

KANT'S "COPERNICAN REVOLUTION" IN PHILOSOPHY
AND THE ROMANTIC "REVOLUTION" IN
ENGLISH LITERATURE

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to provide philosophical insight into the goals and achievement of the English Romantic poets by illustrating the relation between their understanding of the mind as generative of experience and the concepts of human freedom and creativity formally deduced by Kant in his Transcendental Idealism.

Primarily, this relation is defined in terms of Kant's claim in the Critique of Judgment that the aesthetic function "mediates between" or "reconciles" the polarized realms of man and nature. But because the Critique of Judgment has been traditionally accepted as a mere afterthought for Kant, the force of this claim has been greatly underestimated. As a consequence, the full extent of the relation between Kantian and Romantic thought has not been appreciated. Therefore, I have introduced this study with a general survey of Kant's "Critical" teaching, designed primarily to examine the significance of Kant's claim for the aesthetic function, while at the same time outlining the philosophical background against which my main thesis is to be developed. Special attention is paid here to those aspects of Kant's system which most clearly define the terms of his own break from the dogmatic philosophies of his eighteenth-century predecessors, and which appear to relate most closely to Romantic thought: the deduction of the Productive Imagination and the consequent refutation of associationism; the

necessity to distinguish between Verstand (Understanding) and Vernunft (Reason); the interpretation of man as self-legislating in the moral sphere, and the discussion of the origin and vital function of the sense of beauty and artistic creativity.

In the second and more important part of this study, much of what is demanded in Kant by the sheer necessity of philosophical thought is shown to be present in English Romantic poetry as achievement and act. First, I demonstrate that the English Romantics were engaged in the same kind of inward-turning quest for certainty and permanence which led Kant to reject the dogmatic rationalism of the Enlightenment in favour of the "revolutionary" thesis that criteria of truth, goodness, and beauty are grounded not in "outward forms," but in the forms of human consciousness themselves. Second, I show how this reversal of the terms of naive empiricism leads the Romantics into the same dualism of fact and value which emerges from Kant's critical investigation of human reason. Third, I show how the Romantics, like Kant, regarded this dualism as overcome in the aesthetic sphere, through the sensually "liberating" agency of beauty in art, and beauty or sublimity in nature.

In this section my concern is not so much with the actual presence in Romantic literature of Kantian or Kant-like ideas, as with describing how Transcendentalist concepts "became constitutive" of Romantic poetry in terms of myth and symbol, and why such ideas were necessary for the "release" of poetry from eighteenth-century concepts.

Thus, by respecting throughout the difference both in purpose and means between poetry and philosophy, Kant's theories and Romantic practise reveal themselves as complementary rather than antithetic modes of response to the spiritual and intellectual climate they shared.

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INTRODUCTION

Many eminent critics and historians have regarded German Idealism and English Romanticism as presenting similar kinds of responses to the dogmatic rationalism of the Enlightenment. A.C. Bradley, for example, often spoke of these movements as sharing a "community of spirit,"¹ and he saw the poetry of Wordsworth as

an imaginative expression of the same mind which, in his day, produced in Germany great philosophies. His poetic experience, his intuitions, his single thoughts, even his large views, correspond in a striking way, sometimes in a startling way, with ideas methodically developed by Kant, Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer.²

Similarly, G.A. Borgese described Kant's revolutionary insights as "the most authoritative signposts on the road to the real synthesis and rehabilitation of romanticism,"³ and Samuel Monk, in his classic book on The Sublime, takes Kant's philosophy and the art of the Romantics as "symptoms of a changed point of view" and holds that

there is a general similarity between the point of view of the Critique of Judgment and the Prelude; and that the Prelude differs from the Essay on Man in a manner vaguely analogous to the way in which the Critique of Pure Reason differs from An Essay on Human Understanding.⁴

¹"English Poetry and German Philosophy in the Age of Wordsworth," in A Miscellany (London, 1931), 107.

²Oxford Lectures on Poetry (London, 1914), 129-30.

³"Romanticism," Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences (New York, 1937).

⁴Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1960, 5.

And John Crowe Ransom writes that

When we plunge into the first-rate sequence of poets which includes Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats, we at once gather the impression that they are purposeful, dedicated, even programmatic, to a degree hardly equalled by another set of individual poets living in a single age. They had a common preoccupation with a certain understanding of poetry, and they had got it partly from the literary critics; but more and more it tended to go back to Kant, or to those critics who had assimilated their own view to Kant's.⁵

But in spite of the universality of this belief in an intellectual kinship between Kant and the Romantics, or between Transcendental Idealism and Romanticism generally, surprisingly little scholarly effort has been expended in probing into the nature and extent of this relationship. Undoubtedly, part of the problem lies in the famous obliquity of Kant's style, which makes his ideas available only to the most resolute and patient readers: even Schopenhauer was known to have lamented over Kant's "symmetrical architectonic amusements."⁶ Also, the old dispute between Socrates and Ion survives, splitting teachers of philosophy from those of literature in the senseless haggle over who holds the patent on "Truth." And now we have that bête noire of modern education, academic specialization, all but stopping communication between the various disciplines in the modern university, causing it to resemble, in Theodore Roszak's words, "nothing so much as that highly refined, all-purpose brothel Jean Genet describes in his play The Balcony."⁷

⁵"The Concrete Universal: Observations on the Understanding of Poetry," in Poems and Essays (New York, 1955), 161.

⁶Cited by J.H. Bernard, in the Introduction to his translation of Kant's Critique of Judgment (New York, 1951), xiv. This edition cited hereafter as C of J.

⁷The Dissenting Academy (New York, 1967), 12.

But in spite of the narrowly sectarian attitudes which characterize modern scholarship in the humanities, there is a great deal to be gained in placing philosophy and literature side by side as we seek understanding of the nature of man's response to his environment. For the world of the poet and the philosopher are not of gold and of brass (placed in either order)--or even iron--but offer equally valuable and equally comprehensive modes of interpreting the difference between appearance and reality; what has been and is, and what might be and ought to be; of fixing the limits of possible insight, or of determining the meaning or final cause of human existence. As Leslie Stephen said:

The loftiest poet and the loftiest philosopher deal with the same subject-matter, the great problems of the world and human life, though one presents the symbolism and the other unravels the logical connection of the abstract conceptions.⁸

In other words, much of what can be called "true" of our experience can be cast and communicated in propositions. But these are not the "truths" which are communicated through the "non-discursive forms" of art, forms which express "things inaccessible to language" and whose recognition "broadens our epistemology to the point of including not only the semantics of science, but a serious philosophy of art."⁹

⁸Hours in a Library, as cited by John Muirhead, Coleridge as Philosopher (London, 1930), 256. Hereafter referred to as Muirhead.

⁹Suzanne Langer, Philosophy in a New Key (New York, 1958), 224. Compare Eliseo Vivas: "If it is true that art both discovers and creates informed substance, theories of meaning based on the analysis of signs as these function in ordinary discourse and in the language of science are incapable of doing justice to the manner in which the artistic symbol reveals that which the artist has to say . . ." (Creation and Discovery [Chicago, 1955], xviii).

The idea that poetry and philosophy present not opposing but complementary modes of response to experience has special import for the relation between Transcendental Idealism and English Romanticism. For while the same forces were at work in both Germany and England, they received a far more conscious direction in Germany, where there was "an effluence of philosophical genius as unmistakable and almost as profuse as the effluence of imagination here."¹⁰ But in England, the movement developed instinctively and spontaneously, a circumstance which has no bearing, of course, on the standards of Romantic art, but which does require us to look beyond England in order to discover the philosophical foundations of its assumptions.¹¹

But at the same time, Romanticism complements the Transcendental philosophy by presenting as achievement and act what is demanded in the latter by the necessity of philosophical thought.¹² Whereas both Kant

¹⁰A.C. Bradley, "English Poetry and German Philosophy . . . ," 109.

