virtue in the humble poor. He strongly defended the old social order and argued that the English constitution was a sacred growth, a part of Nature's Order. He felt that the very fact that moral and religious laws had lasted so long proved their worth. To seek more than slow and moderate reform would endanger the very foundations of society. The real enemy of religion and liberty was the arbitrary power of revolution.

Conservative forces had needed some support to counteract the spreading doctrine of liberty, equality and fraternity. They received this in Burke's Reflections on the French

Revolution (1790), in which he denounced the French Revolutionaries for attempting to undermine the foundations of society in the name of reason which he saw as a faulty guide. In Burke's argument, reason was open to exploitation and he would put his trust in the feelings rather than reason or intellect. This was a point of agreement between Burke and the Romantics.

"Politics ought to be adjusted, not to human reasonings, but to human nature; of which the reason is but a part, and by no means the greatest part."²⁰

In his insistence that society and many other institutions sprang from nature and were naturally good, Burke is in opposition to Rousseau and the Romantics to whom civilisation was corrupt, the very opposite of nature.

This survey of some of the trends in 18th and 19th Century thought shows that the period was a vital one in moral, religious and political ideas. This was the age when utilitarian philosophy was growing strongly, when psychology was coming to the aid of philosophy in attempts to solve the mysteries of the human mind on an experimental basis. The problem of man's relationship to God and the universe occupied thinkers who formulated acceptable theories. The reliance on reason was now questioned and emphasis given to

20. Quotation from A. Cobban: Edmund Burke and the Revolt against the 18th Century, p.77

emotional and instinctive drives. Some forwarded the ideas of man's natural sociability and benevolence, of the perfectability of man through sensation and association of ideas, whilst others relied on the operation of the pleasure-pain principle. Other significant trends include the conception of the divinity of nature and the approximation of the moral and aesthetic sense.

Many attitudes to human problems were affected by the reactions to the French Revolution. Many advocated human equality on various grounds: for instance, Paine argued for equality as one of man's natural rights, inherent in the Law of the Universe, while Godwin demanded equality on grounds of reason, an obvious symbol of the equality of man, natural to all. Anti-revolutionary thought of aristocracy and men of property was symbolised by Burke, who totally rejected the doctrine of equality in favour of tradition and well established social and political systems. These arguments for and against revolution and reform dominated the time and found the ear of many through newspapers, pamphlets, literature and all kinds of societies.

Educational Ideas

SINCE the last section dealt with philosophical ideas, it is natural that many of the ideas discussed will have a bearing on education. Such influences as Newtonian science, theories of sensation and association, the pleasure-pain principle and the democratic doctrine of the equality of man have obvious relevance. Such different men as Malthus, Bentham, Adam Smith and Paine saw the need for a Programme of instructions. They did not all demand state education but those who did had opposition from the dissenters. Both Godwin and Priestley were opposed to state education, Godwin because he thought it would destroy free opinion and Priestley because he thought it would perpetuate uniformity when human nature demanded variety.

Godwin held that education was of even greater importance than government. He felt that education must aim towards perfection by giving the right direction to lead the moral character from mere association. Progress must follow from the guidance of reason and from active learning. James Mill also with his belief that the mind was mechanically determined by external events stressed the behaviouristic process of conditioning. Unfortunately, in laying such stress on mechanism he ignored unconscious, emotional and conative elements in man. It was a utilitarian tendency to concentrate

on the material good of society, on knowledge for its use and upon book learning. Naturally, this invoked criticism from many including Coleridge.

The age was torn with differing educational opinion. Mill, for instance, would deny the existence of innate ideas, while Burke insisted that man was born with predispositions from the past. Yet amid a welter of educational thought, the conventional theory and practice was being shaken by the influence of Locke and Rousseau. In spite of largely differing attitudes, they argued for a wider and more sensible education than was offered by traditional schools.

Locke's advocacy of sensation, reflection and association and the rejection of innate ideas had probably influenced many thinkers already. However, with the publication of Some Thoughts Concerning Education (1693), Locke offered more direct educational advice. The conception of children as miniature adults was attacked. Locke held that they

"Should be allowed the liberties and freedom suitable to their ages.... They must not be hindered from being children, or from playing, or doing as children, but from doing ill; all other liberty is to be allowed them."²¹

He felt that all learning should be suited to the age of the

21. Some Thoughts Concerning Education (ed. J.W. Adamson) p.48-9.

child. To this end the child should be studied from birth and the characteristics of each age noted. No attempt should be made to fit the child's personality to a preconceived idea of what he should be.

"Everyone's natural genius should be carried as far as it could; but to attempt the putting another upon him, will be but labour in vain....."²²

Locke also saw value in making learning interesting for the child. He did not approve of teaching by rules but by practice. If the learning is to be successful the precepts must be understood by the child. If anything is to be committed to memory then it will be remembered better if it has meaning for the child. He saw value in learning through play and felt that if interest was aroused, then industry would follow.

Rote learning was dismissed as of little importance. The child should be made to reason and think for himself from an early age. With this, Coleridge would disagree as he would with Locke's using the child's sense of shame or desire for esteem. Yet he would agree with Locke's regard for the importance of first-hand experience, of parental responsibility, of not over-indulging a child and of the need of obedience and self discipline. In instilling obedience, Locke felt

22. Ibid., p.46

that corporal punishment was ineffective; it would increase the appeal of forbidden things or break the spirit. To have educational influence, rewards and punishments must be the moral consequences of the pupil's actions.

He saw that both compulsion and too great a liberty held dangers for the child.

"To avoid the danger that is on either hand, is the great art; and he that has found a way, how to keep a child's spirit, easy, active, and free; and yet at the same time to restrain him from many things he has a mind to, and to draw him to things that are uneasy to him; he, I say, that knows how to reconcile these seeming contradictions, has in my opinion, got the true secret of education."²³

Like Coleridge, he saw the responsibilities and the qualities needed in a teacher. Morality was needed more than scholarship, and the task was gently to introduce the immature being to the environment and society as they actually were. A successful integration with the world depended on both parent and teacher.

Locke did not believe in learning for learning's sake but rather in education for life. He did not envisage a very full curriculum embracing all knowledge, but rather a

23. Some Thoughts Concerning Education (ed. J.W. Adamson) p.35-6

curriculum which would be useful in later life. He believed in a training in virtue and good manners but above all he valued a moral and religious education. He valued highly the receptivity of the human mind, holding that it was activity of the reason which was the real agent of the mind. As a result he thought that most teaching difficulties could be resolved by reasoning with the child. Just as Coleridge would never have accepted the importance given to this kind of reason, so Locke would not have accepted the romantic belief in the imagination as an approach to truth.

The second major educational influence on the period was, of course, the publication in 1762 of Rousseau's Emile. The book had a wide circulation since it was translated four times between 1763 and 1767. It must have been well known and it was read and commented upon by Southey, Lamb, Charles Lloyd, Hazlitt, Thomas Poole and by Godwin.

The main argument of Emile is that there is a need to follow the education of nature, to postpone the appeal to the child's reason, and to allow freedom in education. The life of man should become the natural pattern:

"Let us lay it down as an incontrovertible rule
that the first impulses of nature are always right."²⁴

He rejected completely the doctrine of original sin.

24. Emile (Everyman Edition) p.56

He thought that a child enters this world wholly good and innocent. It was only when men built up a civilisation and lived together in communities that evil arose:

"God makes all things good; man meddles with them and they become evil."²⁵

When he then considered current educational practice, Rousseau was appalled and attacked such features as pedantic instruction and authoritarian discipline. He immediately saw that the failure of this system was the total disregard hitherto given to the nature of childhood. His attack was aimed at those who

"devoted themselves to what a man ought to know without asking what a child is capable of learning."²⁶

This insistence upon the need to recognise the importance of the nature of childhood was a contribution to educational progress. He showed remarkable sympathy with and insight into child nature. He insisted on the child's right to happiness, freedom and activity.

Believing in the essential importance of the early years of childhood, Rousseau stressed the role of the mother and the bond between mother and child. He declared:

"The earliest education is most important and it undoubtedly is a woman's work."²⁷

25. Ibid, p.5

26. Emile (Everyman Edition) preface p.1

27. Ibid, p.5

He considered infancy as the sleep of reason and concluded that a child's early knowledge was dependent on sensation alone. As the mind was essentially passive, the child should be occupied with sense exercises that primarily feed the mind, while postponing all that might depend on real activity of the mind. He saw education up to the age of twelve as largely negative, as preparation. There must be no unnatural forcing whether in eating, talking, walking or reading.

The essential element was the strengthening of the body and the training of the senses to receive the works of nature. Physical and moral education were closely connected and the child would become moral, not by precept or moral tale, but only by the discipline of natural consequences. The child should be taught not by words but by experience alone. This moral active training, which precedes the intellectual, depends upon the individual having a clear perception of the consequence of his acts; there must be no adult inflicting of punishments.

Rousseau believed that this negative passive education should continue till the age of about twelve, when the child would be ready to profit from a more positive education. However he would still not allow the arid verbalism of his day to be the model for teaching. The child should still be allowed to learn by problem solving and discovery, using nature itself as his textbook. For a long time the child should be

dependent on things rather than persons, social education being left till adolescence. If a child has learned to read before this he would be ready to profit by it but Rousseau still felt that this was not to be the prime means of learning,

"I hate books, they only teach us to talk about things we know nothing about."²⁸

To Rousseau the principle of effective teaching lay in correlating the natural development of a child's faculties with progressive stages in the education of things and of men. He understood and described such stages in growth as infancy, boyhood, early and late adolescence, each with its own characteristics. He placed a value on the imagination, which like reason re-arranged and combined ideas, established new associations among mental content, suggested new possibilities and interpretations, and generally inspired the inner life.

Many on reading Rousseau in this period, felt that here was a new departure. To many, the insights into the nature of childhood came as a revelation. Much was accepted, though many criticised the strict control of the environment which Rousseau advocated. Others doubted the wisdom of the delay in the teaching of reading. Yet many did realise the virtue of his remarks on the importance of natural educational

28. Emile, p.147

provision, of the value of a sense of property, of the importance of mother, home and family in education and the importance of a teacher tutor.

The writings of Locke and Rousseau did have an effect on conventional educational theory and practice and they paved the way for a great advance in the knowledge of child development and psychology. Emile had its most immediate effect, not in this country but in Germany and Switzerland where his thought was influential on Basedow, Pestalozzi, and Froebel. Even Kant recognised some value in the writings, though he no longer worshipped natural man.

The idea of progression, the education through the senses and the development of the whole man became aims in Pestalozzi's system, aims which show a real debt owed to Rousseau. Similarly Froebel, when he advocated the law of development following nature was influenced by Rousseau:

"Assuredly man shall not neglect his natural instincts, still less abandon them, but he must ennoble them through his intelligence, and purify them through his reason."²⁹

Froebel also wrote on the importance of childhood and even as Rousseau, on the divinity of the child.

Though the importance of Rousseau's ideas on the

29. Froebel's Letters (Michaelis and Moore) p.222

continent have been noted, this country was slower to absorb them, though the initial and necessary impetus was beginning. The first to read and then to popularise Rousseau in this country were enthusiasts such as the Edgeworths, Thomas Day and the Rev. David Williams. Priestley praised Emile for emphasising that education needed a measure of freedom. Reforms begun by David Manson, Graves and Mayo were added to by the Romantics, till Sir T. Wyse was able to base a plea for reform upon the rights of childhood and the need to appeal to feelings and sentiment as well as to intellect and will. A concept of the whole man had to some extent come into being.

Chapter II

ROMANTICISM IN THE AGE OF COLERIDGE

DEFINITIONS of the term Romanticism abound and one is in danger of confusion when contemplating their diversity. However, all definitions have as a common element the recognition of a dynamic force affecting all aspects of life in the early nineteenth century. Since it is in detail that the definitions differ, one has to confine comments on romanticism to pertinent generalisations. This obviates the necessity of too many qualifications of detail.

Bush gave a definition of English romanticism as:

"A change from a mechanical conception of the world to an enthusiastic religion of Nature, from rational virtue to emotional sensibility, from Hobbesian egoism to humanitarian benevolences, from realism to optimism, from acceptance of things as they are to faith in progress, from contentment with urban civilisation to sentimental primitivism, from traditional doctrines of literary imitation to conceptions of the naive and original, from poetic preoccupations with the normal, the true, and the actual to dreams of the strange, the beautiful and the ideal."¹

In many areas, romanticism was a living attempt to re-appraise and indeed to reassert human values. Throughout Europe the romantic tradition was at work with many diverse

1. D. Bush, Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry, p.43

aspects and philosophies making up the complex of thought. Such diverse aspects as the American and French Revolutions, the English revival of romanticism and the idealism of Kant and Hegel in Germany - all in part were indicative of a new romantic reaction against traditions which had proved suspect in a world in which change was evident.

In Europe, there was a constant search for a way of life that was more satisfying in all ways, yet the major English romantics went even further than this as they attempted to formulate completely new philosophies. With them we see a comprehension of the total life and the evolving of personal beliefs in the face of growing materialism. In some cases it is seen in a vague longing expressed in poetry. Sometimes sentimentalism and escapism are elements which pervade their work, but eventually each seems to show a strong reaction against the mechanistic and frustrating civilisation in which they lived and to assert more fundamental, personal and human values.

Political Ideas of the English Romantics

POLITICAL issues in the age of romanticism gave rise to much of the content of romantic expression, particularly the emotional content, which arose from deliberations on such topics as the rights and dignity of man. The ideas of Rousseau gave rise to much revolutionary thought, particularly when the romantics considered the fable of the Golden Age. The idea of a Golden Age which was based on the natural goodness of man was seen as an age without law, convention and other social restraints. They felt that in such a society the natural goodness of man could achieve new heights of perfection which were impossible in the crowding restraints of the civilisation of the early nineteenth century. In consequence, the romantics tended to scorn social distinctions and abhorred cities and urban life, the trappings of polished society and even government itself. They condemned the aristocrat as a product of artificial life whilst the peasant who led the natural life was exalted in no mean way.

The struggle which ensued between the English Jacobins and Anti-Jacobins gave rise to extensive romantic propaganda in contemporary literature. Aristocratic society came under a sweeping criticism in the didactic writings of the novelists of this period. Themes such as natural virtue, rustic simplicity and aristocratic depravity appear in the novels of such popular writers as Bage, Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Inchbald. Many indeed

seemed touched with a tinge of Rousseauism. The revolutionary philosopher Godwin, wrote a novel, Caleb Williams, and the political and ethical views of Holcroft were spread in the story of Anna St. Ives (1792).

The youthful writers of verse of this period betrayed their youthfulness by celebrating the advent of the French Revolution, with its principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. With their strong belief in the natural goodness of man they came to see inequality as the result of chance and environment which resulted in inequality of power and wealth. This argument was taken up in verse form by the minor poet - the Della Guscan, Robert Merry:-

"And has not kind, impartial Heav'n
To every rank an equal feeling giv'n?
Virtue alone should vice subdue,
Nor are the MANY baser than the FEW"²

It must be remembered that the revolutionary spirit infected many sections of the public, dissenters, radicals, poets and intellectuals to the extent that many were stirred into activity. The excise officer and poet Burns sent guns to the Convention in Paris whilst attacking the privileges of rank. Always he was ready to take up the cause of liberty and freedom. The mystic Blake wore the red cap of liberty and

2. R. Merry, Ode on the Fourteenth of July (1791)

freedom, and was the friend and champion of Thomas Paine, whom he helped to escape arrest and flee the country. Many young intellectuals showed enthusiasm for the French Revolution in its early days; these included Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Middleton and Landor who was even known as "a mad Jacobin".

Wordsworth who had spent a quiet childhood in the seeming peace and social equality of the Cumbrian Hills had arrived at a personal social creed. When in early manhood he had to share his beliefs with other men in urban society he was ripe for revolutionary thought. He believed in the natural goodness of man, in

"his noble nature, as it is

The gift which God has placed within his power

His blind desires and steady faculties

Capable of clear truth, the one to break

Bondage, the other to build liberty

On firm foundations".³

On his visit to France, he was alive to the political atmosphere in that country, so much so that he seemed to live more intensely at that period than he ever did again. All things seemed possible:-

"France standing on the top of Golden Laws,

And human nature seeming born again."⁴

3. Wordsworth, Prelude Bk IV.355-60

4. Ibid, Bk VI, 353

Wordsworth at this time became a Patriot. Through his friendship with Bequpuy he believed that great things were happening and for the right reasons. He looked forward to a time when the revolution would remove all suffering and wrong. His really close contact with the revolution at work, however, came in October 1792, when he moved to Paris. The King had been deposed and it was one month after the September massacres, the thought of which gave him a foresight of the horrors to come. Paris was for the moment, quiet,

"But at the best it seemed a place of fear,
Unfit for the repose which night requires,
Defenceless as a wood where tigers roam"⁵

Then followed the contest between Jacobins and Girondins, a conflict which spelled turmoil for Wordsworth. He even contemplated giving up his English Nationality in order to become a Girondin in whose policies he believed. He saw in the Girondins, the representatives of humanity and freedom.

However, he returned to England only to receive a really severe shock when England declared war on the French Republic in 1789. He now encountered the real agony of having to abandon either loyalty to his own country or the deepest intellectual and moral convictions. Before he could come to a solution the terrors which continued till the execution of

5. Ibid Bk X.374

Robespierre took place and shook Wordsworth even further.

"I scarcely knew one night of quiet sleep,
Such ghastly visions had I of despair
And tyranny, and implements of death
And long orations which in dreams I pleaded
Before unjust tribunals, with a voice
Labouring, a brain confounded, and a sense
Of treachery and desertion in the place
The holiest that I know of, my own soul."⁶

If this spelled shock for Wordsworth, his emotional unity was to be torn apart as further political changes took place in France as the revolution passed through war and France itself became an oppressive and conquering power.

With this break in his emotional unity, he fell back on the rationalising intellect and sought refuge for a time in the writings of William Godwin. Although Wordsworth's nature responded to much in Godwin's thought yet he found no real satisfaction and it was left to others such as Coleridge to lead him out of this moral crisis.

As Wordsworth looked back on the moral values he had held high in his youth, he now sought a way in which they could be put into practice in England,

"England came more and more to embody, in her past

6. Ibid, Bk X.374

achievements and in her present possibilities, that spiritual and natural life which was to him the good life"⁷

He now developed a theory of Nationalism or Patriotism based on love of country and based on his old Jacobin faith in that it embodied Liberty and Philanthropic Love. He made an honest endeavour to develop this theory and analysed to some degree the way in which specific political measures could embody his ideal of a society where man's purest and most natural instincts find at once free play and control. In parliamentary politics he did indeed become a Tory and was conservative in many of his thoughts. He opposed Catholic Emancipation, the Reform Bill, the ballot and many other innovations. However he was concerned with growing industrialism. He saw the dangers in large numbers of men collecting in mean cities. He was farseeing enough to realise that a new power was rising in the land. He felt that the old aristocratic powers were breaking and that a new self made monied class was arising. He felt that the trend of English politics was towards the rule of an ignorant and lawless proletariat and it was against this that he fought.

Wordsworth began to believe that some purely external restraint must be placed on man. He had indeed begun to doubt

7. Brinton: Political Ideas of the English Romanticists (1926) p.55

the natural goodness of man; which indeed as a good Anglican, he could hardly find consistent with original sin. Unfortunately in search of control, Wordsworth looked back towards the stiff frame of eighteenth century society. In politics he returned to the prescriptive rights of the landed aristocracy. Through property alone, he said,

"Can be had exemptions from temptation to low habits of mind, leisure for solid education, and dislike to innovation, from a sense in the several classes how much they have to lose; for circumstances often make men wiser, or at least more discreet, when their individual levity or presumption would dispose them to be much otherwise."⁸

In many ways, Coleridge followed a similar pattern of political development to that of Wordsworth. He celebrated the fall of the Bastille as a schoolboy:-

"I see, I see! glad Liberty succeed
With every patriot virtue in her train!"⁹

His hope turned on France as did so many in those times -

"France! whose crimes and miseries posterity will
impute to us. France! to whom posterity will
impute their virtues and happiness."¹⁰

8. Letters of the Wordsworth Family, Vol.3 p.411

9. Poetical Works (Oxford) I, p.11

10. Essays on his own Times I, p.82

Like so many, he expected the cause of Liberty to be taken up in England, and like so many he was dismayed when Britain took up arms to crush France.

Despite his later denials, Coleridge began as a stray supporter of the revolution. In many writings he attacked the government as he believed much evil arose from the institutions of monarchy, priesthood and nobility. His political ideas of this time involved a representative government chosen by universal suffrage governing by a mandate from the electors. One has only to look at the Whig Morning Chronicle of those years to see an indication of Coleridge's radicalism. His sonnets on "Eminent Characters" deal with Erskine, Priestley, Lafayette, Koskiusko, Godwin, Sheridan and Lord Stanhope. With Southey he looked to the possibility of setting up an ideal state in America, the home of Priestley. This scheme known as Pantisocracy would set up a democratic society away from the repressions of Europe.

In later years, however, with the French invasion of Switzerland, Coleridge lost faith in France. He commented bitterly on the changed revolution:-

"The Sensual and the Dark rebel in vain,
Slaves by their own compulsion! In mad game
They burst their manacles and wear the name
Of Freedom, graven on a heavier chain!"¹¹

11. Poetical Works (1912), p.247 France

Any ideas Coleridge may have had on natural man changed and he felt that natural man was selfish, rebellious and lacking in restraint. Instead of Freedom, discipline was needed and so he defended the Establishment in Church and State. He saw that rights and duties could not be separated, and saw that democrats, though willing to destroy, paid little attention to constructive thought. He then lost his faith in democracy as a political expedient in this country. He dropped his ideas on the machinery of frequent elections and the value of popular assemblies, but from his later Tory position he still supported many liberal measures such as Catholic Emancipation, free trade, the repeal of the game laws, universal education and the Factory Acts. He strongly defended the freedom of the press against the repression of Pitt, when he attacked under the title "The Plot Discovered; or an Address to the People against Ministerial Treason".

Southey also betrayed an early enthusiasm for the French Revolution. Speaking through the mouth of John Ball in Wat Tyler he said,

"Ye are all equal; nature made ye so.

Equality is your birthright."¹²

However, like Coleridge and Wordsworth, he became a Tory because of his disappointed hopes in France. He became an

12. Poetical Works II, p.37. Wat Tyler, ACT II

anti-revolutionary writer with the Quarterly Review. He was generally against English Reform as he associated it with utilitarian philosophy which he hated. He felt, as did Wordsworth that reform would cause many of the evils seen in France. In consequence he opposed Catholic emancipation and he would repress the Jacobin press. However, he favoured alteration of the Game Laws, in the factory system and in conditions of child employment.

Wordsworth, Southey and Coleridge represent the first generation of romantic writers and consequently had time to change their views on revolution from early enthusiasm to reaction against the Reign of Terror and the wars of aggression. To such as Byron and Shelley however, as they looked back, such excesses seemed to be a natural part of the revolutionary means which could justify the ends. Yet even so both writers felt it necessary to condemn the seeking ambition of Napoleon. Byron in his Ode to Napoleon wrote:-

"Thine only gift hath been the grave
To those who worshipped thee".¹³

Byron held on to the romantic belief that man is good and was only corrupted by society and civilisation. His poetry and indeed his whole life exemplified his love of political freedom. In his poetry we can detect the rebellion of an

13. Poetical Works, p.322

individual against social order and authority. He took up the cause of many oppressed parties such as the Luddites and the weavers:-

"Men are more easily made than machinery -
Stockings fetch better prices than lives -
Gibbets on Sherwood will heighten the scenery,
Shewing how commerce, how liberty thrives!"¹⁴

Shelley was a fanatic and rebelled against all established conventions and historic institutions. Believing in the rights of individual opinion he was expelled from Oxford for atheism. Under the influence of Godwin he came to believe in the perfectibility of man and he saw the times to be favourable for poet legislators.

"Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration, the mirrors of the gigantic futurity casts upon the present; the words which express what they understand not; the trumpets which sing to battle, and feel not what they inspire; the influence which is moved not, but moves. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."¹⁵

He felt that through intellectual love, the world would be transformed. He had a Utopian vision, based largely on hopes

14. Poetical Works, p.322

15. Prose Works, ed. Forman (1880) Vol.III, p.144

for America, but nevertheless a vision which shows that revolution is not in vain, but good will come later.

"That land is like an Eagle, whose young gaze
 Feeds on the noontide beam, whose golden plume
 Floats moveless on the storm, and in the blaze
 Of sunrise gleams when Earth is wrapped in gloom;
 An epitaph of glory for the tomb
 Of murdered Europe may thy fame be made,
 Great People! as the sands shalt then become;
 Thy growth is swift as morn, when night must fade,
 The multitudinous Earth shall sleep beneath thy shade."¹⁶

Shelley and Byron used poetry to convey social, political and philosophical views, which possibly by virtue of the media seem youthful against the older romantic writers. They ended in despair, but it must be remembered that their early deaths meant that they never had the chance to lapse into the conversatism of old age which overcame the earlier romantics.

16. Poetical Works, Vol. 1, pp.283-4

The Romantic Reaction

THE rise of romantic thinking in England undermined the traditions upon which the culture of the Augustan age had rested. In the Augustan age the close imitation of classical moderation, regularity grace and decorum had given rise to a polished and rational literature. It was against such artificial standards that the romantics reacted. The Augustan age had shown a preference for wit and fancy rather than imagination, for correctness of form and for satire rather than a true emotional content. Any agreement with Pope that "the proper study of Mankind is man" had limited this study to man in society. The Augustan thought that an ultimate in art had been reached was now challenged on all sides.

The fact that the early eighteenth century had been called "the Age of Reason" gives a sufficient indication of the main tenets of its philosophy. The purpose of the mind was to observe, to reason and to think clearly. The mechanistic thought of philosophers like Descartes and Spinoza had emphasised that imagination falsified and misled; one could only approach the truth by rejecting sense impressions, and by striving for clear and distinct ideas. Locke had also denied that interest or passion could lead to truth. However, with philosophers of the enlightenment such as Hume, a change manifested itself when they emphasised the value of experience against authority and feeling against reason. They felt that

man's essence lay in the forces of feeling, impulse and instinct rather than in pure reason.

Experience, feeling, impulse, emotion, instinct, - words of supreme importance for the Romantics. The Newtonian universe, which was fixed and perfect in its age, and explained all, was unsatisfactory to the romantics, for to them it did not explain all. To the romantics the Newtonian universe was a physical world only, in which there was no part for feeling, impulse or emotion. The romantics then sought for an explanation which would give the true reality behind the physical world, they sought for a world of spirit.

In some ways the years in which they lived echoed their own interests. One could possibly give an explanation of the rise of Methodism in these years in similar terms. Wordsworth in fact notes that,

"The worship of the Methodists or Ranters is often heard during the stillness of the summer evening in the country with affecting accompaniments of rural beauty. In both the psalmody and the voice of the preacher there is, not infrequently, much solemnity likely to impress the feelings of the rudest characters under favourable circumstances"¹⁷

The regard for feelings appears in much of the literature of

17. Poetic Works in 5 vols. ed. E. de Selincourt

the period and even the painter Constable can be noted when he said,

"Painting is with me but another word for feeling."¹⁸

The emphasis on feeling shows that man as an individual is now considered. The questioning of the values of the previous period was now intense. The ideas of Newton and Locke were now put under the microscope and found wanting. In Morley's edition of H.C. Robinson's Blake, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Lamb, we read,

"Bacon, Locke, Newton are the three great teachers of Atheism and Satan's doctrine."

Later in the same volume we read that Coleridge in a lecture had, as usual, spoken with contempt of Locke's Essay,

"It led to the destruction of metaphysical science by encouraging the unlearned to think that with good sense they might dispense with study."

