Chapter

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Coleridge's 'Order of the Mental Powers' and the Energic–Energetic Distinction

Peter Cheyne

It is often remarked that Coleridge attempts too much, and, as an intellectual hoarder, rejects too little on either side of the grand philosophical debates in which he engages. Yet he frequently alludes to the 'Principle of Polarity' and the maxim 'Extremes Meet' when justifying these apparent contradictions in his very copious—some would say impossibly overstretched—attempts at philosophical synthesis. Did his ever-inclusive, contradiction-straddling approach produce luminous mist, or soporific smog; enlightened synthesis, or well-meaning muddle? My response to this question develops as I enlist Coleridge to help elucidate contemplation as a state that arises at the extremes, at the poles of human mental life.

I argue that Coleridge is a two-level theorist, with *higher-level*, *energic*[1] acts and ideals in the higher understanding, imagination, and reason organizing and cohering, at least ideally, the *lower-level*, *energetic* desires, associations, and conceptual structuring of sense, fancy, and the lower understanding. From this position I will then argue for a two-level view of contemplation, with the *purer*, ~~*noëtic*~~ mode occurring at the apex of the higher level (Coleridge's 'Reason') and developed in relatively few self-possessed individuals, with this distinguished from an *inchoate*, *sensual* mode, familiar, but still rare, and open to all without effort, though inaccessible to will (Cheyne 2016 further discusses the inchoate mode).

1. POLAR APPROACH

Coleridge developed a polar philosophy from thinkers as otherwise diverse as Heraclitus, Plato,[2] Nicholas Cusanus, Bruno, Böhme, and Schelling, and from reflection on the work of British anti-reductionist physiologist Richard Saumarez. In keeping with his polar theory, I will describe a view of contemplation arising in

[1] The Coleridgean sense of this word will be explained soon; suffice to say for now that the *energic* represents a higher-level, directed use of mental energy involving free will and reason, in contrast to lower-level, *energetic* impulses and concatenations involving desire and association.

[2] On Plato as a polar theorist, my position is in agreement with Thesleff 1999, the clearest and most comprehensive presentation of Plato as a two-level, non-Two-Worlds theorist.

two opposite though intimately related modes. In this polar view, ~~noëtic~~ contemplation occurs at Coleridge's 'higher' extreme—discussed in section two, 'Higher'—as the human openness to reason beyond the horizon of concepts. This active '*Receptivity*' prompted him to 'call the Reason the *sensorium* of the *Spirit*' (*Notebooks* 4 §4935 f 62).

I propose that the contrasting counterpart to contemplation as active receptivity is inchoate, sensuous contemplation, which I will discuss in section three, subtitled 'Lower', and which occurs below the level of articulate, conceptual construction. While the inchoate, sensuous mode is less clear—sensual not intellectual—it is nevertheless equally striking as sensation infused with, yet clouding, ideas inaccessible to conceptual understanding,[3] producing significant experience powerful enough to persuade one of a deeper meaning to life. Inchoate contemplation is primarily a matter of ideation in and through feeling, accompanied by a deepened sense of the reality of value, and its (to us) indistinct objects are not fully comprehensible within our ordinary conceptual frame.[4]

The ordinary, non-contemplative level, in contrast, is that of the everyday understanding which comprehends according to concepts in a way that is never quite able to convey the transporting or becalming qualities of significant sense impressions, of fog floating over water, say, or simply an unguarded moment receiving more openly than usual the sensations that ordinarily wash over one. When that everyday understanding relaxes, Coleridge observed, intuition can intensify, permitting an attention in

> one of those brief Sabbaths of the soul, when the activity and discursiveness of the Thoughts are suspended, and the mind quietly *eddies* round, instead of flowing onward… (*Friend* II 173)

Inchoate contemplation occurs at what I will call the lower pole, with the higher pole conducting the purer, less impressionistic, and more developed and volitional opening of mind that occurs in intellectual, ~~noëtic~~ contemplation.

Although throughout his career Coleridge returned to philosophical issues in an unsystematic manner, and at intervals separated by quite different activities of thought and action, and while, as many commentators have observed, he never assembled the totality of his thinking in the manner of Aquinas or Hegel, his thinking does contain an important element of system. This leaven of system is apparent at all times when Coleridge invites the reader to stand back from the associative and causal relations of material and psychological phenomena to see that the pointillist view, of division in the details—of atoms and matter, and matters of fact—in turn depends for intelligibility on a reality liveable only in the higher terms of free will, conscience, and faith. The dynamic of this element of system can be charted, and this is what I am seeking to make clear. Spontaneity and order are not mutually exclusive, and to outline the lineaments of Coleridge's wide-ranging thought is only to describe its varied connections.

[3] With Coleridge, I use the term *idea* in '*sensu Platonico*' (*Logic* 212).

[4] For discussion of pure (transparent), intellectual contemplation versus inchoate (translucent), sensual contemplation as varieties of mystical experience, see Cheyne 2016.

One might expect an affirmation of contemplation in Coleridge not as rest in meditative stillness, but rather as the ever-pursuant *enérgeia* of thought, as Jim Mays' essay in this volume tentatively and intriguingly concludes (Ch. 1). In agreement, one might add the words of the German poet Konrad Weiss, 'Contemplation does not rest until it has found the object which dazzles it' (quoted in Pieper [1958] 1998 2). In response to Mays, I consider Coleridge communicating the dynamics of thought within an overarching concern for the 'energies of the Reason' (*Statesman's Manual* 29). I propose that slowing down in meditation—in acts of reflection by the higher understanding, or in imaginative attention to natural or other aesthetic forms—is preliminary to a higher level of intellection, and is a calming of the energetic mind before the self-aware stirring of the energic. I will discuss the interaction of these higher and lower energies of thought within the context of Coleridge's two-level 'Order of the Mental Powers' (see Fig. 10.1).[5] Within this two-level context, I will describe what I see as contemplation at the higher and lower poles of human experience, with 'pure contemplation' at the reason pole, and 'inchoate contemplation' at the pole of sense.

Aristotle's term *enérgeia*, at *Metaphysics* Bk 9, 'Potentiality and Actuality [Being-at-work]', is traditionally translated with the Latinate 'actuality', but this technical, contorted usage is misleading, as the usual English meaning of 'actuality' conveys nothing of *enérgeia* ([*c*.330 BC] 1933 1050a 21–3). 'Being-at-work', Joe Sachs' translation of the term, better connotes this *enérgeia* that for Aristotle undergirds being, form, motion, and soul, all these being 'ultimately understood as kinds of being-at-work . . . even the notions of virtue and character . . . depend on it' (Sachs, in Aristotle 1999 xxxix). *Enérgeia* derives from *érgon*, the characteristic 'activity' of a kind or species. The term conveys the sense of energy flowing from the nature of the thing under consideration. *Enérgeia* is the process of things expressing or actualizing their essences, and in this sense it is opposite to *dýnamis* or potential. The *enérgeia* of something works from within the nature of its own kind to realize its being and to become fulfilled. Like Plato, Aristotle considered contemplation to be the perfecting realization, the apotheosis, of human thought. He also thought contemplation divine, with God's activity being *nóēsis noḗseōs*, or 'thought thinking itself', because for 'that which is best . . . its thinking is a thinking of thinking' (Aristotle [*c*.330 BC] 1935 Bk 12 1072b 20, 1074b 35).

