The Art of Poetic Life-Writing[1]

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> We all have obscure feelings that must be connected with some thing or other—the Miser with a guinea—Lord Nelson with a blue Ribbon—Wordsworth's old Molly with her washing Tub—Wordsworth with the Hills, Lakes, & Trees— / all men are poets in their way, tho' for the most part their ways are *damned bad ones*. (CL II 768)

MY THEME IS 'LIFE-WRITING', understood in the sense in which 'all … are poets in their way'. In this art, maker and material are the same. Plotinus writes, 'never stop "working on your statue" ',[2] and the statue is the sculptor. This ideal considers human life to be shaped through the contemplation of values. These values have an inescapably ethical dimension, because as we necessarily poetize our surrounding world, we contribute to our personal and communal ethos the character that arises from the culturally shaping power of guiding ideals. Even the immoralist cultivates life within an ethos where obscure feelings connect with some thing or other, whereby certain aims will then appear more valuable than others.

With Coleridge, we find in imagination an impulse to connect profound but obscure presentiments and ideas with our surroundings. This impulse propels great art and everyday aesthetics alike. Whether we pursue merely what attracts us, or seek value beyond this, all lives are freely shaped, without excuses, as the existentialists say. Our choices inevitably engage us in the poetic art of life-writing. Cast *in medias res*,[3] we necessarily improvise. But this is no argument against lives being moral-aesthetic works, spontaneous compositions in value.

Despite how rough-hewed most attempts are, life is an art written with varying degrees of consciousness and sincerity. While literary poetry proceeds by effort and craft, it develops the more spontaneous poetry of the ordinary that shapes the stuff of life into a meaningful whole, and Coleridge alludes to this in the epigraph to this essay. Owen Barfield suggests this sense when he says that 'poetry is the progressive incarnation of life in consciousness'.[4] My interpretation of the Coleridgean primary imagination sees it as a productivity, often subconscious, and an art after the sense with which Kant finds the transcendental schematism of the imagination (synthesizing conceptual form (thought) with sensual intuition (content)) to be:

> a hidden art [*eine verborgene Kunst*] in the depths of the human soul, whose true operations we can divine from nature and lay unveiled before our

[1] The Japan Society for the Promotion of Science provided funds allowing an early draft of this paper to be presented at the biennial Coleridge conference at Cannington, Summer 2014.

[2] *Ennead* I, 6.9. Plotinus refers to Plato's *Phaedrus*, 252D. In that pasage, however, Plato has Socrates speak not of self-transformation, but of the lover 'working on' and transforming the beloved.

[3] Cast: thrown, *geworfen*, as Heidegger puts it; *in medias res*: Horace, *Ars Poetica*, l. 149.

[4] Owen Barfield, *Poetic Diction: A Study in Meaning*, London: Faber & Gwyer, 1928, 181.

> eyes only with difficulty. (CPR[5] A141/B180-1)

But what might this art produce? In Kant's system, it produces meaningful experience from what would otherwise be a confused manifold of sense. Kant's calling it an 'art' is largely metaphorical, adding an appropriate dignity to the spontaneous acts of synthesis performed by the transcendental schematism of the imagination in combining the heterogeneous elements of conceptual thought and sense-intuited content, thus making experience possible. This mysterious synthesis is, he says, the:

> effect of the imagination, of a blind though indispensible function of the soul, without which we would have no cognition at all, yet of which we are scarcely ever conscious. (CPR A78/B103)

For Coleridge, such synthesis occurs within what he terms, annotating a copy of *The Friend*, the '*necessary* Imagination' (F I 440n.), which constructs, as in Kant's transcendental aesthetic, the 'Outer Sense' of space and the 'Inner Sense' (Coleridge adopts Kant's terms, see CPR B41; A99; A278; B153) of time.