The whole framework on which eighteenth century thought had rested was now suspect. The maxima

"Reason's comparing balance rules the whole"¹⁹,

was no longer satisfactory and the reaction of the romantics to this is probably best summed up in the words of Coleridge -

"The histories and political economy of the present and preceding century partake in general of its

18. Leslie, C.R.: Life of Constable: letter to John Fisher, Oct. 23.1821

19. Pope: Essay on Man, Ep.III. 60

mechanic philosophy and are the product of an unenlivening generalising understanding"²⁰

One value which the romantics had in common and which brought into play the part of feeling and emotion, even passion, was that of the importance which they attached to Imagination. For the romantics, Imagination was a vital activity of an individual mind and a source of spiritual energy. To some of the romantics, such as Blake and Coleridge the Imagination was the divine essence in man and in exercising the Imagination man is in some way partaking of the activity of God. Blake believed that,

"The world of Imagination is the world of Eternity; it is the divine bosom into which we shall all go after the death of the Vegetated body. This World of Imagination is Infinite and Eternal, whereas the world of Generation, or Vegetation is Finite and Temporal. There exists in that Eternal World the Permanent Realities of Every Thing which we see reflected in this Vegetable Gloss of Nature. All Things are comprehended in their Eternal Forms in the divine body of the Saviour, the True Vine of Eternity, The Human Imagination."²¹

We note the words "There Exist in that Eternal world the

20. Coleridge: Lay Sermon (1816) p.34-5

21. A Vision of The Last Judgement, in Poetry and Prose of William Blake (Nonesuch) 1939, p.639

Permanent Realities of Every Thing which we see reflected in this Vegetable Gloss". Although Blake was a visionary, he felt that it was through the power of imagination that one saw the true spiritual realities which accounted for the mechanical world. Like other romantics such as Wordsworth, Keats and Shelley he held that Imagination was his most treasured possession. All the romantics were true observers of the physical world. We have only to read the poetry of Wordsworth or Keats or to regard the lines of Blake's illustrations to see accurate observation and recording of phenomena. However, this in itself was totally unsatisfactory to the romantics, for they held that behind the phenomena lay the true spiritual reality which was revealed by the imaginative aspect of man's seeking mind.

The ordinary intelligence or reason of the eighteenth century is blind to such reality, but just manipulates the fixed entities of a mechanical world. The Imagination, on the other hand acts as an insight, almost Divine in its inspiration, which leads to truth. Coleridge in a review of the poems of Drake and Halleck, printed in the Southern Literary Messenger went so far as to say "Imagination is possibly in man a lesser degree of the creative power of God."

Shelley also, was able to distinguish the Imagination as a guiding agent to truth for he said,

"Reason is the enumeration of quantities already known;

imagination is the perception of the value of those quantities, both separately and as a whole. Reason respects the differences, and imagination the similitudes of things. Reason is to the imagination as the instrument, to the agent, as the body to the spirit, as the shadow to the substance."²²

The Imagination then, is to the romantics a prime power, an individual power depending on each man's make up, notably on his emotional qualities, on his feelings and passions, rather than on any cold intellect or powers of reason. The intellect deals with laws and generalises whilst the imagination or spiritual power is introduced through particular examples. Blake could not, for instance, agree that art deals with general truths, but he felt that nothing could have full significance unless it appeared in a particular form.

"To Generalise is to be an Idiot. To Particularise is the Alone Distinction of Merit. General Knowledges are those Knowledges that Idiots possess"²³

and also,

"What is general Nature? Is there such a Thing? What is General Knowledge? Is there such a Thing? Strictly speaking all knowledge is Particular."

For Wordsworth also the Imagination was a poet's most valued gift. He agreed with Coleridge that the creative power of imagination resembles the activity of God. To Wordsworth it

22. Shelley (Nonesuch Ed.) p.1023-4. 23. Blake, Marginalia, to Sir Joshua Reynold's Discourses in Poetry and Prose, p.777

is the divine capacity of a child who fashions his own little worlds:

"For feeling has to him imparted power
That through the growing facilities of sense
Doth like an agent of the one great Mind
Create, creator and receiver both,
Working but in alliance with the world
Which it beholds."²⁴

Wordsworth feels that the poet keeps this faculty even in manhood. However, since he felt that creation was not enough he suggests that it is accompanied by a special insight and does not, like the other romantics, relegate reason to a lower position. He suggests that the imagination,

"Is but another name for absolute power
And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,
And reason in her most exalted mood."²⁵

Wordsworth differed from the other romantics also, in his view of the external world. To such as Coleridge this world was dead and needed the active imagination of man to bring it to life. To Wordsworth, however, the external world possessed a soul - just as man did, and it was the task of man to enter into communion with this soul. Indeed, man can hardly help doing so, since from birth onwards nature

24. William Wordsworth, The Prelude II 255-260

25. *Ibid*, XIV. 190-192

impresses upon his being and shapes his thoughts. Nature was a source of inspiration for Wordsworth and he felt that it was when the soul of nature and of man united in a single harmony that man perceived the one-ness of things.

Byron also in reaction against the reason and intellect of the eighteenth century looked to the powers in the individual man for a true account of man's being. He felt that the shackles of the previous century had been broken by Rousseau in the first instance.

"The self-torturing sophist, wild Rousseau,
The apostle of Affliction, he who threw
Enchantment over passion, and from Woe
Wrung overwhelming eloquence...."²⁶

Emotion had a great sway in the life of this poet and it was to feeling, emotion and passion that he appealed,

"Passion is the element in which we live; without
it we but vegetate."²⁷

A similar impression is given in the writings on imagination of Keats. To Keats the beauty of physical things was almost overwhelming and it has been suggested that what appealed to him usually was of a sensuous nature. However, he has stated forcibly that ultimate reality could only be found in the imagination.

26. Byron: Child Harold Canto III LXXVII

27. Countess of Blessington: Journals, p.317

"I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the
Heart's affections and the truth of the Imagination -
What the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth."²⁸

Again we find that the appeal is to the individual and when Coleridge wrote that,

"deep thinking is attainable only to a man of deep
feeling."²⁹

it was close in thought to Keats who said,

"Axioms in philosophy are not axioms until they are
proved upon our pulses"³⁰

It was indeed the power of emotion, feeling, all that made a man an individual which the romantics felt had been forgotten in the previous century. They wished to restore to its true place the spiritual side of man - the solitary soul of man. In the presence of imagination they felt awe as if in some religious presence. We must not forget that if they were not orthodox, they were religious men in their own way. Blake may have denied the existence of God, Keats was uncertain of Christian doctrine, Shelley a proclaimed atheist and both Coleridge and Wordsworth in their early days were not orthodox, but yet they all showed a strong belief in the power of the individual soul. They believed that it is the whole spiritual nature of man that

28. Keats Letters (Ed. Forman) to Bailey, Nov. 1817 Vol. I. p. 76

29. Coleridge Letters to Poole, March 1801. Vol. II, p. 338

30. Keats, Letters, p. 138

counts and to this they made their appeal.

The Romantics and Education

WHEN Blake rejected conventional values, creeds and standards and proclaimed the principle of creative imagination, he anticipated the main trend of the romantic movement. He also anticipated the main romantic contribution to education when he passionately sought to educate his generation to the deep significance of childhood experience and the workings of the subconscious. In his Prophetic Books and his Songs, Blake taught that it was only through innate elemental forces within and not through the intelligence, that men could reach perfection. His Songs of Innocence celebrate his vision of the pure and ideal life of the imagination, which his Songs of Experience show as contaminated by worldly custom. Deadening habit repressed the free imagination and thus encouraged the human evils of hypocrisy, selfishness and cruelty - Blake consequently argued that the imaginative, childlike vision of existence should be preserved by close attention to the effective education of children.

The romantics took up these views and in so doing attacked much of current educational practice. The severity of punishment inflicted in those days in many of the schools was condemned by the romantics. In Lamb's essay, Christ's Hospital Five-and-Thirty Years Ago, we can read of the severities which took place among both Lamb and Coleridge's contemporaries. Not only do we read of flogging by both masters

and monitors, but of occasional brandings, solitary confinements in dungeon cells and public whippings. Such practices were felt by the romantics to degrade man and to be completely contrary to the whole nature of childhood. The whole idea of corporal punishment was criticised by the romantics. Coleridge lectured in public on the abuse of corporal punishment used,

"as a substitute for virtue and principle."³¹

The whole idea of children sitting for long hours in serried rows whilst information was pumped or beaten into them was seen as valueless and contrary to any possible principle upon which a theory of education could be built. Blake looked at the schools of his day and lamented,

"Under a cruel eye outworn,
The little ones spend the day
In sighing and dismay."³²

The romantics could not accept such practice for the very basis upon which they viewed childhood was contrary to the ideas which lay behind much educational practice in the early nineteenth century. At that time the Calvinistic view of childhood which held that children had wicked hearts and could only be saved by incessant punishment and coercion was in the ascendant. The romantics held the view that children were naturally good and therefore a complete re-appraisal of

31. H.C. Robinson: Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge and Lamb,
(ed. Morley) p.105)

32. Blake: The Schoolboy (Nonsuch Ed.) p.80

educational method was necessary. If this notion had been suggested by the writings of Rousseau, the romantics had digested it and sought to use it in ways rather different from those of Rousseau. In the first place they appraised much of what they saw in practice and then suggested ways in which education could be improved. Many of the educational institutions were criticised for lack of basic principle to support the superstructure which existed. Southey looked at the Sunday School movement and then declared:

"Subservient to the merciless love of gain. The manufacturers know that a cry would be raised against them if their little white slaves received no instruction; and so they have converted Sunday into a Schoolday."³³

Such an examination of reasons for education and implied criticism of the reasons found, was a new departure. However, evidence of a more fundamental awareness of existing conditions is contained in a letter written by Shelley in 1812:

"Southey is no believer in original sin; he thinks that which appears to be a taint of our nature is in effect the result of unnatural political institutions. There we agree. He thinks the prejudices of education, and the sinister influences of political institutions adequate to account for all the specimens of vice....."³⁴

33. Hodder: Life of Shaftesbury I, p.156-7

34. Shelley (Nonsuch) p.1062

Here we can see that if the romantics had a new notion in the natural goodness of childhood, they had also an important idea when they outlined the power of environment in the development of a man's personality. The emphasis in the above passage on the sinister influences of political institutions is important for this was an age of growing towns and the easier spread of political ideas. We can also see the fundamental theory of Rousseau being developed in a specific way to account for changing conditions in England.

The emphasis upon the effects of environment is important for it seemed to focus attention on the nature of the child itself. In order to understand how the educative power of the environment should work it was necessary to have some knowledge of the 'raw material' of childhood. Many of the romantics thus attached great importance to the nature of the child and to the learning which takes place very early in life. Shelley looked at childhood and was moved to say:

"Let us recollect our sensations as children. What a distinct and intense apprehension had we of the world and of ourselves.... As men grow up this power commonly decays, and they become mechanical and habitual agents."³⁵

Here is a statement of the goodness, power and integrity of childhood, totally opposed to the Calvinistic notion, and also

35. Shelley (Nonsuch) p.972-3

a statement which shows awareness of the effects of environment. Both Coleridge and Wordsworth were in agreement with this statement of the goodness and powers with which a child arrives on this earth. Consequently both Coleridge and Wordsworth were concerned that a child should be allowed to live and experience as a child, giving full reign to his powers. Early education was extremely important and, like all education, it should be such that care was taken not to stifle the nature of the child himself.

Consequently the romantics saw that the earliest education and experience came in the family and particularly through contact with the mother:

"Behold the Parent Hen amid her Brood
 Though fledged and feather'd, and well pleased to part
 And straggle from her presence, still a Brood,
 And she herself from the maternal band
 Still undischarged: yet doth she little more
 Than move with them in tenderness and love,
 A centre of the circle which they make;
 And, now and then, alike from need of theirs,
 And call of her own natural appetites,
 She scratches, ransacks up the earth for food
 Which they partake at pleasure."³⁶

36. Prelude BkV. Lines 246-256

Although Wordsworth had lost his own mother early in life he saw how important was the mother in early education. The reference is tender in the extreme, but in this particular passage of the *Prelude*, Wordsworth does give a vivid and unqualified expression to his faith in the instincts of the child. These instincts, he felt, should be allowed to develop in freedom and like other romantics Wordsworth was appalled at the results when this freedom was not given but 'education was imposed from above. Wordsworth had an idea what he meant by education and it was not necessarily synonymous with schooling,

"Education I need not remark to you, is everything that draws out the human being, of which tuition, the teaching of schools especially, however important, is comparatively an insignificant part. Yet the present bent of the public mind is to sacrifice the greater power to the less; all that life and nature teach, to the little that can be learned from books and a master... The wisest of us expect far too much from school teaching." ³⁷

Implicit then in Wordsworth's view of the child is the necessity for freedom. This notion of freedom is valuable and probably stems from the fact that Wordsworth had had an unusual amount of freedom in his schooldays as we will see in a later chapter.

37. W.Wordsworth: Letter to H.J.Rose, Dec.1828

However, the kind of freedom which the romantics sought in education is summed up in a passage about Wordsworth by James Fotheringham,

"In a phrase (he remarks)... that is in true sympathy with the best naturalism of his age, the 'vital soul' is the ground of all real education, and the free expansion of the 'vital soul' is the true end of education.... In..... the Prelude.... and in other poems of his great period it is a leading idea. There is no real and right growth for human minds without depth and cordiality of feeling. The culture that does not give this is barren, and in a large degree a failure." 38

The "vital soul", "cordiality of feeling" each of these were elements of which no account was taken in the age of reason. Here we can see that the value of the romantics, discussed in the last section, had an integral part to play in their whole conception of education. The whole romantic concept of childhood heralded a new departure and the affective aspects of education were seen to be just as important as the cognitive aspects if the whole man was to be developed.

The common element of any successful educational process was seen by the romantics to be that part which helped to develop the imagination. A prerequisite for a successful

38. Fotheringham: Wordsworth's 'Prelude' as a Study of Education, PP.31-3

education of the imagination was self-knowledge. Coleridge and Wordsworth would agree with Shelley when he declared:-

"Man who man would be
 Must rule the empire of himself, in it
 Must be supreme, establishing his throne
 On vanquished will, quelling the anarchy
 Of hopes and fears, being himself alone."³⁹

Once man knew himself, both his powers and limitations, then by consulting works of imagination, notably through poetry, he could be educated. With children, the works of imagination were contained in fairy stories and imaginative tales. Both Coleridge and Wordsworth extolled the value of such books as Jack the Giant Killer, and were unanimous in their criticism of the moral tales which appeared at that period. Lamb complained to Coleridge,

"Mrs. Barbauld's stuff has banished all the old classics of the nursery..... Science has succeeded to poetry no less in the little walks of children than with men. Is there no possibility of averting this sore evil? Think what you would have been now, if instead of being fed with tales and old wives' fables in childhood you had been crammed with geography and history!"⁴⁰

In childhood then, freedom was essential so that true self-

39. Shelley (Nonesuch) p.732. Political Greatness

40. F.J. Harvey Darton: Children's books in England p.164

knowledge could be achieved. For Wordsworth, the whole of nature constituted an educational force. A child who was early imprisoned in a school to receive information was likely to grow up pollarded. Nature appealed to the whole man and Coleridge saw the value of freedom to investigate, to enquire, and to experience. Of his own son, Hartley he said:-

"Hartley is a spirit that dances on an aspen leaf -
 the air that yonder sallow-faced and yawning tourist
 is breathing is to my babe a perpetual nitrous oxide...
 I look at my doted - on Hartley - he moves, he lives,
 he finds impulses from within and without... he looks
 at the clouds and mountains... and vaults and jubilates...
 Hartley whirling round for joy, Derwent eddying....
 shouting his little hymn of joy."⁴¹

If this freedom was not present and the child not allowed to savour the joys of childhood then the chance was that he would not develop fully into true manhood. In Wordsworth's letters the dangers are pointed out,

"A soul that has been dwarfed by a course of bad culture cannot after a certain age, be expanded into one of even early proportion."⁴²

From this we can see that early forcing of any kind was a

41. S.T. Coleridge: Collected Letters (Ed. Griggs) July 25th 1800
 42. W. Wordsworth Letters 1806-1820 Ed. E. de Selincourt p.617

practice totally abhorrent to the romantics.

Early education was best left to the parents, or even better to the mother alone. The romantics valued the social education which took place within the family. In support of this Wordsworth was prompted to write,

"parents become infinitely the most important tutors of their children without appearing, or meaning, to do so."⁴³

He felt that within the family, children would be given the necessary freedom to develop their early imaginative powers.

As the child grew towards manhood, so the value of good literature increased in the nurture of imagination. This was a thought which most of the romantics held in common. The value of poetry was held in particular regard and Shelley went so far as to say:

"The great instrument of moral good is the imagination, and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause.... Poetry strengthens the faculty which is the organ of the moral nature of man, in the same manner as exercise strengthens a limb."⁴⁴

By poetry, we would be wrong to assume that the romantics meant just verse in this context. Poetry, it would seem, covered all aspects of knowledge and poets were in truth true philosophers; thus at a later juncture Shelley was to add:

43. Memoirs of W. Wordsworth Edited by C.Wordsworth Ch.II 1851,p.202

44. Shelley (Nonesuch) A Defence of Poetry p.1032-3

"Poetry is indeed something divine. It is at once the centre and the circumference of knowledge; it is that which comprehends all science, and that to which all science must be referred. It is at the same time the root and blossom of all other systems of thought..."⁴⁵

Such a view of poetry, although strange to us was common to the romantics. Consequently good literature was an essential element in any true education. Although early experience was extolled over the value of books by Wordsworth, he was keen to point out the value of imaginative literature and quick to criticise the lack of such books in schools. In a letter to a school inspector he noted:

"It struck me also that... too little attention is paid to books of imagination which are eminently useful in calling forth intellectual power. We must not only have knowledge but the means of wielding it, and that is done infinitely more through the imaginative faculty assisting both in the collection and application of facts than is generally believed."⁴⁶

We can now see that romantic criticism of existing educational provision was based on sound belief and theory. Wherever they looked, they saw an educational system based on outmoded ideas such as those put forward in the age of reason.

45. Ibid. p.1049-50

46. Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, 1831-1850
ed. E de Selincourt (1939) p.1269

The schools of the day were places where information was dealt out by masters and children's reason only was appealed to. Although several of the romantics hoped for a national provision for education they could see the dangers of expanding the existing system which took no account of the true nature of childhood. The image of the factory was rising in those days and it seems as if the romantics saw dangers which have taken many years to be realised by the rest of the country. It is true that both Wordsworth and Coleridge welcomed the possibilities of extending educational provision with the monitorial schools, but both saw the dangers of appealing to intelligence only. Yet both saw that some value did emanate from the social contact which children encountered with their peers in school. Lamb wrote of the value to a boy educated at home when he mixed with others at Christ's Hospital:

"How from a pert young coxcomb who thought that all knowledge was comprehended within his shallow brains, because a smattering of two or three languages and one or two sciences were stuffed into him by injudicious treatment at home, by a mixture with the wholesome society of so many schoolfellows.... he has sunk to his own level, and is contented to be carried on in the quiet orb of modest self knowledge in which the common mass of that impresumptuous assemblage of boys seem to move: from being a little, unfeeling mortal, he has got to

feel and reflect."⁴⁷

How Wordsworth and Coleridge would agree with anything which meant that one had to "feel and reflect". Feeling and reflection if enhanced by good literature, or the Bible or poetry would surely lead to self knowledge.

One of the romantic criticisms of educational provision at that time was the passive role played by any pupil. For the romantics this criticism was felt to be true right up to the University level. It was felt that it was when a pupil was active that true learning could take place. From personal experience they had criticised the Universities which gave out outmoded information and active research was almost nil. All would agree with Byron's description of university dons in those days.

"Vain as their honours, heavy as their ale,
Sad as their wit, and tedious as their tale."⁴⁸

It seemed to the romantics that wherever they looked, the whole method of education was based on outmoded principles and took no account of any active powers of the mind, and certainly existing systems appealed to only part of a man.

47. Everybody's Lamb, p.12

48. Poetical Works (Murray) Thoughts suggested by a College Examination, p.9.

Chapter III

THE GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

OF COLERIDGE

The Years of Childhood

AS we will see in a later Chapter, both Coleridge and Wordsworth had an insight into the nature of childhood which was unusual for the nineteenth century. Probably much of their later writings on childhood are a reflection on their own particular upbringing and early education. Both poets came from large families and both lost parents early in life.

Coleridge was born in 1772 in the Devonshire village of Ottery St. Mary and was the son of the Rev. John Coleridge. Samuel was the fourteenth child of a father already in his fifty fourth year. With seven brothers and seven sisters already in the household he was pampered by his parents and regarded with some jealousy by his brothers nearest in age to him. From an early time it seemed as if a bond existed between father and son, a fact which possibly reflects a certain similarity in character between the two. The Rev. John Coleridge was known as a scholar, dreamer, a visionary and not altogether a practical man. It was left to Mrs. Coleridge, the rector's second wife to launch her sons on their respective careers. The rector seems to have made the plans for his elder sons but he decided to take responsibility for his youngest son's early education, and even went so far as to presume that Samuel would eventually follow him into the church. The young Samuel learned easily and at the age of three he was sent to a reading school in his village to be taught by

a certain Dame Key. However, by this age, he was already able to read and by the end of his first year of school he could read aloud a chapter from the Bible. As his constant companion was his father it is not surprising that he was advanced for his years, but even so, he seems to have been a naturally unchildish child. He seems to have mixed very little with other children from his village on whom he apparently looked down. For at this time his adult way of talking was bringing him the flattery of Ottery's old ladies and Samuel was becoming conceited. Later he was to tell his biographer and friend Gillman,

"Alas! I had all the simplicity, all the docility of the little child, but none of the child's habits. I never thought as a child, never had the language of a child."

When, at the age of five, he went on to his father's school, much the same thing happened. He quickly surpassed his fellow pupils and by the age of eight he had a local reputation as a prodigy. In his later life he was able to say that he had been 'forced into an almost unnatural ripeness'. But, in fact, what J.S. Mill was later to call 'one of the greatest seminal minds of the age', probably needed very little forcing.

Writing to Thomas Poole, over twenty years later, of this period in his life, Coleridge recalls how his father had explained to him something of the nature of the stars. He says that,

"I heard him with a profound delight and admiration; but without the least mixture of wonder or incredulity. Far from my reading of fairy tales and genii, etc. etc. my mind had been habituated to the vast, and I never regarded my senses in any way as the criteria of my belief. I regulated all my creeds by my conceptions, not by my sight, even at that age."¹

With many men this would seem a remarkable statement, but it epitomises what later proved to be a basic process of Coleridge's thinking. It does however draw attention to the type of reading which Coleridge had undertaken at this time. The books mentioned in another letter to Thomas Poole are surprising titles for a six-year-old in the late eighteenth century, for from his father's sister's shop we find that he had taken Tom Wickathrift, Jack the Giant Killer, Belisarius, The Seven Champions of Christendom, Robinson Crusoe and Philip Quarles. He had also given himself violent nightmares by reading The Arabian Nights. The later Gothic tales of horror were not yet popular and it perhaps is not surprising to find that such imaginative tales formed much of the early reading of William Wordsworth also. Coleridge also tells how he pondered on these tales and often indulged in imaginative play based upon one of his heroes in the stories. As we have

1. Letter to Thomas Poole, October 9. 1797

seen he later maintained that this reliance on imagination rather than the senses allowed him to see existence as a whole rather than as 'a mass of little things' which is the normal mode of seeing.

However the comfortable village pattern was broken in his ninth year by the sudden death of his father. Samuel was sent to the school under a new head but soon he became an embarrassment as he pointed out the new master's weaknesses to his mother. Fortunately, his mother was able to arrange that her son should enter the charity school of Christ's Hospital.

For a short period before actual entry into the main school, Coleridge was sent to stay with an uncle, a Mr. Bawdon, a London tobacconist. Writing of this period we are again given an idea of Coleridge's rather unusual qualities for his age.

"My uncle was very proud of me, and used to carry me from coffee-house to coffee-house and tavern to tavern, where I drank and talked and disputed, as if I had been a man. Nothing was more common than for a large party to exclaim in my hearing that I was a prodigy etc. etc. etc. so that while I remained at my uncle's I was mostly completely spoiled and pampered, both mind and body."²

Soon this period was over and Coleridge entered the preparatory school of Christ's Hospital at Hertford where he

2. Letter to Thomas Poole, Feb.19. 1798

remained for a short period before transfer to the main school in London. Coleridge has left little record of this period, although it was here that he met Charles Lamb and we can get some idea from the adventures of Elia in "Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago". Although many of the public schools were at a low ebb at this period, Christ's Hospital was flourishing with over one thousand pupils under the leadership of James Boyer, who wielded a considerable influence over the next nine years of Coleridge's life.

Coleridge seems to have been somewhat of a solitary character at school, taking little interest in games or the boyish pursuits of others, apart from swimming in which he seems to have been quite accomplished. Already he was suffering from indifferent health, partly due to escapades in swimming the New River in full clothing, thus catching a chill, which gave rise to rheumatic complaints which dogged him all his life. However, in his solitary moments, he was reading avidly, already in embryo the 'library cormorant' which he was to become in later years.

According to Lamb's account of life in the school at this time the ordinary everyday living was brutal and many suffered in the dormitories under the oppression of tyrannical monitors. Coleridge must have suffered corporal punishment of some sort but he makes little complaint, apart from the criticism that boys had been,

under excessive subordination to each other"³

according to rank during his time at Christ's Hospital. Indeed, this was a time in the country as a whole, when punishment was always brutal. The state set an example by severely punishing a wide range of offences. Boyer was a renowned flogger and in later years it is surprising to find that Coleridge thought that through this medium Boyer had on occasion done him some good.

It would seem that, perhaps as an escape from this brutal world, Coleridge found solace in reading and daydreaming. He seems to have been able to lose himself in a world of imagination. This in itself, was one day to be of service to him, for after reading the story of Hero and Leander, he was walking down the Strand in a day dream, making swimming motions with his arms, as he breasted the waves of an imaginary Hellespont, when his hand caught the coat of a passer-by, who immediately seized him by the wrist, and accused him of being a pick-pocket. This must have been a moment of terror if we consider the penalties for such an offence, but it seems the stranger must have been a man of understanding, or perhaps he had noticed the blue uniform, for upon hearing Coleridge's unlikely explanation, he was so impressed that he presented Coleridge with a free ticket to a nearby circulating library. After this, Coleridge was not afraid to risk breaking bounds in order to secure the two volumes per day to which he was entitled. He seems to have read far and wide and still to have been able to learn Latin

and Greek at an abnormal rate. After he had been found by one Middleton, an older boy, reading Vergil in Latin for pleasure, a fact which was reported to Boyer, for it was no ~~part~~ of his school studies, Boyer seems to have taken an interest, for soon Coleridge was promoted and found himself a potential Grecian, a candidate for one of the Universities.

Yet, despite Coleridge's phenomenal learning rate and progress, he seems to have made friends, and despite his solitary tendencies he was revered by many. As it was the custom in the school at that time to allow boys free days on end with no apparent reason, Coleridge often found himself alone in the city, although he was occasionally taken out by local boys to visit their homes. It was possible to get out into the country in those days but Coleridge seems to have been conscious that his surroundings were urban, a contrast indeed to life for Wordsworth at this time. For it was of this time that Coleridge spoke of his city dwelling in the early lines of 'Frost at Midnight.' Yet even so, his father's early introduction to astronomy taught him to realise the beauty of the heavens which he delighted to observe at this time, an interest which flowers later in lines in 'The Ancient Mariner'.

However, very soon the influence of Boyer was at work on Coleridge and as the Grecian developed through the literary syllabus, so we find that Coleridge's interests and tastes become unusual even for that period. Boyer believed in

adding to the normal Greek and Latin by trying to develop an appreciation of classical and English literature. Shakespeare and Milton were compared with the Greek tragedies, these being lessons which the Grecians found difficult, but which Coleridge in the light of his later writing found useful. Coleridge declared that Boyer had so moulded his taste that he preferred Demosthenes to Cicero, Homer and Theocritus to Vergil, Vergil to Ovid; and perhaps rather unexpectedly in that generation, had taught him to recognise the merits of earlier Latin writers - Lucretius, Terence, Catullus - even as compared with poets of the golden age. One of the most fruitful aspects of the work with Boyer seems to have been his insistence on the proper use of words. He would not tolerate dependence on the poetic conventions of the time, but made the boys examine words to see that they were based on sound sense and gave clarity to expression. He felt that poetry and prose each had a clear logic of its own. We can read of this in a passage from Biographia Literaria in which Coleridge eulogises Boyer and says,

"Lute, harp and lyre, muse, muses and inspirations, Pegasus, Parnassus and Hippocrene were all an abomination to him. In fancy I can almost hear him now, exclaiming, 'Harp? Harp? Lyre? Pen and ink, boy, you mean! Muse, boy, muse? Your nurse's daughter, you mean! Pierian spring? Oh, aye! the cloister-pump, I suppose!'"⁴

4. Biographia Literaria Ch.1, p.4

In the light of Coleridge's great interest in words and their true meaning, and of his belief in the theory of poetry, this must indeed have been a very formative experience.