Additionally, Coleridge's notion of the energy of the higher mind as 'energic' was coloured with the New Testament sense of *enérgeia* as a supernatural power, whether divine or diabolic. Indeed for him the human mind was, while whole and capable of organization according to 'higher Reason', nonetheless polarized into the natural and supernatural faculties of, respectively, sense, fancy, and the lower 'mechanical' understanding; and then the higher understanding ('intuitive, and a living power' *Statesman's Manual* 69), imagination, and reason, with reason alone being wholly above the natural ('the organ of the Super-sensuous' *Friend* I 156), while the imagination and the higher understanding are beyond the level of the merely natural insofar as they are irradiated by, or infused with, the ideas of reason.

[5] For discussion, see also Barfield 1972 85 ff.; Pradhan 1999 Ch. 2; and Gregory 2003 59 ff.

By the *enérgeia* of thought, I mean the movement towards a value that the mind recognizes as ordaining thought by putting it in its place and giving it its mission. In plainer terms, this involves a sense of meaning in life from an order that for most seems more or less elusive but is not for that illusory, and which after reflection or insight can lead to a sense of conviction, even of a calling or vocation, which in Plato is the orientation toward the Good. ~~Noëtic~~ contemplation is therefore the highest expression of what Coleridge, commending Plato, identified as the

> thirst for something not attained, to which nothing in life is found commensurate and which still impels the soul to pursue. (*Lects Hist. Phil.* I 183)

By 'energic', I refer to the exercise of the higher mind through the essentially 'Human Understanding… irradiated by the reason' (*Letters* V 138); through the 'Imagination'; and through '*Positive* Reason'. These 'energies of the Reason' comprise the higher *enérgeia* towards contemplation, towards *nóēsis*, the intellectual acquaintance with ideas in 'the Nous, *i.e.* Intuitive Reason, the Source of Ideas and absolute Truths' (*Aids to Reflection* 259 fn).

By 'energetic', on the other hand, I mean the flurries of the associating, hydraulic, mechanical mind, indeed, all the motions and impulses of the lower mind, which for Coleridge is comprised by 'Sense', 'Fancy', and the lower, 'mere understanding' (*Friend* I 439; see Fig. 10.1). This energic–energetic distinction in fact derives from Coleridge himself. Articulated in March 1834, five months before he died, it can be applied throughout his intellectual life:

> I am by nature a reasoner. A person who should suppose I meant by that word an arguer, would not only not understand me, but would understand the contrary of my meaning. . . . a fact . . . must refer to something within me before I can regard it with any curiosity or care. My mind is always energic—I will not say energetic; I require in every thing what for lack of another word, I may call *propriety*—that is, a reason why the thing *is* at all, and why it is *there*. (*Table Talk* I 464)

This energic search for the 'reason why the thing *is* at all' is a commitment to the principle of sufficient reason that seeks behind the contingency of facts something necessary, a 'living Idea' connecting with something correspondent within. While the *energetic* contingently concatenates through the streamy processes of fancy and desire,[6] the *energic* mind operates at the levels of imagination and reason, referring its objects to principles and ideas.

An energetic (concatenating, mechanical, deterministic) group of natural processes, then, accounts for what Coleridge views as the lower mind of sense, fancy, and the lower understanding. In contrast to this, his accounts of the spiritual mind describe an energic (unifying, elevating, and free) dynamism. Together, the energetic

[6] Coleridge uses the word 'streamy' to refer to the theory of the 'stream' of association—anticipating William James' 'stream of consciousness' ([1890] 1983 109 *et passim*)—as in 'the *streamy* Nature of Association, which Thinking = Reason, curbs & rudders' (*Notebooks* 1 §1770 (29 Dec. 1803)). The streamy mind is more passive, the will is relaxed, one goes with the flow, and this for Coleridge often has a negative moral value, and might, he suggests, 'explain … the Origin of moral Evil' (*Notebooks* 1 §1770 (29 Dec. 1803)).

and energic characterize the whole person as a polar unity, with the lower pole or hemisphere desiring pleasure through gratification, while the higher is ideally oriented towards the 'eternal verities' (*Friend* I 177 n), contemplation of which can transform one's whole life, ordering the impulses of the lower mind within an intuition of intrinsic value and the greater good. Coleridge retains this two-level view, writing in May 1830 of the

> twofold I—the superior, or the I of the Spirit—and the inferior or the I of the Ground—the latter indeed being the Copula or emaning [outflowing] Unity of the Sense and the Understanding— (*Notebooks* 5 §6291 f32^{v})

Though it has been objected that the Coleridgean model of mind is a wrong-headed attempt to yoke together incompatible elements of mechano-corpuscular empiricist associationism on the lower level (the energetic), with Kantian and even Platonic idealism at the higher (the energic), I argue that its setting within a hierarchical and polar theory prevents it from being merely an aggregation of contradictory positions. Seamus Perry has demonstrated admirably and at length the importance that Coleridge gives to the dynamic relationship between synthesis and analysis, between combination and division. But, *pace* Perry, far from symptomizing a 'particular brand of indecision', Coleridge's two-level theory of mind is decidedly hierarchical, describing not 'muddlesome doubleness' (1999 7, 12), but distinct polarity.

What to some readers are apparent contradictions can often be resolved from the two-level view I describe in this essay, revealing order in what otherwise appears as 'muddle'. For example, Kaz Oishi (Ch. 8 in this volume) rightly argues that from the energetic, lower-level perspectives of Benthamite utilitarianism and Owenite utopian socialism, Coleridgean contemplation seems mere inactivity. The Benthamite perspective operates from the midpoint of understanding, i.e. the medial line of Coleridge's 'Order of the Mental Powers', which line is the highest point of the lower mind, the pole of sense, and therefore only the equatorial line of the whole mind. From the perspective of the intellectual, higher level, however, contemplation is entirely 'energic', being so far from inactive that instead it is the very essence of the free act, as James Engell cumulatively argues in his essay (Ch. 14 in this volume). From this higher-level perspective, contemplation is the *principium* from which moral action flows.

The twentieth-century Platonist neo-Thomist Josef Pieper similarly expressed the *apparent* contradiction, also avoiding *actual* contradiction, when he called 'contemplation . . . useless and the yardstick of every use' ([1958] 1998 96). Indeed, because it shares a similar perspective on the hierarchy of super and subordinate levels in human thought and action, Pieper's view can illuminate the same in Coleridge:

> The hierarchical point of view admits no doubt about difference in levels and their location; but it also never despises the lower levels . . . Thus the inherent dignity of practice (as opposed to *theoria*) is in no way denied. It is taken for granted that practice is not only meaningful, but indispensable; that it rightly fills out man's weekday life. That without it a truly human existence is inconceivable. Without it indeed, the *vita contemplativa* is unthinkable. (Pieper [1958] 1998 95)

While the physically active is urged hither and thither by extraneous or associative forces, the truly free act requires one work not *from* a cause, but *for* a reason, which for Coleridge flows from contemplation of those ideas that that transform the 'mere' or 'mechanical' understanding into an 'understanding enlightened by reason', whose ideas 'constitute . . . *humanity*' (*Friend* I 156; *Church and State* 47 fn).