This 'necessary imagination' is indispensible for human perception, and for any cognition beyond that of analytic, a priori necessity.[6] The notion of the necessary imagination originates with Kant, who writes in a footnote in the Transcendental Deduction that 'Psychologists have hitherto failed to realize that imagination is a necessary ingredient of perception itself' (CPR A120fn.). Coleridge accepts Kant's conclusion that this synthesizing power, which Coleridge sees elevated and more consciously operant in the poet as 'that synthetic and magical power' (BL I 14), is necessary for human perception. In this view, imagination is necessary to produce intelligible experience in rational creatures, and is thus not necessary for the equivalent of perception in animals (considered as pre-conceptual), the angels (capable of intellectual intuition), or God (who does not need conceptual thought, and, moreover, knows by creating). A synthesizing imagination is necessary, according to that aspect of Kant's transcendental philosophy shared by Coleridge, for any rational creature (and we only know of humans) that begins to perceive and know through conceptually informed sensation.

Animals, in this view, may have highly developed presentiments, and even, as Coleridge concurs, adaptive, 'instinctive intelligence' (SWF II 1266), but bereft of reason and the ability to consider universals rather than encounter particulars, they cannot be said to know. On the other side, human perception is distinguished from that of hypothetical angelic beings, for whom intellectual intuition would be the norm rather than, for humans, either an impossibility (as

[5] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, [edn A 1781; edn B 1787], transl. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

[6] For a speculative-historical discussion of what is *necessary* and what is *imaginative* in Kant's 'necessary imagination', see 'Imagination and Perception', in P. F. Strawson, *Freedom and Resentment and other Essays*, [1974] London: Routledge, 2008, 50-72.

Kant holds), or the hard-won perfection of reason and contemplation (as Coleridge argues, agreeing with certain English divines such as Taylor and Leighton, and poets such as Spenser and Milton, i.e. with the thinkers of 'spiritual, platonic old England', CN 2 2598). The foregoing considerations of imagination as a technical term in Kant and Coleridge, for both of whom it is, in this special sense, a precondition of perceptual experience in rational, sense-based creatures, help explain why Coleridge defines the primary imagination as 'the living Power and prime Agent of all *human* Perception' (BL I 304, emphasis mine).

While basically agreeing with Kant on the necessity of imagination (in this technical sense) for human perception, Coleridge opposes him in going beyond the Kantian position to find in imagination and its use of symbols an access to truths of reason that transcend the limits of experience and its correlative concepts. The Ideas of reason,[7] for Coleridge, are objectively real, including 'God, the soul, eternal truth, etc.' (F I 156), which is to say that God, the soul, etc. are themselves at once real beings and Ideal powers. For Kant, however, Ideas are components of the mind that are Ideal but not necessarily real, serving to regulate experience according to certain non-empirical ideals. Kant sees these regulative, but non-constitutive, Ideas as the *foci imaginaria* (CPR A699/B697) for hope in justice, for example; in a moral reality; in the possibility of a unified science; in a perpetual peace instituted in a kingdom of ends;[8] and in the possibility of divine recompense for eternal souls.

For Coleridge too, these intellectual beacons are present to imagination, but as objective and transcendent realities, and not just as inner, transcendental guides. Kant's transcendental Ideas are present to the mind because they comprise its a priori constituents. For him they are subjective (in the sense of existing in the subject, and as forming or regulating experience), and might, for all we know, have no objective reference in reality. Thus Kant's aim is 'to deny *knowledge* in order to make room for *faith*' (CPR Bxxx). And that, if he is correct, is the end for metaphysics, but certainly not for religion, imagination, and hope. Coleridge, in contrast, sees Ideas primarily as transcendent, and not just transcendental. For him, Ideas are objective and productive realities, independent of the human mind, being neither its products nor merely its regulating tools. Annotating Tennemann's Kantian *Geschichte der Philosophie*, Coleridge defines Ideas negatively against Kant, and positively with Plato:

> Kant supposed the Ideas to be *Oscillations* of the same imagination, which … produces the Mathematical intuitions, line, circle, etc. … each denied or negatived so soon as made, and yet the constructive power still beginning anew. Whereas, according to the true Platonic view, the Reason and Will are the Parents … and the Idea itself, the transcendent

[7] I capitalize *Idea* to distinguish it from anything mental, such as a 'concept', 'notion', or 'idea', and to give the positive connotation of Plato's ἰδέα (noetic Idea), and sometimes εἶδος (dianoetic Form).