¹¹Bradley attributes this situation to "a characteristic of the English or Anglo-Saxon mind": "When the English mind is in flood and approaching or reaching its high-tide . . . it breaks into poetry; and its greatest poetry appears at such times. But its most famous philosophy does not. Locke and Berkeley and Hume appear when the tide is on the ebb, or the temperature a trifle subnormal, and when the poetry shows less of creative power and lyrical passion and comes somewhat nearer to prose. . . . The matter, the ideas, of these philosophers do not strike us as corresponding with those pictures of the world that are painted by our most imaginative poets" (ibid., 111-12). Less venturesome about indulging in such stereotypes, Leslie Stephen wrote that "We are not sufficiently acquainted with the laws which regulate the appearance of unique genius to say why Kant should not have been an Englishman" (History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century [New York, 1962], I, 50).

¹²As Max Deutschbein says in Das Wesen des Romantischen, "The German and English Romantics are perfect counterparts: the Germans are primarily theoretical, while the English brought these theoretically established principles to fruition in their poetry" (Cöthen, 1921, vii; my trans.).

Margaret Sherwood makes the same point when she says that "England, lacking, as usual, a philosophy, had, as usual, a conduct, and the forces

and the Romantics were "mental travellers," inspired partly by Rousseau and partly by the strength of their own convictions to "deny knowledge" and "make room for faith,"¹³ Kant was obliged by the very premises and method of his Transcendental¹⁴ philosophy to limit himself to demonstrating the possibility of moral, aesthetic and "religious" experiences, while the Romantics characteristically probed beyond theory to get at the experience itself, and to present it concretely to sense in a system of symbols.

But perhaps the most important reason for studying English Romanticism against the background of Transcendental Idealism is the fact that Kant's Critical philosophy places such an extremely strong emphasis on the role of the creative artist. For in Kant's scheme, the aesthetic dimension, which is defined by the "free play" of Imagination and Understanding, contains principles valid for the realms of both fact and value, or sensuousness and morality; those "two worlds" of consciousness which became separated in the process of fixing the limits of

becoming apparent in Germany in ideas, conceptions, manifested themselves here in imaginative literature,--all the richer, perhaps, because the critical sense halted behind the creative" (Undercurrents of Influence in English Romantic Poetry [Cambridge, Mass, 1934], 22).

See also the article by D.G. James, "Kant's Influence on Wordsworth and Coleridge," in The Listener, XLIV (August 31, 1950), 311-12.

¹³Immanuel Kant, The Critique of Pure Reason, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York, 1929), 29. Hereafter referred to as C of PR.

¹⁴I follow Kant's own distinction in my use of the distinction between "Transcendental" and "transcendent," the former signifying that which is a precondition of experience, and the latter, that which transcends experience. See C of PR, 59. (Coleridge also made this distinction: see below, p. 64). The word "Transcendental" has been capitalized throughout, to mark this special use, as has the word "Critical," when it is used in Kant's sense, as a synonym for Transcendental (i.e., as deriving from "Critique").

discursive knowledge, or, in Romantic terms, of the "fall" into the awareness of Self. And in "mediating" between these "two worlds," the aesthetic function emerges in Kant "not merely as a third dimension and faculty of the mind, but as its center, the medium through which nature becomes susceptible to freedom, necessity to autonomy."¹⁵ Such, I believe, is the foundation on which the Romantics, either knowingly or unknowingly, based their understanding of the material and function of poetry, a foundation which provides Transcendental sanctions for all but their most extreme claims for the power of creative Imagination.

Kant's aesthetic is not commonly regarded as having any exceptional affinities with Romantic poetics, much less as providing grounds for calling Kant "the most radical and ultimate spokesman for poetry that we have had" (Ransom, op. cit., 169). For the most part, this indifference towards the Critique of Judgment is due to the tendency to regard the work merely as part of Kant's architectonic, or worse, as merely an afterthought for Kant; an attitude which does not do full justice to the great scope and originality of the work, and which totally disregards Kant's own statement that it signifies the culmination of his "whole critical endeavour," and provides "a means of combining the two parts of philosophy into a whole" (C of J, 8, 12). Consequently, the first part of this study is given over to a brief exegesis of Kant's Critical philosophy, directed specifically towards establishing the

¹⁵Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilization (New York, 1961), 159.

centrality of his aesthetic theory. Here, although I am greatly indebted to Norman Kemp Smith's masterly Commentary to Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason,"¹⁶ I have avoided coming into competition with Kant's many great commentators by selecting only such trends and insights of the three critiques as have a particular bearing on Romantic thought. Consequently, Kant's last critique, which contains his aesthetic theory, receives more emphasis than the first two critiques combined; his moral philosophy is given only a brief summary, and my exegesis of the Critique of Pure Reason centers mainly on Kant's "positive"¹⁷ teaching, on his reasons for distinguishing between Verstand and Vernunft, and on his Transcendental deduction of the "Productive Imagination."¹⁸

Also, although Kant's philosophy breaks with both the Rationalist and the Empiricist traditions, I have focussed on his relationship with

¹⁶2nd ed., rev. and enlarg., New York, 1962. Hereafter cited as "Commentary."

¹⁷Kemp Smith's term, used in reference to those aspects of Kant's teaching which point beyond the purely "destructive" doctrines of the Critique of Pure Reason. See Commentary lv-lxi.

¹⁸However naive it seems in terms of modern psychology to speak of the mind as broken up into hypostatic "faculties," Kant, like Coleridge and Wordsworth, is primarily concerned with function and process rather than assigning principles to the faculties. For them, these distinctions are means to an end--as Coleridge says: "The office of philosophical disquisition consists in just distinction; while it is the privilege of the philosopher to preserve himself constantly aware, that distinction is not division. In order to obtain adequate notions of any truth, we must intellectually separate its distinguishable parts; and this is the technical process of philosophy. But having so done, we must then restore them in our conceptions to the unity, in which they actually co-exist; and this is the result of philosophy" (Biographia Literaria, ed. John Shawcross [London, 1965], II, 8. Hereafter cited as BL). In the pages that follow, I have capitalized the words "Reason," "Understanding," and "Imagination," when specific reference is intended to the faculty psychology of the philosopher and the various poets. Similarly, the words "Idea," and "Ideal" are capitalized to mark the special sense in which Kant used them.

Hume rather than with Leibniz, since his argument with the former is more relevant to his relation with the Romantics than his refutation of the latter.

The second, and main part of this study, is an attempt to show that the same revolutionary attitudes towards the nature of space and time, the bounds of discursive intelligence, the source and import of moral and aesthetic values, the function of art and the artist, and so on--are also operative in English Romantic poetry,¹⁹ and in fact define the philosophical context of their own break from eighteenth-century concepts. Here, I have followed a procedural suggestion made by Wellek and Warren in their Theory of Literature. In approaching literature through philosophy, they write:

Instead of speculating on such large-scale problems of the philosophy of history and the ultimate integral of civilization, the literary student should turn his attention to the concrete problem not yet solved or even adequately discussed: the question of how ideas actually enter into literature.²⁰

This suggestion can be clarified by means of an analogy drawn from post-Kantian physics. Kant's ideas were necessary for the liberation of art from repressive eighteenth-century concepts. But once the stream of

¹⁹Although reference is made to the poetry and prose of Blake, Shelley, Keats and Byron, I have focussed primarily on the work of Coleridge and Wordsworth, partly because of the basic similarities between the terms of their faculty psychology and those of Kant's, and partly to impose some reasonable limitations on the scope of the work. Also, little reference is made to post-Kantian Idealism, with the exception of Schiller's letters On the Aesthetic Education of Man, which I regard as a logical development of Kant's own theory of art and beauty, and as extremely relevant to the directions which Transcendentalist notions took in Romantic thought.