Muddle or apparent contradiction resolves when the higher-level, energic, moral aims harness—though with reins relaxed—the energetic motions of the lower-level impulses and interests. An example of such apparent contradiction in Coleridge is his highly critical renunciation of associationism in the *Biographia Literaria* (see esp. Chs 5–8), while still not jettisoning the theory entire. Indeed he retains association as a process of the lower mind which, far from curtailing the possibility of free will, can itself be set within a higher purpose by a free will. Rather than being muddled and self-contradictory, however, in holding to free will while retaining association, Coleridge presents a form of hierarchical restricted compatibilism that is ultimately one of philosophical libertarianism. The compatibilism (of free will and determinism) is restricted in according determinism only to mechanical processes unimpeded by free human action, and the position is hierarchical in that free will is recognized as the superior power over the force of association and other lower-level, energetic mental processes.

Indeed, he never abandons the associationist theory entirely, and instead keeps it in its place, retaining 'the great and surprising power of association' (*Table Talk* II 53 [1 May 1823]) to explain the phenomena of energetic mind from a causal perspective. Thus he succeeds in retaining associationism as a contained theory applicable only to the lower sphere of human mental life, while dismissing it as a theory of the whole of the human mind. He therefore manages to remain faithful to a largely Kantian view of a rational will that, through a reason not bound to association and causality, cognizes the moral law and can freely choose it as its own, indeed, as a universal imperative. Such apparent contradictions therefore resolve into hierarchical restricted compatibilism when what might have been seen as contradictories are placed in their respective positions between the polar extremes of the two levels.

In this libertarian view, the mind pursuing a higher purpose at times resists and other times floats upon the stream of association, to employ Coleridge's famous 'active and passive' water-insect analogy 'of the mind's self-experience in the act of thinking' (*Biographia* I 124). It would be a mistake to label as 'muddled' a view of such an order, when there is quite clearly a medial line—the midline of the understanding—preventing contradiction, much as it would stretch fair description to say that a bar magnet is a muddle of oppositely charged electrons.

2. HIGHER

Despite his usual passion for desynonymization, Coleridge did not provide a pair of terms distinguishing between (1) reason considered objectively, as the universal *lógos* beyond the human mind though present to it, and (2) reason considered subjectively, as the human mind's openness to that reason. Although he used the same

word, *reason*, he did not conflate these two senses. Nonetheless, it would be clearer to reserve the term *reason* for its objective sense of certain truths and laws as powers and principles independent of human mind, and to use *contemplation* for the mind's openness to that reason and its 'Ideas'. Thus in the following quote, for example, he uses the word 'Reason' where the term 'contemplation' would make the point clearer:

> Reason as the Entrance-way of Ideas?—In this sense of the term, Reason, the only sense in which ~~Reason~~ the term can be used to designate a *faculty of* the Human Mind . . . Reason is the capability of Ideas— (*Notebooks* 4 §5393)

Reason in the objective and external sense (i.e. as *lógos*) can, by contrast, be efficiently described as 'that more than man which is one and the same in all men' ('Ideal of an Ink-Stand' *Shorter Works* II 947). This primary, objective sense of the term is 'reason *sensu eminenti*, as the self-subsistent Reason or *Logos*' strictly distinguished from reason 'merely considered as the endowment of the human will and mind' (*Statesman's Manual* 73 n). In the objective and eminent sense, reason is 'the light of Ideas', a 'mental light', but speaking subjectively it is 'the mental eye which perceives it', and 'a mere potential faculty as long as the inward light is not present' (*Opus Maximum* 171). So while there are no degrees of objective reason, there are degrees of

> this act of self-direction, this act of opening and of receiving, which may be . . . counteracted or suspended or even suppressed. (*Opus Maximum* 171)

Affirming the higher mind beyond the conceptual understanding, he juxtaposes their essential characters, writing that

> Understanding is the faculty of *Reflection*. Reason of Contemplation.
> (*Aids to Reflection* 223)

He continues with a statement paraphrasing the sixteenth-century theologian Richard Hooker, suggesting his own polar view of the 'Order of the Mental Powers':

> Reason is indeed much nearer to SENSE than to Understanding: for Reason . . . is a direct Aspect of Truth, an inward Beholding, having a similar relation to the Intelligible or Spiritual, as SENSE has to the Material or Phenomenal. (*Aids to Reflection* 223–4)

The analogies between reason and sense tell of their polar relation, with one at the limit of our material, sensory pole, the other at the furthest reach of our intellectual mind, such that

> Reason and Sense are both universal Poles—Reason of our personal Being, Sense of our Animal—opposed to both is the Understanding, λόγος ψύχικος[,] as the individual Pole. (*Notebooks* 4 §5374 f62–3)

Coleridge's 'Order of the Mental Powers' clearly outlines his view of the ascent to contemplation from sense, through fancy, and the two levels of understanding, then through imagination, to reason (see Fig. 10.1). He sketches out this diagram

while reading the Kantian philosopher Tennemann's *Geschichte der Philosophie*, responding to where the intellectual historian describes the mental powers ascending from *sensus*, through *imaginatio*, *ratio*, and *ingenium* to *contemplatio* as outlined by the twelfth-century Augustinian theologians Hugh of St Victor, Richard of St Victor, and by the fifteenth-century Victorine-inspired Jean Gerson of the University of Paris. Coleridge finds compelling similarity between the Victorine outline and his own scheme of the mental powers, despite superficial terminological differences, with Coleridge's 'Fancy' for the Victorine *imaginatio*; his 'Understanding' for the Victorine *ratio*; his 'Imagination' equivalent to the Victorine *ingenium*; and his '*Positive* Reason, or R. in her own Sphere' for the Victorine 'Contemplation'. The schematic similarity probably derives from the neo-Platonists, whom the Victorines and Coleridge treated as an important source.

Among these notes on the Victorine psychology, Coleridge succinctly distinguishes contemplation (in positive reason) from meditation (in negative reason, i.e. the higher understanding):

> By the one the Mind contemplates Ideas: by the other it meditates on Conceptions. (*Marginalia* V 797)

Plato called contemplation in this sense *nóēsis*, and Aristotle (and Plotinus) *theōría*. For Plato, *nóēsis* is the highest epistemic mode, beholding the ideas and letting go of images, such as the mathematical diagrams and theoretical schemata employed in *diánoia* (which mode of *epistḗmē* becomes in Coleridge the ratiocinative higher understanding). Such ~~noëtic~~ contemplation follows the energic concentration towards ultimate ends, being distinct from and superior to the energetic activities of the lower mind.