[8] Immanuel Kant, *To Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* [1795], trans. Ted Humphrey, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2003.

> Analogon of the Imag[ination] … or spiritual Intuition. (CM V 750-1)

An Idea for Coleridge, then, is a Platonic power (a 'transcendent Analogon' not a transcendental immanence) before it is ever, however dimly, a notion in the human mind. Thus he defends 'the doctrine of Ideas, or Knowledges that are supersensuous and yet truly Objective' (CM V 776). And yet these objectively real Ideas must somehow become present to the mind if we are to contemplate them. As he explains, regarding the contemplation of beauty in nature:

> the *reality*, the *objective* truth … derives its whole and sole evidence from an obscure sensation, which he is alike unable to resist or comprehend, which compels him to contemplate as without and independent of himself what yet he could not contemplate at all, were it not a modification of *his own being* (F I 509)

But how can an external Idea (*in sensu Platonico*) touch or otherwise modify a mind that must begin to perceive and know through the senses and the conceptual schemata? There are two answers. 1. If there are objective Ideas in a Platonic sense, then they exist everywhere and nowhere,[9] including the human mind, being equally intelligible (for that is what they are in themselves) everywhere, and having no particular physical location, being universal truths. 2. The second way for Ideas to touch or modify the sensual mind is through the symbol. Mediating between the lower mind (St Paul's 'mind of the flesh' (Romans 8: 7), which Coleridge identifies with the senses and the unenlightened understanding), and reason, the setting of the Divine Ideas, creative discovery develops whereby imagination reaches towards Ideas as a sort of Jacob's ladder. The symbol, being both accessible to the senses, and consubstantial with the Idea it symbolizes, is thus an 'educt of the Imagination actuated by the pure Reason' (LS 113), and is able to convey Ideas in aesthetic form, through sense, to an awakening understanding.

With this view of the fundamental imagination, active in any conscious human being, as aiming towards Ideas through sense material taken symbolically, we can appreciate this esemplastic power at work as a bridging faculty between the lower mind and reason. What in Kant's system is a 'blind though indispensible function' (CPR A78/B103), becomes with Coleridge a 'living power' and a 'prime agent [not a passive processor] of perception'. If the 'living power' involves a freedom that raises experience above mechanical, or otherwise passive process, then without it we would be slaves to stimuli, able, that is, to process environmental information by following routines, but incapable of moral being, because incapable of relating to value beyond the

[9] This is a Porphyrian formula, from the *Sententiae. Select Works of Porphyry*, [c. 275], trans. Thomas Taylor [1823], Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing, 2010, 69-99: '*Sententiae:* Auxiliaries to the perception of intelligible nature': 'that which is essentially incorporeal is found to be there … with respect to place every where and yet no where.' Taylor's n.15 glosses: 'For that which is truly incorporeal, is every where virtually, i.e., in power and efficacy, but is no where locally.'

senses.

But why would I bring in moral being at this point? Isn't Coleridge's purpose here, with the primary imagination, simply a theoretical concern with how perception gets going, and how this process is the basis for the secondary imagination, the same power in a superior degree, now 'co-existing with the conscious will' (BL I 304), being the power essential to the poetry of a Shakespeare, a Milton, a Wordsworth. Indeed he asserts, in a letter of 1804, that Wordsworth's poetic genius grows from a splendid and pure perception, an 'august & innocent Life', arising from 'his own habitual Feelings & Modes of seeing and hearing' (L II 1034).