Nevertheless, before his fifteenth birthday Coleridge had become interested in metaphysics to an unusual degree for a boy of that age. His intensely active mind fostered by private reading had caused him to lose an interest in the world of senses: history, even the poetry of natural phenomena, ceased to have meaning while he dabbled in neo-Platonism, trying to find a solution to the problem of existence in the doctrines of Plotinus and Iamblichus. He translated the hymns of the neo-Platonist Synesius, and he even went to the lengths of stopping passing clerics in the street to engage in discussions on theology,

"Of providence, fore-knowledge, will and fate,
Fixed fate, free will, fore-knowledge absolute,
And found no end in wandering mazes lost."⁵

He was rescued from his wanderings and returned to an interest in poetry by an unexpected action. Middleton presented Coleridge with an edition of Bowles' sonnets, then newly written. Coleridge was so enthusiastic for this writing that he copied them out in full forty times to circulate to friends. It seemed to him at this time that here was a new departure in poetry. He felt that the conventions had been broken and

5. Biographia Literaria, Ch.1, p.4

for the first time new imagination had entered English poetry.

As he said,

"Bowles and Cowper were, to the best of my knowledge, the first who combined natural thoughts with natural diction; the first who reconciled the heart with the head."⁶

Following the neo-Platonist interest, Coleridge soon went to the other extreme when he read Voltaire and Erasmus Darwin and developed a materialistic interpretation of life. This again was a result of private reading, but it took a serious turn when he began to have religious doubts and as an atheist felt he should follow an occupation other than the church. He soon hit on the unlikely plan of becoming a cobbler. When he expressed his wish to Boyer, he received a flogging which, apparently, changed his mind, a flogging which in later years, Coleridge felt had been of great benefit to him.

"Thank heaven!"

he wrote,

"I was flogged instead of flattered."

As Coleridge's brother Luke was at this time walking the wards at London Hospital, Coleridge now formed the plan of becoming a doctor and was allowed to accompany his brother in his work, but fortunately he soon lost interest. However, he

6. Ibid, p.13.

did read every medical book he could find, in Latin and Greek, as well as English. He knew Blancard's Medical Dictionary almost by heart even though it was in Latin. In view of his later interest in scientific matters, this reading must have also stood him in good stead.

In the meantime, his education went on inexorably till he became Head Grecian in his time. The classical and literary studies suited him, even though he does seem to have had shortcomings as a mathematician. He also had a close circle of friends in Le Grice, Lamb, Robert Allen, Favell and Middleton. He also favoured a younger boy William Evans, into whose family circle he was invited, thus meeting and developing a love for Mary Evans. Many of these friends were to follow on to Cambridge with Coleridge, whilst Coleridge, when at Cambridge, was often in contact with the remaining Grecians.

The early prophecy of Boyer that the school should become father and mother to Coleridge seems to have come true, for he always spoke of Christ's Hospital with affection. Many miles from his Devonshire home he had developed under its wing, often physically ill, but achieving in his turn, entry to the University at Jesus College, Cambridge.

"Farewell parental scenes! a sad farewell!.....

Adieu, adieu! Ye much loved cloisters pale!.....

Lingering I quit you with as great a pang,

As when ere while, my weeping childhood, torn

By early sorrow from my native seat,
 Mingled its tears with hers - my widow'd parent lorn.⁷

Compared with the early childhood and schooldays of Coleridge the upbringing of William Wordsworth strikes one as unconventional. He seems to have been comparatively free of all normal restraints and was encouraged in a way which was valuable in developing his gifts. Many of the traits in his character which distinguished him as a man were present in the child of ten, probably due to the lack of restraint he enjoyed.

He was born in 1770 in the West Cumberland town of Cocker-mouth, the son of an attorney working for Lord Lonsdale. Unlike Coleridge, we hear very little of his father's influence. His father seems to have remained somewhat aloof from his family of four sons and a daughter, although we do hear that he made William learn by heart English poetry, notably large quantities of Shakespeare, Milton and Spenser. His mother seems to have been happy with her children, although from an early age William was known as the rebel and the only child who gave his mother any cause for concern.

William's early life in Cocker-mouth gave him a foretaste of the freedom and the close contact with nature which he enjoyed at Hawkshead when he went to school. He owed this to his mother. Apparently she did not believe in disciplining her

7. Sonnet on quitting school for College, The Poems of Coleridge, Oxford, p.29

children unnecessarily. Wordsworth and his brothers and sister were turned loose, to wander as they pleased. William and his sister, two years his junior, seem to have spent long days wandering in the meadows, exploring the vicinity or bathing in the Derwent, which ran at the foot of the garden. If we read in The Prelude of Wordsworth's early years we are struck by the timeless quality which pervades the writing. We get the impression that the boy was pursuing his bent with the same unrestricted freedom at seventeen as he was at seven. Very few landmarks seem to emerge as they do in a normal child's progression through its school years.

"Oh! many a time have I, a five years child,
 A Naked Boy, in one delightful Rill,
 A little Mill-race sever'd from his stream
 Made one long bathing of a summer's day,
 Bask'd in the sun, and plunged, and bask'd again,
 Alternate all a summer's day or cours'd
 Over the sandy fields, leaping through graves
 Of yellow grounse, or when crag and hill,
 The woods, and distant Skiddaw's lofty height,
 Were bronz'd with a deep radiance, stood alone
 Beneath the sky, as if I had been born
 On Indian Plains....."⁸

8. Prelude Bk.I, lines 292-303

Yet the pursuits of the young Wordsworth were boyish and not in the least effeminate. He ranged the countryside from quite an early age and took delight in feats of danger and strength. As a child he took great delight in reading and in this he was encouraged by his parents who did not limit the reading matter to the newly fashionable works of moral improvement of Mrs. Barbauld, Mrs. Trimmer and Thomas Day. Instead we hear that Wordsworth was supplied with the books of his own choice, notably stories of Robin Hood, Jack the Giant Killer, Fortunatus with his magic cap, St. George, and The Arabian Nights. Wordsworth had been taught to read by his mother.

At six Wordsworth entered Cockermonth Grammar School run by the Vicar, the Rev. W. Gilbanks. However, at the end of six months his father seems to have been dissatisfied with the school and Wordsworth was withdrawn. He was then taught at Penrith in the little dame-school kept by Mrs. Ann Birkett. Later Wordsworth recalled,

"The old dame did not affect to make theologians or logicians, but she taught to read, and she practised the memory."¹⁰

As textbooks, she used the Bible and The Spectator.

The first break of any sort in the pattern of Wordsworth's childhood occurred in his eighth year when his mother died suddenly. The family now had to be split and whilst Dorothy

went to live in Halifax, the boys were sent to their grandparents at Penrith. This marks a period when William seems to have been genuinely unhappy as for some reason he never managed to get on amicably with his Uncle Christopher who was responsible for his discipline. We hear of outbursts of temper, acts of defiance which in turn led to chastisement and consequent sullenness and even thoughts of suicide.

Salvation came however when the boys were transferred to Hawkshead Grammar School. Wordsworth, then nine years old along with his elder brother now entered on what he said was the happiest and most fruitful period of his life. Hawkshead, a small foundation was still fulfilling its original purpose of providing free clothes, maintenance and education for twelve poor scholars and at the same time attracting fee-paying pupils from almost the whole area of Northern England. In Wordsworth's time the school had 100 boys and always managed to send a quota to Cambridge, particularly to St. John's, a college with which it had a number of ties.

Some sixty boys lived in the main school house, whilst the rest stayed in cottagers' homes looked after by dames, who seemed to combine the role of landlady and mother. Wordsworth always spoke with particular affection of his dame, Ann Tyson.

The school day was 7 to 11 and 1 to 4 in winter with an additional hour, both morning and evening in the summer months. This of course made a long day by modern standards. All boys

were taught Latin with some Greek and they also, due to the connection with Cambridge, had a good course in mathematics, rather an unusual feature in that period.

The boys were taught by the headmaster assisted by ushers who were often boys who had finished the school course but could not afford the university. Wordsworth studied under a series of four headmasters, but as with Coleridge it was one man who made a lasting impression. When Wordsworth was eleven years old the Rev. William Taylor, M.A., then only 28 years old was appointed headmaster. Taylor seems to have been both youthful and enthusiastic in his approach to the boys in his charge. He met them both in the classroom and at play, a really unconventional approach in that period. He loved learning and he loved his pupils, and what is probably very pertinent with William Wordsworth in his charge, he loved English poetry; and communicated his enthusiasm to his pupils.

The combination of William Taylor and Ann Tyson contributed to Wordsworth's well-being at this period in no uncertain terms. Punishment seems to have been at a minimum and the boys seem to have had areas of unlimited freedom to roam around the beautiful environs of the school. In the Prelude we hear of night excursions, snaring, skating, boating, riding and picnics, of poetry competitions, of dancing and of other sundry sports. With such a wonderful life to be led it hardly comes as a surprise when Wordsworth early in life starts to infer

that he has indeed communed with Nature.

Apart from his outdoor pursuits, Wordsworth read a good deal at this time. In school he read much Latin and Greek. He enjoyed Ovid's Metamorphoses, he read Ovid and Vergil. Like any conventionally educated poet of his generation, he followed some translations and adaptations from the classics, some Anacreon, a version of the famous sparrow poem of Catullus, the story of Orpheus and Euridice and other passages from Vergil. As a result of this early learning he continued, even at Cambridge, to read the classics for their own sakes, though he was no scholar and scoffed at the pedants 'trade in classic niceties'.

The school possessed a reasonable library in English and William Taylor was a man to encourage the individual tastes of any boy in his charge. As with Coleridge, an examination of some of Wordsworth's reading reveals stories of an imaginative and adventurous nature. We find Fielding and Swift, Gulliver's Travels and Tale of a Tub, Don Quixote, Gil Blas and even when Jack the Giant Killer and Robin Hood has lost appeal, up came The Arabian Nights, to entertain Wordsworth. If we are to believe the Prelude it was during this period that William developed a live interest in writing poetry. He supplemented his school reading, possibly from his father's library and reveals an interest in other poets of uncommon breadth in one so young. Milton, Macpherson, Thomson, Gray, Collins, Chatterton

and Crabbe were all read by him. Possibly Taylor encouraged this reading by lending books of his own.

Despite his solitary nature, Wordsworth seems to have had many friends. We hear no tales of flogging or bullying. No doubt Wordsworth was always big enough to take care of himself, but flogging seems never to have been used in the school. There seems to have been an air of freedom about the school and Wordsworth enjoyed the company and the adventures to the full.

Two things only can have caused him unhappiness. One was the early death of his father in 1783. After this, holiday periods had to be spent with Uncle Kit, which was apparently painful to both Uncle and Nephew. School became his real home as it had done with Coleridge. Three years later as Wordsworth approached his final year, came the untimely death of William Taylor. Wordsworth was probably more upset by this than by the death of his father. Taylor was followed by the Rev. Thomas Bowman and Wordsworth would be one of his senior scholars. Of Bowman we hear nothing and Wordsworth went his own way.

Wordsworth had by this time decided to study law and eventually was to go to St. John's College, Cambridge. Many of his friends from school would be there to greet him. After a short return to school at the end of his final year, Wordsworth finally left to take up his University place.

If we now compare the two experiences of Coleridge and Wordsworth, we find that Coleridge had been to a good but

orthodox school for the period. School life for Coleridge was a hard life. Any freedom which the boy had was a result of his own nature which sought out freedom for itself. As a future poet and metaphysician, Coleridge read widely and imaginatively, unrestricted by the adult censorship which many experienced in that age. On the other hand, Wordsworth had freedom in unlimited amounts. He seems to have been free to develop in his own particular way. Perhaps in the light of his later personality, some restraints may have been of benefit to him. But again, a future poet and thinker was free to read as he pleased, and again he chose to read stories of imagination.

Seeking a Philosophy

IF Coleridge's schooldays appeared normal in most respects, the unusual feature was his very wide scope in reading. By the time he entered the university he was quite familiar with the Neoplatonists and also inspired by the events of his time; he had to his credit an ode on the destruction of the Bastille, saluting the defeat of Tyranny and the birth of Liberty in France. As much as anyone at this period of his life, he was shaped by the spirit of his times in that he was conventionally democratic, egalitarian and had a strong interest in politics and he showed strong sympathy with events in France, being critical of the Pitt government. A friend, C.V. Le Grice, has described the political evenings in Coleridge's rooms at Jesus,

"When Aeschylus, and Plato, and Thucydides were pushed aside"

and the latest pamphlet of Burke's heatedly discussed.

"There was no need of having the book before us.

Coleridge had read it in the morning; and in the evening he would repeat whole pages verbatim."⁹

Coleridge was also a strong supporter of William Frend who showed him that a political radical could also be a pious believer. Frend's combination of social philosophy and Unitarian theology must have satisfied Coleridge's liberal instincts as well

9. Quoted in Cottle, J. Reminiscences of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Robert Southey (London 1847) p.304

as his basic theism. At Cambridge dissent was fashionable as well as reasonable and the Unitarian believer in the adaptive divinity of Christ had a more reasonable position than the Trinitarian of the established Church which was associated in the public mind with the abuses and inadequacies of the government and prevailing order. When the university attempted to deprive Frennd of his tutorship by trial, because of his unorthodox religious beliefs and for his political writings which urged negotiation rather than war with France, Coleridge was strong in his support and narrowly missed expulsion himself. At this time, Coleridge went so far as to stamp himself Jacobin and in 1794 after his first meeting with Thames Poole, Poole wrote,

"In religion he is a Unitarian, if not a Deist;
in Politicks a Democrat, to the utmost extent of the
word."¹⁰

Religion and politics seem to have been prominent in Coleridge's mind at Cambridge and yet he was very perturbed about the state of society in which he lived. He was interested in the thoughts of William Godwin on the state of society, Godwin the philosophical anarchist to whom the answer to society's ills was the clarification of principles and the spread of illumination. Coleridge, however, advocated the path of individual reform.

"That general illumination should precede revolution,

10. Chambers, E.K. Samuel Taylor Coleridge: A Biographical Study (Oxford, 1938), p.29

is a truth as obvious, as that the vessel should be cleaned before we fill it with a pure liquor. But the mode of diffusing it is not discoverable with equal facility.... He would appear to me to have adopted the best as well as the most benevolent mode of diffusing truth, who uniting the zeal of the Methodist with the views of the philosopher, should be personally among the poor, and teach them their duties in order that he may render them susceptible of their rights."¹¹

The idea of personal responsibility was to become a fundamental tenet of Coleridge's philosophy and is indicative of the direction of his later religious thought. Yet the stirrings of thought caused by the French revolution had a marked effect upon Coleridge. It would be difficult to assess what effect his absence from Cambridge when he enlisted in the Light Dragoons had, but two new acquaintances of this time did have an effect upon Coleridge. One was the meeting with William Godwin already mentioned, the other was that with Robert Southey. The letters to Robert Southey both of the Cambridge years and just after, are full of politics. A notable letter written in July, 1794 begins,

"S.T. Coleridge to R. Southey, Health and Republicanism to be!"

and continues,

11. Essays on His Own Times, I p.21-22

"It is wrong, Southey! for a little girl with a half-famished sickly baby in her arms to put her head in at the window of an inn - "Pray, give me a bit of bread and meat!" from a party dining on lamb, green peas, and salad. Why? Because it is impertinent and obtrusive!

"I am a gentleman! and wherefore the clamorous voice of woe intrude upon mine ear?" My companion is a man of cultivated, though not vigorous understanding; his feelings are all on the side of humanity; yet such are the unfeeling remarks, which the lingering remains of aristocracy occasionally prompt."¹²

It is in this letter also that we have the first mention of Pantisocracy, a scheme intended to realise the principles of Political Justice without delay. From a letter by Thomas Poole of September 1794 we read,

"Twelve gentlemen of good education and liberal principles are to embark with twelve ladies in April next and fix their abode in a delightful part of the new back settlements. The labour of each man, for two or three hours a day, would suffice to support the colony, and the produce would be a common property. There was to be a good library, and the ample leisure was to be devoted to study, discussion, and the education of children. The women were not only to look

12. Letters (ed. E.H. Coleridge, 1895) Vol.I, p.16

after the infants, but also to cultivate their own minds. It was undecided 'whether the marriage contract shall be dissolved if agreeable to one or both parties'. There was, however, to be complete freedom of political and religious opinion. Each gentleman provides £125 at the start."¹³

The scheme has been variously described as Communistic and as a variant on Plato's plan for the immediate establishment of the just state. That it was more than a plan for agrarian retirement is evident from the vigour with which Coleridge wished to arrange circumstances so that no taint of received opinions or cant orthodoxy might enter the ideal community. He objected to children accompanying them on the grounds that the prejudices and error, the fear and selfishness, already learned from their schoolfellows will be subversive of a permanent system. He doubted whether the women were sufficiently concerned with the true purposes of the plan. He even showed alarm lest Christianity or,

*that mongrel whelp that goes under its name,"¹⁴ be introduced. Coleridge wanted the community to be completely egalitarian and to have no concern for money and was shocked when Southey suggested the introduction of a servant class. The theory behind the idea is open to argument but seems to

13. Mrs.Sandford.Thomas Poole and His Friends, Vol.I, p.97
 14. Collected Letters (Ed.Griggs) I, p.119,123

involve the Godwinian and Priestleyan principle that freedom from artificial restraints was the key to the formation of the perfect natural society. Coleridge did not at this time subscribe to the doctrine of innate goodness, but he was so far a perfectibilist as to hold that the removal of temptation was the only requirement for man's goodness.

"Wherever men can be vicious, some will be. The leading Idea of Pantisocracy is to make men necessarily virtuous by removing all Motives to Evil - all possible Temptations."¹⁵

Due largely to the loss of interest by Southey, the scheme failed to materialise and Coleridge was left with his unfortunate marriage to Sara Fricker as a legacy from the Southey friendship. However, the ideas contained in the scheme are interesting as a guide to Coleridge's thought in these years. Professor Basil Willey has suggested,

"that the enthusiasms of this period were largely froth upon the mind's surface."¹⁶

However, a statement made by Coleridge in later years is worthy of consideration.

"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,

15. Ibid, I, p.114

16. Willey, B. Nineteenth Century Studies (1949) p.15

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 have endeavoured to write the insulated fragments of truth, and therewith to frame a perfect mirror. I show to each system that I fully understand and rightfully appreciate what that system means; but then I lift up that system to a higher point of view, from which I enable it to see its former position, where it was, indeed, but under another light and with different relations; - so that the fragment of truth is not only acknowledged, but explained."¹⁷

From such statements as this and from our overall view of Coleridge's thought we know that he possessed a mind which was constantly trying to connect all knowledge which it received. It is as though he took in systems of philosophy and mulled them over till he had detected any errors which he discarded, whilst retaining and improving that which he considered useful. Therefore rather than 'froth upon the mind' at this time he was contemplating and analysing the work of Hartley which he had read in 1794.

Hartley's Observations on Man was first published in 1749 and Coleridge had read an edition of 1791. The work was in

17. Table Talk, Sept.12. 1831

two volumes, the first volume,

"Containing observations on the frame of the Human Body and Mind, and on their Mutual Connexions and Influences" develops the theory of vibrations, the association of sensations, and the parallel association of ideas and of pleasures and pains, concluding with general remarks on the mechanism of the human mind. The second volume "Observations on the Duty and expectations of Mankind", treats of natural and revealed religion from a rational and apologetic point of view; it subsumes under those topics much of the psychology of the first volume, now put to the purposes of religion.

There have been many criticisms of Hartley's Observations on the ground of a supposed dichotomy between the theoretical bases of the two parts of the work. Several have argued that the science was confined to the first part and religion to the second.¹⁸ However, one must take notice of the purpose of Hartley's first book, which can only be understood in relation to the second. The argument proceeds from the mechanism of the origin of ideas, to the theory of the association of ideas and feelings in our intellectual and moral activity (Vol.I), and then to the essentially rational analysis of the proper conduct of our lives (Vol.II):

The argument is rather pseudo-scientific and only superficially

18. Muirhead, J.H. Coleridge as Philosopher (1930) p.42

empirical; it seems to proceed from details of experience to abstract principles of behaviour. However, the ends which Hartley had in view were responsible for his choice of details. To Hartley the final state of man was "theopathy" or "perfect self-annihilation, and the pure love of God". To achieve this he develops a "rule of life" based on a threefold analysis - of the "frame of our natures", "the dictates of natural religion, and the precepts of the scriptures taken together". The last two elements derive from revelation, both natural and direct. The first element is our own empirical knowledge of our nature. Christian revelation is a "far cleaner light" and "a more definite rule" but, given "the frame of our natures", the empirical psychology of the first book must be equally well understood.¹⁹ The unity of Hartley's system lies in this teleology of moral and religious purpose and in the rational method of analysis.

If one can accept the assumption that a benevolent deity has pre-arranged the operation of our natures towards ultimate bliss, then Hartley would say we must discover the conditions of this process so as best to co-operate with it. Therefore morality demands a mechanism, which Hartley provides by a psychology acting on the methods of Gay and Locke. His association of ideas requires the premise that ideas are unitary

19. Hartley, Observations II, iii.

entitles whose complexity results from their being related according to empirically discoverable laws of association. In the first instance, he provides a mechanism for the origin of ideas themselves by making a threefold assumption: of the existence of vibratory motions, of an intermediate aether, and of the possibility of transmitting corporeal motions in the brain into sensations and ideas of the mind. In Hartley's terms the system forms a unity. However, if one's conception of some part of the system changes then the two parts can be seen as contradictory. When Coleridge later came to see association as a mechanical and lifeless process then his view of the whole system changed. However, for him to be able to do that he had first to absorb the whole unified system and mull it over. Consequently in this period of his life, Coleridge's thought was coloured by his appreciation of Hartley's doctrines.

We must now consider just what Coleridge took from Hartley which may have had a bearing on his enthusiasms such as Pantisocracy at this period. If we consider Coleridge's religious philosophy there is little evidence of the apparatus of association psychology. However, the certain moral and religious principles implicitly assumed in the second book seem to have some relevance. There is firstly the theistic conception that underlies the work, secondly the mechanism of necessity by which this process is accomplished and also the confidence in rational analysis which pervades the study. These in the

1790's are the themes of Coleridge's theology and his early politics.

"They seem to define what was the precise attraction and most enduring, though sometimes negative, influence of Hartley's "Christian Philosophy"²⁰

The elements - theism and rationalism - had a basic appeal to Coleridge and place him in the tradition of English thinkers who combined supernatural faith with scientific analysis of the state of Man - Bacon, Newton, Locke, the Cambridge Platonists, Shaftesbury, Paley, Butler, Priestley and Hartley. Perfectibility and Necessity, however define a smaller segment of this line. Whenever at this time Coleridge tried to define his position these two doctrines were mentioned. In 1796 he wrote to Thelwell,

"A Necessitarian, I cannot possibly disesteem a man for his religious or anti-religious opinions - and as an Optimist, I feel diminished concern - I have studied the subject deeply and widely - I cannot say, without prejudice: for when I commenced the Examination, I was an Infidel"²¹

Earlier he had written to Southey:

"I would ardently, you were a Necessitarian and (believing in an all-loving Omnipotence) an Optimist."²²

20. Appleyard, J.A. Coleridge's Philosophy of Literature, p.29

21. Collected Letters (Ed. Griggs), I. p.205

22. Ibid, I, p.145.

As Appleyard says, religious optimism and philosophical necessity may seem strange bedfellows but for Coleridge and many of his contemporaries in the last years of the Eighteenth Century they formed a convincing point of view.

The idea of innate goodness as we have noted earlier was a reaction against the Calvinistic point of view which regarded man as iniquitous and helpless apart from grace. The innate goodness theory was of course open to the criticism of experience; but when this theory was considered in relation to the psychology of Locke, which taught that the content of the mind was composed entirely of external impressions, the notion of natural perfection became one of natural perfectibility, which could be achieved by controlling the circumstances that formed the mind, and in this version innate goodness became almost scientifically credible.

The doctrine of perfectibility or optimism can be seen then in much of Coleridge's early thinking. After all, he had written:

"And after a diligent, I may say, an intense study of Locke, Hartley and others who have written most wisely on the Nature of Man - I appear to myself to see the point of possible perfection at which the World may perhaps be destined to arrive - "23

This benevolent system inspired in him a confidence,

23. Ibid, I, p.126

"as an Optimist, I feel diminished concern (about subjective guilt)"²⁴

One can now see how Godwin, who believed that by Education or the removal of evil surroundings, men could be improved, had an appeal for Coleridge. At this time, one of the motives for the publication of *The Watchman* had been to show the value of Education as a means of eradicating bondage to surroundings. In the first of the "Conciones ad Populum" in 1795, Coleridge described a member of the "small but glorious band" of true patriots:

"Convinced that vice originates not in the man, but in the surrounding circumstances; not in the heart, but in the understanding; he is hopeless concerning no one - to correct a vice or generate a virtuous conduct he pollutes not his hands with the scourge of coercion, but by endeavouring to alter the circumstances would remove, or by strengthening the intellect, disarms, the temptation. The unhappy children of vice and folly, whose tempers are adverse to their own happiness as well as to the happiness of others, will at times awaken a natural pang; but he looks forward with gladdened heart to that glorious period when justice shall have established the universal fraternity of love."²⁵

24. *Ibid*, I, p.205

25. Essays on his Own Times, I, p.17

From the above we can see that Pantisocracy and the theory behind it were a natural development in view of Coleridge's embracing for a time the Hartleyan doctrine. He adopted Necessitarianism with his Unitarianism and even then strove to add to Hartley's ideas for he announced,

"I am a compleat Necessitarian - and I understand the subject as well almost as Hartley himself - but I go farther than Hartley and believe the corporeality of thought - namely, that it is motion."²⁶

However, before long he was regarding such a position as extreme and the necessitarian aspects of perfectibility became united in his statements. There can be no doubt however that Coleridge did to a certain extent accept associationist doctrine e.g. to Mary Evans he wrote,

"My associations were irrevocably formed, and your Image was blessed with every idea."²⁷

Again,

"As to Harmony, it is all association - Milton is harmonious to me, and I absolutely hate Darwin's Poem".²⁸

Although Coleridge would not accept many of Hartley's postulates on association he did subscribe to the doctrine. When he came later to criticise the doctrine, it was rather the

26. Collected Letters (Ed. Griggs) I, p.137

27. Ibid, I, p.130

28. Ibid, p.290

whole drift of thought which Lockean psychology had given rise to, which alarmed Coleridge. Hartley's writings had popularised the theory, but it was the effect the theory was having upon total English thought which gave cause for concern to Coleridge.

Chapter IV

COLERIDGE'S MATURE THOUGHT

The Rejection of Association Theory

WE must now try to show how Coleridge really did embrace a system before coming to a decision upon its true worth. Always his mind was growing towards a unified system of philosophy which would account for all the evidence, whether it was concerned with religion, literary criticism, the education of the intellect or even politics. It was not long before he had seen the limitations of associationism, but the largest account of its shortcomings was written in 1815 in the Biographia Literaria when he was clearing the ground before giving an account of his later position. He was feeling his way towards a theory of the Imagination which was more central to his thoughts upon the true nature of man.

Coleridge traces the history of the theory of association before criticising it and showing its shortcomings. He poses the problem in terms of what he calls "the natural difference of things and thoughts", and the resulting conjectures concerning the way in which our perceptions originate.

"In the former the cause appeared wholly external, while in the latter sometimes our will interfered as the producing or determining cause, and sometimes our nature seemed to act by a mechanism of its own, without any conscious effort of the will, or even against it. Our inward experiences were thus arranged in three separate classes: the passive sense, or what the schoolmen call the merely receptive quality of the mind; the voluntary;

and the spontaneous, which holds the middle place between both."¹

When experimental research was still in its infancy, metaphysicians gave such thorough explanations of our passive and voluntary perceptions that for many centuries it has been difficult to advance a new truth or even a new error in the philosophy of intellect or of morals. But it has been the claim of modern philosophers, especially the British, to have discovered a theory of the third category, the so-called spontaneous movements of thought.² Coleridge here means of course, the partisans of associationist psychology, and he makes it his first task to refute this particular explanation of the non-voluntary yet not wholly receptive acts of the mind.

Coleridge tells us that it was Sir James Mackintosh who asserted,

"that the law of association as established in the contemporaneity of the original impressions, formed the basis of all true psychology; and any ontological or metaphysical science, not contained in such (i.e. empirical) psychology, was but a web of abstractions and generalisations."³

Hobbes, according to Mackintosh, was the discoverer of this

1. Biographia Literaria (Everyman Ed.) p.54

2. Ibid, p.54

3. Ibid, p.55

law, and Hartley the systematizer of the insight. Coleridge dissents on Hobbe's originality, and names Descartes as having first proposed the mechanical recall of contemporaneous impressions and the construction of general ideas from simple ones.