In what I am outlining as Coleridge's two-level view of mental activity, 'Sense' intuits the surrounding material world; 'Fancy' reconstructs memories to propel desire; and 'Understanding' applies concepts to the presentations of sense and fancy in order to match 'means to medial ends' (*Church and State* 59). These operations comprise the 'lower mind', beyond which a higher degree of understanding, enlightened by ideas of reason, uses discursive reasoning in the service of reflection and knowledge. The higher or enlightened understanding is

> Reason therefore, in this secondary sense, and used, *not* as a spiritual *Organ* but as a *Faculty* (namely, the Understanding or Soul *enlightened* by that organ)— (*Friend* I 158)

This secondary sense, he earlier clarified,

> means the understanding considered as using the Reason, so far as by the organ of Reason only we possess the ideas of the Necessary and the Universal, and this is the more common use of the word, when it is applied with *any* attempt at clear and distinct conceptions. (*Friend* I 157)

The 'understanding enlightened by reason' allows for the '*discourse of reason*', which is the only way for us that the reason 'can . . . manifest itself' (*Friend* I 156). Higher or 'rationalized understanding' arises from enlightenment by the ideas of reason,

which impress upon the understanding the vast scope 'of the Necessary and the Universal' (*Friend* I 157), appreciation of which brings tremendous confidence in logical reasoning and the validity of 'our Affirmations and Conclusions' (*Aids to Reflection* 259 fn).

Although through 'the organ of Reason only', at the higher pole, may we possess ideas (*Friend* I 157), their 'irradiative power'—the *lumen* cast from the *lux*—as it affects the understanding is such that the understanding by enlightenment becomes, at its rational pole, the higher understanding (*Opus Maximum* 87). This enlightenment effects in the conscious human mind a qualitative advance beyond the contingent, empirical concepts of the lower understanding as it becomes possessed by ideas of truth, necessity, universality, freedom, and so on, such that the perceiving and discoursing mind recognizes the claims of reason regarding belief, orientation, method, and morality, i.e. wherever the universal ideas of reason intersect with the particulars of practical experience.

Imagination oscillates between understanding and positive reason, conveying ideas to the understanding in the aesthetic (and therefore graspable) form of symbols, of which the images of fancy are a lower-level analogue—ornaments or effects in art, or else associative counters for seeking the satisfaction of natural desires via images derived from sense. In association, fancy rolls through thoughts of things with images, memories, and composites oscillating—in lower-level counterpoint to the imagination—between understanding and sense. Fancy sensualizes, pulling down and stretching out towards the nature pole, yet, oscillating, also 'unsensualises' when it draws up, from sense to understanding, as Coleridge describes in 'The Destiny of Nations: A Vision':[7]

> For Fancy is the Power
> That first unsensualises the dark mind,
> Giving it new delights; and bids it swell
> With wild activity; and peopling air,
> By obscure fears of Beings invisible,
> Emancipates it from the grosser thrall
> Of the present impulse, teaching Self-controul,
> Till Superstition with unconscious hand
> Seat Reason on her throne. (Poetical Works I 285, ll. 80–8)

Imagination, the higher-level counterpart of fancy, idealizes, pulling up towards the reason pole, but also aestheticizes, when it uses symbols to draw ideas down to the understanding. Fancy and imagination draw out the experiencing mind in opposite directions, towards the sense pole and the reason pole, imparting the sense of nature and of reason respectively, each extrapolated beyond the human mind and pre-existing it. As 'Oscillations' (*Marginalia* V 798; see Fig. 10.1), fancy

[7] This poem—commenced in 1797, developing an earlier contribution to Southey's *Joan of Arc*, and not completed until 1814—predates Coleridge's explicitly formulated fancy–imagination distinction (*Biographia* I 82–4, 103–4, 233, 304–5, II 235; *Notebooks* 3 §4066; *Marginalia* IV 596–7, V 798; *Table Talk* II 489).

and imagination also draw experience from the poles back to the understanding, in a focusing and conceptually comprehending concentration. Thus most people, most of the time, identify their stable level at the equatorial line, as it were, between the two levels of understanding.

With this two-level theory of the mental powers, we can consider contemplation in its fullest and purest sense to be a higher-level intuition of reason that occurs,

> Whene'er the mist, that stands 'twixt God and thee
> Defecates to a pure transparency,
> That intercepts no light and adds no stain—
> There Reason is, and there begins her rein!
> (*Church and State* 184)

Such pure contemplation is an appreciative, 'intellectual Beholding' (*Notebooks* 5 §6517 f8^{v}), a transparency surpassing the translucence of imagination, and requiring the mental energy of active attention, an inner focus stretching to intuit ideas considered as realities. In pure contemplation, the very symbols that convey the ideas in aesthetic form begin to dissolve ('Defecates to a pure transparency'), and one reaches the clarity of a Platonic *nóēsis* that enlightens experience. This ~~noëtic~~ contemplation is an energic activity within a higher passivity—a stretching to hear—as the will opens and attunes to the ideas. The intuitive openness to ideas in contemplation is therefore different indeed from the introspective acts of reflection that occur in the higher understanding.

Imagination, oscillating between reason and understanding, creates and recognizes symbols by 'incorporating the Reason in Images of the Sense' that become '*educts*' (conduits) allowing the understanding access to ideas through 'translucence'. This translucence lets the 'light of ideas' shine through, but also obscures and colours that light in the process, a translucency in contrast to the transparency of pure contemplation (*Statesman's Manual* 29–30; *Table Talk* II 384). Positive reason indeed consists in ideas, and Coleridge calls this light of reason the *lux*, whereas negative reason is the enlightened understanding, whose light is not the substantial light of reason itself, but the *lumen*, or the diffused and reflected illumination from that light.[8] In 1824,[9] in another of his remarks on the Victorine spiritual psychology, he says:

> Contemplation is in my System = *Positive* Reason, or R. in her own Sphere as distinguished from the merely *formal* Negative Reason, R. in the lower sphere of the Understanding. The + R = Lux: – R = Lumen a Luce. (*Marginalia* V 797)

While the imagination, with its symbols, is a higher-level term for Coleridge, it is not the highest, being an intermediary embodying the ideas it aims to transmit.

[8] Coleridge employs the early medieval distinction between substantial *lux*, and *lumen*, the illumination from that light.

[9] The date is not recorded, but this marginalium on the back flyleaf of Tennemann's *Geschichte der Philosophie* vol. VIII Pt 2 is one among several placed by the editors between 14 Feb. 1824 and 8 Oct. 1827. The year 1824 is most probable, as *Notebooks* 4 §5062 (1823–4) mentions Hugh and Richard of St Victor, as does a letter to C. A. Tulk dated 26 Jan 1824 (*Letters* V 326).