Yet while such poetry (or the root of such poetry, since we are discussing the primary imagination) may be splendid, and may well relate to psychology and the philosophy of mind, need this have any moral bearing? Coleridge's position of the necessity of primary imagination is not confined to transcendental idealism. The philosopher of mind John Searle's recent work on consciousness emphasizes what he calls the 'unified field of qualitative subjectivity'.[10] This field essentially unites all thoughts, sensations and other phenomena of consciousness into a world of meaning. For Searle, consciousness is essentially qualitative, subjective, and unified. These same three qualities are contributed, according to a straightforward interpretation of Coleridge, by the primary imagination. My aim in this essay concerns progressing from this view of a unified meaning-making consciousness, to a view of life as an art that inevitably relates to the axiological dimensions of goodness and beauty (which polar dimensions include the possible valences of evil, the ordinary, and the ugly).

Coleridge's poetry of everyday life sees values and ideals become daily bread:

> The *Heart* should have *fed* upon the *truth*, as Insects on a Leaf—till it be tinged with the colour, and shew its food in every the minutest fibre. (L I 115, October 1794)

The primary imagination is, in my reading, an ontological faculty. It discerns kinds and categories of being, such as objects and persons, substances and qualities, and also Ideals beyond being. Thus 'the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception', meaningfully colours and shapes the world of the miser, of the admiral, old Molly, the poet walking in nature, and of you and me. This is, I take it, the inevitable poetry of everyday life that makes poets of us all.

From this primary imagination, Coleridge distinguishes the secondary as the same kind of agency, only more conscious and under 'a superior voluntary controul' (BL I 125). The more voluntary aspect of the secondary imagination is acknowledged in his Chapter XIII pronouncement distinguishing fancy from

[10] John Searle, 'Consciousness, Free Action and the Brain', *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 7, No. 10, 2000, pp. 3-22.

imagination, where he describes secondary imagination, but not the primary, as 'co-existing with the conscious will' (BL I 304). Earlier in the *Biographia*, before he introduces the term 'secondary imagination', he already begins to distinguish it from a certain technical usage of the term 'imagination' in 'philosophical language' (BL I 124). Distinguished but not divided from this philosophical sense, is that higher level, a 'superior degree' within the whole, which:

> in common language, and especially on the subject of poetry, we appropriate the name to a superior degree of the faculty, joined to a superior voluntary controul over it. (BL I 125)

This more voluntary power writes life into things, animating them into the organic whole of the artwork. Such artefacts physically express or indicate Ideas, and in synthesizing object and Idea, thing and person, artworks derive their unique, quasi-personal presence.

Secondary imagination creates artworks that can survive their creators. These creations are more independent than the products of primary imagination, which latter aim towards essences and are living instantiations of values, or gropings toward them. This life in the culture, however, survives only *in vivo*, in the living individual – the sculpture constantly being re-sculpted. Although not written in verse, or marble, it is still something poetic, and poetry's essential preliminary.

The expression of obscure aims, that 'vague appetency' (SWF II 633) evolving through the primary imagination, gains a comparative permanence and distinctness when developed to the secondary degree of art or philosophy. The 'philosophic imagination, the sacred power of self-intuition' (BL I 241) thus reflects the mind and its concerns to itself. In creating independent works, the vitality of the previously spontaneous imagination can be preserved while allowing the accidents and errors accrued in the unexamined mode to be repaired or discarded, that is, to be perfected in art.

Works of secondary imagination introduce a greater degree of discernment to our lives, because they present objectively what were previously obscure presentiments. Moreover, because this objective presentation is communicated to an audience, the object of thought and feeling can be considered apart from the confusion of personal, psychological, and biographical details and thus become an object for reflection. This mental clarity that proceeds beyond personal problems to objective reflection of more universal issues is an important goal for any program of aesthetic education, and is the essential contribution of the moral and humane sciences.

Unlike either degree of imagination, fancy (or fantasy) is only rarely poetic. A store of images and the conduit of association, it contributes to memory and provides material for empirical concepts (BL I 305). Unconcerned with truth or ultimate ends, it explores along the stimulating current of desire. Imagination, in contrast, retains value beyond fleeting moments, as it beholds rather than consumes. Imagination penetrates details to find principles. We do

this on nature walks, in meditation or prayer, before artworks, and even while enjoying sport. Where sensual, intellectual, and moral qualities are appreciated, we contemplate the Ideals of perfection.