²⁰New York, 1956, 111-12.

Transcendentalist concepts began to flow in the arts, they became like a stream of particles already having great energy entering a cyclotron. Each time round they became accelerated, and went through an evolution in character with shifts in the ratio of mass and energy. Eventually they became capable of acting in ways previously unknown in the study of particles.

Thus, my concern in Part Two is not with the presence of Kantian or Kant-like ideas in Romantic poetry so long as they are "raw material" and "mere information," but only with these ideas as they are "actually incorporated in the very texture of the work of art"; as they are "constitutive" and "cease to be ideas in the ordinary sense of concepts and become symbols, or even myths" (ibid., 112). For this study has not been written from the premise that Kant created Romanticism, but merely, as Oskar Walzel succinctly put it, that "Romanticism without Kant is unthinkable."²¹

²¹Deutsche Romantik (Leipzig, 1918), I, 11; my trans.

PART ONE

KANT'S "COPERNICAN REVOLUTION"

CHAPTER I
THE BACKGROUND OF THE "REVOLUTION":
KANT AND HUME

Kant regarded Hume's criticism of induction and the doctrine of innate ideas as irrefutable, and yet he could never share the great Empiricist's resolve to "perish on the barren rock" of scepticism rather than "venture . . . upon that boundless ocean, which runs out into immensity."¹ For whether it was because of the lingering influence of Plato and the German Rationalists, or the newly-acquired influence of Rousseau;² because of the uncommon intensity of his belief in the validity of Newton's methods and the significance of his discoveries, or because of his strong pietistic concern with the moral obligations of man; or perhaps merely because, to paraphrase Whitehead, man can no more live on a diet of disinfectants than a diet of bread,³ Kant always regarded scepticism as simply a "resting place" for human reason; a necessary, but merely temporary stage of mental growth, where reason might "reflect upon its dogmatic wanderings . . . so that for the future it may be able to choose its path with more certainty."

¹The Treatise of Human Nature, in Hume Selections, ed. Charles W. Hendel (New York, 1955), 92. This edition cited hereafter as Hume.

²See below, p. 98.

³Alfred North Whitehead, Science and the Modern World (New York, 1960), 87.

But it is no dwelling-place for permanent settlement. Such can be obtained only through perfect certainty in our knowledge, alike of the objects themselves and of the limits within which all our knowledge of objects is enclosed (C of PR, 607).

In Kant's eyes, and here is where much of his affinity with the Romantic poets lies, what the British sceptics had proposed as a counter-irritant to the opaque mysticism of the schools became a sterile, divisive bankruptcy of thought which divested reason of her "lawful claims" by accepting out-of-hand the premise that mind is acted on in cognition, passively receiving "impressions" from "without," which become associated by means of empirical laws. This is the "uncritical" concept of mind, symbolized by Locke as a "wax tablet" or "white paper," which implies, in Kant's terms, that "our knowledge must conform to objects" (*ibid.*, 22).⁴ But Kant held that since "all attempts to extend our

⁴Another favorite metaphor for minds in Locke is that of a small, vacant room or cabinet: "The senses at first let in particular ideas, and furnish the yet empty cabinet; and the mind by degrees growing familiar with some of them, they are lodged in the memory, and names got to them. Afterwards the mind, proceeding farther, abstracts them, and by degrees learns the use of general names. In this manner the mind comes to be furnished with ideas and language . . ." (Essay Concerning Human Understanding, in Locke Selections, ed. Sterling P. Lamprecht [New York, 1956], 99; hereafter referred to as Locke). Note how Locke's visual metaphor for mind as an enclosed, three-dimensional space works to support his main contention, that "the simple ideas we receive from sensation are the boundaries of our thoughts; beyond which the mind, whatever efforts it would make, is not able to advance one jot; nor can it make any discoveries, when it would pry into the nature and hidden causes of ideas" (*ibid.*, 188).

Following Locke, Hume also enlisted metaphors for mind which beg the question of our ability to "go beyond" sense experience. For Hume, the mind is "a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations" (Hume, 85). Thus it is hardly surprising that Hume should believe that "we never really advance a step beyond ourselves, nor can conceive any kind of existence, but those perceptions, which have appear'd within that narrow compass" (*ibid.*, 21).

knowledge of objects by establishing something in regard to them a priori . . . have, on this assumption, ended in failure," there is no reason why we might not "make trial whether we may not have more success in the tasks of metaphysics, if we suppose that objects must conform to our knowledge."⁵

This would agree better with what is desired, namely, that it should be possible to have knowledge of objects a priori, determining something in regard to them prior to their being given. We should then be proceeding precisely on the lines of Copernicus' primary hypothesis. Failing of satisfactory process in explaining the movements of the heavenly bodies on the supposition that they all revolved around the spectator, he tried whether he might not have better success if he made the spectator to revolve and the stars to remain at rest (*ibid.*, 22).

This original use of the term a priori to denote that which is prior to experience or that by which experience is rendered knowledgeable to us, rather than merely that which is the cause of a given effect,⁶ is the key to Kant's relationship with the Romantic movement in literature. For it not only signifies a Copernican revolution in philosophy, but is also a parallel to the Romantic belief that the human subject is creative of his own experience. Moreover, it provides the clearest indication that the traditional quest for permanence has shifted from the Platonic ideas on the one hand and "outward forms" on the other, to the actuating principles of human consciousness themselves. This is why Kant appealed so deeply to Coleridge, and why the Transcendental

⁵Thus Kemp Smith's assessment of the Critical philosophy as the "science of the possibility, nature, and limits of a priori knowledge" (*Commentary*, 74).

⁶See *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 14th ed., art. "A Priori and A Posteriori." Coleridge also used the term in this sense. See *BL*, I, 193n., and *Friend*, 111n. See also below, p. 64.

philosophy provides such a fruitful background against which Romanticism can be studied.⁷

Consequently, in the next three chapters I shall attempt to define this background by showing how Kant applies this new concept of mind to the traditional problems of epistemology and ethics; why this approach necessarily results in a complete isolation of fact from value, and why it is possible in the terms of the premises of Transcendentalism to recognize in the aesthetic sphere the possibility of their ultimate reconciliation. And although Kant's way of formulating these issues is often extremely abstract, the problems he raises and the solutions he offers lie very close to the heart of Romantic thought.

⁷Note that Coleridge also referred to Transcendentalism as a "revolution in philosophy" (BL, I, 104). And compare M.H. Abrams' statement that "In all essential aspects, Coleridge's theory of mind, like that of contemporary German philosophers, was, as he insisted, revolutionary; it was, in fact, part of a change in the habitual way of thinking, in all areas of intellectual enterprise, which is as sharp and dramatic as any the history of ideas can show" (The Mirror and the Lamp [New York, 1958], 158).

CHAPTER II

THE TRANSFORMATIONAL NATURE OF HUMAN INTELLIGENCE

Romanticism and Transcendental philosophy are ultimately concerned with human beings as moral agents,¹ and as such, they share a common interest in determining the limits of empirical knowledge. For if all our knowledge arises solely out of experience, then we can be conversant only with what is, and not with what ought to be. As a result, canons of ethics, like those of aesthetics, are regarded by the empiricist as purely psychological and non-normative; as ultimately reducible to sentiment, or custom; and concepts of free will and moral responsibility are rendered meaningless.