However, Coleridge traces the lineage of the association doctrine back through Vives to Aristotle. He says that Aristotle proposed no successive particles propagating motion like billiard balls (which Coleridge says Hobbes did), nor animal spirits which became fluids and etch engravings (as did the followers of Descartes), nor any oscillating ether to vibrate the fibres of the nerves and brain (as in Hartley), nor any of the recent theories of chemical or electrical affectations in the brain. Aristotle was content to propose a theory without pretending to a hypothesis, by which Coleridge means that Aristotle gave a comprehensive survey of the facts and their relations to each other but did not offer suppositions in explanation of the facts. To Coleridge, Aristotle's general law of association is this:

"Ideas by having been together acquire a power of recalling each other; or every partial representation awakes the total representation of which it had been a part."⁴

In practice there are five occasioning causes of the phenomenon: connection in time, connection in space, causal connection,

4. Ibid, p.59

likeness, and contrast:

"In association there consists the whole mechanism of the reproduction of impressions, in the Aristotelian Psychology. It is the universal law of the passive fancy and mechanical memory: that which supplies to all other faculties their objects, to all thought the element of its materials".⁵

Coleridge now shows that it is when Hartley differs from Aristotle that he differs only to err.

"Hypothetical vibrations" in the "hypothetical oscillating aether of the nerves are totally dismissed and he remarks that,

"under the despotism of the eye.... we are restless because invisible things are not the objects of vision; and metaphysical systems, for the most part, become popular not for their truth but in proportion as they attribute to causes a susceptibility of being seen, if only our visual organs were sufficiently powerful"⁶

Without the material hypothesis of Hartley's system, however, other parts of it lose their main support and reason for existence. Thus, the principle of contemporaneity, which Aristotle had made the common condition of all the laws of association, Hartley was constrained to represent as being itself the sole law. The action of material atoms can be

5. Ibid, p.60

6. Ibid, p. 62

subject to the law only of proximity in place. Their motions can be subject only to the law of time. Inevitably this leads to the position that will, reason, judgement and understanding, instead of being the determining causes of association, are represented as its creatures and among its mechanical effects.

"The consequence would have been, that our whole life would be divided between the despotism of outward impressions, and that of senseless and passive memory."⁷

This "law" would in effect mean the subordination of final causes to efficient causes, and the soul becomes nothing more than an ens logicum.

"The sum total of my moral and intellectual intercourse dissolved into its elements, is reduced to extension, motion, degrees of velocity, and those diminished copies of configurative motion which form what we call notions, and notions of notions."⁸

Of such a philosophy, Coleridge quotes Butler as saying:-

"The metaphysics but a puppet motion
That goes with screws, the notion of a notion,
The copy of a copy and lame draught
Unnaturally taken from a thought;
That counterfeits all pantomimic tricks,
And turns the eyes like an old crucifix;

7. Ibid, p.64.

8. Ibid, p.69

That counterchanges whatso'er it calls
 B'another name, and makes it true or false
 Turns truth to falsehood, falsehood into truth,
 By virtue of the Babylonian's tooth."⁹

According to these principles the existence of an infinite spirit must be "mere articulated motions of the air".¹⁰

Although Coleridge does not impugn Hartley's religious spirit, he does charge him with an unbridgeable dichotomy between the philosophy of the first book of his Observations and the theology of the second part. This coexistence of associationist psychology with a genuine religious spirit, however, does not render the former any less pernicious.

The basic error of Hartleyan philosophy is reducible to one sophism:

"the mistaking of the conditions of a thing for its causes and essence; and the process by which we arrive at the knowledge of a faculty, for the faculty itself. The air I breathe is the condition of my life, not its cause. We could never have learnt that we had eyes but by the process of seeing; yet we know that the eyes must have pre-existed in order to render the process of sight possible."¹¹

9. Ibid, p.69 Butler 'Miscellaneous Thoughts'

10. Ibid, p.70

11. Ibid, p.71

Thus contemporaneity is the limit and condition of the laws of our minds; at most it is to thought as the law of gravitation is to locomotion. When we move voluntarily we first counteract gravitation and then take advantage of its reaction to assist us. The law is thus the limit of our actions.

"Now let a man watch his mind while he is composing; or, to take a still more common case, while he is trying to recollect a name; and he will find the process completely analogous. Most of my readers will have observed a small water-insect on the surface of rivulets which throws a cinque-spotted shadow fringed with prismatic colours on the sunny bottom of the brook; and will have noticed how the little animal wins its way up against the stream by alternate pulses of active and passive motion. Now resisting the current, and now yielding to it in order to gather strength and a momentary fulcrum for a further propulsion. This is no inapt emblem of the mind's self-experience in the act of thinking. There are evidently two powers at work, which relatively to each other are active and passive; and this is not possible without an intermediate faculty which is at once both active and passive."¹²

This rather appealing example takes Coleridge rather far ahead

12. Ibid. p.72

of his argument here, for he is introducing a hitherto unmentioned synthesising faculty to mediate between active and passive powers, though it is implicit in the refutation of the mechanical explanation of knowledge. He says that in philosophical language we must call this power Imagination. Having thus momentarily digressed Coleridge now makes his final remarks on the association of ideas. The "true practical general law" of association can be thus stated:

"Whatever makes certain parts of a total impression more vivid or distinct than the rest, will determine the mind to recall these in preference to others equally linked together by the common condition of contemporaneity, or (what I deem a more appropriate and philosophical term) of continuity"

And this emphasis may be furnished by the will itself arbitrarily giving vividness or distinctness to any object whatsoever.¹³

Thus did Coleridge refute his earlier allegiance to the theory of Association. By the time he wrote this account in Biographia Literaria he had become aware of the dangers inherent in such a system. However, this realisation had been a long process and the result of much thought and consideration of other sources. After Hartley he had become enhanced by Berkeley and Spinoza in turn. He was also acquainted with

13. Ibid, p.73

the works of Kant and Schelling after his visit to Germany. That he had thought of the human mind as a passive organ is witnessed in the use of the AEolian Harp as an image in his poetry. However, this concept was not to remain with him for long. By a study of various writers and by acquaintance with such diversities as the poetry of Bowles, with its imaginative quality, and particularly with Wordsworth himself, whose influence was great, and above all with introspection and contemplation of his own mind Coleridge could hardly remain happy with a mechanical explanation of the human mind. It was in 1801 that he wrote,

"Be not afraid that I shall join the party of the Little-ists. I believe that I shall delight you by the detection of their artifices. Now, Mr. Locke was the founder of this sect. Himself a perfect Little-ist.... Newton was a mere materialist. Mind in his system, is always passive - a lazy looker-on on an external world. If the mind be not passive, if it be indeed made on God's Image, and that too, in the sublimest sense, the Image of the Creator, there is ground for suspicion that any system built on the passiveness of the mind must be false, as a system".¹⁴

It was in the same letter that he had written:

"The interval since my last letter has been filled up

14. Quoted in The Portable Coleridge (Ed. Richard I.A.) p.273

by me in the most intense study. If I do not greatly delude myself, I have not only completely extricated the notions of time and space, but have overthrown the doctrine of association, as taught by Hartley, and with it all the irreligious metaphysics of modern infidels - especially the doctrine of necessity."¹⁵

15. Collected Letters (Ed. Griggs) Letter to Thomas Poole, Mar. 16. 1801

Years of Reflection and Later Philosophy

COLERIDGE has often in the past been dismissed as a mystic and his writings regarded as "transcendental moonshine". No doubt his tortuous style and his long digressing parentheses have more than once put people off the trail. But how a man who had once embraced a mechanical philosophy could achieve a position which could be regarded as mystical is a fascinating tale. To his contemporaries even, he must have appeared as an enigma as he pursued his often obscure sources for knowledge; and as he tried to devise his own metaphysic of life. At one point Southey was prompted to write in a letter of 1808:

"Hartley was ousted by Berkeley, Berkeley by Spinoza, and Spinoza by Plato; when I last saw him Jacob Behmen had some chance of coming in".

The image of Coleridge as an addict of opium has perhaps coloured the thought of too many critics and it has even been fashionable to ascribe the dessication of Coleridge's poetic impulse to his involvement with metaphysics. What is often ignored, is that for many years Coleridge suffered such pains and illness that he was consigned to long sleepless nights when metaphysical speculation was his sole solace. Having contracted an unfortunate marriage he was often in some mental turmoil due to the almost total lack of any sort of sympathy between him and his wife. His domestic situation and his health for many years made Coleridge fall back on metaphysics

not as an escape but as a means of trying to find some explanation of life and the nature of man. That his poetic genius seemed to wane at this time is hardly surprising.

However, Coleridge was not totally alone in his speculation in these years. The long and famous friendship with Wordsworth had been struck and this, as much as anything seemed to have a seminal impulse for several of Coleridge's later thoughts. If Wordsworth did not actually sow any seeds to mature in Coleridge, he did seem to act as a catalyst in the formation of many ideas. No doubt Wordsworth in return owed Coleridge a great debt for many of his ideas and it has been suggested that Wordsworth was like many other things which Coleridge took up, he never really finished the job. However, be this as it may, the traffic in ideas cannot have been all one way.

In the last section we noted how in 1801 Coleridge said that he had broken with associationism and Hartley, but even in 1795 he had ascribed some allegiance to Berkeley and we must ascribe to some of this allegiance the way in which associatism came to be refuted. The most important idea which Coleridge took from this source was the conception of the unity of man with the natural world and with God. In 1795 he wrote,

"It is melancholy to think that the best of us are liable to be shaped and coloured by surrounding objects".

So far this is the standard doctrine of association. But

then Coleridge adds:

" - and a demonstrative proof that Man was not made to live in Great Cities! Almost all the physical Evil in the World depends on the existence of moral Evil - and the long-continued contemplation of the latter does not tend to meliorate the human heart. The pleasures which we receive from rural beauties, are of little Consequence compared with the Moral Effect of these pleasures - beholding constantly the Best possible we at last become ourselves the best possible."¹⁶

The assumption that rural beauty is naturally good which is implied in this passage comes as a surprise, and the idea that natural beauty could be on the same level with rational analysis good example, instruction and other sources of moral improvement certainly formed no part of Hartley's philosophy. The idea may have taken root after a study of Bowles' poetry but it is more probably the result of conversation with, and the influence of William Wordsworth.

By March 1798, Coleridge was writing to his brother George that he was devoting his energy to the consideration of "fundamental and general causes":

"In poetry, to elevate the imagination and set the affections in right tune by the beauty of the inanimate

16. Collected Letters (Ed. Griggs) I, p.154

impregnated as with a living soul, by the presence of Life.... I love fields and woods and mountains with almost a visionary fondness¹⁶.

This is followed by a quotation from Wordsworth:-

"Not ~~useless~~ do I deem
 These shadowy Sympathies with things that hold
 An inarticulate Language: for the Man
 Once taught to love such objects, as excite
 No morbid passions, no disquietude,
 No vengeance and no hatred, needs must feel
 The Joy of that pure principle of Love."¹⁷

Several statements of indebtedness written at this time suggest that the emphatic identification of mind with Nature contained in the above, has as its source the theistic immaterialism of Berkeley. The same rejection of Urban life and Berkeleyan doctrine that Nature is the language of God are to be found in the lines to his child Hartley, in "Frost at Midnight", already quoted. The idea is probably taken further and with more force and meaning in tracing Coleridge's thought in some lines from "The Destiny of Nations":-

"For all that meets the bodily sense I deem
 Symbolical, one mighty alphabet
 For infant minds".

17. Ibid, I, p.397

However, we must remember that for Berkeley, sensible signs are merely the medium by which ideas are directly communicated to us by God, and this idea did not have a strong hold with Coleridge. As with any system, he analysed, and then extracted those ideas best suited to his purpose. This idea was just too idealistic altogether, for when Coleridge evolved a theory of symbol it was based on a more realistic metaphysic and insisted on the participation of symbol and referent in a common nature as the foundation of the symbolic knowledge.

The attitude towards nature developed from his involvement with Hartley resulted in a conception of the unity of all being that shows in many of his communications of this time. To Thelwall he wrote in October 1797:-

"I can at times feel strongly the beauties, you describe, in themselves, and for themselves - but more frequently all things appear little - all the knowledge, that can be acquired, child's play - the universe itself - what but an immense heap of little things? - I can contemplate nothing but parts, and parts are all little - ! - My mind feels as if it ached to behold and know something great - something one and indivisible - and it is only in the faith of this that rocks and waterfalls, mountains or caverns give me the sense of sublimity or majesty! But in this faith, all things counterfeit infinity."¹⁸

18. Ibid, p.349

In a letter to Poole written just a few days later and which is autobiographical in character he argues for the reading of romances and tales of giants and genii in giving a love of the Great and Whole. He says:

"Those who have been led to the same truths, step by step throu' the constant testimony of their senses, seem to me to want a sense which I possess - They contemplate nothing but parts and all parts are necessarily little - and the Universe to them is but a mass of little things..... (They) uniformly put the negation of a power for the possession of a power- and called the want of imagination Judgement and the never being moved to Rapture Philosophy!"¹⁹

It is from this insight into the unity of things and an imaginative identification with them that Coleridge derived his aesthetic. The absence of it, on occasions due to illness or other means, led to Coleridge's periods of deep depression.

Along with the development of the idea of unity of self with the world of perception at this time arose the importance which Coleridge assigned to emotion and feeling. Coleridge was realising the limitations which were implicit in the theory of association. Although it was a philosophy which was popular

19. Ibid, I, p.354-5

in his period and which has developed in many ways through to our times due to the spread of scientific thought, it held many possibilities which alarmed Coleridge. He saw that if the idea that man's mind was purely passive and was the result of random sense impressions held sway, then man would ultimately be nothing more than an automaton or mechanical entity. We must not forget that Coleridge was not being purely mystical when he thought this way, but he himself had a strong scientific interest. He had studied medicine with his brother Luke in a London hospital during his schooldays. Through his friendship with Sir Humphrey Davy he was well versed with many of the latest developments in chemistry. However, by his own admission, it was the contact with the poetry of Bowles, in 1789, that showed him feeling was at least as strong a motive to virtue as logical argument. Coupled with the revelation of friendship with Wordsworth, and research into his own mental states, the power of emotion and feeling grew in Coleridge's mind.

At first he cautiously allowed that emotion was a concomitant of thought:

"I feel strongly, and I think strongly; but I seldom feel without thinking, or think without feeling... My philosophical opinions are blended with, or deduced from, my feelings."

He was ready to admire both

"The head and the fancy of Akenside, and the heart and

fancy of Bowles".²⁰

Later he was to lose any suspicion of feeling or enthusiasm and in 1800 could say:

"Life were so flat a thing without Enthusiasm - that if for a moment it leaves me, I have a sort of stomach-sensation attached to all my thoughts, like those which succeed to the pleasurable operation of a dose of Opium".²¹

In 1801 Coleridge had re-examined his philosophy and shaken off the trappings of pure association as shown in the previous section and was able to say of man, not that he was the result of his senses only but he was able to declare to Wedgewood :-

"My opinion is this - that deep Thinking is attainable only by a man of deep Feeling and that all Truth is a Species of revelation".²²

Association was rejected, therefore, and in its place was substituted a ground of feeling. By 1803 he was able to formulate an account of this in a letter to Robert Southey:

"I hold, that association depends in a much greater degree on the recurrence of resembling states of Feeling, than on Trains of Ideas.... Believe me Southey! A metaphysical solution, that does not instantly tell for something in the Heart, is grievously to be

20. Ibid, I, 279

21. Ibid, I, 558

22. Ibid, II, 709

suspected as apocryphal - I almost think, that Ideas never recall Ideas, as far as they are Ideas - any more than Leaves in a forest create each other's motion - The Breeze it is that runs thro' them/ It is the soul, the State of Feeling. If I had said, no one Idea ever recalls another, I am confident that I could support the assertion."²³

The transcendental element which was now appearing in Coleridge's philosophy seemed to have an effect also upon his religious thinking. His belief in Christ was becoming daily stronger, but his belief was becoming more personal as his reliance on perfectibility waned. Many personal failures in day to day life and the deterioration in his health probably helped create the need for a personal faith. He was able to realise that,

"I have been too neglectful of practical religion - I mean, actual and stated prayer, and a regular perusal of scripture as a morning and evening duty! Tho' Christianity is my Passion, it is too much my intellectual Passion."²⁴

At the time of rather serious illness when for many long night hours he was thrown back on his own speculations, he saw how his religion must really be an affair of the heart rather more

23. Ibid, II, 961.

24. Ibid, I, p.407

than of the head.

"My philosophical refinements and metaphysical Theories lay by me in the hour of anguish, as toys by the bedside of a Child deadly sick. May God continue his visitations to my soul, bowing it down, till the pride and Laodicean self-confidence of human Reason be utterly done away with; and I cry with deeper and yet deeper feelings, O my soul! Thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor and blind, and naked!"²⁵

With this realisation of the value of feelings and sentiment in the wakings of man's mind, the optimistic process inherent in rational religion tended to become disfavoured. He now saw the need for voluntarism and personal effort and responsibility in achieving true faith. Here we can see some elements which become important in his later theology. The emphasis now is on a volition and the consequent denial of any kind of associationist determinism, the notion of grace, and the development of a redemptive rather than a merely benevolent theology.

A source of help, and indeed inspiration in coming to such conclusions and in progressing beyond them to his later ideas, was undoubtedly the long friendship with William Wordsworth. During the years when Coleridge lived at Nether

25. Ibid, I, p.267

Stowey and Wordsworth and his sister at Alfoxden, long hours of discussion upon the nature of poetry took place. Probably the debt which Coleridge owed to Dorothy Wordsworth in sharpening his observational powers will never be known, but we can attempt to evaluate the friendship with Wordsworth himself.

Following the interest in the poetry of William Bowles, the first contemporary poet who was hailed by Coleridge was Wordsworth, and this was before they met. On meeting the friendship ripened as in many ways they were kindred spirits. Wordsworth having become disenchanted from his early revolutionary interests was extricating himself from Godwinian thought. He had reached the moral crisis from which he escaped with Dorothy's help as he started to contemplate the value of Nature in the English countryside. To escape the thought of Godwin was the object of both poets at this time and it was not long before Wordsworth had seen the value of Hartley's doctrines. Although the doctrines of the two were to diverge in later times they must have explored much common ground together. The character of Coleridge was such that he constantly needed the buttress of a firm friendship upon which to rest and it was not long before he was idolizing Wordsworth.

The strongest appeal to Coleridge was the poetry of Wordsworth, which in Coleridge's eyes possessed a new and imaginative quality which he compared with that of Milton and Shakespeare. The esteem in which Coleridge held Wordsworth can

be seen from the fact that he felt that Wordsworth was the only poet of the time who was capable of writing a Philosophical or epic poem and indeed he strongly encouraged this. To Coleridge, the writing of an epic poem could only be undertaken by a man of unusual powers - another Shakespeare or a Milton. For he had said,

"I should not think of devoting less than twenty years to an epic poem. Ten years to collect materials and warm my mind with universal science. I would be a tolerable mathematician. I would thoroughly understand Mechanics; Hydrostatics; Optics, and Astronomy; Botany; Metallurgy; Fossilism; Chemistry; Geology; Anatomy; Medicine; then the mind of man; then the minds of men; in all Travels, Voyages and Histories. So I would spend ten years; the next five in the composition of the poem, and the five last in the correction of it."²⁶

Coleridge must have felt that all this was within the capabilities of his friend. However central to our interest are the results of long conversations and meditations on the nature of poetry which led to the publication of the Lyrical Ballads. As a result of these conversations Coleridge must have seen the limitations of a conception of man based on Associationist or Berkeleyan thought for he started to look upon Wordsworth as

26. Quoted in Snyder, A.D. Coleridge on Logic and Learning (1929) p.I.

the Complete Man, whom he sees as :-

"the only man who has effected a complete synthesis of thought and feeling and combined them with poetic forms, with the music of pleasurable passion, and with Imagination or the modifying power in that highest sense of the word, in which I have ventured to oppose it to Fancy, or the aggregating power - in that sense in which it is a dim analogue of creation - not all that we can believe, but all that we can conceive of creation"²⁷

Now indeed was Coleridge beginning to search much deeper for a philosophy of man.

When the Lyrical ballads were published the avowed aim was:

"Above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature: chiefly as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement."

- this according to Wordsworth in the preface to the second edition. However, according to Coleridge in Biographia Literaria:-

"Our conversation turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of

27. Quoted in Potter, S. Coleridge and S.T.C. (1935) p.47

the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of Nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination.

"In this idea originated the plan of Lyrical Ballads: in which it was agreed that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so far as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment that constitutes poetic faith. Mr. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself as his object to give the charm of novelty to the things of everyday, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and wonder of the world before us."²⁸

It will now be obvious that the discussions on the nature of poetry and the attempts to write poetry with a specific purpose had led to a study of the nature of man. The creative process was now under scrutiny and some attempt to understand man's imaginative powers was foremost in their minds. Even though Hartley's system was long embraced, Coleridge was

28. Biographia Literaria, Ch.XIV. p.169

coming to the realisation that associationism was only giving an aggregate of so many parts or faculties in man. Again such things as feelings and emotions were not accounted for. The relationship with Wordsworth was instrumental in leading Coleridge to speculate beyond this for he tells us:

"I shall hardly forget the sudden effect produced upon my mind by his (Wordsworth's) recitation of a manuscript poem."²⁹

(Later Guilt and Sorrow)

The point which really impressed Coleridge was:

"the union of deep feeling with profound thought: the fine balance of truth in observing, with the imaginative faculty in modifying the objects observed; and above all the original gift of spreading the tone, the atmosphere and with it the depth and height of the ideal world around forms, incidents, and situations, of which, for the common view, custom had bedimmed all the lustre, had dried up the sparkle and dewdrops."³⁰

Probably many insights which Coleridge was developing were helped along when he came across the writings of kindred spirits who were working on the continent. If Coleridge's speculations on the nature of men, of art, of poetry, were becoming transcendental, he would recognise echoes of his

29. Biographia Literaria, Ch.IV, p.47

30. Ibid, Ch.IV, p.48-9

own thought when he travelled in Germany in 1798-9, and in the following years when he read many German works. Coleridge has been accused of plagiarism of some continental thinkers, but we must remember that many of his writings on these topics only appeared in private notebooks, with no thought of publication. In his critical thoughts on Shakespeare, for instance, he had almost certainly arrived at his own ideas long before he heard of Lessing, however similar some of their ideas may be.

However, he certainly became an ardent student of Lessing, of Kant and Schiller and of Schelling. Through Lessing he came to see the true nature of Shakespeare's 'irregularities'. He came to see indeed that Shakespearean drama was everywhere controlled by subtle contriving intelligence which it was his own business to discover. But Lessing shared the spirit of the *Aufklärung* too largely not to give more than its due to the function of analytic intellect in art. Schiller qualified this by the doctrine that genius is 'naive', meaning that it attains the organic perception of art by instinctive sense of harmony, not of conscious contrivance. This became a cardinal doctrine of the Friend (1809).

Schelling had completed the fabric of his own philosophy; and German Romanticism was provided with a metaphysic while it was announcing its own existence.

"Kantian Idealism, physical science, and Romantic art were successively drawn into an all embracing system,

the controlling animus of which was vigorously expressed by such aphorisms as Nature is Spirit; Nature is self-organising; Nature is a poem. Art was the culminating form of Nature; the unimpeded expression of creative energies struggling for utterance in the organic world³¹

In Germany then arose important developments of art theory. The poetic idealism of Goethe and Schiller passed with the Romantics into a mystic reverence for the work of genius as such. The main business of criticism was conceived to be reverent interpretation. Genius was contrasted with talent, as organic growth with mechanical combination. Similarly Richter distinguished Imagination, the faculty of genius, which constructs organic wholes, from Fancy, which forms arbitrary aggregates. And, like other kinds of organic force, the action of imagination was conceived as a fusion of heterogeneous or opposite qualities. The 'union of opposites' became, in the hands of Schlegel, the fundamental formula of 'Romantic' art.

Coleridge had been looking for a philosophy to describe the active power of the mind before he came upon the German Idealists. He probably recognised his own thoughts in many of the distinctions noted above and he certainly used the terminology when he came to expand his views on the mind.

31. Hereford, C.H. The Age of Wordsworth (1909), p.86

Another distinction used by Coleridge which has a respectable history, but which was also used by Kant is that between the reason and understanding. Plato had given different functions to *νοῦς* and *διανοία* and Thomas Aquinas had distinguished between *intellectus* and *ratio*. In much of his reading, Coleridge must have met the contrast between intuitive and discursive faculties, for they appear in Milton, Bacon and the Cambridge Platonists. We know from Coleridge's own notebooks however that he had read Kant's distinction, for in his own hand he has written the words *Vernunft* and *Verstand*, even though his own distinction follows more in the Platonic mould than the Kantian.

In order to understand fully how Coleridge arrived at an understanding of the nature of the mind of man which was totally unlike anything possible with a mechanico-corpuscular philosophy, and which was organic and vitally active we must consider some of the distinctions which he himself elaborated. Firstly we will look at the distinction between Fancy and Imagination. As we have seen in earlier references the distinction had been in Coleridge's mind for some time and it was central to his thought. However, as always, when confronted by a problem he usually sidestepped the issue until he had come to a full formulation. The most famous exposition of his ideas on Fancy and Imagination appears in Chapter 13 of the Biographia Literaria and is crystallised in two paragraphs right at the end of the chapter:

"The imagination then I consider as either primary, or

secondary. The primary imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the act of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still, at all events, it struggles to idealise and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead.

"Fancy, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with but fixities and definites. The fancy is indeed no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space; and blended with, and modified by that empirical phaenomenon of the will which we express by the word choice. But equally with the ordinary memory it must receive all its materials ready made from the laws of association."³²

32. Biographia Literaria,
Ch. XIII, p.167

The distinction here quoted is now well known, but has often been dismissed as having no value. Yet by looking at poetry in the light of terms such as those contained in this distinction, new insights into the nature of poetry and into the minds of those who both write and those who read poetry can be achieved. As Professor Willey has remarked,

"A whole philosophy lies beneath each phrase"³³

There is in the ideas contained a summary of the revolt of Coleridge's own mind against an eighteenth century view of the mind which regarded it as a passive 'blotter' which soaked up impressions. He is now seeing with a clear insight that in perception the mind is essentially active and not only does it know objects but also, much more importantly, it knows itself in the objects.

By his reference to the Primary Imagination, Coleridge is affirming that the mind is essentially active and in everyday living it has the power to make its own world. Out of Nature or the infinite I AM come the stimuli which the Primary Imagination acts upon. Yet there is a Secondary Imagination, which is at work in the poet, and this is contrasted with Fancy.

To Coleridge it was the Secondary Imagination which was the possession of the Genius. The mind which transcends the ordinary everyday mind, active as this may be. It was the loss

33. Willey, B. Nineteenth Century Studies, 1949, p.22

of this transforming power which Coleridge lamented in Dejection. Once having possessed this power, the loss of it was spiritual death. In the Secondary Imagination the 'cold inanimate world' of the Primary Imagination is 'dissolved, diffused, dissipated' and finally recreated in one unified whole, a living whole. The Imagination then (dropping the word 'Secondary') is the mind of man in its highest state of creative insight and alertness. Its acts are acts of growth. Coleridge himself seemed to strive to see all knowledge as one, he strove to connect, to see the relationships, not only of things, but the principle behind things. He would have declared this as a function of Imagination. He declared it was a co-ordinating, shaping power which sought to see all things as one, and the one in all things. It was typically displayed in the balance of opposite or discordant qualities. In his deliberations in arriving at this definition, he had noted such discordant qualities as,

"a sense of novelty and freshness with old and familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion with more than usual order. It was the part of Imagination to make the external internal, the internal external; to make Nature thought and thought Nature; reducing 'multitude to unity' or 'succession to an instant'. To the ordinary everyday mind objects are fixed and dead, killed by an uncreative mind. But when a mind has the vital inner life and energy of imagination, objects

can be vitalised by this inner power.

"'Extremes meet' was a favourite maxim of Coleridge; indeed, he saw in the interpenetration of opposites the very meaning and inmost process of existence. Life itself, abstractly considered, consists in the tension between polar opposites, the One becoming the Many, and the Many being resolved in the One.