It is 'consubstantial with the truths' and ideas of reason, but is 'the same Power in a lower dignity' (*Statesman's Manual* 29, 72). Indeed, from as early as 1805 he recognized a definite hierarchical and ontological distinction between ideas and their symbols:

> all expressions belong to the world of Sense—to phænomena / all are contingent, local, here this, there another / but when ennobled into symbols of Noumena, it is a common & venial error to forget the vileness in the worth, to confound not to analyse—the contingent symbol with the divine Necessity = *Νουμενον* [noúmenon]. (*Notebooks* 2 §2664 f83)

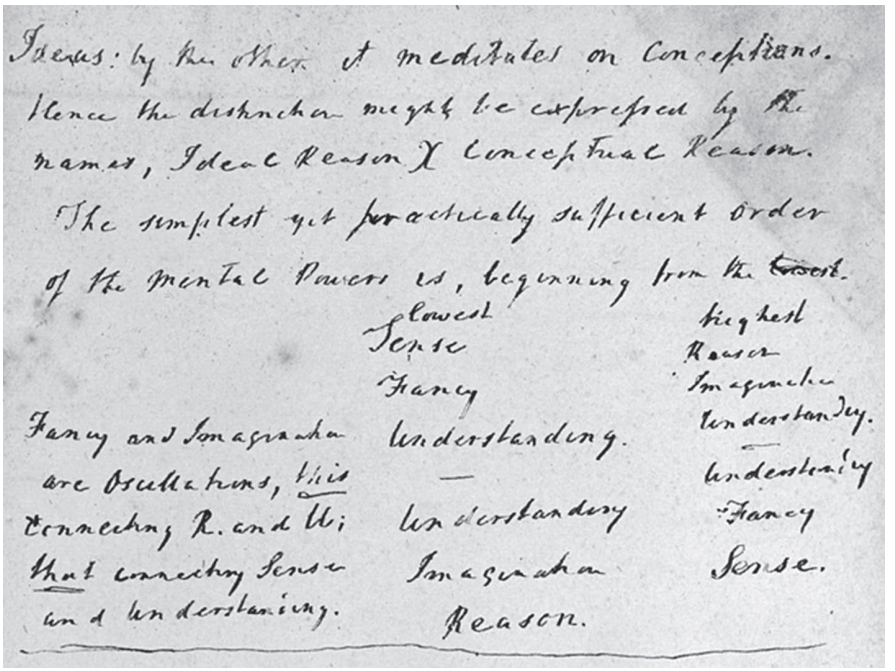
3. LOWER

In this two-level view, illustrated by the Order of the Mental Powers diagram (Fig. 10.1; *Marginalia* V 798), desire, pleasure, the psychological forces of association, and 'the mechanical understanding' (*Statesman's Manual* 30) conform to natural, causal contingency in the energetic lower-level processes, while the free and rational level of the energic proceeds through the enlightened understanding, imagination, and reason to contemplate its objects, the ideas, which constitute universal laws, moral goodness, and intelligible truth.

While the principle of the energic is to aim at, know, and consider higher-level forms or ideas (unity, divinity, the universal, the moral, etc.), covering the movements of thought from reflection to contemplation, it is the principle of the energetic to react. Locke, observes Coleridge, essayed 'to make the mind out of the senses' (*Table Talk* II 179 [25 July 1832]), and thus, with the energetic only in view, concluded that reflection is the highest mental power, being that process whereby the mind observes its own operations, and that all ideas derive exclusively from either the sensation of external objects or reflection on those sensations (Locke [1690] 1996 II.1 §4). Unable to admit any higher notion of reason, the empiricists, grasping but the lower half of the whole, held up the understanding as the end and apex of human intellect, yet this faculty of processing materials and concepts abstracted from sense occupies but the medial position in Coleridge's theory of mind. Thus Coleridge could maintain that 'Locke erred only in taking half the truth for a whole Truth' (*Aids to Reflection* 79). For Coleridge, 'The Understanding in all its judgments refers to some other Faculty as its ultimate Authority', ensuring that 'the Faculty by which we reflect and generalize' is therefore essentially medial (*Aids to Reflection* 223, 224).

In getting off the train too early, thinking they had already arrived at the terminus and best destination with reflection, the empiricists, and other reductionists, miss those otherwise unaccountable elements of poetry and symbolism that are possible only with the imagination, and neglect the contemplation possible only with reason. While reflection is crucial for Coleridge, it is for him but the commencement of the higher mind. The further development of thought then rises to imagination and, though rare, to purer contemplation. Elitist, perhaps, but not belittling, Coleridge sees those who do not attain to pure contemplation as nevertheless enlightened, though defeasibly, in the 'down-shine'[10] of '*Positive* Reason'.

[10] A Coleridgeism: *Shorter Works* I 783; also *Notebooks* 5 §6291 f33).


Ideas: by the other it meditates on Conceptions.
Hence the distinction might be expressed by the
names, Ideal Reason X Conceptual Reason.
The simplest yet practically sufficient order
of the Mental Powers is, beginning from the ~~lowest~~.

	lowest	highest
	Sense	Reason
	Fancy	Imagination
Fancy and Imagination	Understanding	Understanding
are Oscillations, this	—	—
connecting R. and U;	Understanding	Understanding
that connecting Sense	Imagination	Fancy
and Understanding.	Reason	Sense.

[From preceding page: Gerson's and St Victore's Contemplation is in my System = Positive Reason, or R. in her own Sphere as distinguished from the merely formal Negative Reason, R. in the lower sphere of the Understanding. The + Reason = Lux: – Reason = Lumen a Luce. By the one the mind contemplates…]

[…] Ideas: by the other it meditates on Conceptions. Hence the distinction might be expressed by the names, Ideal Reason) (Conceptual Reason.
The simplest yet practically sufficient order of the Mental Powers is, beginning from the ~~lowest~~.

	lowest	highest
	Sense	Reason
	Fancy	Imagination
Fancy and imagination	Understanding	Understanding
are oscillations, this	___	___
connecting R. and U;	Understanding	Understanding
that connecting Sense	Imagination	Fancy
and Understanding.	Reason	Sense

10.1 Order of the Mental Powers (*Marginalia*, vol. V, ed. H. J. Jackson and George Whalley, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press and London: Routledge, 2000: 798)

The intimation of ideas through symbols of imagination is a higher-level occurrence but lower than reason itself or contemplation in its purest sense. For the way that this process infuses perception—the infusion being the 'living Power' in Coleridge's notion of 'primary IMAGINATION' (*Biographia* I 304)—one might turn to the opening lines of Wordsworth's 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality':

> There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
> The earth, and every common sight,
> To me did seem
> Apparelled in celestial light,
> The glory and the freshness of a dream.
> (Wordsworth [1815] 1984 297 ll. 1–5)

Symbols of the imagination, then, occur when our everyday perception becomes infused with a highly significant and universal aspect, illuminating with correspondences between a quality of the object or vista and something within that seeks an external word or image. Coleridge articulates a more voluntary grade of this process when he describes

> The eyes quietly & stedfastly dwelling on an object not as if looking at it or as seeing anything in it, or as in any way exerting an act of Sight upon it, but as if the whole attention were listning to what the heart was feeling & saying about it. (*Notebooks* 2 §3025)

Such attention is, like contemplation, an activity-within-passivity, being a mental exertion that aims in order to receive, and that with as little intermediary distortion as possible. Such is not yet pure contemplation, but approaches it.