In one respect, we are passive in the reception of value and Ideas, which Coleridge sometimes describes as 'spiritual intuition'.[11] Yet we are also responsible for our openness to Ideas, which requires preparatory acts. So in another sense, we are active in appreciating value, in that we make room for it. Like the improvisation that takes minutes to create, the capacity can take decades to achieve. We must carve from within, hollowing ourselves, to receive and echo Ideals.

Whatever moves us connects us, dimly and defeasibly, with Ideas, which work in us, though we do not usually reflect on the process. That is, 'of Ideas––the Fewest among the Few … live in their Light, and yet all … live in their power—the Idea working *in* them' (CN 4 5495). But how do Ideas touch us? To mean something for us, Ideas require aesthetic expression. This synthesis of sense and Idea occurs in the imagination, which Coleridge, in a note on the relation of 'Form' and 'Thinking', 'Being' and 'Process', calls the 'Laboratory in which Thought elaborates Essence into Existence' (CN II 3158). Here he describes an elaborating (literally: working out) imagination configuring appearances through the aspect of intimated Ideas. In the preliminary poetry of primary imagination (the enlivened perception), the Ideal might illuminate a gesture, an aspect of landscape, the roar of a waterfall, indeed any phenomenon. In the secondary imagination, Ideas become accessible in cultural artefacts such as paintings, or poems, and even in works of history or philosophy.

In being moved by something, we intuit, however dimly, 'knowledge of *its ultimate aim*' (CS 12). This knowledge, dim and defeasible, will err from vagueness and misinterpretation. Nevertheless, ultimate aims, or Ideals, must be expressed aesthetically, i.e. through symbols, if they are to have any meaning in our lives. This aesthetic import of value begins in the primary imagination, revealing through materially constituted events consequences that matter and goals worth striving for.

An admirable person is esteemed as a creation, as a work of freedom. We find a poetic quality in lives shaped by commitment to Ideals. Yet nobody invents or redefines honour, courage, or any of the virtues, however much our desire to praise heroes suggests such superlative phrases. The admirable are admired for embodying the Ideal, not for creating it. Embodying principles in this way is to unite the active life with the contemplative. I am suggesting that this union is effected by bringing the evaluative insights of primary imagination into a living work of conversion, producing a generative ethos in which one shapes one's life towards the realisation of Ideals.

In a similar discussion, on the 'bodily manifestation' of 'the morally good',

[11] E.g., SM 46, where 'spiritual intuition' is glossed as a 'positive inward knowledge by experience'; CN V 6367, where it is 'a perceiving sensation of moral truth'; and CM V 751, where 'Imagination' is the 'spiritual Intuition' and 'Idea itself [its] transcendent Analogon'.

Kant says that 'this embodiment involves a union of pure ideas of reason and great imaginative power' (CJ §17, 'Ideal of Beauty'). For Kant, an '*Idea* signifies, strictly speaking, a concept of reason, and *ideal* the representation of an individual being as adequate to an idea' (§17). Kantian Ideas of reason signify 'reason's indeterminate idea of a maximum' and are 'not … capable of being represented by means of concepts', but only by 'the ideal of the beautiful' (§17). '[T]he ideal', Kant continues, is 'something that we strive to produce in ourselves even if we are not in possession of it' (CJ §17).

This returns us to the role of imagination in shaping one's life according to ideals. '[A]ll … are poets in their way', as we imbue our surroundings with meanings and Ideas not fully describable by clear and distinct concepts. We give a setting and expression to Ideas by uniting them with obscure feelings and judgements cast into actions, attitudes, and preferences. Thus:

> You may see an Idea working in a man by watching his tastes and enjoyments, though he may hitherto have no consciousness of any other reasoning than that of conception and fact. (CN 4 5409)

In even the meanest tastes, there exists an elementary, unexamined ethics, because even these exercise choice and strain after some value, some vision of perfection. At all levels, we compose autobiography *concrète* in our inevitably creative lives. The rhyme and reason in the art of life-writing necessarily involves spontaneous composition. While improvisation lends its virtues, such as flexibility, centeredness, and presence to the moment, it can also be shallow, and easily swayed by an unreflective taste that aims for more or less immediate gratification. Themes first used authentically in shaping one's life can become mere habits. Doggerel prevents poetry.