'Subject' and 'Object' coalesce in Knowing; and in Art, Nature becomes Thought and Thought Nature"³⁴

In a footnote to 'The Friend' Coleridge had written:

"Every power in nature and in spirit must evolve an opposite, as the sole means and condition of its manifestation; and all opposition is a tendency to reunion. The principle may thus be expressed. The identity of thesis and antithesis is the substance of all being; their opposition the condition of all existence... It is the object of mechanical atomistic philosophy to confound synthesis with synartesis, or rather with mere juxtaposition of corpuscles separated by invisible interspaces."³⁵

He then added of the final statement,

"I find it difficult to determine whether this theory contradicts the reason or the senses most; for it is

34. Ibid, p.28

35. The Friend, p.57-58, n.

alike inconceivable and unimaginable."³⁶

We must now look at the other side of the distinction which Coleridge has made and consider the Fancy. Unlike the Imagination the Fancy is unable to fuse anything into unity or to bring forth a new identity. It is below Imagination, and yet on a higher level than mere perception or memory. Rather than make anything new, it can merely make patterns out of ready made materials. In the mechanical mixtures which it makes the constituent parts still retain their own identity. In 1834 in Table Talk we find an entry which discusses this distinction again and gives an example of Fancy in Poetry:

"You may conceive the difference in kind between the Fancy and the Imagination in this way - that if the check of the senses and the reason were withdrawn, the first would become delirium and the last mania. The Fancy brings together images which have no connection natural or moral, but are yoked together by the poet by means of some accidental coincidence; as in the well-known passage in Hudibras:-

'The sun had long since in the lap
Of Thesis taken out his nap,
And like a lobster boyl'd the morn
From black to red began to turn'.

36. The Friend, p.58 n

The Imagination modifies images, and gives unity to variety; it sees all things in one, il piu nel' uno.

There is epic imagination, the perfection of which is in Milton; and the dramatic, of which Shakespeare is the absolute Master."³⁷

Shakespeare and Milton in Coleridge's estimation possessed genius or Imagination. Coleridge devoted much time to Shakespearean criticism, and has probably been more instrumental than many other critics, in drawing attention to the unity within the plays. All his criticism however had as its guiding precept the distinction between poetic Fancy and Imagination. To Coleridge all the works of Shakespeare were written upon a principle whereby in each character may be termed an ideal reality.

"They are not the things themselves, so much as abstracts of the things, which a great mind takes into itself, and there naturalises them into its own conception."³⁸

In his lectures on Shakespeare he demonstrated how the mind of the poet in plays such as *The Tempest* creates an organic unity by contrasting and bringing together the highest and lowest character, and by introducing the profoundest wisdom where least expected, yet doing it naturally. Shakespeare possessed for Coleridge such powers that he was drawn to say,

37. Table Talk, June 23, 1834

38. Coleridge: Shakespearean Criticism, Vol.II, p.125

"If Shakespeare be the wonder of the ignorant, he is, and ought to be, much more the wonder of the learned; not only from profundity of thought, but from his astonishing and intuitive knowledge of what man must be at all times, and under all circumstances, he is rather to be looked upon as a prophet than as a poet. Yet, with all these unbounded powers, with all this might and majesty of genius, he makes us feel as if he were unconscious of himself, and of his high density, disguising the half god in the simplicity of a child."³⁹

Coleridge illustrated the difference between Fancy and Imagination as it affects even a few lines of poetry by quoting from Venus and Adonis. His illustration of Fancy is:

"Full gently now she takes him by the hand,
A lily prison'd in a gaol of snow,
Or ivory in an alabaster band;
So white a friend engirts so white a foe."⁴⁰

As Dr. I.A. Richards in Coleridge on Imagination has observed, the activity of putting these images together is 'an empirical phenomenon of the will', an act of choice. It is an exercise of selection from among objects already supplied by association, a selection made for purposes which are not then and therein being shaped, but have been already fixed!

39. Ibid, p.140

'Lily', 'snow', 'ivory' and 'alabaster', all are drawn out from memory and juxtaposed, without changing in any way, they do not as intended, become one with the hands of Venus and Adonis with which they are compared.

To illustrate the power of Imagination, however, Coleridge chose the lines,

"Look! how bright a star shooteth from the sky,
So glides he in the night from Venus' eye."

This was regarded as imaginative, because Shakespeare is here seen in the act of realising, making real to himself, and to us, the departure of Adonis from Venus; the fall of the shooting star and the flight of Adonis became one in a flash of creative vision. He feels we have the fusion of subject and object in the act of imagination.

We must remember that to Coleridge the thinking of the Eighteenth Century had resulted in the exclusion of Imagination from poetry. In the Eighteenth Century the only poetry which had been possible was that denoted by the fancy. It had taken the form of selecting images from poets of the past, Milton, Celtic, Norse and Mediaeval sources. In the age of Coleridge, however, notions of life, growth and transformation were growing. The onset of revolutionary thought tried to make the fixities of the eighteenth century, the old established order, yield to flux. Here was an attempt to create organic life out of a mechanical system, to change order to process. Poets were in a position to

feel that they were allies of the ascendant forces, instead of being triflers and refugees from reality. That is why this aspiration to conceive of mind as organic and vital was such a personal and longliving problem to Coleridge. It was to him the difference between life and death. He said that 'genius must act on the feeling that body is but a striving to become mind - that is mind in its essence!' With an active principle of the mind, nature was not dead naturata but alive and growing. ready to reveal its secret to the eye which brings with it the means of seeing. It is indeed Naturans.

From his own experience in poetry, Coleridge knew that there was a difference between those times when the Imagination was present and his whole being was working on an activity which in the reader would call the whole soul into activity; and those times when with Fancy he could produce works which may appeal to perhaps some of the faculties, but would not really strike an answering light. His own experience as a poet had brought the distinction home to him in such a way that he was able to use this self knowledge, gained by inner reflection, to get at the heart of the matter and discover the true nature of poetry and the workings of the human mind. He was probably spurred on to this realisation of the wholeness of man by his social and political thinking. As he looked upon modern scientific and commercial developments he was forced to observe,

"We have purchased a few brilliant inventions at the loss

of all communication with life and the spirit of nature." This he blamed on a philosophy of parts rather than a true contemplation of the whole man. He felt that the whole country was suffering from a spiritual malaise as the people lost sight of principles and true ends and as they become obsessed with means. In Constitution of Church and State he saw 'The guesswork of general consequences substituted for moral and political philosophy'. To enable men to understand that their true natures should possess two sides, an everyday faculty and a more spiritual higher thing, he postulated another distinction, that between Reason and Understanding. Just as his literary theory stands on the Fancy and Imagination distinction, so that between Reason and Understanding epitomises his true ethical and religious thought.

Coleridge gave definitions of his own to the Reason and Understanding and we find that it is analogous to the previous distinction. Reason is to Understanding what Imagination is to Fancy. In a letter written to Thomas Clarkson in 1806 he tries to set out the difference between those two 'faculties' in answer to a question upon their natures. He says:

"I would reply, that the Faculty of the Soul which apprehends and retains the mere notices of Experience, as for instance that such an object has a triangular figure, that it is of such a magnitude, and of such and such a colour, and consistency, with the anticipation of

meeting the same under the same circumstances, in other words, all the mere *φαινόμενα* of our nature, we may call the Understanding. But all such notices, as are characterised by Universality and Necessity, as that every Triangle must in all places and at all times have its two sides greater than its third - and which are evidently not the effect of any Experience, but the condition of all Experience - that indeed without which Experience itself would be inconceivable, we may call Reason - and this class of Knowledge was called by the ancients *Νοῦμενα* in distinction from the former or *φαινόμενα*. Reason is therefore not eminently the Revelation of an immortal soul, and its best Synonime - it is the *forma formans*, which contains in itself the law of its own conceptions. Nay, it is highly probable, that the contemplation of essential Form as remaining the same thro' all varieties of colour and magnitude and development, as in the acorn even as in the Oak, first gave to the mind the ideas, by which it explained to itself those notices of its Immortality revealed to it by its conscience."⁴⁰

Coleridge felt that on all too many men this 'synonime' of Immortality was missing. In a materialist age:

40. The Portable Coleridge (Ed. I.A. Richards), p.301

"Materialists unwilling to admit the mysterious element of our nature make it all mysterious - nothing mysterious in nerves, eyes, etc., but that nerves think etc! Stir up the sediment into the transparent water, and so make all opaque."⁴¹

Such explanations ignored or failed to see the missing power of Reason. Perhaps on many occasions Coleridge gave unusual meanings to Reason and Understanding: Reason is the organ of the supersensuous; Understanding is the faculty by which we generalise and arrange the phenomena of perception. Reason is 'the knowledge of the laws of the whole considered as one'; Understanding is the 'science of phenomena'. Reason seeks ultimate ends; Understanding studies means.

All these meanings are further elaborated when he considers Reason as the eye of the spirit, the faculty whereby spiritual reality is spiritually discerned and Understanding the mind of the flesh. He declares that Understanding has a wide and legitimate field of activity in which to operate, for in natural science it is used to measure, analyse and classify. Danger appears when it encroaches on the realms where Reason alone is valid. That is to say it is dangerous when the Understanding tries to present its limited theories as absolute laws. This for Coleridge accounted for the materialism and

41. Anima Poetae

ungodly utilitarianism which he saw in his time.

To Coleridge Imagination and Reason led to God. It was part of conscience and faith to allow free reign to both. In this way the whole man came to the fore. For Coleridge the position is stated lucidly when he says,

"The groundwork, therefore, of all true philosophy is the full apprehension of the difference between the contemplation of reason, namely, that intuition of things which arises when we possess ourselves, as one with the whole, which is substantial knowledge, and that which presents itself when transferring reality to the negations of reality, to the ever-varying framework of the uniform life, we think of ourselves as separated beings, and place nature in antithesis to the mind, as object to subject, thing to thought, death to life. This is abstract knowledge, or the science of the mere understanding. By the former we know that existence is its own predicate, self affirmation, the one attribute in which all others are contained, not as parts, but as manifestations. It is an eternal and infinite self-rejoicing, self-loving, with a joy unfathomable, with a love all comprehensive. It is absolute; and the absolute is neither singly that which affirms, nor that which is affirmed; but the identity and living copula of both."⁴²

42. The Friend, Section II, Essay II, p.366

Chapter V

COLERIDGE ON EDUCATION

AND THE INDIVIDUAL

Education and Imagination

ALTHOUGH Coleridge wrote no one work concerned wholly with education it is a recurrent theme which is to be found strewn in all his writings. That he took an active interest in the educational system of his time is evidenced by lectures given on the subject and in many odd notes written at times throughout his life. However, it seems inevitable that a man who held such a dynamic view of the personality should have a theory of education in keeping with it. Wordsworth had said that he wished to be remembered as a teacher or not at all, and it is possible that Coleridge regarded himself in the same light. Processes of thought and development fascinated him and he was led to a psychological view of mind as will be shown later, which was not only new in England, in that it eschewed eighteenth century rationalism and the educational system built upon it, but was akin to German philosophic thought of the time, and was predictive of much modern psychological theory.

Coleridge's view of man led him to think upon many aspects of education and its importance and possibilities. Before we attempt to bring together some of the strands of Coleridge's thoughts concerning education we must first remind ourselves of the view of man which Coleridge held and which gives some idea of the possible aims which he had in mind for any educational process. Coleridge often wrote of the nature of the poet and his art and here he is thinking of man in his

perfect state:-

"The poet described in ideal perfection brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other according to their relative worth and dignity."¹

To Coleridge it was necessary for man to be seen as a whole, and to try to analyse and to break down his nature into a number of faculties, each to be treated separately, was regarded by Coleridge as utter folly and doomed to failure.

"To each of us in varying degrees",
Coleridge said,

"God has given faculties which it is our duty to develop."²
We notice the plural of faculties and to Coleridge this was important. It was when one faculty was educated or developed in excess and to the detriment of others, that Coleridge saw danger and failure. The result was explicitly described as a 'pollarded man'. It was only when all the faculties worked in harmony and were developed in harmony, that true education could be said to be taking place. This point is emphasised when we consider what Coleridge meant by poetry which he described as,

"A mode of composition that calls into action and gratifies the largest number of human Faculties in Harmony with each

1. Biographia Literaria II, Ch.14, p.173-4
2. Coleridge, Lectures on Shakespeare, p.393

other and in just proportion."³

As we shall show later, Coleridge was not a faculty psychologist, as we might think from these quotations, but he was bound in some degree by the terminology of the faculty psychologists of his time. His vision was, like that of other romantics, that of the whole man, and if any one 'faculty' was to be considered in any way more important than the rest, it was the Imagination. The Imagination features largely in Coleridge's ideas for early education. Like other romantics such as Blake, as we have shown, Coleridge felt that the Imagination had suffered at the hands of reason in the previous century following the writings of Descartes and Locke. However, a certain distrust of Imagination (φαντασία) is of earlier origin than the eighteenth century and dates back to the Stoics and Plato. It was the romantics who sought to place Imagination at the helm for they felt that any system of education based upon reason alone was inadequate and saw danger in statements such as that of Locke:-

"When all is done, this as the highest and most important faculty of our minds, deserves the greatest care and attention in cultivating it; the right improvement and exercise of our reason being the highest perfection that a man can attain to in this life."⁴

3. Notebook 18

4. Locke, J. Some Thoughts concerning Education (1693) Sec.122

Like Blake and Rousseau, Coleridge objected to reason as the highest power, for to him it led to arid intellectualism, and the mere storage of facts of knowledge he did not regard as education at all. Many did however, believe in the importance of storing facts of knowledge and many regarded education as the collection of the requisite facts. In objecting to a proposal that education should be on a national basis, William Godwin wrote:-

"Real intellectual improvement demands that mind should as speedily as possible be advanced to the height of knowledge as already existing among the enlightened members of the community, and start from thence in the pursuit of higher acquisitions."⁵

This was the 'ideal' pursued by Dr. Robert Hooke, whose method sought to cram his pupils' minds with facts while he scarcely considered the imagination. To Coleridge, Hooke's method seemed absolutely absurd.⁶ He objected and saw that under such a system the mind works passively like a storage tank and he felt that a true education of the intellect involves self-development whereby the mind is placed

"In such relations of circumstance as should gradually excite its vegetating and germinating powers to produce

5. Godwin, W. quoted in Prose of the Romantic Period 1780-1830, Ed. Raymond Wright, p.92

6. Philosophical Lectures, p.335

new ideas of Thought, new Conceptions and Imaginations and Ideas."^{7a}

As in most of Coleridge's theories, the basic premise is that the mind is active. A true and sound education will take into account

"Quid sumus et quidnam victuri gignimus - what our faculties are and what they are capable of becoming."^{7b}

The basic raw material of education, the nature of the child, was a constant source of interest for Coleridge. In childhood he saw the unspoiled potential as the oak in the acorn and he revered it. In a lecture on Education reported in the Bristol Gazette for 18 November 1813, we read:-

"Returning to general education of children, Mr.

Coleridge observed, there was scarce any being who looked upon the beautiful face of an infant, that did not feel a strong sensation - it was not the attraction of mere loveliness; it was a sense of melancholy; for himself he always when viewing an infant, found a tear a candidate for his eye. What could be the cause of this? it was not that its innocency, its perfectness, like a flower, all perfume and all loveliness, was like a flower to pass away. (It was rather the) thought doubtlessly felt by everyone - if he could begin his career again, if he

7a. Collected Letters, Ed E.H. Griggs 1895, p.243

7b. Inquiring Spirit (Ed. Coburn K.) p.71

could recover that innocency once possessed, and connect it with virtue. With these thoughts, who could avoid feeling an enthusiasm for the education of mankind."⁸

From this we note that Coleridge felt that a discontinuity of development must exist between childhood and adulthood. To Coleridge each child arrives on this earth with a potential which awaits development. This potential has to be educed and drawn forth. In childhood he notes certain qualities which though present in childhood in abundance seem to wither and die as the child grows in years. Prime among the qualities of childhood were the senses of Joy and Wonder. Whenever Coleridge wrote upon children, he seems to note this sense of sheer joy in existence. We remember his description of his own son Hartley.....

"Hartley is a spirit that dances on an aspen leaf... I look on my doted-on Hartley - he moves, he lives, he finds impulses from within and without... he looks at the clouds and mountains... and vaults and jubilates... Hartley whirling round for joy, Derwent eddying... shouting his little hymn of joy."⁹

Coleridge lamented that this sense of joy and wonder dies all too soon, often stifled by an education which did not cater

8. Coburn, K. Inquiring Spirit (1951) pp.88-9

9. Unpublished Letters (Ed. Griggs E.L.) Letter to Godwin, Sep. 22, 1800

for such a force and took no account of the nature of childhood, but regarded the child as a small adult with a passive mind to be stuffed with alien facts. To Coleridge these qualities of childhood should be recognised and encouraged to develop for,

"To carry on the feelings of childhood into the powers of manhood, to combine the child's sense of wonder and novelty with the appearances which every day for perhaps forty years has rendered familiar,

With sun and moon and stars throughout the year,

And man and woman -

this is the character and privilege of genius, and one of the marks which distinguish genius from talent."¹⁰

The childhood view of life then, was to Coleridge an unspoiled view. It had a quality of innocence which is undisturbed by doubt. As Professor Walsh has noted,

"The child accepts the amazing universe. He is astounded by it but never despairs of it. He supposes an answer to exist for every question, and his chief difficulty is to articulate the question. His world is undisturbed by doubt 'The deep intuition of our oneness with childhood', which is the condition of an imaginative perception of it, is possible only in an age of firmer certainties and fewer uncertainties than our own."¹¹

10. The Friend, I. Essay 15. p.68

11. Walsh, W. The Use of Imagination p.12

Coleridge had this view of childhood as we can see from his writings, although one might doubt if he would have regarded his age as one of firm certainty. He seems to hold this view in the face of an age which he regarded as one of deep uncertainty, for he felt the certainties of his age to be based upon a mistaken philosophy of life.

Another characteristic of childhood which Coleridge aimed to enforce and preserve was the basic integrity possessed by children:

"Two things we may learn from little children from three to six years old: 1. That it is a characteristic, an instinct of our human nature to pass out of our self... The first lesson that innocent Childhood affords me, is - that it is an instinct of my Nature to pass out of myself, and to exist in the form of others.... The second is - not to suffer any one form to pass into me and to become a usurping Self."¹²

Perhaps Coleridge saw a basic quality here which is in perfect state in childhood - namely the search for true identity which he felt should be encouraged in true education. He sees childhood as the constant search for an escape from the restrictions of the image of selfhood whilst endeavouring to keep the true self intact. This true self or individuality was a sacred

12. Inquiring Spirit, Ed. Coburn, K. p.68

thing and represented the deeper springs of the unconscious mind whilst the imagined self was only the tip of the iceberg. Professor Walsh has suggested that when Coleridge speaks of the child's resistance to the intrusion of an alien form, he is speaking of the innocency of childhood, which he never professes overtly but rather suggests by implication, image, overtone and language expressing a note of delighted awe. Be that as it may what Coleridge obviously does suggest is that children are completely human and imaginatively free, a state which he felt, would all too soon wither and die in a system of education or way of life which took no account of imagination.

Coleridge indeed asserts that the early education should be concerned with imagination and take into account the joyousness which is characteristic of childhood. He saw that this joy was nowhere more evident than in a child's activities in play:

"Hartley and Little Derwent running in the green where the gusts blow most madly, both with their hair floating and tossing, a miniature of the agitated trees, below which they were playing, inebriate both with pleasure - Hartley whirling round for joy, Derwent eddying, half willingly, half by force of the gust - driven backward struggling forward, and shouting his little hymn of joy."¹³

13. Unpublished Letters (Ed. Griggs E.L.) To Sothorby: Sep. 27. 1802

Here we can see that Coleridge recognised this sense of joy in its perfection and it is worthwhile to notice the background against which it takes place.. Although Coleridge was no disciple of Rousseau and differs widely from him in many of his pronouncements, he did believe in a natural environment. He expressed fears lest Hartley's life should follow the pattern of his own, and felt that he would benefit by a natural environment.

"But thou, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze
 By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags
 Of ancient mountains, and beneath the clouds,
 Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores
 And mountain crags: so shalt thou see and hear
 The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
 Of that eternal language, which thy God
 Utters, who from eternity doth teach
 Himself in all, and all things in himself.
 Great universal Teacher! he shall mould
 Thy spirit, and giving make it ask."¹⁴

Although he regretted that even in his time many men had to spend their lives in an urban environment and although he had bewailed his city schooldays, he had spent his early life in surroundings just as idyllic as those of Wordsworth. Hartley

14. Frost at Midnight, lines 54-64

was to spend his life in Wordsworth country, but the reasons for this had seemingly little to do with the suggestions in Frost at Midnight. However, there can be little doubt that the long conversations with the Wordsworths at Alfoxden would have helped or confirmed Coleridge's belief in the value of natural surroundings and he could hardly have approved of the attempts of the schools to conduct an active education in serried rows of desks in dark and cramped classrooms. Given a healthy natural environment it is interesting to see how Coleridge regarded early learning in young children. The operation he describes has a modern sound about it and when we remember that this was written in the early nineteenth century it strikes one as all the more surprising as it describes childhood in a way which could not have happened in the eighteenth century:-

*In the infancy and childhood of individuals (and something analogous may be traced in the history of communities) the first knowledges are acquired promiscuously - say rather that the plan is not formed by the selection of the objects presented to the notice of the pupils; but by the impulses and dispositions suited to their age, by the limits and dispositions suited to their age, by the limits of their comprehension, by the volatile and desultory activity of their attention, and by the relative predominance or the earlier development of one or more faculties over the rest. This is the happy delirium, the healthful fever

of the physical, moral and intellectual being - nature's kind and providential gift to childhood. In the best good sense of the words, it is the lightheadedness and light-heartedness of human life! There is indeed 'method in't' but it is the method of nature which thus stores the mind with all the materials for after use, promiscuously indeed and as it might seem, without purpose, while she supplies a gay and motley chaos of facts, and forms, and thousand-fold experiences, the origin of which lies beyond the memory, traceless as life itself, and finally passing into a part of our life more rapidly than would have been compatible with distinct consciousness, and with a security beyond the power of choice! Promiscuously, we have said, and seemingly without design: and yet by this seeming confusion alone could nature.... have effected her wise purpose, without encroachment on the native freedom of the soul and without either precluding, superseding, or overlaying the inventive, the experimental, combinatory and judicial powers"¹⁵

Early learning, then, for Coleridge, resembles his ideas on the development of language 'a chaos grinding itself into compatibility'. One can see in the light of modern psychology that this sort of process happens when children are at play.

15. Coleridge on Logic and Learning (Ed. A.D. Snyder), p.105

One has only to talk to children of their play a few days after the event to find that 'the mind has been stored with materials for after use' and 'facts and forms have passed into part of life more rapidly than would have compatible with distinct consciousness'.

When we came to consider how Coleridge describes the process of educating the imagination we would do well to remember the words, 'the plan is not formed by the selection of the objects presented to the notice of the pupils; but by the impulses and dispositions suited to their age, by the limits of their comprehension'. In the education of the imagination, Coleridge saw that the schoolteacher had a particular role to play. He was critical of the teachers of his time who thought that the task was completed when the information had been given. These teachers never considered the true nature of the child at all but regarded them as passive sponges which would soak up the information. To Coleridge the true nature of the child had to be understood as the basis upon which an educational system could be built. Coleridge saw the teacher as a presenter of materials, the builder of a learning situation who understood the needs of children and took these needs into account when considering the materials to be presented.

*We are aware that it is with our cognitions as with our children. There is a period in which the method of Nature is working for them; a period of aimless

activity and unregulated accumulation, during which it is enough if we can preserve them in health and out of harm's way. Again, there is a period of orderliness, of circumspection, of discipline, in which we purify separate, define, select, arrange, and settle the nomenclature of communication. There is also a period of dawning and twilight, a period of anticipation, affording trick of strength. And all these, both in the growth of the sciences and in the mind of a rightly educated individual, will precede the attainment of a scientific METHOD. But, notwithstanding this, unless its attainment be looked forward to and from the very beginning prepared for, there is little hope and small chance that any education will be conducted aright; or will ever prove in reality worth the name."¹⁶

Coleridge was well aware that any learning programme did not follow a steady course, but that a child's progress was uneven. The idea of Age, Aptitude and Ability, which has received much attention in our own century would probably have been given approval by Coleridge, but it formed no part of the thought of schoolteachers in his own time.

Coleridge was anxious that the pace of progress of young children should be determined by age and ability. His words on

16. The Friend, Section II Essays 10, p.351

determining the individual level of a child have a modern ring and could be well noted by many teachers in our own time.

"This reminded him of a friend who said there might be idiots, but there were no dunces in his school; depend on it, the master is the dunce, not the boy, for in a state of progression, the art is to begin low enough: if a boy cannot learn three lines, give him two, if not two, one, if not one, half: the level of capacity must be found."¹⁷

Thus did Coleridge scorn much of the teaching method in his own lifetime. The factory system of teaching could take little or no account of any level of ability or interest in the pupil. Again Coleridge saw that the interests of the child should be utilised for here was an excellent starting point. In the same lecture he recalls how he was castigated by being placed in the dunce's row at school because he saw little point in learning his Greek. Yet he was promoted when someone noticed the fact that he was voluntarily reading the Eclogues of Virgil, a task considered to be advanced for him, simply because he had a personal interest in these works. He felt that each child had an interest and an aptitude and this could be taken as the starting point. The schoolmaster in this situation had to have a mind which was able to perceive individual differences

17. Inquiring Spirit, p.84

in children and he would require a skill in catering for them. All too many schoolteachers taught in a mechanical fashion and set too much store by factual knowledge and the bare skills of reading, writing and enumeration. Coleridge was highly critical of the results of such a process for to him reading, writing and arithmetic constituted part of the means of an education, certainly not its ends. The acquisition of knowledge was only part of the process and those who praised children for displays of knowledge unsuited to their age could only do the children a disservice.

"Alas! how many examples are now present to my memory, of young men the most anxiously and expensively be-schoolmastered, be-tutored, be-lectured, anything but educated; who have received arms and ammunition, instead of skill, strength and courage; varnished rather than polished; perilously overcivilised, and most pitiably uncultivated. And all from inattention to the method dictated by Nature herself, to the simple truth, that as the forms in all organised existence, so must all true and living knowledge proceed from within; that it may be trained, supported, fed, excited, but can never be infused or impressed."¹⁸

The words 'living knowledge proceed from within' remind

18. The Friend II, Essay 10. p.351-2

us of the definition which Coleridge gave to Education, and of the task which he regarded as that of the teacher.

"Education was to educe, to call forth; as the blossom is educed from the bud, the vital excellencies are within; the acorn is but educed, or brought from the bud.... its object and its end would only be pernicious, if it did not make men worthy and estimable beings."¹⁹

The schoolteacher then has a tremendous responsibility -

"A duty which if ably discharged is the highest and most important which society imposes."²⁰

He was to awaken the vegetative powers and he could do this by supplying materials and stimuli to the imagination. His was a positive role as Coleridge did not believe in the negative education of the early years which Rousseau had advocated; he was not an advocate of the 'play way' which has for a time, even in this century, led to excesses which are only now being controlled. The education of the imagination as Coleridge saw it required awareness and subtlety in taking account of development and establishing the stage of progress reached. A purely negative education he scorned:-

"Thelwall thought it very unfair to influence a child's mind by inculcating any opinions before it should have

19. Inquiring Spirit, p.84

20. Allsop T. Letters, Conversations and Recollections II, 123-6

come to years of discretion, and be able to choose for itself. I showed him my garden, and told him it was my botanical garden. 'How so?' said he, 'It is covered with weeds'. 'Oh', I replied, 'that is only because it has not yet come to its age of discretion and choice. The weeds you see, have taken the liberty to grow, and I thought it unfair in me to prejudice the soil towards roses and strawberries."²¹

It is in the Education of the Imagination that the teacher takes a positive role and prejudices the soil towards roses. It is commonplace now to say that children thrive on love and affection, but it was here that Coleridge saw the starting point for the teacher. For Coleridge the intellectual being rose out of the moral being

"All speculative truths begin with a postulate, even the truths of geometry. They all suppose an act of the will; for in the moral being lies the source of the intellectual."²²

For Coleridge love was a necessary beginning if the imagination was to be nurtured in a wholesome environment. The relationship between teacher and taught was a delicate relationship which could flourish only if mutual trust and understanding, or love, were present. It was the duty of the teacher to

21. Table Talk, July 27, 1830

22. The Friend, Essay XVI p.71

present works of imagination and of quality upon which the child's mind could feed and become acquainted with all that was 'good and great in human character'. This imagination would then provide the media in which knowledge would grow, almost of its own accord.

"In the education of children, love is first to be instilled, and out of love obedience is to be educed. Then impulse and power should be given to the intellect, and the ends of a moral being be exhibited. For this object thus much is effected by works of imagination - that they carry the mind out of self, and show the possible of the good and great in human character....