Below the highest level of pure contemplation, and below the intermediate stage of symbolic imagination, there is a correspondent form of experience in the lower mind that we can recognize as inchoate contemplation. This occurs

> "When the Soul seeks to hear; when all is hush'd
> "And the Heart listens!"
> (*Poetical Works* I 262 ll. 25–6)[11]

Inchoate contemplation occurs at the level of sense and illustrates the harmony between the poles of sense and contemplative reason. Both are intuitive, the lower responding with a vibration of qualitative feelings, the higher as a self-aware opening to ideas. The difference across the harmonic similarity between pure contemplation (at the level of reason), and inchoate contemplation (at the level of sense) can be illustrated with reference to one of T. S. Eliot's contemplative *Four Quartets*, 'The Dry Salvages'. There the narrator describes pure contemplation as the province of the saint, whose task by grace it is 'to apprehend | The point of intersection of the timeless | With time' ('Dry Salvages' V ll. 200–2). This he contrasts with a lower mode of contemplation, more sensual and sensory, occurring in 'the unattended | Moment' that yet opens one to 'the moment in and out of time' ('Dry Salvages' V ll. 205–6). Such is the lower mode of contemplation that Eliot sees as available 'for most of us':

[11] 'Reflections on having left a Place of Retirement', 1796.

> For most of us, there is only the unattended
> Moment, the moment in and out of time,
> The distraction fit, lost in a shaft of sunlight,
> The wild thyme unseen, or the winter lightning
> Or the waterfall, or music heard so deeply
> That it is not heard at all, but you are the music
> While the music lasts. ('Dry Salvages' V ll. 206–12)

Coleridge describes such a moment of inchoate, sensuous contemplation in 'The Eolian Harp', reclining with his fiancée by the jasmine and the myrtle as the Evening Star rises:

> How exquisite the scents
> Snatched from yon bean-field! and the world so hushed!
> The stilly murmur of the distant Sea
> Tells us of Silence. (*Poetical Works* I 232 ll. 9–12)

Inchoate contemplation involves sense detached from desire, disinterested, as eighteenth-century aestheticians from Shaftesbury through Hutcheson to Kant understood the appropriate attitude before beauty, with a yearning that is aesthetic rather than appetitive. It is therefore a kind of secular grace more likely to occur when one is not on the hunt, that is, when one is contented, well-fed perhaps, and drowsily relaxed.

What there is of the idea in inchoate, sensory contemplation is diffused. Inchoate, sensory contemplation is a kind of reverie in the most pre-conceptual form of experience available to us, and in harmony with pure, ~~noëtic~~ contemplation, the most praeter-conceptual. These intuitive modes of reverie and of pure contemplation are opposed, then, not to each other but to the conceptual understanding, which is unable to give an adequate account of either experience.

The experiences of inchoate contemplation are of the illumination diffused in 'the mist', are of *lumen*, not *lux*. The clarification of that mist reveals the source of the illumination, and goes beyond both inchoate (sensory) and symbolic (imaginative) contemplation, which require the sensory or aesthetic 'mist', and 'belong to the world of Sense' (*Notebooks* 2 §2664). In this comparison of higher-level, pure contemplation and its lower-level, inchoate counterpart, there is already the suggestion that the meaning and potency of inchoate contemplation owes to an intimation of what Coleridge calls reason itself, as the light in the mist, the ideal value intimated through the extraordinary qualities of sensory reverie.

I am describing a model of contemplation occurring in different modes at both poles of our experience, each indicating through intuition the objective sense of reason as opposed to 'the universal Subjectivity of the Kanteans' (*Marginalia* V 743), inclining one to refer to such ideas as Coleridge, with Kant, named God, freedom, the immortal soul, the Good, and so on.[12] Those who would offer more

[12] Coleridge lists 'Ideas' such as: 'the Ideas of Being, Form, Life, the Reason, the Law of Conscience, Freedom, Immortality, God!' (*Friend* I 106); 'the Ideas (N.B. not images), as the ideas of a point, a line, a circle, in Mathematics; and of Justice, Holiness, Free will, etc., in Morals' (*Friend* I 177 fn);

secular accounts might refer to principles such as the cosmos, eternity, freedom, purpose, the infinite, and the infinitesimal. Contemplation, pure or inchoate, occurs at the top and bottom respectively of the range of experiences Coleridge describes, with the ideas contemplated or intimated constituting, as he saw them, the principles of reality itself.[13]

4. ALL THE WORLD BETWEEN

And yet, hardly contemplative in a traditional sense, there is much in Coleridge's letters, nature writing and psychological observations—especially in his notebooks—and much heard too in his poetry, to persuade one of the tireless, I should say restless, vitality of the modes of thinking he communicates. Is there not an energetic scattering of his powers, and not only the concentrated, energic pursuit of reason that he insists characterizes his own mind?

The energetic flurries of this restless, flowing, and challenging quality of mind are, however, not only balanced by, but subordinated to the higher level of mental energy that he held to be a spiritual conatus straining towards ultimate ends and meaningful values. In an image uniting side-to-side discursion with stable progress, he identified, after the ancient Egyptians, the serpentine movement of the snake as an 'emblem of intellectual power', moving this side and that to propel itself over uncertain ground (*Biographia* II 14; see also *Notebooks* 1 §609). The balance and hierarchical alignment of the faculties occurs par excellence in his own description of the ideal poet:

> 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. (*Biographia* II 15–16)

Like his image of the pond skater, that water-insect whose passive and active motions represent the opposed powers required for thinking (*Biographia* I 124), the human mind, in the Coleridgean view that I present, uses the currents of association, pleasure, and fancy, yet also, ideally, decides when to resist them, controlling their flow for the sake of that ultimate aim towards values worthy of contemplation.

The possibility of contemplation, with the occasional, usually inchoate experience of it, gives meaning to the work and play, and all modes of living, learning, and experimentation that precede contemplation. This view of the ordination of being and thought by ideas is explicitly hierarchical, so that while the higher suffuses and informs the lower, the lower does not correspondingly inform the highest to alter its character in any essential way. In giving order and meaning to

and 'the ideas of God, eternity, freedom, will, absolute truth, of the good, the true, the beautiful, the infinite' (*Church and State* 47 fn).

[13] See e.g. his realist account of Ideas as 'the subsistence of the universe, material and intellectual' (*Opus Maximum* 274–6).

the acts and energies of thought at all levels, contemplation initiates the ordination of thought, and achieves this because the recognition of a value entails the acknowledgement of a hierarchy. Certain works, be they political, artistic, or even actions within an everyday context, can strike us as having a special meaning that stands out from the norm, and they do so by resonating more powerfully with values essential for humanity, such as freedom, or kindness.

By 'ordination', I mean the bestowing of a duty within a vocation. One becomes more conscious of ordination after conversion. In the context of this essay, the higher mind, in virtue of its orientation toward an object worthy of contemplation, ordains the lower mind, the Pauline *phrónēma sarkós* (Romans 8: 6–7). That is to say, the higher sets the lower in its place and reveals to it valuable ends, so that through and beyond the wandering and sidewinding, the bubbling, the swerving desires, and the wobbles, the lower mind gains greater self-awareness in becoming aware of a point of value external to itself and superior, yet bidding it nearer. Self-aware, conversion becomes refined, unwilling to deviate from the call of the guiding ideal.