In a notable coincidence of thought, Nietzsche expresses just this insight of life as poetry in language strikingly similar to Coleridge's:

> *People as bad poets* – Just as bad poets in the second half of a line, look for a thought to fit their rhyme, so people in the second half of their lives, having become more anxious, look for the actions, attitudes, relationships that suit those of their earlier life, so that everything will harmonize outwardly. But then they no longer have any powerful thought to rule their life and determine it anew; rather in its stead, comes the intention of finding a rhyme.[12]

Habitual patterns might be idiosyncratic marks of style, but they are inauthentic in that they repeat, rather than reflect. And so Coleridge attests that while 'it is the privilege of a few to possess an idea: of the generality of men, it might be more truly affirmed, that they are possessed by it' (CS 13).

Insufficient contemplation of a guiding Idea leads to errors in its material

[12] Nietzsche, *All Too Human*, 1878, §610.

expression through the stuff of life. Mistakes become compulsively repeated, like the Freudian return of the repressed. J. C. C. Mays observes a compulsive return to a biographical pattern when he notes that:

> Coleridge fixed early on the theme of incompleteness and yearning, bolstering it with a sense of buoyancy lost as youth gave way to manhood, and it was never fundamentally revised. … His command over what he wrote developed, but the plotline hardly at all because it was a situation to come to terms with.[13]

In poems that 'consistently press toward an end just beyond the words', Mays diagnoses an 'obligation continually to rewrite the same story [deriving] from the need for renewal, or … dedication to an idea of Reason which a process (Imagination) serves' (2013, 7).

That there is 'a divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will'[14] is implicit in Coleridge's philosophy, wherein Ideas often:

> powerfully influence a man's thoughts and actions, without his being distinctly conscious of the same, much more without his being competent to express it in definite words. (CS 12)

For Coleridge, remaining related to Ideas only through an obscure wallowing can make us puppets in a shadow-play unless we face them with the full powers of reflective thought. To give a concrete example, imagine someone who tends to rebel against authority. Although this impulse springs from a noble ideal of freedom, the person seized by cultural echoes of the Idea has yet to approach it as an objective reality behind hazy moods and cries of the heart. Distinctly conscious and reflective recognition brings a superior clear-sightedness that is less prone to ethical and practical mistakes analogous to fumbling in the dark. What Coleridge means by being 'possessed by Ideas' is a going with the flow, a passive consent to the Zeitgeist, for example, and an imitation of surrounding examples while thinking no further than one's emotional antennae. The problem in being possessed like this by Ideas does not lie with Ideas themselves, but in their misconception.

We are inevitably prone to this danger, because, as Coleridge puts it, 'No Idea can be rendered by a conception. An Idea is essentially inconceivable' (CM II 1145: notes on Hooker). Annotating the same volume, Coleridge continues this Platonic contrast between conception and Idea:

> An Idea is a POWER (δύναμις νοερά [intellectual power]) that constitutes its own Reality—and is in order of Thought, necessarily antecedent to Things, in which it is, more or less adequately, realized—while a Conception is as necessarily posterior. (CM II 1134)

[13] J. C. C. Mays, *Coleridge's Experimental Poetics*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, 52-3; 56.
[14] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, V.ii, l.11.

The understanding is so clear, and its concepts so well defined, because they abstract from the 'fixities and definites' supplied by fancy from sense experience (BL I 305). Concepts are products of the human mind, and cannot exist without that mind. Ideas are the very opposites of concepts, in Coleridge's view, in which 'an ultimate end … an idea … is not representable by the sense, and has no entire correspondent in nature, or the world of the senses' (CM III 423).