In the imagination of man exist the seeds of all moral and scientific improvement; chemistry was first alchemy, and out of astrology sprang astronomy. In the childhood of these sciences the imagination opened a way and furnished materials, on which the ratiocinative powers in a maturer stage opened with success. The imagination is the distinguishing characteristic of man as a progressive being; and I repeat that it ought to be carefully guided and strengthened as the indispensable means and instrument of continued amelioration and refinement."²³

23. Coleridge: Lectures on Shakespeare No.XI

Coleridge does give us some idea of how the wise schoolmaster will excite and nurture the imagination. This would be done by presenting noble works of literature and suitable stories. To Coleridge stories should have a suitably imaginative content. He did not agree with Wordsworth who tended to play down the value of books completely. Works of little imagination he detested and in this category he saw most of the novels of his time:

"The modern novel, in which there is no imagination, but a miserable struggle to excite and gratify mere curiosity, ought, in my judgement, to be wholly forbidden to children."²⁴

He felt that such an approach was injurious to the imagination and particularly to the morals as there arose, as a result of such reading, an over-excitement of feeling with no accompanying spur to activity of the mind.

We remember that in Coleridge's early years he had read and gained much from books such as The Arabian Nights, Tom Hickathrift and Jack the Giant Killer. Works of this nature he considered as suitable for children as here the full imagination was spurred and appealed to. He fully supported their use as he thought that the books of this nature helped children to forget themselves. He was severely critical of

24. Quoted in The Portable Coleridge, p.402

many of the publications which filled the market of his time and which were written purely for children.

"..... books which only told how Master Billy and Miss Ann spoke and acted, were not only ridiculous but extremely hurtful; much better to give them Jack the Giant Killer, or the Seven Champions, or anything which being beyond their own sphere of action, should not feed their self pride."²⁶

The presentation of such materials was a task to be undertaken with care and sympathy by the schoolmaster. It was in his timing and assessment of the presentation of the right materials that the teacher revealed his understanding of children. If the education of the imagination or moral education was miscalculated or rushed then the result was worse than if no attempt had been made. Undue pressure could only lead to disaster:-

"Touch a door a little ajar, or half open, and it will yield to the push of your finger. Fire a cannon ball at it and the door stirs not an inch: you make a hole thro' it, the door is spoilt for ever, but not moved. Apply this to moral Education."²⁷

He saw quite clearly that children have limitations in intellectual capacity and was very concerned that the pace of

26. Inquiring Spirit, p.87

27. Ibid, p.81

education should be kept to a suitable level. Even the contemplation of books and the understanding to be gained from them followed a developmental pattern which was the concern of the teacher if he was to use a suitable method in teaching. Everyone will agree that a child has limitations but Coleridge was able to give an account of the precise nature of these limitations:-

"Reflect on the simple fact of the state of a child's mind while with great delight he hears or listens to the story of Jack and the Beanstalk. How could this be if in some sense he did not understand it? Yes, the child does understand each part of it - A, and B, and C; but not $ABC = X$. He understands it as we all understand our dreams while we are dreaming, each shape and incident or group of shapes and incidents by itself - unconscious of, and therefore offended at, the absence of the logical copula or the absurdity of transitions."²⁸

Coleridge was against Wordsworth's suggestion in Ode on the Imitations of Immortality that a child was a philosopher and could read the eternal deep or was possessed by God. Coleridge clearly saw that children had definite limitations as they could see only simple relations and

"had the command of few and crude transitions in

28. Ibid, p.204

expression",²⁹

consequently Coleridge regarded intellectual education as the building up of the power to see relationships and to make the pertinent connectives. Since at this age the judgement is not active the process was to be a delicate one, and one always had to have in view what the child is to become, not only what he is at the moment. In systems where the judgement was forced as in the system which Coleridge surveyed, the child quickly lost view or was blindfolded from the end view of an education. He quickly became selfish and prematurely, though mistakenly, self assured - 'a pert young coxcomb'.

To help a child to come to a true perception of the relationships between things, Coleridge laid great store by the value of language. The first task was to rescue the child from the despotism of the eye. It is no small tribute to Coleridge's reputation as a psychologist that he noticed the value of touch in early childhood learning. He noted that a child first learns to know objects by touch so that the object when visually perceived is already half understood. He knew that the eye was a powerful organ and just as capable of giving rise to illusions as well as true perceptions. Consequently the rescue from such a power was a part of education. He saw that language was able to help in this education as it helped in the development of fine

29. Walsh W. The Use of Imagination, p.19

discrimination and a more fully developed consciousness in the use of words. Of a child whose education has taken account of this he says:-

"He will at least secure himself from the delusive notion that what is not imageable is likewise not conceivable. To emancipate the mind from the despotism of the eye is the first step towards its emancipation from the influences and intrusions of the senses, sensations and passions generally. Thus most effectually is the power of abstraction to be called forth, strengthened and familiarised, and it is this power of abstraction that chiefly distinguishes the human understanding from that of the higher animals - and in the different degrees in which this power is developed, the superiority of man over man mainly consists."³⁰

The value of language in the education of imagination cannot be overemphasised. Coleridge saw that language had a part to play in his concept of growth. He saw language as not only composed of verbal elements,

"I include in the meaning of a word not only its corresponding object; but likewise all the association it recalls. For language is framed to convey not the object alone, but likewise the character, mood and intentions of the person who is representing it."³¹

30. Coleridge on Logic and Learning (ed. Snyder, A.D.) pp.126-7
 31. Biographia Literaria XXII

Language gives experience its peculiarly human note and gives meaning a permanence which would otherwise dissolve before the eyes. Words to Coleridge were

"living powers, by which things of most importance to mankind are activated, combined and humanised."³²

The language of literature and poetry, which should be presented to young people must appeal to the imagination as these languages have been refined and spring from the well of human imagination in the first place. The absolute refinement contained in the language of poetry constituted one of the most valuable models to be presented to children. The language in good poetry showed the value of each word, and also the relationship of each word to the whole. Good poetry, the work of the imagination, would cause the young mind to ponder on the inter-relationships contained in the poem and its constituent words. This inter-relationship, as we shall see, when we discuss Coleridge's science of method, is analogous to the relationships which exist between the various branches of knowledge, and the true perception of these relationships is one of the ultimate aims of education.

32. Aids to Reflection, Preface

The Science of Method

THERE are two accounts of what Coleridge was pleased to call 'the science of method'. One account appears in the second section of 'The Friend' in a section entitled 'On the Grounds of Morals and Religion'. The other and not dissimilar account appeared as a 'General Introduction of the Encyclopaedia Metropolitana' and was subtitled 'A Preliminary Treatise on Method'. Whether Coleridge is speaking on the grounds of morals and religion or whether he is presenting an ideal system for the organisation of a new encyclopaedia his ideas of what constitutes method are the same, for it is in line with his own philosophy of life.

In 'The Friend', Coleridge sets out to show what education really means and to give some account of the value of knowledge. As we read the section on method the Platonic overtones of many of his findings become self-evident. Early in the section we are asked to distinguish between the nature of an educated man and that of an ignorant man in order to decide if an educated man reveals some quality which we ought to note. The distinguishing characteristic of an educated man is,

"the unpremeditated and evidently habitual arrangement of his words, grounded on the habit of foreseeing in each integral part, or (more plainly) in every sentence, the whole that he intends to communicate."³³

33. The Friend II. Essay IV p.316

This is compared to the ignorant man who connects his words only by memory or passion. There is in the educated man then a leading idea, an act of the mind which provides the initiative which gives order and method to the arrangement of his words. This leading idea was of utmost importance to Coleridge. In *Biographia Literaria* we read,

"the intercourse of uneducated men is distinguished from the diction of their superiors in knowledge and power by the greater disjunction and separation in the component parts of that, whatever it be, they wish to communicate. There is a want of that prospectiveness of mind, that surview which enables a man to foresee the whole of what he is to convey, appertaining to one point; and by this means so to subordinate and arrange the different parts according to their relative importance, as to convey it at once, and as an organised whole."³⁴

Coleridge goes on to give illustrations drawn from Shakespeare of a mind which shows the want of this leading idea, and a mind which shows an excess of generalisation.

The Hostess, Mrs. Quickly shows the complete absence of any forethought, and to Coleridge shows the absence of method which characterises the uneducated; Hamlet on the other hand is so precise and compressed in his speech that his exuberance

34. Biographia Literaria, Ch.18, p.201

of mind is said to interfere with the forms of method. It would seem that these illustrations are meant to show extremes and Coleridge would suggest that a balance of the two would show true method. He draws attention to the Greek origin of the word Method, meaning a way, or path, of transit, and suggests that the idea involved is a progressive transition from one step of a course to another, and implies a Principle of UNITY WITH PROGRESSION.

"But that which unites, and makes many things one in the Mind of Man, must be an act of the Mind itself, a manifestation of intellect, and not a spontaneous and uncertain production of circumstances. This act of Mind then, this leading thought, 'this keynote' of the harmony, this 'subtile, cementing, subterraneous power, borrowing a phrase from the nomenclature of legislation, we may not inaptly call the INITIATIVE of all Method."³⁵

Having suggested that Method is initiated by the mind he now looks at the world upon which the mind exercises this initiative and upon the ways in which this world is organised by the mind. He suggests that it is not things which concern the mind if it is working properly but the relations of things. The contemplation of the relations 'is the indispensable condition of thinking methodically'. These relations are then considered

35. Coleridge's Treatise on Method (Ed. Snyder, A.D.) p.2

in themselves and two principal kinds are distinguished,

"One of them is the relation by which we understand that a thing must be: the other, that by which we merely perceive that it is. The one, we call the relation of LAW, using that word in its highest and original sense, namely that of laying down a rule to which the subjects of the LAW must necessarily conform. The other, we call the relation of THEORY."³⁶

Coleridge sees the relationship of Law as seen in its purest form as being an attribute of God. Yet even with man there are sciences which are organised as a result of a pre-determined truth originating in the mind of man. He suggests that astronomy is a science of this type. Another type is a science such as Geometry in which fundamental truths exist for the mind such as the idea of a perfect circle. He then goes on to quote Plato as his authority for such an idea.

The second relation, that of theory,

"in which the existing forms and qualities of objects, discovered by observation or experiments, suggest a given arrangement of many under one point of view... for the purposes of understanding, and in most instance of controlling them,"³⁷

he suggests comprises such scientific arts as medicine,

36. Ibid, p.4

37. The Friend II Essay VI, p.328

chemistry and physiology. Again he notes that before such classification by a leading idea can take place, there must have been some assumption or initiative present in the mind that began the classification. As we would say now, a leading concept must have been present. Some quality in the external world has been abstracted to give the concept under which phenomena can be classified.

In the Treatise on Method, many examples are given of these two orders of knowledge and the methods which are appropriate to each and Coleridge even goes so far as to suggest that between the two methods lies the Method of Fine Arts in which certain great truths composing the Laws of Taste predominate. He shows that in the Method of Law as applied to some sciences limitations to progress have often been present due to the leading ideas being for long based on false hypothesis. The classificatory system has later been entirely revolutionised by the suggestion of a completely different leading idea which has been some other principle behind the relations of the phenomena. A notable case in Coleridge's day was the theory of electricity which was revolutionised by the law of polarity. As an example of a classification system based on false leading ideas he cites the study of botany which he saw as,

'little more than an enormous nomenclature, a huge catalogue bien arrange, yearly and monthly augmented' and all for want of a true hypothesis. A stagnant nomenclature

or classifying system was certainly not method because method implies not only unity but progression.

Progression for Coleridge meant the seeking after the principles which underlay and connected up the branches of knowledge into a total unity. If one is immediately struck by the similarity of this notion to that of 'the forms' suggested by Plato, it would seem that it was not a coincidence as Coleridge now says that Plato's purpose was to

"establish the sources, to evolve the principles, and exemplify the art of method."³⁸

The whole of Plato's theory of education, was to Coleridge bound up in method, and like Plato, Coleridge wishes the mind not to store up knowledge as subject matter, but to be awakened and to seek truth or the principles which lie behind subject matter.

"We see, that to open anew a well of springing water, not to cleanse the stagnant tank, or fill, bucket by bucket the leaden cistern; that the education of the intellect, by awakening the principle and method of self-development, was his proposed object, not any specific information that can be conveyed into it from without: not to assist in storing the passive mind with the various sorts of knowledge most in request, as if the human soul were a mere

38. The Friend II, Essay VII, p.333

repository or banqueting room, but to place it in such relations of circumstance as should gradually excite the germinal power that craves no knowledge but what it can take up into itself, what it can appropriate, and reproduce in fruits of its own. To shape, to dye, to paint over and to mechanise the mind, he resigned, as their proper trade to the Sophists....."³⁹

From all that has been previously noted, not only was this the idea of Education for Plato, but it was basic to any idea of Education held by Coleridge. He held that both Plato and Francis Bacon in their own time and their own ways had realised the need of an awakening idea which would set alight the germinal power both in the individual and in the organisation of particular branches of knowledge. Both had indeed been masters of the science or art of method.

As usual, Coleridge adopts a rather sweeping attitude as he essays to look back over the history of civilisation to decide what common quality underlies the various great eras of civilisation. After suggesting that all great civilisations have commenced by educating in their young, the moral sense or the inner man he further suggests that it is the development of the human in human nature which is important.

"The aim, the method throughout was, in the first place,

39. The Friend II, Essay VII, pp.333-4

to awaken, to cultivate, and to mature the truly human in human nature, in and through itself, or as independently as possible of the notices derived from sense, and of the motives that had reference to the sensations; till the time should arrive when the senses themselves might be allowed to present symbols and attestations of truths, learnt previously from deeper and inner sources."⁴⁰

This he suggests was done in early times by excitement of the idea of God as spirit, and by deference to the will of God. These Coleridge suggests were the first lessons in the cultivation or culture of reason and will which were limited by faith. It was a spiritual end for education which was carried on by intellectual means. It led to true culture.

With this education of the inner man he contrasts that which throughout the ages has been carried on by those who deduced their knowledge from sense impressions of the outside world. These became rapidly civilised as opposed to those who became cultured,

"They built cities, invented musical instruments, were artificers in brass and in iron, and refined on the means of sensual gratification, and the conveniences of courtly intercourse."⁴¹

40. Ibid, p.352

41. Ibid, p.353

It seems that Coleridge saw in this line of development all that led to the materialism which he hated in his own time and he more than hints that this is the line which led to the unsatisfactory regime in France.

From this, however, he is led to suggest that there are two directions of human activity - trade and literature. The commercial activity is essential for the welfare of the body, whilst literature is the province of the mind. In commerce it is the outer world which calls men into action, acting through the senses.

"His ultimate aim is appearance and enjoyment".

But he warns that an excess pursuit of this path will lead only to disillusion and discontent. It is the pursuit of literature which Coleridge regards as the important one, and here we are back to the idea that literature in its widest Platonic sense will help man to know himself.

"In order, therefore, to the recognition of himself in nature, man must first learn to comprehend nature in himself, and its laws in the ground of his own existence. Then only will he have achieved the method, the self-unravelling clue, which alone can securely guide him to the conquest of the former - when he was discovered in the basis of their union the necessity of their differences; in the principle of their continuance the solution of their changes. It is the idea of the common centre, of

the universal law, by which all power manifests itself in opposite yet interdependent forces, that enlightening inquiry, multiplying experiment, and at once inspiring humility and perseverance, will lead him to comprehend gradually and progressively the relation of each to the other; of each to all, and of all to each."⁴²

Again in the phrase 'self-unravelling clue' we have the suggestion of an initiative act of mind which leads to principles on which to organise knowledge. From this point on, Coleridge is concerned with the true value of knowledge and, like Plato, he seems to be working towards something higher than man. It is as if he transcends all subject matter as such, and just as Plato tried to go behind the forms to suggest a unity, in the comprehension of which, Music, Gymnastic and Dialectic were only means to an end, Coleridge suggests a progression towards a unity of knowledge which transcends all science.

The laws of the pure sciences, and the theories of the applied sciences when completely understood and held in balance, are for Coleridge inadequate in accounting for all the creations of God. A man who has developed rationally only will be in no position to see the true principles of knowledge. However, a man who has developed in a balanced way, both

42. Ibid, p.359-60

scientifically and with due regard to literature, a man who has understood by reflection, in the Coleridgean sense, his own inner soul, this is the man whom Coleridge regards as truly educated. He will realise that much knowledge is achieved, not by scientific analysis, however valuable that may be, but some knowledge is achieved only by revelation. It is for this purpose that Coleridge elevates religion to the highest point in any hierarchy of knowledge. Such a mind will have noted the events of history and will have noted the lessons of past ages. For Coleridge, History was the study of man in society. It was from study of events that human Principles and Passions could be seen working. However, an educated man with due regard for revelation and with faith would see the unity of all knowledge.

In many ways this theory with its Platonic idealism shows Coleridge's reaction against the rationalism of eighteenth century thought at its height. He is advocating that we look at man as far more than just an intellectual system. His emphasis on the human and spiritual side of man were largely misunderstood in his day and his mention of revelation would fall on stony ground in the early nineteenth century. His distinction between civilisation and culture was based on a long observation of events in France and a deep interest in the events of history. However, it is his view of the whole nature of man and its importance in any educative process which distinguishes the new thought of Coleridge. His science of

method, or indeed if we wish to call it so, his theory of knowledge, was based on a view of man which was totally against the view of man which had come down from the age of Pope. The events of the French Revolution and the growing materialism of his age together with a distrust of the nature of much of the scientific enquiry of his time caused Coleridge to look carefully into the nature of man and to see that if only the intellect was given free reign and extolled to the exclusion of spirit and all that was fine in man, then the end product, for the individual and for society was mere civilisation and the loss of all that was of lasting value, which he termed culture. This idea of culture as opposed to mere civilisation was to receive attention from more thinkers in the later nineteenth century.

Chapter VI

COLERIDGE ON

EDUCATION & SOCIETY

Educational Ideas for a National Church

IT WAS towards the end of his life that Coleridge wrote the volume 'On Church and State'. During his lifetime he had progressed from youthful radicalism to a conservative outlook. However, this was a far more considered change than the bare facts suggest. Coleridge had always been possessed of a reflective mind. During his lifetime such events had taken place and such books had been written, that on all sides he was able to see change and ferment. With much change he must have been in agreement, but his reflective nature also led him to analyse and to decide for himself just what was of value and worthy of preservation. He had seen the results of an emphasis on the rational man and did not like them. He had seen the growth of materialism and he had seen men seek short term satisfactions at the expense of long term ends. Many ideas which had previously been regarded as of value had become discredited by some in his time. It was this which caused Coleridge to analyse his society and its values, and to try to show that in former times long usage had often shown true values which were in danger of being neglected in his own age of revolutionary fervour.

Some of his regrets at the way things seemed to be moving in his age he put together in a section of 'Church and State' in a chapter entitled simply "Regrets and Apprehensions". Among his apprehensions for the future of education we read,

"..... national education is to be finally severed from all religion, but speedily and decisively emancipated from the superintendence of the national Clergy. Education is to be reformed, and defined as synonymous with instruction...
... The subjects to be taught in the National schools are to be reading, writing, arithmetic, the mechanic arts, elements and results of physical science, but to be taught as much as possible empirically."¹

It seemed to Coleridge that Education was in danger of being degraded to simply a means by which men could achieve their desires. The total development of the latent powers in the individual had ceased to be the purpose or end of Education. To Coleridge this was another sign of the total malaise into which society was in danger of falling. It was in order to counteract such dangers and to give guidance back on to a more stable path that Coleridge wrote his account of what he considered to be the correct basis and relationship between the Church and the State. Basic to his ideas of this relationship is a true understanding of what is meant by Education. He saw that his age was one which increasingly demanded education for all, but in its place was rapidly inserting 'instruction'. The rationalist view of life which regarded education as merely intellectual development was having increasing effect. It was

1. Church and State (Ed. H.N. Coleridge) p.73

after long deliberation upon such developments that Coleridge gave this comment and suggestion in reappraisal of the state of the English nation.

Coleridge first looked at the English Constitution which he regarded as a long-lasting balance of forces that reflected the Idea, or fundamental political principles, held by the English over the centuries. This balance he called the lex equilibrii. He saw two social elements that must be properly balanced against each other: 'Permanence' and 'Progression' and 'Church' and 'State'.

Coleridge was probably driven to the first formula by his opposition to the French Revolution and its reactionary opponents. By Permanence, Coleridge meant all those aspects of a society which contain the energies of national life within fixed channels. Such is the role of laws, institutions, and even customary practice, habits and responses. By Progression he meant the volatile elements which led to change as they seek to find a place in an established society. Without these forces of Progression there can be no vigour, no liberty, no improvement in material well-being. However, change should not be so rapid that it leads to political or cultural or even moral anarchy. The tendency toward Permanence is the means by which society holds fast to past achievements which should not be lost in the cause of fitful experimentation.

As Coleridge surveyed his own age he saw Permanence

represented by the major landed magnates. Progression by the commercial classes. Permanence was tied to the land. However, the wealth of the mercantile, manufacturing and professional classes he regarded as 'personal' as it lay mainly in their skills and even their reputations. If a man wished to secure his wealth and position he would turn to the land and thereby ally himself with those whose interests were in maintaining wealth rather than acquiring it.

In politics, the great landed interests were represented by the House of Lords, whilst the Commons were the province of the commercial and progressive interests. In between these two almost antagonistic forces Coleridge saw the gentry as a mediating force. These were the moderately wealthy who always had a minority of places in the Commons and who tempered the radical majority in that house. Between the forces of Permanence and Progression the King was the "beam of the scales". He united these opposing but not contradictory forces in a common focus of loyalty.

Permanence versus Progression was the first of Coleridge's constitutional balances. The second was a proper relationship between the Civil State in a narrow political sense and what Coleridge called the "National Church". This National Church was not actually a church in the usual sense of the word. It exists as an idea quite distinct from Christianity or any other religion. It is in effect a great national guild of the learned

professions. Coleridge regarded some such institution as a necessity in any well ordered state, be it Christian or otherwise. Coleridge felt that such a church had formerly existed in England and in pre-Christian times the pagan priesthood was the intellectual estate or Church.

In former England it had consisted of all the learned, the "Clerisy" who together formed the educational establishment of the realm:-

"The Clerisy of the nation, or national Church, in its primary acceptation and original intention, comprehended the learned of all denominations, the sages and professors of the law and jurisprudence, of medicine and physiology, of music, of military and civil architecture, of the physical sciences.... in short, all the so-called liberal arts and sciences, the possession and application of which constitute the civilisation of a country."²

In order to function this institution required an adequate portion of the national wealth. Coleridge argued that landed property in England had always been divided into two portions, the 'Propriety' and the 'Nationalty'. The Propriety was that part leased out in entailed heritable portions to the aristocracy to be managed in perpetual trust for the benefit of the nation. The remaining portion, the Nationalty, was set

2. Ibid, p.54

aside for the maintenance of the National Church. Thus was a certain part of the wealth of the nation set permanently aside to support education and learning.

In modern times the commercially profitable professions such as law and architecture became self-supporting. But the Nationalty was still needed for the great centers of scholarship and instruction - the universities. And throughout the nation there remained a need for funds to support the local clergyman and schoolteacher. Coleridge believed these two figures existed ideally to perform essential and complementary functions in the local community:

"1st To the maintenance of the Universities and the great liberal schools: 2ndly To the maintenance of a pastor and schoolmaster in every parish: 3rdly To the raising and keeping in repair of the churches, schools and other buildings of that kind; and, lastly, to the maintenance of the pauper, that is, the infirm, poor whether from age or sickness; one of the original purposes of the national reserve being the alleviation of those evils, which in the best forms of worldly States must arise, and must have been foreseen as arising, from the institution of individual properties and primogeniture."³

3. Ibid, pp.80-81

The Clergyman, by virtue of rank and duty, was a gentleman whose functions brought him in contact with all levels of society. He and his family were meant to be a humanising influence throughout local society, and by their example inspire respect for intellectual and moral cultivation. It was the purpose of the schoolteacher to instruct the young in the essentials of learning, patriotism and morality.

If it was the role of the Civil State to reconcile Permanence and Progression, law and freedom; the National Church existed,

"to secure and improve that civilisation, without which the nation could be neither permanent nor progressive."⁴

Coleridge saw that one of the ends of a State, and here he obviously includes the National Church, was to

"develope in every native of the country those faculties, and to provide for every native that knowledge and those attainments, which are necessary to qualify him for a member of the State; the free subject of a civilised realm. I do not mean those degrees of moral and intellectual cultivation which distinguish man from man in the same civilised society, much less those that separate the Christian from the this-worldian; but those only that constitute the civilised man in contradistinction from the barbarian, the savage, and the animal."⁵

5. Ibid, p.85

The National Church was to develop patriotism in the state, but it was also in itself the necessary counterpoise, within the state in the largest sense, to the state in the narrow political sense.

Coleridge had long considered the function of the church to be a vital element in national life as we know from a reading of the Lay Sermons. He had noted the rise to prominence of commercial and material values and he saw the need for an activating force which would counter these values by leading the philosophical, religious and artistic life of the nation. A vigorous National Church would enable 'cultivation' to keep pace with civilisation and would be able to spread true values through all levels of society.

His criticism of the Church of England stemmed from the relationship it had with Civil State. He felt that the church was too often influenced by political considerations and could have no autonomy of action as long as its endowments were the concern of hungry politicians. Only when such activities had been stopped could the Church of England possibly take on the function of the National Church. The trust which the National Church would hold was too sacred to be tied in any way to political power of the moment:

"No interest this of a single generation, but an entailed boon too sacred, too momentous, to be shaped and twisted, pared down or plumped up, by any assemblage of Lords,

Knights, and Burgesses for the time being."⁶

An ideal state the Church should govern itself. The proper seat of government for the Church were its own Houses of Convocation. The titular head of the Church is the King, who is thus the trustee of the Nationality. If Parliament should attempt to tamper with the independence or endowment of the parishes, universities or schools this would be a violation of the true Idea of the Constitution, and if successful, would be the source of ravaging disease in the life of the nation.

Although Control of the National Clerisy was no part of Parliament's concern, the Nation as a whole could demand certain qualifications for admission to the clerisy. No aspirant to the Clerisy could profess allegiance to any foreign power or acknowledge any other head than the King of England. Failure to meet this condition is the only absolute disqualification which Coleridge would impose. The basic principle which Coleridge is aiming to assert is that a proper State must have an educational system extending through all levels of the society. This system must be maintained by men who devote their lives to learning and teaching, and whose financial and intellectual independence is secure against the incursions of political power. The State may demand loyalty, but it does not necessarily demand conformity.

6. Ibid, p.91

One aim of Coleridge was to show that an established National Church was an integral part of any State and no mere accident of history. It served no purpose to ask why the State supports a particular sect. The Church of England is not just another sect. Indeed, according to the essential nature of the Idea the National Church is a secular estate of the realm rather than a religious institution. The fact that the Church of England is Christian is merely fortuitous. Whatever happens there will always be a need for a Church of England:-

"As the vine, with its prop may exist, though in less perfection, without the olive, or previously to implantation:- even so is Christianity, and a fortiori any particular scheme of theology derived and supposed by its partisans to be deduced from Christianity, no essential part of the being of the national Church, however conducive or even indisposible it may be to its wellbeing. And even so, a National Church might exist, and has existed, without, because before the institution of the Christian Church; - as the Levitical Church in the Hebrew Constitution, and the Druidical in the Keltic, would suffice to prove."⁷

The Church then was not so much a theological position but more an institution. It was an institution composed of those

7. Ibid, p.66

concerned in the pursuit of knowledge. He desired to safeguard the church from sectarian controversy and he was perhaps the first to anticipate the dangers of a controversy between scientific criticism and "Bibliolatry". By this freedom from political and sectarian interests, Coleridge was seeking freedom for a band who could pursue knowledge for its own sake. In separating Church from State however, care should be taken that power for its own sake should not develop within the Church. This he felt was one of the faults of the Roman church, which was constantly trying to become a Civil State rather than a Church. He saw that this would lead to collapse of the Idea as no state could tolerate a rival within its community. He also felt that knowledge for its own sake should be pursued without any need for the members to be concerned with politics. In his time he had seen Political philosophers expected to become political agitators, and politics had not gained from this. Again and again he returned to the cause of intellectual debility - the need for a truly philosophic class devoted to the pursuit of truth.