For both Kant and the Romantics, therefore, the central problem of human thought was to challenge the imperious claim of Verstand to be the sole arbiter of truth and value, while assuring us that it is not in vain that nature has "visited our reason with the restless endeavour to transcend sense experience"; that the supersensible "modes of knowledge" to which the soul "naturally exalts itself" must be recognized as "having their own reality," and are "by no means mere fictions of the brain" (C of PR, 21, 310-11). Consequently Kant regarded his critique of

¹Note that Coleridge doubted whether Kant "in his own mind . . . laid all the stress, which he appears to do, on the moral postulates." But ironically, as Shawcross points out, "it is on this very point that Coleridge seems most sincerely at one with Kant" (BL, I, 100; and 246 n.).

knowledge as a "propaedeutic" (ibid., 659); as serving to "deny knowledge [of the supersensible], in order to make room for faith." The "inestimable benefit" of this procedure, says Kant, will be that

all objections to morality and religion will be forever silenced, and this in Socratic fashion, namely, by the clearest proof of the ignorance of the objectors. There has always existed in the world, and there will always continue to exist, some kind of metaphysics, and with it the dialectic that is natural to pure reason. It is therefore the first and most important task of philosophy to deprive metaphysics, once and for all, of its injurious influence, by attacking its errors at their very source (ibid., 30).

Kant's "denial" of traditional metaphysics emerges as a form of Idealism which teaches that human understanding can be conversant only with "phenomena," or things as they appear; and never with "noumena," or things-in-themselves. Since all knowledge is for Kant a product of an alliance between sensation and concept, the former producing the initial data and the latter making them objects of thought, he seeks to impose this doctrine on two levels: the "perceptual" and the "logical." Consequently, the Critique of Pure Reason is divided into two main sections: the "Transcendental Aesthetic," which contains his theory of perception; and the "Transcendental Logic," in which Kant deduces the "categories of thought" and demonstrates the futility of attempting to extend them beyond experience to the realm of the "supersensible."

Generally, speaking, his intention is to demonstrate that there are "Transcendental principles" governing both perception and conception, principles which are "contributed" by our faculty of knowledge in the process of cognition. This hypothesis, says Kant, is totally legitimate, since it does not follow from the fact that "all our knowledge begins with experience" that it all "arises out of experience."

For it may well be that even our empirical knowledge is made up of what we receive through impressions and of what our own faculty of knowledge (sensible impressions serving merely as the occasion) supplies from itself. If our faculty of knowledge makes any such addition, it may be that we are not in a position to distinguish it from the raw material, until with long practise of attention we have become skilled in separating it (C of PR, 41-42).²

The "Transcendental Aesthetic" and the Ideality of Space and Time

The first indication that Kant's "revolutionary" hypothesis might bear fruit occurs in his theory of perception³ which, by demonstrating the ideality of space and time, apparently solves one of the most unsettling aspects of Humean empiricism; the impossibility of applied

²Compare Coleridge: "Assume in its full extent the position, nihil in intellectu quod non prius in sensu, without Leibnitz's qualifying praeter ipsum intellectum, and in the same sense, in which the position was understood by Hartley and Condillac: and what Hume had demonstratively deduced from this concession concerning cause and effect, will apply with equal and crushing force to all the other eleven categorical forms, and the logical functions corresponding to them. How can we make bricks without straw? or build without cement? We learn all things indeed by occasion of experience; but the very facts so learnt force us inward on the antecedents, that must be pre-supposed in order to render experience itself possible" (BL, I, 93-4; see below, p. 198.)

³Kant's word for perception is "Anschauung," which he equates with the Latin "intuitio." But neither "perception" nor "intuition," as Coleridge recognized, are good translations of the German term: the latter is patently ambiguous, and "perception" does not convey Kant's sense of the apprehension of wholes out of the manifold of sense. Of Coleridge's many attempts to discover a meaningful English equivalent for "Anschauung" (e.g., "atsight," "onlook"), "Aspicience" seems to be the most satisfactory. For as Orsini, who found this term in an unpublished MS note on Kant, says: "The word is a perfect etymological mould for the German term: as- corresponds to An- and -spicience to -schauung; there is even a similarity in the sounds. But the word, being buried in Coleridge's MSS., has enjoyed no currency, although it deserves it. Its very novelty would warn the reader that it is a technical term, with a special meaning, and all the confusions of "intuition" would be avoided" (Coleridge and German Idealism [Carbondale and Edwardsville, 1969], 92. Hereafter cited as Orsini).

mathematics.⁴ Following the terms of his new hypothesis, Kant attempts to show that space, which he deals with first, is not "an empirical concept which has been derived from outer experiences" but is rather a "property of our mind" which is sui generis, and which merely allows us to "represent to ourselves objects as outside us" (C of PR, 68, 67). That space is not derived from experience is, Kant feels, demonstrated conclusively by the fact that we "can never represent to ourselves the absence of space" although we can think of space as "empty of objects." Therefore it is possible to "isolate"⁵ space as "an a priori representation, which necessarily underlies outer appearances" (*ibid.*, 68); and as the "subjective condition of sensibility, under which alone outer intuition is possible for us" (*ibid.*, 71).⁶ In this way, the "certainty" of mathematical judgments and their applicability to experience is established at once, merely by demonstrating that their laws are dictated by the very nature of human perception.⁷

⁴Hume did not usually extend his skepticism to mathematics, but, Kant believed, to be consistent with the rest of his philosophy he should have extended his skepticism even to it, and either would have had to do so if he had properly understood the nature of mathematical knowledge or else would have in principle, at least, anticipated Kant's own discoveries" (Lewis White Beck, in the Introduction to his translation of Kant's Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics [Indianapolis and New York, 1950], xiiin. Cited hereafter as Prolegomena).

⁵Compare Coleridge's word "extricate," used in describing his own discovery of the Ideal nature of space and time in the letter to Poole of March 16, 1801 (Collected Letters, ed. E.L. Griggs [Oxford, 1956-59], II, 706. Hereafter referred to as Letters). See below, p. 83.

⁶This argument is one of four (five in the First Edition) Kant advances for his position. See C of PR, 67-70.

⁷Note the interesting parallel in Wordsworth's Prelude to Kant's fascination with the possibility of applying the a priori propositions to experience:

With Indian awe and wonder, ignorance pleased
With its own struggles, did I meditate

Much the same sort of argument is proposed to demonstrate the ideality of time in the second section of the "Transcendental Aesthetic." Like space, time cannot be considered as a "concept that has been derived from any experience" since "We cannot, in respect of appearances in general, remove time itself, though we can quite well think time as void of appearances" (ibid., 74-5). Time becomes, from this point of view, "a pure form of sensible intuition," that is, "nothing but the form of inner sense . . . of the intuition of ourselves and of our inner state" (ibid., 77).⁸

Two conclusions derive from Kant's theory of perception which are crucial in Romanticism. First, although the doctrine of the ideality of space and time seems to limit all of our consciousness to consciousness only of appearances in nature--to what "is," or what seems to be--such is not the ultimate effect or design of the Critical philosophy. For Kant's purpose is not to "destroy" all metaphysics, a study which was dear to him, but only those forms of metaphysics, such as Deism, which attempt to reduce theology or ethics or teleology to terms of linear consciousness: to make the "Philosophical & Experimental . . . the ratio

On the relation those abstractions bear
To Nature's laws, and by what process led,
Those immaterial agents bowed their heads
Duly to serve the mind of earth-born man;
From star to star, from kindred sphere to sphere,
From system on to system without end.

(The Prelude, ed. Ernest De Selincourt,
2nd ed. [Oxford, 1959], VI, 121-28.
Hereafter cited as Prelude).