An Idea of reason is a power that pre-exists the mind, and necessarily antecedes all phenomena. Ideas are, in this view, correlates not only of ultimate ends understood in an ethical sense, i.e., of the Platonic Ideas of Truth, Goodness, Justice, Self-control, and so on, but also of all mathematical truths and of the laws of nature; they are, that is, objectively real ends or powers, independent of mind, and utterly distinct from concepts, which refer to the perceptual world. That being or power, then, for 'which there neither is [n]or can be an adequate correspondent in the world of the senses—this and this alone—is = an IDEA' (LS 113-4).

Because of his positive notion of Ideas as objective realities, Coleridge cannot accept Kant's more negative and subjectivist view of them. For Kant, Ideas neither construct nor constitute experience (this is what the concepts of the understanding do), instead they regulate it. One legitimate[15] function of Ideas for Kant lies in their ordering our empirical and mathematical knowledges into an interconnected system of science, which he calls 'the architectonic of pure reason' (CPR A832-51/B860-79). This architectonic is a human construct, effectively an ambition inspired by the rational idea of the 'cosmos', the truths of which should ultimately unite in a coherent system.

Kantian rational Ideas, such as God, the soul, and the Good, find another legitimate function in regulating human conduct according to maxims of behaviour that can be universalized without contradiction. Kant finds a final legitimate role for Ideas in aesthetic judgement, although here, in the realm of taste, and unlike in the moral realm, where the categorical imperative holds, judgements can no longer be proven or disproven to be universalisable without contradiction. Thus Kant finds the legitimate use of Ideas to lie in organizing our unitary conceptions of Truth, with the architectonic; Goodness, with the categorical imperative; and Beauty, in aesthetic judgement.

In the final sentence of *The Statesman's Manual*, Coleridge describes his crucial divergence from Kant regarding the objective reality of the Idea:

> Whether Ideas are regulative only, according to Aristotle and Kant; or likewise CONSTITUTIVE and one with the power and Life of Nature, according to Plato, and Plotinus … is the highest problem of Philosophy, and not part of its nomenclature. (LS 114)

[15] Kant's concern with legitimate roles for the Ideas is related to his finding in metaphysics an illegitimate use of Ideas, as in his system concepts have validity only in relation to phenomena. For Kant, Ideas are a special kind of concept (the concept of a maximum), whereas for Coleridge the two are utterly distinct.

While for Kant, rational Ideas, with the pure concepts (space, time, causality, etc.), are transcendental mental entities, for Coleridge, an Idea of reason is not merely a human concept of the being it names, but is the very principle of what it names insofar as it becomes 'a modification' of our '*own being*', which we may then 'contemplate as without and independent' (F I 509). Any sense of an Idea is an intuition via symbols through outward or imagined sense. Coleridge explains that, 'as all the products of the understanding … are generalized from Sense, it is by only a *Symbolical* use of words that they can be made to express things *above* sense' (CM III 425).

Enlightenment is, in this view, the progress from 'judging according to sense' (AR 222) to an increasingly conscious reflection on Ideas, seeing 'the mass of Mankind Day-dreamers; the Philosopher only awake' (F II 75 n.3). If Ideas are objectively real powers, then enlightenment is the progress from a misconceived possession by Ideas to possession of them positively, through reflective thought and what Coleridge calls the 'energies of Reason' (LS 29).

Even 'the best and the wisest', Coleridge insists in a notebook entry of October 1803 (CN 1 1612), are subject to 'eyes filmy with drowsy empiricism'. With vision dimmed by reliance on generalized experience, their limited virtue is 'akin to certain errors'. Fortunately, however, the 'Passions & Instincts … often are the natural Correctives & Supplements' that realign actions with the imperfectly realized ideals that are their principles. The 'Passions & Instincts' may then 'by their folly work out the wisdom of God' (CN 1 1612). Coleridge's Romantic Platonism thus suggests that Ideas can be felt through a sensuous, aesthetic modality of mind that is initially unreflective, but is yet a path, low on the slope from cave to open sunlight. The initial ascent is faltering and prone to repeated error. As Nietzsche puts it, 'One rarely falls into a single error. Falling into the first one, one always does too much. So one usually perpetrates another one—and now one does too little.'[16]

A compulsion in good will to modify repeated patterns drives an initially somnambulant ascent towards Ideal contemplation and the perfection of virtue. Ideas thus become lived, and deep calls to deep as feelings and aesthetic qualia correspond with non-sensible intelligibles.