We must remember that if such hopes seem somewhat extravagant, then so do some of Coleridge's fears. Coleridge felt that the Church of England was heir to a wealth of culture embodied in its own past, and if education became separated from the Church that wealth would be lost. As he looked for an alternative to the Church as an agency of learning he was

appalled as he saw only a Benthamite School system or mechanics institutes or even "lecture bazaar" universities. He needed something more fundamental than these which he considered merely as means. He argued that religion has a great advantage as a true means of education. By parable and symbol, backed by the authority of faith, its most complex truths can be adapted to all classes and levels of intelligence. It was faith which made man a philosopher in conduct if not in intellect. It was religion which informed the masses and which taught them principles which their intellects could never possess. In the absence of Christianity few humane influences would reach the common man and the character of a culture is determined by its popular religious faith:

"In fine, religion, true or false, is and ever has been the centre of gravity in a realm, to which all other things must accommodate themselves."⁸

If Coleridge's appeal for a National Church seems to be a means of perpetuating an elite, this elite is one which is based on **principles**. For Coleridge it was the leaven that leavens the lump, as it would be spread through all the strata of society. It was the aim of education to enable men to see the fullness of things in proper relation. This implies in Coleridge's language men of genius rather than talent

8. Ibid, p.67

and not ~~all~~ fell into this class. He was scornful of such as Bentham whose elite would produce only men of talent.

He realised that society had to be adapted to constant change, but change should be for long term principles rather than short term material ends. Consequently an elite which could cultivate and lead was more desirable than men who were partially educated and whose outlook would appeal to 'mobocracy'. Only a liberal education in its most humane sense fits man for government. This education would be based on true principles with theology at its head. In outlining the nature of the clerisy he said Theology,

"Was indeed, placed at the head of all; and of good right did it claim the precedence. But why? Because under the name of theology or divinity were contained the interpretation of languages, the conservation and tradition of past events, the momentous epochs and revolutions of the race and nation, the continuation of the records, logic, ethics and the determination of ethical science, in application to the rights and duties of men in all their various relations, social and civil, and lastly, the ground knowledge, the prima scientia as it was named - philosophy, or the doctrine and discipline of ideas."⁹

9. Ibid, pp.54-5

Coleridge and Educational Practice

WHEN we turn from the theories for an Educational system held by Coleridge to his interest in the Educational practices of his own time it comes as a surprise to find him showing great enthusiasm for the Monitorial system of teaching as devised by the Rev. Andrew Bell. The theories of both Bell and Lancaster are well known and it is easy in the twentieth century to look back and list the limitations of the system, but it would be unfair to a contemporary of Bell if we did not examine the nature of his system and the support of the Church which it received.

Bell had first thought of the system of using senior pupils as teachers to overcome difficulties of staffing whilst he was headmaster of the Male Orphan Asylum at Madras. On his return to England in 1797 he had published an account of the system which was introduced in England in St. Botolph's Charity School, Aldgate and elsewhere. Almost simultaneously, Joseph Lancaster introduced an almost similar system, and indeed he gained assistance from Bell's publication in furthering his work. In an age which was growing more used to the factory system in industry it is not surprising that the cheapness of the method appealed to the devotees of popular education, and Lancaster's system gained more and more support. Support came from many distinguished sources including the King, and the prospect of educating children at 5s. a head appealed to such an extent that

it was used by Mr. Whitbread in introducing his Parochial Schools Bill in 1807.

However, the non-sectarian emphasis of Lancaster's plan caused it to lose the support of many. This was accelerated by the criticism of the system by Mrs. Trimmer, who by her own good works had gained a position of authority in educational matters. Accordingly, attention was directed towards Bell's Madras system, which gained increasing support from the Church. The denunciation of Lancaster as an infidel and an atheist, whilst losing for him the Church support did gain allegiance from the rationalist party and many Nonconformists. The dispute hardened and two antagonistic sides were formed. As Birchenough says,

"It was the difficulty of harmonising deep-rooted differences of religious and social ideals. In the present instance we have a party of men who regarded the widespread dissemination of the three R's and simple Bible reading, without note or comment as a matter of urgency. On the other side, we see many individuals no less honest, pinning their faith to the spiritual uplift of religious formularies and observances, and less convinced of the importance and urgency of mere secular instruction. In addition they were firmly persuaded that if any universal system of education was to be established, the Church was the only organisation

with the power and the sanction to carry on the work."¹⁰

Accordingly, Bell was appointed to the Rectory of Swanage and was able to establish day and Sunday Schools in the parish. He received increasing Church support and was able to act in an advisory capacity to parties opening schools in other parts of the country. Several old schools were reorganised on the Madras plan and new ones opened. At this time Bell was known by Wordsworth, Southey and Coleridge. One source of support for the plan came from Bishop Shute Barrington of Durham, a friend of Coleridge, who had visited Durham and on occasion used the Cathedral library. It was Bishop Barrington who founded at this time the Barrington School at Bishop Auckland for the training of monitors on the Madras plan.

In 1808 Bell furthered his system by publishing his sketch of a National Institution for training the children of the poor in the elements of letters, morality and religion, in conjunction with industry. Three years later in 1811, due to the activity of several High Churchmen, The National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church throughout England and Wales was founded. The Archbishop of Canterbury supported by a large number of church dignitaries and peers was President of the National Society. Using Bell's system of teaching it was adopted as a fundamental principle,

"That the national religion should be made the foundation

10. Birchenough, C. History of Elementary Education in England and Wales p.48

of national education, and should be the first and chief thing taught to the poor, according to the excellent liturgy and catechism provided by our own Church for that purpose."¹¹

⁶ Very quickly the number of schools grew as money from all sources including the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge flowed into the society. In 1816, the cost of educating a child in a school of 500, exclusive of building charges was estimated at 4s. 2d. per head. This was one fact which was assured to appeal to the minds of such an age. By 1831, according to the returns of the National Society, the National Schools alone were educating 900,412 children.

The boast of the Monitorial school protagonist that a thousand children could work under the supervision of one master has probably been noted to such an extent that our common vision is of a very large establishment. Such schools did exist, but we must remember that Bell visited many schools, even small village establishments, and influenced them to adopt his system. The method was even used in the small village school at Grasmere where Hartley Coleridge received some of his education. After a visit with Wordsworth to this school, Bell managed to persuade the master to take up the mastership of a larger school in the South of England. However, the

11. Ibid, p.50

system of teaching was common to all schools of the National Society, large or small.

One master was responsible for teaching a group of monitors who then dispersed to teach the same material to a group of children. For Bell, the ultimate object was

"to make good scholars, good men, good subjects and good Christians; in other words, to promote the temporal and spiritual welfare of our pupils."¹²

Admirable though these aims may be, the actual accomplishment can only be regarded as limited. Using such texts as Mrs. Trimmer's Charity School Spelling Book and both Testaments of the Bible, reading and writing were taught in the most mechanical manner. Likewise, arithmetic or computation was carried out in a manner which can only be regarded as stilted and monotonous. On accomplishing fixed standards children could be promoted from the top of one grade to the middle position of the next grade and careful records were kept. Similarly within Bell's system if a child on promotion could not maintain his position he could be degraded. In all subjects a definite procedure from one stage to the next was advocated. In reading for instance single syllable words were first to be mastered before polysyllabic words could be attempted. Drill was the watchword for this method and the role of the teacher became more that of an

12. Bell, A. The Madras School, p.7.

organiser and inspector than actual teacher.

However, if we view this system as mechanical it is with the advantage of hindsight that we do so. When the system was inaugurated it was natural to hail it as an advance over much of the practice in those times. To educate greater numbers and to do so cheaply appeared as obvious advantages. Yet other features recommend themselves also.

"Look at a regiment or a ship"

says Bell,

"you will see a beautiful example of the system which I have recommended for a single school."

In it,

"every boy has his place and hour its proper business...."
 "... there grows up imperceptibly a sense of duty, subordination and obedience".... "The hope of reward... the fear, not of corporal pain, but of disgrace, are the effective springs by which the mighty machine is to be moved."¹³

A system based on emulation and the full time occupation of the pupils could only lead to the betterment of the pupils. The comparative freedom from actual corporal punishment was also a humane change in the early nineteenth century. However, on the form of punishment, Bell and Lancaster differed. In

13. Quoted from The Madras School in Birchenough, C. History of Elementary Education in England and Wales, pp.226-7

Lancaster's plan offenders were made conspicuous by being subjected to punishments which involved ridicule. They were hung with labels or crowns, probably the forebear of the dunce's cap. Hardened offenders may be yoked together and forced to walk backwards through the school. Bell believed in order which would be fixed by habit.

"The smart of bodily pain soon subsides and is forgotten, but the sense of shame strikes close and will not suffer the offender to be at peace, till the fault that occasioned it be obliterated by subsequent meritorious action....

These things daily and hourly preached... are wrought into the sentiments", and they become "the fixed and settled habits of body and mind".¹⁴

Many protagonists of the system obviously welcomed the attempt at moral and social training which was implicit in the plans of the two men. However, it may be doubted if many of the actual schools lived up to the ideals of the planners.

Through friendship with Wordsworth and the Bishop of Durham, Coleridge was well versed in the system devised by Bell. As a supporter of the Church he eulogised its inception.

In The Friend we read:

"A system of education is wanting, such a system as that discovered, and to the blessings of thousands

14. Bell, A. The Madras School, pp.270-72

realised, by Dr. Bell, which I never am nor can be weary of praising, while my heart retains any spark of regard for human nature, or of reverence for human virtue - a system, by which in the very act of receiving knowledge, the best virtues and most useful qualities of the moral character are awakened, developed, and formed into habits. Were there a Bishop of Durham (no odds whether a temporal or a spiritual lord) in every county or half county, and a clergyman enlightened with the views and animated with the spirit of Dr. Bell in every parish we might boldly challenge the whole world to show a peasantry as well fed and clothed as the English, or with equal chances of improving their situation, and of securing old age of repose and comfort to a life of cheerful industry."¹⁵

These are bold claims and cause us to wonder what features of the system appealed to Coleridge.

For an account of Coleridge's thoughts on the system we must turn to a report of a lecture given in 1813 and reported in the Bristol Gazette. In this lecture on the 'New System of Education', Coleridge draws attention to a few features which had for him a particular appeal. The method of boys teaching boys under the eye of a schoolmaster appealed for in its simplicity there was "a world of richness". He felt that in

15. The Friend, Section I, Essay 7, pp.161-2.

this method labour would be lessened and improvement forwarded, as it gave to the poor the benefits of a method of learning open until then only to the higher and middle classes. He saw value in the method of breaking down learning in too easily assimilated parts as it would avoid the existence of a Dunce's row. Each child would accomplish something. He felt that in this system, the child retained his childish nature and could proceed at his own pace.

Other advantages were

"The pleasure of getting forward in hopes of being appointed to help others - 2ndly The prevention of procrastination, so dreadful in its consequences through life - 3rdly Emulation without envy. Lastly: It enabled a child to learn in one year what usually took three; but above all, it gave an opportunity to boys whilst teaching the lower forms or classes, to divulge all moral and religious ideas whilst in the act of instruction."¹⁶

To keep a child occupied and free from procrastination was a policy which appealed to many in those years. Coleridge also welcomed a more humane attitude towards the use of punishment in schools:-

"Children never should be made the instruments of punishment farther than the taking of one another's place; never

16. Quoted in Inquiring Spirit, p.87

should be taught to look with revenge and hatred on each other; from the goodness of heart of those who tolerated the system, he was convinced that they need only be reminded of its ill effects, to explode it. Five minutes' confinement from play would have more effect on boys than whipping; he was not an advocate for that, for he thought it did no good; but if it were necessary to bring up boys as Britons, who had and might have again to oppose the world, let them be brought up to despise pain, but above all to hate dishonour; to hold him who regards the feelings of the moment, as a wretch and a coward.¹⁷

As we can see, Coleridge saw great possibilities in the system. Many facets appealed to him in its method. It was supported by the Church and had as its basis the Liturgy and Catechism of the church. However, this was in 1813, at a time when Coleridge's development of a personal philosophy was incomplete. As we know from previous sections, later in life Coleridge developed a theory that Education should be based on the nature of the whole man. Towards the end of his life he had seen the shortcomings of the English Education system and he accordingly wrote a plea for a new system under the auspices of a National Church. Even by 1817 he had realised the limitations of any system which appealed only to the

17. Ibid, p.89

intellectual faculty in man. True education should be based on the nature of the whole man. Towards the end of his life he had seen the shortcomings of the English Education system and he accordingly wrote a plea for a new system under the auspices of a National Church. Even by 1817 he had realised the limitations of any system which appealed only to the intellectual faculty in man. True education should be based on the total nature of man which should be developed in harmony so that a true balance of all the faculties would be the end product.

As he looked again at the Monitorial system in the light of these later ideas he was disappointed with what he saw. He had realised even in this year that if a truly educated nation was to evolve, then it would be dependent upon a well- educated higher class, an elite. Consequently we read in 'The Statesman's Manual':

"The mistake proceeds from the assumption that a national education will have been realised whenever the people at large have been taught to read and write.... Much less can it be held to constitute education, which consists in educating the faculties and forming the habits; the means varying according to the sphere in which the individuals to be educated are likely to act and become useful. I do not hesitate to declare that whether I consider the nature of discipline adopted, or the plan of poisoning the children of the poor with a sort of potential infidelity under the

'liberal idea' of teaching these points only of religious faith in which all denominations agree, I cannot but denounce the so-called Lancastrian schools as pernicious beyond all power of compensation by the new acquirements of reading and writing."¹⁸

From Coleridge's position as a member of the Established Church one would expect this outburst against a system supported by Rationalists and Nonconformists. Yet even here we can see that his view of education has developed with his philosophy. However, this point is confirmed beyond all doubt when he continues;

"But take even Dr. Bell's original and unsophisticated plan, which I myself regard as an especial gift of Providence to the human race; and suppose this incomparable machine, this vast moral steam-engine, to have been adopted and in free motion throughout the empire; it would yet appear to me a most dangerous delusion to rely on it as if this of itself formed an efficient national education. We cannot I respect, honour the scheme too highly as a prominent and necessary part of the great process; but it will neither supersede, nor can it be substituted for, sundry other measures that are at least equally important. And these are such measures, too, as unfortunately involve

18. The Statesman's Manual in Political Tracts of Wordsworth Coleridge and Shelley (Ed. R.J. White) 1953, p.9

the necessity of sacrifices on the side of the rich and powerful, more costly, and far more difficult, than the yearly subscription of a few pounds! - Such measures as demand more self-denial than the expenditure of time in a committee or of eloquence in a public meeting.

Nay, let Dr. Bell's philanthropic end have been realised, and the proposed modicum of learning universal; yet convinced of its insufficiency to stem up against the strong currents set in from an opposite point, I dare not assure myself, that it may not be driven backward by them and become confluent with the evils it was intended to preclude."¹⁹

This last quotation does not indicate an undue pessimism, but is indicative of the fact that Coleridge was arriving at a mature philosophic position. It shows that he was aware of the limitations of the most advanced educational practices of his time in developing a truly educated nation. He saw that elementary educational practice in the early nineteenth century was based upon what he would term a 'pollarded' view of man.

When we consider Secondary and Advanced Education, the true weight of Coleridge's philosophy can be seen. He always spoke well of his own school days at Christ's Hospital and the model which it presented to his mind was one with which he was

19. Ibid, p.9

in agreement. He saw value in the classical tradition which the school followed, but he obviously felt that the school had given him more than this. Looking back upon the methods of teaching used by James Boyer he said:

"He sent us to the University excellent Latin and Greek scholars and tolerable Hebraists. Yet our classical knowledge was the least of the good gifts which we derived from his zealous and conscientious tutorage."²⁰

Coleridge obviously felt that the tradition of such schools as Christ's Hospital had much to offer and the literary methods used in the schools were methods he sought to preserve. To Coleridge they were methods which were proved and had stood the test of time. He valued the products of such schools in which the nature of the boy was preserved. He saw danger in methods which ignored this.

"There are indeed modes of teaching which have produced, and are producing, youths of a very different stamp; modes of teaching in comparison with which we have been called on to despise our great public schools and universities, modes by which children are to be metamorphosed into prodigies. And prodigies with a vengeance have I known thus produced! Prodigies of self-conceit, shallowness, arrogance and infidelity!"²¹

20. Biographia Literaria, p.5

21. Ibid, p.6

The value which Coleridge attributed to his secondary school education was that it had been an education in breadth.

Of his own University Education, we know that Coleridge had been critical. Although he never completed the course, he had regarded it as piecemeal and lacking in method. To a mind which strove to connect all knowledge this was an unforgivable error. Consequently it is interesting to note that on his return from Germany, whilst still quite a young man, Coleridge had proposed to run a private Class for six or seven young men. The class did not run for long but it is interesting to see the scope of the proposed course of study which he outlined in a letter to Thomas Poole dated May 6th 1796:

"On my return I would commence a school for 8 young men at 100 guineas each - proposing to perfect them in the following studies in order as follows -

1. Man as animal: including the complete knowledge of Anatomy, Chemistry, Mechanics and Optics.
2. Man as an Intellectual Being: including the Ancient Metaphysics, the systems of Locke and Hartley - of the Scotch Philosophers - and the new Kantian System.
3. Man as a Religious Being: including an historic summary of all Religions and the arguments for and against Natural and Revealed religion. Then proceeding from the individuals to the aggregate of individuals and disregarding all chronology except that of mind I

should perfect them in 1. The History of Savage tribes; 2. Of semi-barbarous nations; 3. Of nations emerging from semi-barbarism; 4. Of civilised states; 5. Of luxurious states; 6. Of revolutionary states; 7. Of Colonies.

During these studies I should intermix the knowledge of languages and instruct my scholars in Belles Lettres and the principles of composition - Now seriously - do you think that one of my scholars thus perfected would make a better senator than perhaps any one member of either of our Houses?"²²

We could not have a better example of Coleridge's belief in the unity of all knowledge than this syllabus. And yet it is based on an organising principle. It may seem Encyclopaedic in its scope, but Coleridge had in mind that this course should serve as a preparation to young men about to set out upon careers at the bar, the senate, the pulpit or in other professions. He later suggested a rather full course in Logic should be added. We note that he gave prominence to science in his course as well as literature. The modern day social sciences of psychology and sociology are there in embryo also.

When in 1825 the University of London was to be founded, Coleridge was keen to give a series of lectures examining the

22. Quoted in Snyder, A.D., Coleridge on Logic and Learning, pp.40-41

philosophical principles which should guide the setting up of such an institution. The course was never given but it is interesting to see how Coleridge felt that such an undertaking should be based on firm principles. Had the course been given one feels that it might have had much influence on the development of Universities in this country. The three Lectures were to be as follows:-

- "1. On the Histories of Universities generally, the most interesting Features in the history of the most celebrated Universities in Great Britain, France, Germany, &c. Reduction of all Universities of any name, with respect to their construction and constitution, to three Classes.
2. The Meaning of the ~~Team~~ University and the one true and only adequate scheme of a University stated and unfolded from the seed (i.e. the idea) to the full Tree with all its Branches.
3. The advantages, moral, intellectual, national, developed from reason and established by proofs of History; and lastly, a plan (and sketch of the means of approximating to the Ideal, adapted and applied to this Metropolis (NB. The Plan in detail, salaries only not mentioned - the particular sums, I mean). The obstacles, the favourable circumstances, the pro and con regarding the question of Collegiate Universities,

etc. etc."²³

Coleridge felt that an Education which was to fit a man for a profession should be widely based. The essential quality of an Education was that it should teach men to think. If a man had a wide education which was organised in the first place on sound principles, then he would be forced to think and to see the connecting principles which underlay all the various branches of knowledge. Again its value was that it should appeal to the whole man so that he would indeed develop in harmony. This was to be considered as the aim for any system of higher education. His whole philosophy of society and the nature of society follows on these lines - an organic principle is involved in the structure of society, just as there is an organic principle in the individual. Man should be educated fully in order to take his full place in society.

23. Quoted in Snyder, A.D. Coleridge on Logic & Learning, p.41

Chapter VII

COLERIDGE & PSYCHOLOGY

IN the twentieth century we have become accustomed to basing much educational theory upon the findings of psychologists. Indeed, every student in a College of Education is expected to have some understanding of psychological theory and to be able to apply this knowledge to the everyday classroom situation, thus gaining insight into the causes of the behaviour observed. Much of the psychological theory which has a bearing upon education is of comparatively recent origin. The names of Freud, McDougall, Hadfield, Allport, are often quoted and the fruits of their research have been often utilised in the first half of the twentieth century. Yet in an almost intuitive way, it seems to the writer, Coleridge had in the early nineteenth century anticipated some of the findings of modern psychology and had formulated many questions which are the subject of investigation today. Indeed the word 'psychological' seems to have been coined by him to supplement the word 'psychology' borrowed from the Germans by Hartley half a century before.

From previous chapters in which we have discussed Coleridge's ideas on the human mind it would seem that he thought of the mind as being made up of several distinct mental faculties, for we have spoken of reason, understanding, memory, fancy, imagination exactly as any pure faculty psychologist might. However, if on this evidence we were to brand Coleridge as a faulty psychologist we would be guilty of a gross error. Although he agreed that the mind can, out of its own free

choice, limit itself to a partial self-activity, he realised how dangerous this could be if it were not consciously recognised as being an act of limitation. In normal activity the various faculties of the mind were not detached and in opposition to each other. As Coleridge frequently showed in discussions of Shakespeare's characters, if one element was allowed to become predominant then the result was a 'pollarded' man.

It is important to remember that even in this thought upon the nature of the mind Coleridge could not help but be influenced by the time in which he lived, for he had to employ the language of the times to express his ideas. Consequently he was obliged to speak in terms of mental faculties in order to be understood. Yet if we read his thoughts concerning the mind in full, we must acknowledge that the drift of his thought was away from faculty psychology. In the writings of critics such as Stephen Potter, Coleridge has been regarded as a split personality himself, yet it would seem that such critics have chosen to disregard the totality of mind in which Coleridge obviously believed. In fact Coleridge had noted

"the exquisite absurdity involved in the very notion of splitting the intellectual faculties, and subdividing the business of thought, almost as curiously as that of a pin factory."¹

1. Essays on His Own Times, I, p.188

To Coleridge it was necessary for the individual to make 'unfettered use' of all the powers with which God has endowed us. To him a true intellectual act could not be other than the act of the whole man. He was critical of the attempts of his time which set out to trace distinct mental categories whether it was the attempt of the philosopher or even the craniologist, such as Spurzheim, whose antics so amused Coleridge. Perhaps one of his most explicit statements which is an anticipation of Gestalt psychology appears in Table Talk:-

".... every intellectual act, however you may distinguish it by the name in respect of the originating faculties, is truly the act of the entire man; the notion of distinct material organs, therefore, in the brain itself, is plainly absurd."²

The notion implicit here that the mind of man is more than the sum of its parts is truly the idea later elaborated by the Gestalt psychologists and indeed reads as if it had formed a part of the thought of William McDougall in our own century.

Perhaps the best indication of Coleridge's conviction of the wholeness of experience and the workings of the mind is contained in his ideas of the relationship between conscious and unconscious elements in thought. For Coleridge, as we have seen, the emotions and feelings were of paramount importance

2. Table Talk, July 29th 1830

in the establishment of thought. We know that Coleridge was conversant with the works of Kant and he in turn had thought upon the connection between the emotions and the unconscious mind, thoughts to which he had been led by consideration of the writings of C.A. Crusius (1715-1773), a German philosopher and theologian who stressed the unconscious mind as being the seat of the passions. At the same time Goethe was being impressed by the writings of J.G. Hamann whose main principle was:-

"All that a man undertakes to perform, whether by deed or word or otherwise, must proceed from all his powers united: everything isolated is worthless."³

Although this was written almost a century before Coleridge, and we have no definite evidence that he read Hamann, we can see that this statement is fully in line with Coleridge's thought.

It is of interest to note that in eighteenth century Germany there was also a growing interest in the significance and origin of dreams. Interest in his own dreams was shown by G.C. Lichtenberg (1742-1799), a German mathematician and physicist. He, like Moritz, Schubert, Carus, Schopenhauer and Jung, had the idea that dreams may be reminiscences of states prior to the development of individual awareness. But more

3. Quoted in L.L. Whyte: The Unconscious before Freud, p.111

important, and like Coleridge he was mainly concerned with the contribution which particular dreams could make to one's understanding of oneself:

"I recommend dreams again. We live and feel just as much in dreams, as in walking, and the one is as much a part of our existence as the other... One has hardly yet made the right use of (our knowledge of dreams)."⁴

L.L. Whyte in The Unconscious before Freud (1962) has drawn attention to the line of thinkers following Kant and including Platner, Herder, Moritz, Fichte, Novalis, Schelling, Schlegel and Goethe who show a deepening sense of the emotional and volitional. He names the sources of this emphasis in Shakespeare, Rousseau and Hamann, but feels that the time was ripe for an outburst of emotions from the unconscious forcing men to realise that the source of feeling and willing lay in unconscious regions of the mind.⁵

Coleridge has indeed acknowledged his indebtedness to several of these writers, but before considering Coleridge's thoughts upon the value of the unconscious, some quotations from this distinguished line will reveal how the German thinkers may have truly influenced him.

E. Platner (1744-1818):-

"Ideas with consciousness are often the psychological

4. Ibid, p.114

5. Ibid, p.115

results of ideas without consciousness."⁶

J.G.V. Herder (1744-1803):-

".... varied as the contributions of the different senses are to thinking and feeling, in our inner man everything flows together and becomes one. We usually call the depths of this confluence the imagination."⁷

J.G. Fichte (1762-1814):-

"It is this almost always neglected activity (the synthetic activity of the mind) which constructs a unity from steady contrasts, which enters between moments which must separate from each other and preserves a unity linking both; it is this alone which makes possible life and consciousness, and above all consciousness as a continuous temporal sequence."⁸

Now finally a quotation from F. Schiller (1759-1805):-

"Although by the dim light of everyday emotions the secret working of the forces of desire remain hidden away from light, it becomes all the more conspicuous and stupendous when passion is strongly roused.... If for the other realms of nature there should arise a Linnaeus to classify impulses and inclinations he would greatly astonish mankind."⁹

The unconscious then, had become a subject of interest in Germany at least, in the years immediately preceding and

6. Ibid, p.116

7. Ibid, p.118

8. Ibid, p.120

9. Ibid, p.129

contemporary with Coleridge. If we accept Coleridge's own statement that he was a 'veritable library cormorant', then we are probably safe in assuming that he was acquainted with the idea at least. We accept that the terminology he was forced to use is now outdated and words such as 'underconsciousness' and below consciousness have never been accepted in normal usage. His idea of a mental storehouse for the retention of images is not completely acceptable, although later replacements of the idea have not always proved satisfactory.

Many of the critics of Coleridge's writing such as Kathleen Coburn, Humphrey House, I.A. Richards, Livingstone Lowes have pointed out Coleridge's value as a psychologist and there is little doubt that he foreshadowed much modern teaching. Many psychologists including Freud would say that the real problem in psychology is the nature of the unconscious. Freud has no doubt given great insights into the nature of the unconscious mind and has given techniques to the modern psychologist for working with cases in which repression and anxiety are operating at the level of the unconscious. Yet even so he was aware that there remains much to be discovered on this topic for he wrote:-

"The unconscious is the true psychic reality; in its inner nature it is just as much unknown to us as the reality of the external world....."¹⁰

10. Freud, S. The Interpretation of Dreams, p.562

Yet a century before this the same thought had been voiced by Coleridge when he said:-

"Psychologically, Consciousness is the problem, the solution of which cannot too variously be rewarded, too manifestly be illustrated.... Almost all is yet to be achieved."¹¹

We must now look at Coleridge's observations on the unconscious, but we must bear in mind that his rejection of automatic association, and his appreciation of the physiological and emotional factors which influence psychic processes must probably count as his greatest achievements as a psychologist. His attitude to association is fundamentally the same as Freud's when he points out that under every superficial connection there exists a more profound connection (suppressed emotions) and this cathartic energy of unfulfilled emotion throws the chains of association into a state of excitation. Yet even so, for many years after the death of Coleridge psychologists still explained dreams in terms of the chancelike operations of the "laws of association", namely Contiguity and Similarity.

Much of the insight into the nature of the unconscious which Coleridge achieved was a direct result of his reflection upon the nature of dreams. He seems to have dreamed frequently and vividly and the imagery of the dream and its possible cause

11. M.S. Notebook, 51.

was a constant source of speculation. We know that he suffered long periods of ill health and certainly for much of his life he could not have been free of emotional strains and stresses. G. Yarlott in Coleridge and the Abyssinian Maid, has drawn attention to the fact that after 1802 Coleridge suffered emotional stresses and possible guilt feelings in connection with his unsatisfactory marriage and love for Sara Hutchinson and also possibly in connection with his increasing addiction to opium. If this is so then the emotional factors were there to be investigated and Coleridge constantly tried to examine his personal experience and sought to give it meaning. Coleridge would have indeed agreed with Freud who stated,

"the interpretation of dreams is the via regia to a knowledge of the unconscious element in our psychic life.