The ordination of thought initiates a redemptive process whereby the associative, wandering motions of the lower mind are called from the narrower service of the self to be given a role in a wider and more meaningful mission. Within this redemptive process, 'the lower nature is taken up into and made to partake of the higher' ('Essay on Faith' [1820], *Shorter Works* II 842). Expanding on this notion a year or two later, he writes that

> All goodness is refluent, circular in its movement still as it revisits its own source, leaves nothing behind but what is incapable of elevation. And what it cannot elevate, it strengthens and improves. (*Opus Maximum* 149–50)

The ordination of thought as the proper circulation of the mental energies, within a moral imperative that requires levels of subservice, is suggested by Coleridge's own description of the best order and balance of the mental powers in subordination to higher ends:

> When the Man uses the Understanding, in *mastery* only for that which is below it, but in subserving as to that which is above it, as not comprehending, but comprehending *by* it, then ανθ. πνευματικο [*ánth. pneumatikó*[*s*], spiritual man].
> (*Notebooks* 4 §4935 f 62^{r}–^{v} [May 1823])

Below this ideal balance—the 'spiritual' state—there are two progressively lower modes of order, now becoming disorder, so that, using Coleridge's epithets, there is the 'natural', and then the 'demonic'. The natural state in between the best and worst possibilities is one of rational egoism or self-interest, and predominates when the understanding is used

> *only* for that which is *below it*, & winning the will over to the same exclusively the ανθρωπος ψυχικος [*ánthrōpos psychikós*, natural/unspiritual man], ανθρωπος σαρκος [*ánthrōpos sarkós*, man of the flesh]— (*Notebooks* 4 §4935 f62^{v})

Psychḗ here is the natural soul or mind in contrast with *pneûma*, the spirit, or higher mind. The dichotomy goes back to Plato's distinction of an immortal psyche, or

higher mind, temporarily conjoined to a mortal soul, itself divided into an affective and an appetitive part. But Coleridge's main reference here is Christian, with *psychikós* denoting the natural, sensual mind, as in James 3:15: 'This wisdom descendeth not from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, devilish'. The KJV renders the Greek ψυχική (*psychikḗ*) as 'sensual', the NIV as 'unspiritual'—the sense being of a mental process that is psychological but not spiritual.

Coleridge holds that under the merely natural order of the mental powers, the understanding is instrumental only, and used to tend to the impulses of the lower mind. Hume advocated precisely such naturalism in declaring that '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' (*Treatise* 2.3.3). Humean 'reason' is for Coleridge 'the mere understanding', 'reasoning'. In this naturalistic order of mind, which Coleridge sees as an imbalance of the order of the mental powers, the will is won over by fancy in the manner that Roger Scruton describes in his essay in this volume (Ch. 5) as fantasy seeking gratification, opposed to which is the moral and truth-directed movement of imagination.

And so to the lowest, the 'demonic' balance of the mental powers:

> lastly, when he uses the understanding in mastery over that which is above it, and pretending to comprehend it within its own limits & laws, which yet is impossible—it dreams itself to be that highest, refuses any higher, and assigns its own measures to justify its own refusal—this is ανθρωπος δαιμονιωδης, σοφια δαιμονιωδης [*ánthrōpos daimoniṓdēs, sophía daimoniṓdēs*, demonic man, demonic wisdom].—
>
> (St James [3:15]) (*Notebooks* 4 §4935 f 62^{v})

These three possibilities of ordering the dynamics between the higher (energic reason), the medial (understanding), and the lower (energetic desires and fantasies) result in (1) the spiritual mind when reason is acknowledged uppermost; (2) the natural mind when understanding calculates solely for the advantage of the lower; and (3) the demonic mind when the understanding pretends mastery over reason. Coleridge discusses the same theme of balance and imbalance regarding reason and understanding in the 'Essay on Faith', describing how 'reason . . . judges the Understanding as the Faculty of the Finite, and cannot without grievous error be judged by it' (*Shorter Works* II 841). When this judgement against the reason is nonetheless attempted, 'its Antagonist is the . . . Unsubordinated Understanding, or Mind of the Flesh'.

Returning to the parallel with Plato's tripartite theory of mind where *noûs* (reason/higher intellect) is the higher soul, with the lower soul comprised by *thymós* (spiritedness/noble feeling), and *epithymía* (appetite), we see that Coleridge draws out three general possibilities of spiritual balance or imbalance much as Plato describes deviation from the most rational balance—i.e. that with *noûs* at the apex—as leading to disorder in self and society (*Republic* Bk 4; *Phaedrus* 246a–254e).

In this model, the energies of thought circulate at two levels, finding synergy only when the hierarchy is achieved whereby the understanding masters the desires below and subserves the reason above. When this happens, the energetic flurries,

tendencies, and compulsions of the lower mind become the currents that Coleridge's water-insect—emblematizing the mental synergy of active powers and passive forces—one moment resists, another moment glides upon, so that, the analogy goes, the objectives of the higher mind might be neared (*Biographia* I 124). The mind that only ever followed the current to 'go with the flow' would be ever prone to fantasy, and fleeting impulses, lacking the self-control to achieve even long-term egoic goals, let alone pursue higher purposes.

Having reflected on the two kinds of imbalance that Coleridge sets against the reason-uppermost 'Order of the Mental Powers', we can now return to my suggestion that there is also a lower-level, inchoate mode of contemplation at Coleridge's level of 'Sense'. I am suggesting that sensory stirrings that are not pursued by self-interested desire are aesthetic states that can become inchoate contemplation of a meditative kind. Such states are a respite in the sensory realm from slavish self-interest, freeing us from the circuit of self and opening us to qualities beheld for their own sake. Nevertheless, these aesthetic meditative moments lack both the transparency (the clarity of intellectual vision), and the deliberate aim at truth of contemplation proper. Lower-level, inchoate contemplation can be seen, then, as concerned with the pleasurable state of being transported by out-of-the-ordinary moments of sensory intuition in which we enjoy rare moments of secular grace, as if somehow out of time, or in a different mode of time, like Wordsworth's 'spots of time'. Calling these intuitions lower-level is not to demean their power or significance, but is to describe the relative passivity of these graceful and richly qualitative, almost pre-conceptual moments in contrast with the deliberate and energic movement of the higher mind towards ~~noëtic~~, praeter-conceptual contemplation.

Both inchoate contemplation and contemplation proper are more intuitive of value and concerned with truth than the streams of association and fancy that can often tempt one to 'go with the flow' rather than pursue longer-range, ethical purposes. Far from considering himself entirely above them, Coleridge acknowledged his own mazy motions of mind. He recounts, for example, the story when, suspicious that he and his taciturn friend Wordsworth were Jacobin spies, Nether Stowey locals judged that, 'As to *Coleridge*, there is not so much harm in *him*, for he is a whirl-brain that talks whatever comes uppermost' (*Biographia* I 189). In the two-level, polar theory of mind, the whirl-brained, streaming associations, and the paths of pleasure and interest, are energetic flurries, outpouring in all directions to new niches, and are therefore better harnessed than ignored or suppressed. More inward than these vital and enthusiastic out-flowings is contemplation—collecting and directing the exploring and sustaining energies of association, fancy, and the conceptual understanding.