Compare Coleridge, The Friend (The Complete Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. W.G.T. Shedd [New York, 1853]), II, 421 (hereafter referred to as Friend), and BL, I, 196-97.

⁸"The act of consciousness is indeed irreducible with time considered in its essence" (Coleridge, BL, I, 87). For other references in Coleridge to Kant's theory of space and time, see Orsini, 91, 94, 97.

of all things," as Blake said.⁹ And if the doctrine of the ideality of space and time has the effect of imposing these limitations on human consciousness in theory, it does not have the same effect in the realm of practise, as we shall see when we turn to Kant's moral and aesthetic treatises.

But even more revelatory of the basic affinity of Transcendental Idealism to Romanticism is the fact that Kant's theory of perception represents a positive step towards breaking down the man-nature dualism which underlies all empirical philosophy, by making experience depend upon what Coleridge called a "reciprocal concurrence" of the "exclusively representative" and the "exclusively represented": that is, of "the conscious being" and "that which is in itself unconscious" (BL, I, 174). For the Romantics, as I shall point out later, the refutation of this dualism was essential, since as long as man represents himself as exclusively acted on in the process of coming to know and value his world and understand the grounds of his existence, he is subject to materialism and fatalism, and ceases to regard seriously the possibility of destroying or even limiting the social and psychological forces which continually oppress him.

The "Transcendental Analytic" and the Generation of Synthesis in the Productive Imagination

Having demonstrated our inability to know the thing-in-itself even on the perceptual level, Kant proceeds in the "Transcendental Logic" to show that "pure thought" like "pure perception" has a priori

⁹"There is No Natural Religion," [First Series]; The Complete Writings of William Blake, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London, 1957), 97. Hereafter referred to as Writings.

elements (the "categories of the understanding"), and that it is only through these elements that we arrive even at knowledge of phenomena. These two points are taken up in the first sub-section of the "Transcendental Logic" called the "Transcendental Analytic." Then, in the "Transcendental Dialectic," Kant shows the futility of any attempt to extend the categories of the Understanding into the "supersensible Ideas" of "God, Freedom, and Immortality"--concepts which are none the less important to our moral beings because they are (literally) "inconceivable."

The present discussion will center around the second chapter of the "Transcendental Analytic," the famous "Transcendental Deduction of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding," the chapter which Kant says "cost me the greatest labour" (C of PR, 12), and which in Coleridge's words contains "the most difficult and obscure passages of the Critique."¹⁰ For it is here that Kant, through his doctrine of the Productive Imagination, offers his most conclusive refutation of empiricism, and in so doing formulates one of the most fundamental tenets of Romantic thought: that the generation of synthesis in the Imagination is not something merely derived from experience, but is the primary condition upon which experience is made knowable to us.

Speaking in the broadest possible terms, Kant introduces the faculty of Imagination in order to account for the great mystery that the manifold of sense can be "subsumed" under concepts, and categories "applied" to the realm of appearances (*ibid.*, 181). He believed that in order for this mediation between sense and Understanding to occur, there

¹⁰Written on the fly-leaf of Coleridge's copy of the Critique of Pure Reason; cited Orsini, 99-100.

must be some "third thing"¹¹ which is "homogeneous on the one hand with the category, and on the other hand with the appearance." And it is to this "third thing" that Kant applies the name "Imagination," the faculty which "aims at . . . unity in the determination of sensibility" (ibid., 181-82).

From a merely empirical point of view, the ability of the Imagination to "run unity through" and "hold together" appearances derives from its traditionally accepted function of "reproduction." Kant agrees with Hume that this function is necessary for knowledge since "if I were always to drop out of thought the preceding representation . . . and did not reproduce them while advancing to those that follow, a complete representation would never be obtained" (ibid., 133).¹² Thus from this point of view, Imagination merely reproduces and connects data from memory and sensation according to the laws of resemblance, continuity, and cause and effect. Kant refers to this faculty as "Reproductive Imagination," a function which he regards as

entirely subject to empirical laws, the laws, namely, of association, and which therefore contributes nothing to the explanation of the possibility of a priori knowledge (ibid., 165).

¹¹In his essay "On the Principles of Genial Criticism," Coleridge refers to the "'Third Something'" which is "formed by a harmony" of the "active with the passive powers of our nature" as "TASTE" (BL, II, 227). But in the *Biographia*, this "intermediary faculty" is specifically identified as the "IMAGINATION" (I, 86). Shawcross suggests that "The close connexion of the two faculties was perhaps suggested by Kant's definition of taste, as the perception of the mere fitness of any sense-complex to be made an object of knowledge" (BL, II, 310n.).

¹²"Were ideas entirely loose and unconnected, chance alone would join them; and 'tis impossible the same simple ideas should fall regularly into complex ones (as they commonly do) without some bond of union among them, some associating quality, by which one idea naturally introduces another" (Hume, 13).

Now according to Kant, Hume was correct in regarding these laws as merely contingent, but the inference that Hume drew therefrom--that we can have no certain knowledge about ourselves or about the world--did not, in his view, follow. For the reason that Hume was forced to deny the possibility of science and self-knowledge is that he was "constrained" by his premises to "derive them from experience," and "it never occurred to him" that human consciousness "might itself . . . be the author of the experience in which its objects are found" (ibid., 127).

Therefore, in the Second Edition of the Critique of Pure Reason, and in certain passages included comparatively late in the First Edition, Kant proposed to reverse the terms of Hume's premises by including amongst the "fundamental faculties of the human soul" a "Productive Imagination," a faculty to be regarded not as subject to the laws of association, but as actually generative of the principles (or "schema") by which unity of the manifold is achieved a priori.¹³

¹³Smith, following Vaihinger, points out that in the First Edition, Kant "constantly alternates" between the view that the Productive Imagination is merely an "auxiliary function of the Understanding," and the view that it is a "separate and distinct faculty" which operates Transcendentally in the "generation of unified experience" (Commentary, 227, 265). But in the passages which constitute the latest parts of the Deduction to be written, this latter, more radical view was "allowed to drop" (ibid., 227). Smith conjectures that this change of heart, which essentially undercuts the "universal or absolutist aspect of our consciousness" to which Kant is ultimately "seeking to do justice" occurred on "the very eve of the publication of the [First Edition] of the Critique" (270, 227). For according to Smith's evidence, Kant suddenly became aware of the "revolutionary nature of the conclusions to which he feels himself driven by the exigencies of the Critical teaching," discovering that his new doctrine was "deepening into consequences" which would too sharply contradict both "current psychology" and "his own previous views" (224). In the Second Edition, which Coleridge read, Kant adopted the more radical view, although with some modifications, a fact which supports D.G. James' and Raymond Havens' opinion that Coleridge's understanding of Imagination ultimately derives from Kant (see below, pp. 192-93).

Kant's deduction of this "Transcendental Unity of Apperception" lies, therefore, at the very core of his Critical teaching. And although it is difficult to paraphrase, it is necessary for the purposes of this study to provide a brief outline of its major points, since, as Orsini says, it is "probably the most complete answer to empiricism formulated by a philosopher" and "may perhaps suggest the reason why Kant took hold of Coleridge's mind 'as with a giant's hand'" (Orsini, 118, 120).

Briefly stated, Kant's argument runs as follows. For Kant, as for Coleridge, the doctrine of the association of ideas can be valid only if the associative process can be thought of as taking place in "one consciousness" (C of PR, 153).¹⁴ In Kantian terms, this means that unity of consciousness is an a priori condition of the possibility of consciousness in general. For

this unity of consciousness would be impossible if the mind in knowledge of the manifold could not become conscious of the identity of function whereby it synthetically combines it in one knowledge. The original and necessary consciousness of the identity of the self is thus at the same time a consciousness of an equally necessary unity of the synthesis of all appearances according to concepts . . . which not only make them necessarily reproducible but also in so doing determine an object for their intuition, that is, the concept of something wherein they are necessarily interconnected (ibid., 136-37).