It gives us a start to the investigation."¹²

Coleridge it seems had to be aware of his own nature before he could proceed; this self-knowledge did not mean an introspective analysis of his conscious thought but included motives and all that may be operating on an unconscious level. As he wrote in The Friend:-

"The first step to knowledge, or rather the previous condition of all insight into truth, is to dare commune with our very and permanent self. It is Warburton's remark, not

12. Freud, S. The Interpretation of Dreams, p.559

the Friend's, that of all literary exercitations, whether designed for the use or entertainment of the world, there are none of so much importance, or so immediately our concern, as those which let us into the knowledge of our own nature."¹³

On analysing his own dreams, Coleridge did distinguish various causes, some of which have been confirmed by modern psychological investigation. Other speculations have been found to be dubious, but nevertheless show that Coleridge was asking pertinent questions years ahead of his time. Of the latter type possibly, is his distinction between 'reveries' and dreams. In reverie the outward sensations are suspended and the mind has before it the images of the last moments of wakefulness and as reason is operative (though imperfectly) these images or thoughts now appear to be realities. He cites examples from his own experience and thinks that reverie may account for people believing they have seen ghosts.

On true dreams however, Coleridge is more in line with modern psychology as he sees the importance of the body-mind relationship. Moreover he felt that dreams throw light upon the function of the imagination,

"for in certain sorts of dreams the dullest white becomes a Shakespeare."¹⁴

13. The Friend, p.71

14. The Friend I, p.246

In a dream it is the imagination rather than reason which is the ruling power and this itself is stimulated by feelings. Even though the dream is unintelligible and illogical, it is accepted and not questioned. The feelings operative in dreams could be external and incorporate such things as the ticking of a clock, a fact confirmed in recent times, or it could be internal and due to bodily feelings or emotions.

With his constitutional ill health Coleridge must have suffered both the above conditions and he must also have had time to ponder upon them.

"On awaking from such dreams, I never fail to find some local pain, circa or infra-umbilical, with kidney affections, and at the base of the bladder."¹⁵

To think of Coleridge examining his body on awakening to chase the cause of a nightmare is rather surprising, but it shows his seriousness in tracing physical causes. Again Coleridge was asking the sort of questions which in the time since Freud have received an affirmative answer.

Colour features in the accounts of Coleridge's dreams and has caused some writers to suggest that this may have been caused by opium, No evidence will ever be able to give a conclusive answer on this and it is just as likely that rejection of opium for short periods could give rise to such vivid

15. Notes on the English Divines (Ed. Derwent Coleridge), p.299

dreams. What is undoubtedly true is the fact that Coleridge suffered particularly vivid and disturbing dreams. As he wrote to Dr. Thomas Beddoes in 1803:

"Believe me, Sir! Dreams are no shadows with me; but the real, substantial miseries of Life."

Since this letter marks a time when Coleridge could have been both emotionally and physically disturbed it is quite likely that they fit the findings of Freud and represent repressed emotions or even wish-fulfilment.

However, it is the role of the imagination working on the stuff of the unconscious which gives importance to Coleridge's thought on dreams. In dreams the imagination gathered into unities the chaotic materials of the unconscious and had the same function which we discussed in its role in poetic creation. We do not find any developed account of what we find in the storehouse of the unconscious but he felt that the unconscious mind varies from individual to individual, and probing it is a difficult process:-

"For the same impossibility exists as to the first acts and movements of our own will - the farthest back our recollection can follow the traces, never leads us to the first footmark - the lowest depth that the light of our consciousness can visit even without a doubtful Glimmering, is still an unknown distance from the ground."¹⁶

16. *Aids to Reflection* (1825) p.72-3

Coleridge thought of the conscious and unconscious as merging gradually from one to the other, as in the state of 'reverie'. Between them in the 'twilight' realm lay the materials of poetry. He felt that beyond the reach of consciousness psychic activity is ceaseless and he gave the example of trying to recall a name:-

"I felt that there is a mystery in the sudden by-act-of-will-
 unaided, may, more than that frustrated, recollection of a
 Name. I was trying to recollect the name of a Bristol
 Friend.... I began with the Letters of the Alphabet -
 A B C - and I know not why, felt convinced it began with
 H. I ran thro' all the vowels, a,e,i,o,u,y, and with
 all the consonants to each - Hab, Heb, Hib, Hob, Hub and
 so on - in vain. I then began other letters - all in vain.
 Three minutes afterwards, having completely given it up,
 the name, Daniel, at once stared up, perfectly insulated,
 without any the dimmest antecedent connection, as far as
 my consciousness extended. There is no distinction
 ως ενόησε δόκει, of this fact, but by a full stop
 distinction of Mind from Consciousness - the Consciousness
 being the narrow Neck of the Bottle. The name, Daniel,
 must have been a living Atom - thought in my mind, whose
 uneasy motions were the craving to recollect it - but
 the very craving led the mind to reach (?) which each
 successive disappointment (= a tiny pain) tended to

contract the orifice or outlet into consciousness. Well - it is given up - and all is quiet - the Nerves are asleep or off their guard - and then the Name pops up, makes its way, and there it is! - not assisted by any association, but the very contrary - by the suspension and sedation of all associations."¹⁷

To most of us, this experience has the ring of truth about it and the image of the bottle as representing the conscious/unconscious relationship is quite Freudian. Through his appreciation of the importance of unconscious mental activity Coleridge developed a view of memory quite in keeping with modern psychology. He, like Sir Frederick Bartlett saw the memory as conative and its processes reconstructive and creative. The unconscious was not merely a store but any images which re-emerge from the unconscious are not quite the same as they were originally. In the meantime, subtle changes have taken place. Remembering does not consist simply in recollecting what was originally put in store, but also includes whatever has become attached to the original image by what Coleridge calls "the hooks and eyes of the memory".

For Coleridge this had tremendous significance for poetry. Every thought and experience of the poet leaves an impression on the unconscious mind and Coleridge like Freud regarded these

17. M.S. Notebook 44. Quoted Coburn, K. Inquiring Spirit, p.30

as imperishable. In discussing Education we recall that Coleridge pointed out that Nature educates the young by supplying their minds with an absolute motley of facts, which then remain:

"absolutely secure below the level of unconsciousness."¹⁸

Thus we find the raw materials of the poet, and even before the creative imagination is set into action by a conscious act of will, the unconscious mind has already been at work in the twilight regions modifying, colouring, and re-arranging the data given it by experience.

"For a thing at the moment is but a thing of the moment; it must be taken up into the mind, diffuse itself through the whole multitude of shapes and thoughts, not one of which it leaves untinged, between (not one of) which some new thought is not engendered."¹⁹

All this is prior to the intervention of the conscious will. The poet's invention then 'establishes a centre' among his recollections towards which clusters of images are drawn from all directions. Finally the secondary Imagination works upon these materials - idealising and unifying, dissolving, diffusing and dissipating in order to recreate. Thus consciousness and unconsciousness, for Coleridge, were complementary in their functions, and both were indispensable to the creation of poetry.

18. Snyder, A.D., Coleridge on Logic and Learning (1929) p.105

19. Anima Poetae (Ed. E.H. Coleridge 1895) p.31

To Coleridge the unconscious mind was a vital part of the whole man, and an integral part of personality. We have noted how he anticipated the Gestalt psychologists and much of what he thought was feeling its way to a view of the personality which has been given prominence in our own time by such writers as Allport and McKinnon. In Personality: A Psychological Interpretation (1949), Allport has drawn attention to the way in which Coleridge equates personality with selfhood and notes that Coleridge's term for selfhood was personicity. Much of modern psychology and psychiatric treatment is based upon a view of mental health which is dependent upon us fulfilling and harmonising the potentialities of our nature. A notion which we may call truly Coleridgean.

In the twentieth century it has become accepted that Psychology is to be regarded as a science. Scientific method and the use of statistics have become part of the psychologist's way of life. Yet in all that we have noted so far it will have been obvious that Coleridge was using personal introspection to delve into the workings of the mind. Many of his notebooks and particularly the entries in Anima Poetae reveal that he was constantly analysing the workings of his own mind. He was constantly trying to relate the various parts of his own experience. Entries such as the following abound:

"Intensely hot day; left off a waistcoat and for yarn wore silk stockings. Before nine o'clock, had unpleasant

chillness; heard a noise which I thought Derwent's in sleep, listened, and found it was a calf bellowing. Instantly came on my mind that night I slept out at Ottery and the calf in the field across the river whose lowing so deeply impressed me. Chill + child and calf-lowing - probably the Rivers Greta and Otter."²⁰

Here we see the mind brought to bear on personal experience and a possible reason for the experience itself is postulated.

Another introspective reference to himself is as follows:

"My inner mind does not justify the thought that I possess a genius; my strength is so very small in proportion to my power. I believe that I first, from internal feelings, made or gave light and impulse to this important distinction between strength and power, the oak and the tropic annual, or biennial, which grows nearly as high and spreads as large as the oak, but in which the wood the heart is wanting - the vital works vehemently, but the immortal is not with it. And yet, I think, I must have some analogue of genius; because among other things, when I am in company with Mr. Sharp, Sir J. Mackintosh R. and Sydney Smith, Mr. Scarlett & Co., I feel like a child, nay rather like an inhabitant of another planet. Their very faces all act upon me, sometimes, as if they were ghosts, but more often

20. Anima Poetae, p.29

as if I were a ghost among them - at all times as if we were not consubstantial."²¹

By many present day psychologists such notes and utterances would be considered to be of little value as they are based on evidence which can not be measured. Such is the power of scientific method. However, we earlier noted the names of two eminent psychologists of this century, William McDougall and Sir Frederic Bartlett. In his book An Outline of Psychology published in 1923, William McDougall noted:

"Such observation of the varieties of one's own experience is called introspection. Every intelligent person can and does to some extent notice and remember his experiences; and there are very few who do not sometimes describe their experiences in words, reflect upon them and discuss them with their fellows. When such experiences and reflections upon them are conducted systematically the process constitutes one of the greatest methods of psychology."²²

Sir F. Bartlett in his book Remembering (1932) wrote up the results of many experiences which examined the processes of human memory. Yet the book contains not one statistic. In fact, Bartlett distrusted the reliance placed upon statistics in psychological experiments. He, like McDougall, noted the introspective responses of his subjects. His experiments

21. Ibid, p.36

22. McDougall, W. An Outline of Psychology, p.3 (Methuen)

were conducted systematically and much valuable information was gained from the responses.

No-one could accuse Coleridge of being unsystematic in his recording of his own responses. His detail was meticulous, and it seems that if followed, his method of introspective analysis may teach us much, even today.

Chapter VIII

COLERIDGE & SOME NINETEENTH

CENTURY THINKERS

It has been pointed out that Coleridge lived in an age of change. During his lifetime the whole of British life was undergoing a change which radically altered the social, economic and political ethos of the country. Yet since the death of Coleridge to the present day this change which had started with the early industrialisation of the towns has accelerated one hundredfold. Although in the twentieth century we have become accustomed to adapting to changing circumstances so that no one decade is like the last, in the nineteenth century as a whole, change must have had a traumatic effect upon the nation as establishments and values had to be reconsidered.

The very conception of the nature of man had to be reconsidered afresh. It has been shown that men such as Coleridge regarded the nature of man as being organic and whole, and any attempts to educate him must be based on this conception. However, there did exist a body of belief which would oppose this view and which looked only to short term gratification and self interest as being basic to man's nature. Such were the views of the Utilitarian philosophers headed by Jeremy Bentham. Yet it is John Stuart Mill, a man of Bentham's persuasion who could describe Jeremy Bentham and Samuel Taylor Coleridge as,

"the two great seminal minds of England in their age."¹

Indeed, John Stuart Mill saw that the outlook of Coleridge

1. Mill, J.S., Dissertations and Discussions Vol.I, p.331

was entirely opposed to that of Jeremy Bentham who had followed in philosophy the tradition of Locke. Yet in their ways these two philosophers had for Mill brought about an almost revolutionary method for dealing with ideas in the changing world of the nineteenth century. He went so far as to say:

"Whoever could master the premises and combine the methods of both, would possess the entire English philosophy of their age."²

Mill felt that the institutions and values of the preceding age had been too static and ridden with false assumptions to be able to cope with a changing world, a world in which new classes and forms of power were arising. An age in which industrial progress was giving birth to new Gods in the forms of materialism and money. Although the two thinkers, Bentham and Coleridge had very little in common, it was to Mill's credit that he recognised that by the ways in which they each analysed mankind and then synthesised a new philosophy, they were in fact complementary to each other:

"They agreed in making it their occupation to recall opinions to first principles; taking no proposition for granted without examining into the grounds of it, and ascertaining that it possessed the kind and degree of evidence suitable to its nature.... They agreed, too, in

2. Ibid, p.397

perceiving that the groundwork of all other philosophy must be laid in the philosophy of the mind. To lay this foundation deeply and strongly, and to raise a super-structure in accordance with it, were the objects to which their lives were devoted."³

On reading Mill's account of the value of Coleridge's thought, one is struck by the fact that he had obviously turned to Coleridge, not expecting to find anything of value in a professed conservative - yet he acknowledges that the sentiments he found expressed were those that he would have expected to find in a Liberal rather than a Tory.

Mill was particularly impressed by the ideas which Coleridge had on Church and State. He felt that Coleridge had been instrumental in bringing to the foreground the inadequacies of the church as established. It was Coleridge's ideas which were causing serious rethinking and improvement both in the universities and among young clergymen, and this was hailed by Mill as a vital start. He also welcomed the lead which he felt Coleridge had given in drawing attention to the value of an endowed class who would lead in the learning throughout the country. Mill saw that there was much value in the idea of a constitution based upon the twin notions of permanence and progression.

Mill saw that if reform was based on such ideas they would

3. Ibid, p.396

bring only good as they were based on principles which had already been a feature of the nation's heritage and did not involve revolutionary change to some untried ideal. He admired the way in which Coleridge had analysed the nature of society and elaborated the basic principles which underlay English society, and having done this had then synthesised and suggested a system eminently suited to that society. Mill did not accept all of Coleridge's writings, indeed, one could not expect a man brought up in a completely opposed tradition to do so. He regarded Coleridge's ideas on political economy as "arrant drivell". Yet he was impressed by Coleridge's suggestion of a trust inherent in landed property.

It would seem that John Stuart Mill did indeed derive much that was of interest from a reading of Coleridge. One would not expect Mill to be wholly or even partly influenced by such reading - he was too steeped in the Utilitarian tradition. Yet it does say something for Mill that he was able to appreciate the good in Coleridge and was able to see that Coleridge's ideas might have particular relevance to the changing society of the nineteenth century.

Turning now to another nineteenth century writer and thinker, Matthew Arnold, it is difficult to trace a direct influence from Coleridge. Yet there is much to suggest that influence may have been present. It is known that Thomas Arnold, Matthew's father was a strong admirer of Coleridge, as he often revealed in his

letters. Thomas too, had strong ideas on the value of a National Church and had read many of Coleridge's published writings. Yet his son can hardly have known Coleridge personally, as he was only twelve years old when Coleridge died, and in those years Coleridge had been living at Highgate with Dr. Gillman.

Matthew Arnold rarely overtly acknowledged any debt to Coleridge. Indeed, Arnold was critical in the extreme of Coleridge's personality. However it is probable that he read many of Coleridge's works while he was young although he did not often refer to them in later life. He was also acquainted with Derwent and Hartley Coleridge and was a classmate of John Duke, later Lord Coleridge at Balliol. Any ideas he received at this time would be reinforced by his father who was well read in Coleridge, and probably became part of his nature at this impressionable and formative time.

What is certain however, is that there appears to be great similarity of thought between Coleridge and Arnold at a later time, notably in 'Culture and Anarchy' - the word 'clerisy' being used. As a literary critic and in his everyday work as an inspector of schools, Arnold was given to meditate on the state of society in which he lived. Like Coleridge he was concerned with growing materialism and the changing quality of English life. The rise of the working classes and the squalor of many of our towns had an effect upon him. He lived in an age of ferment when increased competition both in industry and

agriculture from abroad and the change in the balance of political power was leading to a cultural crisis in British life. In addition to this the writings of Darwin and the views of agnostics such as Huxley and Morley together with the increased claims of science over the classics were causing grave doubts and confusion in religious and intellectual circles.

It was to analyse the difficulties besetting English society and to suggest a prescription for them that Arnold developed his theory of culture. In the preface to Culture and Anarchy, Arnold wrote,

"the whole scope of this essay is to recommend culture as the great help out of our present difficulties, culture being a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best that has been thought and said in the world; and through this knowledge, turning a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits, which we now follow staunchly but mechanically vainly imagining that there is a virtue in following them staunchly which makes up for the mischief of following them mechanically. This and this alone is the scope of the following essay."⁴

This passage is in many respects reminiscent of Coleridge. From it we observe that culture is an activity which in itself assumes an active mind. Culture is the pursuit of total perfection, again suggesting that it is the whole man which ought to

4. Culture and Anarchy (ed. J. Dover Wilson), preface

be considered. Thirdly perfection which is to be achieved by knowing the best that has been thought and said implies works of imagination, particularly as they will turn a stream of fresh and free thought on notions which have become mechanical.

The similarity of thought is taken further when Arnold talks of culture and its function. He says it is

"To render an intelligent being more intelligent"⁵

and also,

"To make reason and the will of God prevail"⁶

However, if we compare the ideas contained in Arnold's writing on this theme with those of Coleridge it becomes obvious that, obscure as Coleridge may be, his language does have more precision and definition than that of Arnold. Sometimes one is left with the feeling that one is grasping at air when reading Arnold. Yet the main theme or drift of his ideas seems to parallel those of Coleridge quite closely. The thin quality of Arnold's suggestions is particularly noticeable when he discusses the purpose of culture which has as its end human perfection which has

"For its characters increased sweetness, increased light, increased life, increased sympathy."⁷

By Coleridge's standards these properties seem nebulous in the extreme. Nevertheless the organic nature of such perfec-

5. Ibid, p.45

6: Ibid.

7: Ibid. p.64

tion is evident when Arnold says,

"To reach this ideal, culture is an indispensable aid....
Not a having and a resting, but a growing and a becoming,
is the character of perfection as culture conceives it;
and here, too, it coincides with religion."⁸

Like Coleridge, Arnold makes it evident that he is concerned with the inner man who must grow in harmony. He was aware that the nineteenth century growth of materialism and the increased force of externals made this more difficult. Many were losing sight of ultimate ideals and the writings of such philosophers as Bentham, whom Arnold deplored, had turned men away from older, and to Arnold, more humane concepts of the true nature of man.

"Religion says: The Kingdom of God is within you;
and culture, in like manner, places human perfection
in an internal condition, in the growth and predominance
of our humanity proper, as distinguished from our animality."⁹

Arnold saw that the increased concern for wealth in the nation was suspect, as wealth is only a means for human advancement, not its end. He described increasing wealth as 'machinery', which took no account at all of spiritual standards, indeed he felt that true spiritual standards were in danger of being undermined by concern for wealth. He goes so far as to analyse the three main classes of English society. The Aristocrats he

8. Ibid, pp.47-48

9. Ibid, p.47

calls 'Barbarians', the middle class Philistines and the working class, the Populace. These terms seem derogatory, but it is only Arnold's way of showing that each class in its way is pursuing dangerous material ends. Yet he does say that in most individuals in each of these classes there is a "Best Self", to which there must be some appeal in order to help each individual turn towards perfection. If the best self was not appealed to then the dangers of self-seeking individualism would lead to a form of anarchy in the country. Arnold saw that it was up to the State to take a lead upon these times and he draws attention to the practices of Education as carried out in Germany and France as examples to be followed. Like Coleridge, he saw the value of an organised education supported in some form by the State. Yet this education had to be based on a conception of true human nature and had to treat the inner man. Two aspects of man which are suggested have a Coleridgean flavour in that they are opposite forces which have somehow to be reconciled. These forces Arnold calls Hebraism and Hellenism. One is reminded of the Coleridge maxim 'Extremes meet'. Yet the way in which these forces are used by Arnold savors more of the Aristotelean mean, than the Coleridgean synthesis.

Arnold is one with Coleridge when he discusses the places of literature and science in a liberal education. He thinks that the arguments so strongly put for each, are raised by people who have not really thought upon the nature and purpose of knowledge.

"At present it seems to me, that those who are for giving

to natural knowledge, as they call it, the chief place in the education of the majority of mankind, leave one important thing out of their account; the constitution of human nature."¹⁰

He sees that if based on the nature of the human mind then true knowledge will seek towards a unity. He seems to assume an active mind which seeks to relate all knowledge, and any education which stresses literature or science only can result in the education of part of man:

".... when we set ourselves to enumerate the powers which go to the building of human life, and say that they are the power of conduct, the power of intellect and knowledge, the power of beauty and the power of social life and manners.... Human nature is built up by these powers; we have need of them all. When we have rightly met and adjusted the claims of them all, we shall then be in a fair way for getting soberness and righteousness, with wisdom.... But perhaps they may not have sufficiently observed another thing; namely that the several powers just mentioned are not isolated, but there is, in the generality of mankind, a perpetual tendency to relate them one to another in divers ways."¹¹

Even though these ideas may not be stated with the finesse of

10. Quoted in Matthew Arnold (Ed. Gribble, J.) p.171

11. Ibid, p.171

Coleridge, they do seem to reflect the thought of Coleridge outlined in this thesis. Like Coleridge also, Arnold felt that literature had a part to play and a very valuable part indeed. Yet looking back from the twentieth century one cannot help but feel that Arnold had really seen dangers in the growth of science, which had first been suggested by Coleridge. He was also strangely prophetic when he said of letters,

"So long as human nature is what it is, their attractions will remain irresistible. As with Greek, so with letters generally: they will some day come, we may hope, to be studied more rationally, but they will not lose their place. What will happen will rather be that there will be crowded into education other matters besides, far too many; there will be, perhaps, a period of unsettlement and confusion and false tendency; but letters will not in the end lose their leading place."

Mill and Arnold then, although not overtly influenced by Coleridge, did read him, and in a period of change saw the dangers inherent in their times. Mill acknowledged that Coleridge had much sound sense, whilst the suggestions laid down by Arnold for benefitting the country as a whole, appear to be strongly reminiscent of many of the ideas put forward by Coleridge.

Nevertheless, Coleridge in his Highgate years did gather round him a group of disciples who in their turn influenced

other thinkers of later years. We know that one of the men who studied at Coleridge's feet was John Sterling. John Sterling in turn was a friend of Julius Hare and F.D. Maurice. These three were influenced by the teaching and conversations of Coleridge and can be said to be thorough going Coleridgeans in their early years.

F.D. Maurice is a particularly interesting case as he, like the younger Coleridge, sought to break away from unitarianism. In Maurice's day the predominant undergraduate belief was that of Benthamism. Maurice was a vigorous opponent of materialism and Utilitarianism, and defended Coleridge's metaphysics. In his later years, Maurice became critical of Coleridge's philosophy but there can be little doubt that the notion of the organic nature of man and the spiritual world which underlies the physical world had a seminal influence upon him. Always in reading, Maurice we are aware that here is a mind which is striving towards unity when it thinks of the Church and Belief. This is the hallmark of a true Coleridgean. It is not surprising that in Mill's Autobiography we read:-

"The Coleridgeans, in the persons of Maurice and Sterling, made their appearance in the Society as a second Liberal and even Radical party, on totally different grounds from Benthamism and vehemently opposed to it."

The society referred to here was of course the London Debating Society founded by John Stuart Mill and the Philosophic Radicals.

Coleridge's writings on the Idea of a National Church were also well received by the Coleridgeans and indeed many have suggested that it was this idea which F.D. Maurice developed and which gave rise to the later Christian Socialism through Thomas Arnold and eventually Bishop Westcott of Durham later in the Century.

Many have also suggested that the line of thought which developed through Carlyle and Emerson may owe something to Coleridge. Carlyle despised Coleridge the man, but much of his philosophy shows the ante-materialist revolt against the eighteenth century thought which is everywhere apparent in Coleridge. It is perhaps through Emerson that a Coleridge tradition developed outside this country in the United States, although the publication in 1829 of an Edition of Aids to Reflection, by President Marsh of the University of Vermont ensured that Coleridge's thought would be studied there.

CONCLUSION

IT has been the aim of this study to consider the thinking which took place during the age in which Samuel Taylor Coleridge lived and to show how he was led to meditate upon the nature of man and to develop a coherent educational theory based upon the true nature he evolved.

As a child he was brought up in an age whose values belonged to the philosophy of the eighteenth century. However, Coleridge was particularly unusual in that, at an early age, he was involved in speculative thinking based on reading far removed from the reading of most young people. This seems to have developed a critical faculty which was to prove useful in shaping a philosophy of his own. In common with many of the Romantic poets he was affected by the events of the French Revolution, which showed the possibility of radical change in society. The events which followed the French Revolution turned enthusiasm to dismay and caused even further speculative thought which one finds in Coleridge's writing is probably accounted for by the fact that Coleridge embraced several philosophical systems before developing one of his own. The much written about change from youthful Radical to Mature Orthodox Tory is far too simple an explanation for Coleridge's development. This study has shown how Coleridge examined the philosophy of the eighteenth century and found it unsatisfactory. The change from acceptance of the Hartleyan creed to a more Idealist position has been outlined. Yet the fact that Coleridge did

change his position several times is only evidence of a powerful critical intellect. He did not change for change's sake, but seemed to examine any system and show the faults and values which that system possessed. He then extracted the valuable elements and used them in developing a theory of his own.

He was able to leave behind the associationist theories as we have shown because he saw that this theory only dealt with a part of man. Coleridge was able to recognise that the extension of such theory led to the Materialist and Utilitarian theories of the Benthamites; a creed which Coleridge hated for he saw the results of such thinking in his own time. He realised that any system of philosophy which was based on a partial view of the nature of man could only lead to error. One is struck by the unity of his educational thought and his literary theory which each had as their basis the conception that it was the whole man which should be considered. Many of his ideas on literature he held in common with the Romantics of his age who extolled the powers of the Imagination. Yet Coleridge, perhaps helped by his reading of the German philosophers, and Kant in particular, carried his ideas much further than the other Romantics. As we have noted one Romantic poet in particular, William Wordsworth had a powerful effect upon Coleridge. The friendship allowed discussion upon the nature of literature and of man which helped Coleridge in his development. The final outcome of these speculations and influences was a theory which regarded the mind

as active and seeking after the unity of all knowledge, and which can be stimulated by an approach through the Imagination. This forms a coherent theory.

The criticisms which Coleridge aimed at the Educational system of his day are worth considering in the twentieth century. His notion was that the growth of the mind follows an organic pattern and this was too often ignored. He was critical of the pattern of elementary education in his day in which he felt there was too much emphasis on reading, writing and enumeration, which appealed only to the intellectual side of man, just one facet of the mind. He felt that such activities were being mistaken as an end of education, rather than just as the means to an end. He also saw that in many cases teaching was carried out by a method which seemed to assume that the mind was passive. The teacher's task was assumed to be complete when the information was given. He strongly advocated that children should be involved in the learning process. In our own time the Education of young children is now organised on the assumption that the mind is active and it is the aim of the infant's teacher to present materials of a stimulating and imaginative nature. Yet the education of older children often seems to fall from this standard, till the emphasis in the secondary school often seems to have reverted to the assumption of a passive mind.

In the light of the curriculum which Coleridge suggested for the proposed series of classes which he would give to young

men, a curriculum truly encyclopaedic in its nature one wonders what he would have thought of the practice of calling upon our fourteen and fifteen year olds to make an almost irrevocable decision before sixth form years - the decision to specialise in the arts or the sciences. One wonders if he would accuse us of producing the 'pollarded' man.

The first half of the present century saw the growth of the Intelligence test as a selective agent in deciding the educational future of our children from the age of eleven. Again one wonders what Coleridge's reaction would have been towards the protagonists of such tests. Do the tests assess all-round ability in every sphere, or are they just tests of one tiny and almost unimportant facet of the human mind?

When Coleridge saw the growth of the human mind and consequently education as an organic process, his theory was at one with his philosophy of literature. For Coleridge a work of Imagination such as a poem should form a unity in which each part is part of a total structure which is greater than the sum of its parts. As we can see from his writings upon the science of Method he seems to have held a theory of knowledge based upon the same principles. All true learning is connected, or seeking to connect, till in the end the principles behind the parts of knowledge is known and the true knowledge is greater than the sum of its parts. As we have seen, the fact that this is so reminiscent of the Gestalt psychologists is no accident, for

in many ways Coleridge in his introspective analysis had anticipated many of their findings. Yet this theory forms a sound principle for organising the learning process in the twentieth century and it is all the more striking when we think that it was based upon early nineteenth century observation.

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