The two kinds of beholding can harmonize, but the hierarchy remains. Inchoate contemplation is below, while pure contemplation—'*Positive* Reason'—is beyond the conceptual middle. They are more in tune with each other than either is to its nearer neighbour, the understanding. While a concept of the understanding for Coleridge, as for Kant, is a medial tool and not itself an object beyond the mind, Coleridge also makes it clear that, unlike Kant, he takes the ideal objects of reason to be real and objective, human-mind-independent powers that constitute

not only reason itself, but the laws that determine natural phenomena and the rightness and wrongness of actions in the practical sphere. In this view, while concepts are posterior abstractions from phenomena, ideas necessarily antecede phenomena, being the 'Physical Ideas'[14] (laws) that constitute phenomena and govern their behaviour, or the moral ones in relation to which our actions and intentions have their meaning and value:

> Every Conception has its sole reality in its being referable to a Thing or Class of Things, of which . . . it is a *reflection*. An Idea is a Power (δυναμις νοερα, [*dýnamis noerá*, spiritual or mental power]) that constitutes its own Reality—and is, in order of Thought, necessarily antecedent to the Things, in which it is, more or less adequately, realized—while a Conception is as necessarily posterior.
>
> (*Marginalia* II 1134, notes on Hooker)

Ideal objects therefore elude all conception, and, short of perfect ~~noëtic~~ contemplation, can only be reached or intimated by an imaginative blend of the aesthetic and the intellectual, that is via the symbol, by which we feelingly intuit meaning and value. And so in this view, considerate of intellectual praeter-conceptuality:

> Ideas are not *conceived* but contemplated. They may be apprehended but cannot be comprehended: a fortiori therefore, not expressed. (*Notebooks* 4 §5288 f15 [Dec. 1825])

While Coleridge argues that ideas cannot be comprehended, fully defined, or adequately expressed, this is not to say that they cannot be named. Indeed, to reiterate, he lists ideas such as 'God, the Soul, eternal Truth, &c.' (*Friend* I 156), elsewhere reciting longer lists. Furthermore, although ideas cannot be comprehended, in the enlightened understanding they allow one to produce the 'discourse of reason', not by becoming, *per impossibile*, fully described or defined as nouns substantive, but by becoming the very grammar of discourse, and the leading principles of method.

At the opposite pole to ideas, in this dynamic theory about thought itself, we have desire, fancy, and the associations, all psychological pressures driven by pleasure and instinct, with curiosity taking over, trying to grasp the contiguous connections and the useful possibilities of things. Yet this outspreading hedonic drive of the lower mind to grasp and appropriate is balanced and set into meaningful direction when it is ordered by the value-orientation of the higher, intellectual mind. The meditation of the reflective understanding, whether ascetic (emptying or concentrating the mind) or academic (organizing and clarifying the questions), is still not contemplation, but it does attend to the intellectual drive that Coleridge calls

[14] Coleridge does not assert that laws of nature are themselves physical entities. Rather, he proposes to 'distinguish Ideas into those of essential property and those of natural existence; in other words, into Metaphysical and Physical Ideas', i.e. according to their subject matter and fields of influence. Discussing 'Ideas' from the metaphysical perspective of essences, any actual existence is not of primary concern, but 'Physical Ideas . . . we . . . express, when we speak of the *nature* of a thing as actually existing . . . whether the thing be material or immaterial, bodily or mental' (*Shorter Works* I 635–6; see also *Friend* I 467 n).

> that grand prerogative of our nature, A HUNGRING AND THIRSTING AFTER TRUTH, as the appropriate end of our intelligential, and its point of union with, our moral nature. (*Friend* I 495)

Meditation and reflection reduce the distracting 'flaps and freaks'[15] of our wandering, playful mind by shifting the focus of attention away from the immediacy of desire and the stream of association. Meditation is preliminary to contemplation; no end in itself, but rather a more progressed and less irritable, less reactive mode of attending. Meditation generally involves a persistent attention to objects, logical or phenomenal, that can then lead to contemplation. I have discussed in detail elsewhere Coleridge's meditative practice before natural phenomena, finding in his 'sustained practice . . . a reflexive activity, attending to the flow of external patterns and at the same time to the mind's processes in the experience' (Cheyne 2013 61).

In his nature writing we find delightful examples of meditation as an alternately focused and diffusing mode of mind that teems with significant observations which seem often on the verge of discovering from symbolic impressions some universal truth accounting for the phenomenon, or accruing greater meaning to it. Thus Mary Warnock has found that

> Coleridge perhaps more than any writer in English demonstrated in his detailed description of, for example, the movements of water, the . . . belief that from the sensible properties of things one could deduce not only their true nature, but the true nature of the universe at large. (Warnock, in Sartre 1958 xiii)

This belief in a movement from meditation before natural phenomena to 'the true nature of the universe at large' shows the contemplative direction of the *enérgeia* of thought, with meditation enacting a shift from the energetic to the energic. In another of his notes on Victorine theology and psychology and his own 'Order of the Mental Powers', Coleridge distinguishes the rewards of contemplation from the work of meditation:

> To these solemn Sabbaths of Contemplation we must add the Work-days of Meditation on the interpretation of the Facts of Nature and History by the Ideas; and on the fittest organs of Communication by the symbolic use of the Understanding, which is the function of the *Imagination*. (*Marginalia* V 795–6)

He commends the Victorine observation that contemplation requires a preliminary, purifying meditation to set 'aside the intrusive images of Sense, and the Conceptions of the Understanding' (*Marginalia* V 795).[16] Meditation can then be followed by

> contemplation of the Ideas, or Spiritual Verities, that present themselves, like the Stars, in the silent Night of the Senses and the absence of the animal Glare. (*Marginalia* V 795)

The pre-contemplative, 'Work-day' mode of meditation is a persistent attention entirely superior to escapist fantasy. Rather than merely relaxing, or going with the flow, it aims toward contemplation, the 'solemn Sabbath'. In meditation and the

[15] 'Frost at Midnight' *Poetical Works* I 454 l. 20.
[16] See his account of this process at *Marginalia* III 11 ff.; also his notes on Swedenborg (*Marginalia* V).

exercise of the enlightened understanding, one already begins to recognize value in the energic pursuit.

We have seen, then, how Coleridge's two-level model of mind, consonant with his polar philosophy and his energic–energetic distinction, reveals method, but if the hierarchy in his model, and throughout his thought, is unheeded, the many materials and positions he marshals can appear as aggregate muddle. The omni-comprehensiveness that Coleridge attempts in his prose writings leads him to encompass at once both (1) lower-level associations and a restricted (mechanical, but non-universal) determinism, and (2) higher-level intellection and decision-making that contemplates 'Ideas of Reason' as truths beyond individual situations and idiosyncrasies (beyond even the abstract concepts of the understanding) and therefore requiring the free will that he defends with his libertarian hierarchical restricted compatibilism. This two-level model developed from his conviction in the neo-Platonic harmony between polarized 'Sense' and 'Reason' which allows intuitive connections between the poles of experience that are nonetheless unavailable at the level of ordinary understanding, and it is from this view that I have proposed a theory, developing from Coleridge's 'Order of the Mental Powers', of inchoate contemplation as the more available, lower-level counterpart of its purer instances.

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