But such unity cannot be derived from association itself, since, as Coleridge said, this would amount to "mistaking the conditions of a thing for its causes and essence" (BL, I, 85). Therefore, association

¹⁴ Compare Coleridge: "Only in the self-consciousness of a spirit is there the required identity of object and of representation; for herein consists the essence of a spirit, that it is self-representative. If therefore this be the one only immediate truth, in the certainty of which the reality of our collective knowledge is grounded, it must follow that the spirit in all the objects which it views, views only itself. . . . It is asserted only, that the act of self-consciousness is for us the source and principle of all our possible knowledge" (BL, I, 184, 186).

must be "grounded, antecedently to all experience, upon a priori principles; and we must assume a pure transcendental synthesis of imagination as conditioning the very possibility of all experience" (C of PR, 133).

For even though we should have the power of associating perceptions, it would remain entirely undetermined and accidental whether they would themselves be associable; and should they not be associable, there might exist a multitude of perceptions, and indeed an entire sensibility, in which much empirical consciousness would arise in my mind, but in a state of separation, and without belonging to a consciousness of myself.

But Kant holds that this would be impossible, since

it is only because I ascribe all perceptions to one consciousness (original apperception) that I can say of all perceptions that I am conscious of them. There must, therefore, be an objective ground (that is, one that can be comprehended a priori, antecedently to all empirical laws of the imagination) upon which rests the possibility, nay, the necessity, of a law that extends to all appearances . . . (ibid., 145).

Now, as Smith says, Humean associationism is "no longer tenable" since Kant has shown that "Association cannot be taken to be an ultimate and inexplicable property of our mental states."

Nor is it a property which can be regarded as belonging to presentations viewed as so many independent existences. It is conditioned by the unity of consciousness, and therefore rests upon the "transcendental" conditions which Critical analysis reveals. Since the unity of consciousness conditions association, it cannot be explained as the outcome and product of the mechanism of association (Commentary, 256).

Even though Kant often speaks of Imagination, even in its "productive" capacity, as "in the service of Understanding" (a position not shared by the Aesthetic Imagination--see below, pp. 53-6), ordering and unifying data in order to permit their application to the categories,

the relationship of the Kantian to the Romantic faculties is more than nominal. For by taking this essentially "mysterious,"¹⁵ generative power as the sine qua non of all experience, Kant demonstrated that its products are objectively valid for all thinking beings, whereas the products of the mere "reproductive" faculty, since they are subject to the laws of association, are merely subjective and contingent. Here, as Coleridge was to see, was the straw for Hume's bricks. And although it was clearly "impossible for him to stop short with Kant" (Shawcross, BL, I, lviii), who never openly committed himself to the view that imagination might provide insight into the "supersensible," Kant at least established the possibility that through our own innate, creative powers, "something of the fruitful and inexhaustible nature of noumenal reality is traceable" (Commentary, 265), a hint which was later to be more fully developed in the Critique of Judgment.

The "Transcendental Dialectic": Metaphysics, and
The Distinction Between Verstand and Vernunft

Rochester says that it is to our "supernat'ral Gift" that we owe the overpopulation of our asylums (and universities), and like the rest of the Tory Satirists, he was convinced that "he that thinks beyond

¹⁵How the Productive Imagination legislates for thought is for Kant a mystery: it is "an art concealed in the depths of the human soul, whose real modes of activity nature is hardly likely ever to allow us to discover, and to have open to our gaze" (C of PR, 183). But Kant says that, in any case, how the Imagination performs this synthesizing function is a psychological, not a philosophical question, and his intention has been to establish the a priority of its operations; to prove that without this "blind but indispensable function of the soul" we should "have no knowledge whatsoever" (C of PR, 112).

thinks like an Ass."¹⁶

In some respects, Kant would have agreed with Rochester--in fact, he devotes almost one hundred pages of the Critique of Pure Reason to outlining the futility of attempting to "think beyond." But as I have said before, to regard Kant as merely carrying on or amplifying the traditions of the Enlightenment would be to disregard completely the "positive" aspects of his teachings in the first critique, wherein our compulsion to "transgress" the "field of possible experience" is regarded not only as "natural" and inevitable for all thinking beings, but also as an essential condition of our growth into moral awareness. From this point of view, the capacity to distinguish between good and evil becomes part of our common birthright and even definitive of the human condition, a fact which prepares the ground for a critique of moral action based on Transcendental principles, rather than on mere sentiment, or custom and habit.

Ironically, it is due to the very thoroughness with which Kant demonstrates the limits of what can be known through discursive reasoning that an opening is left for attributing some positive value to metaphysical speculation.¹⁷ For according to Kant, the fact that we can only be

¹⁶"A Satyr Against Mankind," 76, 97; in Works, ed. John Hayward (London, 1926), pp. 37, 38.

¹⁷"Such teaching [that we may never transcend experience] at once acquires a positive value when we recognize that the principles with which speculative reason ventures out beyond its proper limits do not in effect extend the employment of reason, but, as we find on closer scrutiny, inevitably narrow it" (C of PR, 26). Recall A.O. Lovejoy's observation that "It is one of the instructive ironies of the history of ideas that a principle introduced by one generation in the service of a tendency of a philosophical mood congenial to it often proves to contain, unsuspected, the germ of a contrary tendency--to be, by virtue of its hidden implications, the destroyer of that Zeitgeist to which it was meant to minister" (The Great Chain of Being [Cambridge, Mass, 1936], 288).

conversant with appearances necessarily implies the existence of a realm which is "beyond" phenomena. Otherwise, "we should be landed in the absurd conclusion that there can be appearance without anything that appears" (C of PR, 27). Of course, it is impossible in Kantian terms to regard this realm as "available" to consciousness, a fact which does not justify Mendelssohn's epithet for Kant (as translated by Coleridge) as "the all-to-nothing-crushing" (BL, II, 69n), since it is every bit as correct, if not more correct to regard Kant as having liberated the Ideas of "God Freedom and Immortality" from "the fetters of experience" (Prolegomena, 111) in order that they may be dealt with more fruitfully in non-speculative contexts. This, in fact, is the specific position Kant takes in the Preface to the Second Edition of the Critique of Pure Reason:

When all progress in the field of the supernatural has . . . been denied to speculative reason, it is still open to us to enquire whether, in the practical knowledge of reason, data may not be found sufficient to determine reason's transcendent concept of the unconditioned, and so to enable us, in accordance with the wish of metaphysics, and by means of knowledge that is possible a priori, though only from a practical point of view, to pass beyond the limits of all possible experience. Speculative reason has thus at least made room for such an extension; and if it must at the same time leave it empty, yet none the less we are at liberty, indeed we are summoned, to take occupation of it, if we can, by practical data of reason (24-25).¹⁸

Implicit in Kant's viewpoint is his long-standing conviction that we can "no more give up metaphysical researches . . . than give up

¹⁸It is often easy to agree with Goethe's observation that "Kant seems to have woven a certain element of irony into his method. For, while at one time he seemed to be bent on limiting our faculties of knowledge in the narrowest way, at another time he pointed, as it were with a side gesture, beyond the limits which he himself had drawn" (Cited by J.H. Bernard, in the Introduction to his translation of the Critique of Judgment, xxxiii). For a discussion of the contrary tendencies of the first critique, see Commentary, 425-40.

breathing" (Prolegomena, 116), and that compared to other sciences, metaphysics "displays a dignity and worth such that, could it but make good its pretensions, it would leave all other human science far behind" (C of PR, 422). Consequently, he sees it as an integral part of his Critical plan to investigate the sources of the "natural tendency to transgress" the limits of experience (*ibid.*, 532), beyond whose comfortable boundaries he ventures with greatest trepidation:

This domain [of the Verstand] is an island, enclosed by nature itself within unalterable limits. It is the land of truth--enchanted name!--surrounded by a wide and stormy ocean, the native home of illusion, where many a fog bank and many a swiftly melting iceberg give the deceptive appearance of farther shores, deluding the adventurous seafarer ever anew with empty hopes, and engaging him in enterprises which he can never abandon and yet is unable to carry to completion (*ibid.*, 257).