To possess Ideas, rather than blindly move in their sway, is to safeguard responsibility for one's direction while also accepting that the truer meanings in life are discoveries, albeit ones that are creatively reached. Hence the art of poetic life-writing deepens with praeter-conceptual contemplation. As a cavern forms by an underground river coursing through limestone, meditative experience enlarges our capacity to echo the transcendent. This deepening, aesthetic connection to Ideas develops what Coleridge calls 'the one Life within us and abroad' (PW I.1 233), and generates yearnings beyond conceptually understood experience. Through approaching Ideas, we can strive to embody Ideals, which are possible for us to consider only:

[16] Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols* [1895], trans. R. J. Hollingdale, Penguin Books, 1990, Maxim 30, 34-8.

> by means of the IMAGination, by force of which the Man … feels Wants … and proposes to himself Aims & Ends … that can be gratified and attained by nothing which Experience can offer or suggest (CN IV 4692)

Imagination, then, provides us with a perspective on values 'beyond being', Plato's formula for the Idea of the Good, the Idea of Ideas (Republic 509b). The Ideal intimates an Idea that cannot be deduced from any empirical 'is', inspiring an 'ought' from the rational will that recognizes it. Yet while the Ideal driving this 'ought' lies beyond what is given in experience, art and culture, in creating material traces of the imagination, inspire by indicating beyond the empirical limit.

I have reflected on primary and secondary imaginations as original and secondary *poiesis*, seeing in the former, Coleridge's *imago Dei*, an *in vivo poiesis*, a vital, esemplastic power that shapes experience in the unity of consciousness. And does primary imagination not have its own poetry, an unwritten kind, that cannot be stored in libraries or otherwise archived, yet is nonetheless lived, an accomplishment in life-writing, in *bio-graphia*, however 'damned bad it may be'? The kind, I mean, that exists with, and in a sense dies with, 'old Molly with her washing Tub', and that makes 'all … poets in their way'. We are inwardly acquainted with this power, if my interpretation is on the right track, through perceptual tones and the subliminal significances within a life. Secondary imagination could then be distinguished as *ad vita poiesis*, bringing materials into life in the creation of artworks, able, unlike *in vivo poiesis*, to survive their maker, producing a materially expressed extension of mind, and through which symbolical, aesthetically expressed values can be contemplated.

Primary imagination produces foundational ways of seeing (forms of *theoria*) that shape our perceptions, ethos, and moral direction. Although they cannot survive independently, they can be culturally transmitted, and most families and communities could describe the outward forms of such traditions in living memory. These evolving creations always exist *in vivo*, and, bubbles patterns rising from the spring of value, easily die out with small groups or with generations, yet ever replaced with an evolving form. The bringing-to-life of secondary *poiesis*, however, creates works that once made do not depend on the living perception. Such artistic work animates surrounding objects by evolving them through the maker's vision. Inanimate materials are brought to life, demonstrating traces of the individuating and ideally directed tendencies that distinguish persons from things. In this light, we see the mysterious aura of artworks as the effect of a thing in which person-like qualities are encountered.

In configuring perception towards essences, primary poiesis imparts value throughout the world of sense. The defeasible and imaginative (i.e., the human) perceptual intuition of moral and aesthetic qualities develops from the physical on which it supervenes. This astonishing qualitative construction is an everyday work of art infusing the works that we make of our lives. Making one's own life and work out of contemplation, contemplating, amid practical life, is the art

of poetic life-writing, a creative discovery of value sustained in the act of faith.