There is something especially appropriate in the fact that Kant should compare the prospect of transcending the severe but secure limits of ordinary experience to a mariner's voyage through icebergs and fog banks, leaving behind the comfort of what he has always known, since Kant is engaged in an endeavour which is very similar to Coleridge's in the Ancient Mariner: to discover the grounds upon which it is possible for us to assert our freedom from the laws which determine natural events. For like Coleridge (and the Romantics generally), Kant was convinced that there was a powerful principle within each of us that will always render us dissatisfied with purely empirical accounts of experience, and that this principle provides the means by which we learn to perceive moral values.

More specifically, this inner compulsion to transcend the bounds of experience is, according to the Transcendental philosophy, "prescribed

by the very nature of reason itself" (C of PR, 7). For once we accept the principle that "knowledge has only to do with appearances," we are forced to think of the source of these appearances as something which is "unconditioned," a concept which is "required to complete the series of conditions" (ibid., 24). Obviously, the concept of the unconditioned cannot be derived from experience itself, which is always influenced by the forms of perception and categories of thought. Rather, the concept presupposes "an antecedent awareness of Ideal standards" and a "More fundamental form of consciousness" than mere awareness of phenomena, to which "all our criteria of truth and reality are ultimately due" (Commentary, 416).

In Kant's system, these "Ideal standards" are generated by the Vernunft, a faculty which is distinct from the Verstand in that it does not "create concepts (of objects)" but rather "orders them, and gives them that unity which they can have only if they be employed in their *widest possible application, that is, with a view to obtaining totality in the various series" (C of PR, 533).

Reason has, therefore, as its sole object, the understanding and its effective application. Just as the understanding unifies the manifold in the object by means of concepts, so reason unifies the manifold of concepts by means of ideas, positing a certain collective unity as the goal of the activities of the understanding, which otherwise are concerned solely with distributive unity (ibid., 533).

Now it is of utmost importance to realize that Kant regards this unification of the concepts of the Verstand by the Vernunft every bit as essential to the possibility of knowledge arising as an effect as is the

unification of the sense-manifold by the Productive Imagination.¹⁹ For without the "Transcendental grounding" of this distinction between the empirical and metaphysical faculties, there would be, as I have said, no more reason to regard Transcendentalism as the philosophical counterpart of this fundamental tenet of Romantic thought than Platonism, with its distinction between Nous and Dianoia; or the system of Bacon, which also attempts to "render unto faith that which is faith's," but with no prior criticism of the bounds of reason. And Kant is very specific on this point:

The law of reason which requires us to seek for this unity, is a necessary law, since without it we should have no reason at all, and without reason no coherent employment of the understanding, and in the absence of this no sufficient criterion of empirical truth. In order, therefore, to secure an empirical criterion we have no option save to presuppose the systematic unity of nature as objectively valid and necessary (ibid., 538).

Kant's discussion of metaphysics raises one more issue, an issue which Coleridge regarded (significantly) as "the highest problem of philosophy";²⁰ that is, whether the Ideas of Reason are "constitutive," or merely "regulative"; i.e., whether they extend our knowledge of the "supersensible" or are merely generated by Reason for the guidance of Reason (see C of PR, 450ff., 454ff.). For reasons which shall be explained

¹⁹It is true that Kant is not completely consistent in his doctrine that the Vernunft is a faculty separate and distinct from the Verstand; in fact, on occasion he actually speaks of the former as "merely understanding in its self-limiting, self-regulative employment" (Commentary, 426). But Smith is obviously correct when he claims that "The true Critical contention . . . is that the Ideas are necessary to the possibility of each and every experience, involved together with the categories as conditions of the very existence of consciousness. They are not merely regulative, but are regulative of an experience which they also help to make possible. They express the standards in whose light we condemn all knowledge which does not fulfil them; and we have consequently no option save to endeavour to conform to their demands" (ibid., 554).

²⁰The Statesman's Manual, Shedd, I, 484. Hereafter referred to as SM.

later, the Romantics are at variance with the Transcendental philosophy on this question (see below, pp. 114-19). For now, it is enough to say that because the Ideas of Reason are "transcendent," Kant could not see how they could possibly "allow of any constitutive employment" (C of PR, 533)--their function is not to supply knowledge, but merely to ensure that we are not rendered satisfied with materialism, naturalism or fatalism--dogmatic philosophies which are bound by the "fetters of experience" and which therefore cannot possibly "expand to the universality which reason unavoidably requires from a moral point of view" (Prolegomena, 111; my emphasis).

Thus, the stress is made to fall once again on the moral issue, and if the Critique of Pure Reason has no other ramifications for Romantic thought, it has at least demonstrated that empirical knowledge is not coextensive with human insight, and that "the ultimate intention of nature in her wise provision for us has indeed, in the constitution of our reason, been directed to moral interests alone" (C of PR, 632-33). And with this in mind, Kant prepares, near the end of the first critique, to enquire "whether . . . reason may not be able to supply to us from the standpoint of its practical interest what it altogether refuses to supply in respect of its speculative interest" (*ibid.*, 635). And it is here, in the moral consciousness, that Kant discovers what he regarded as "the key to the meaning of the entire universe as well as of human life" (Commentary, 571).

CHAPTER III

REASON IN PRACTISE: KANT'S ETHICAL SYSTEM

One of the most fundamental and deeply-rooted convictions shared by Kant and the Romantics in their break from "Enlightened" thought is that the moral ought is not reducible to terms of what is ("utility," private "sentiment," etc.), or what has been. As Kant puts it:

Nothing is more reprehensible than to derive the laws prescribing what ought to be done from what is done, or to impose upon them the limits by which the latter is circumscribed (C of PR, 313).

Notice that Kant is not merely saying, like Hume, that it is vain or erroneous to derive an ought from an is, but that the attempt to do so is "reprehensible." Kant illustrates his case by referring to the concept of an ideal state. As Blake so well knew, social repression will flourish only when the citizens allow themselves to be manipulated by vested interests into believing that the way things are is the way things should be; that reformers and idealists are at best eccentric dreamers and at worst a menace to the common weal. But as Kant puts it, repression

would never have existed at all, if at the proper time those institutions had been established in accordance with ideas, and if ideas had not been displaced by crude conceptions which, just because they have been derived from experience, have nullified all good intentions (*ibid.*, 312).

And although we may never know such a perfect state,

none the less this does not affect the rightfulness of the idea, which, in order to bring the legal organisation of mankind ever nearer to its greatest possible perfection, advances this maximum as an archetype.

For what the highest degree may be at which mankind may have to come to a stand, and how great a gulf may still have to be left between the idea and its realisation, are questions which no one can, or ought to, answer. For the issue depends on freedom; and it is in the power of freedom to pass beyond any and every specified limit (*ibid.*).

If, then, we cannot, and should not attempt to derive Ideal standards from experience, what is their source? Kant's attempts to answer this question is the subject of his two ethical treatises, the Foundation of the Metaphysics of Morals, and the Critique of Practical Reason. His answer, it should be stated now, is not on all counts that of the Romantics, at least in their most representative poems. But their task is essentially similar; to find a standard of authority which is not superimposed, but which is sui generis and Transcendentally grounded; that is, not derived from experience, but projected into experience as a precondition of moral knowledge.

Briefly, Kant begins his exposition with the concept of a "good will,"¹ which is the only thing to be called "good without qualification" (*FMM*, 55), or good in itself, regardless of utility or consequences.² The good will is "disinterested,"³ acting freely from a sense of rational obligation, not merely following vague and changeable inclinations, not attempting to satisfy personal desires, nor to achieve some proposed end,

¹In this short exposition of Kant's moral views, I follow his argument as laid out in the Foundation of the Metaphysics of Morals (Critique of Practical Reason and Other Writings in Moral Philosophy, trans. Lewis White Beck [Chicago, 1949]). Referred to hereafter as *FMM*.

²"It is impossible to think of anything in the world, nay of anything even outside the world, which could without limitation be held to be good except a good Will" (Coleridge, MS quoted in *Muirhead*, 156-157n.).

³Hyder Rollins notes that this is "a favorite word of Keats'," a word which he often uses in a sense similar to Kant's. See his edition of The Letters of John Keats (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), I, 293; II, 79, 129, 279. Hereafter referred to as *Letters*.

but acting completely, and without duress, in conformity to that moral "principle of volition" which constitutes "duty." Of course, there are an infinite number of "maxims" which we can propose to ourselves: thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, etc., and the question is moot as to which of these maxims is morally "right"--what the test of the validity of a moral principle is.

But one thing, says Kant, is clear: in practise, we do not enlist the sanctions of some supposed "feeling," nor do we inquire into the consequences of an action in seeking for this "test": the end may justify the means in corporate politics, but not in Kantian ethics. Morality, says Kant, is totally self-less, and a moral act is therefore one which always asserts our community with mankind in general:

I should never act in such a way that I could not will that my maxim should be a universal law. Mere conformity to law as such (without assuming any particular law applicable to certain actions) serves as the principle of the will, and it must serve as such a principle if duty is not to be a vain delusion and chimerical concept. The common reason of mankind in its practical judgments is in perfect agreement with this and has this principle constantly in view (FMM, 63).

Here, then, is the famous "categorical imperative" which Kant says speaks to all of us: "Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law" (ibid., 80).⁴ Note first that this command is categorical, not hypothetical--no moral person acts according to his conscience merely for the sake of "laying up treasures in Heaven"--and note secondly, that it is

⁴Compare Coleridge's formulation of the categorical imperative in the Friend: "So act that thou mayest be able, without involving any contradiction, to will that the maxim of thy conduct should be the law of all intelligent beings--is the one universal and sufficient principle and guide of morality" (180).

imperative, because only an imperative dictum is capable of enlisting our respect for the law. Kant expresses his own respect for the moral law in a passage remarkably similar in feeling and terms to Wordsworth's "Ode to Duty":

Duty! Thou sublime and mighty name that dost embrace nothing charming or insinuating but requirest submission and yet seekest not to move the will by threatening aught that would arouse natural aversion or terror, but only holdest forth a law which of itself finds entrance into the mind and yet gains reluctant reverence . . . what origin is there worthy of thee, and where is to be found the root of thy noble descent which proudly rejects all kinship with the inclinations and from which to be descended is the indispensable condition of the only worth which men can give themselves?⁵

Kant's exuberance is understandable considering that he has, in his mind, freed moral speculation from principles based on mere contingent sentiment, which was the primary goal of his whole moral philosophy, just as the goal of his epistemology was to found the principles of natural science on something more enduring than habit and custom.

From the reality of our sense of duty, Kant is able to postulate autonomy of the will. And only by declaring the will free can he account for the fact that we are able (if only occasionally) to follow the dictates of duty even when (or especially when) they do not coincide with our desires. We obey the call of duty, says Kant, for the most important of all reasons: it is in exercising this capacity that we assert our very human-ness, which is defined by our "freedom and independence from the mechanism of nature" (ibid.), and that we recognize that men, by dint of their freedom, are "ends in themselves." This brilliant conclusion led Kant to another formulation of the Categorical Imperative: "Act

⁵Critique of Practical Reason, in Critique of Practical Reason and Other Writings in Moral Philosophy, trans. Lewis White Beck (Chicago, 1949), 193.

so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an end and never as a means only" (FMM, 87). Thus the bigot, the capitalist, the slaver and the despot, by creating a double standard of morality and manipulating others to serve their own ends, are quite literally acting, in Kantian terms, "inhumanly."⁶ The moral experience, that is, is no less than definitive of our humanity, since without it, we could never become aware of our inherent freedom, or of our emancipation from nature's mechanized determined scheme.

Kant's position after the first two critiques can be summed up by saying that he has rescued some knowledge of the world and of our moral nature from the sceptical philosophy, but at the enormous cost of isolating them in two apparently irreconcilable realms: the "realm of the concept of nature" and the "supersensible realm of the concept of freedom" (C of J, 12). Between the two lies a "gulf" which might never be bridged, since "The concept of freedom as little disturbs the legislation of nature as the natural concept influences the legislation through the former" (ibid., 11).

⁶This principle is given a fine poetic turn in Book IX of Wordsworth's poem, The Excursion:

Our life is turned
Out of her course, wherever man is made
An offering, or a sacrifice, a tool
Or implement, a passive thing employed
As a brute mean, without acknowledgement
Of common right or interest in the end;
Used or abused, as selfishness may prompt.
(Poetical Works, ed. E. De Selincourt and
Helen Darbishire [Oxford, 1940-49], V,
113-19. Hereafter referred to as Works.
The Excursion referred to hereafter as
Excursion.)

But from this standpoint, man's inexorable destiny is that of Byron's Childe Harold--to stand perpetually on the "Bridge of Sighs" with "A Palace and a prison on each hand."⁷ That is, man is free, and knows that he is free, from his ability to follow the dictates of duty à contre coeur. But at the same time, he can perceive no theoretical possibility of finding a theatre in this world for his Ideals; no hope of transforming what ought to be into what might be. And for a man who sympathized as deeply as Kant with the goals of the French Revolution, this position was obviously intolerable.

Ironically, the possibility of reconciling the realms of nature and freedom is left open by Transcendental Dialectic, the most "negative" part of the Critique of Pure Reason. For there, Kant showed that although these two realms must be distinguished in theory, they are not logically incompatible, since it is possible to "prove" both, as the thesis and antithesis of the same rational "Antinomy" (C of PR, 409-15).

But in the Introduction to the Critique of Judgment, Kant states that this kind of negatively deduced compatibility cannot suffice, since in life, we normally and properly assume that moral values do have an influence on natural fact, and that it is possible to find a theatre for our ideals in the given world; for as Coleridge said:

We have hearts as well as Heads. We can will and act, as well as think, see, and feel. Is there no communion between the intellectual and the moral? Are the distinctions of the Schools separates in Nature? Is there no Heart in the Head? No Head in the Heart? Is it not possible

⁷Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, IV, 1-2; The Works of Lord Byron, Poetry, ed. E.H. Coleridge (New York, 1966), II, 327. Hereafter referred to as Poetry.

to find a practical Reason, a Light of Life, a focal power from the union or harmonious composition of all the Faculties?⁸

As if in answer to these very questions, Kant set out in the Critique of Judgment to discover "a ground of unity of the supersensible, which lies at the basis of nature . . . with that which the concept of freedom practically contains"; a ground which would make possible "the transition from the mode of thought according to the principles of the one to that according to the principles of the other" (C of J, 12). And the fact that Kant should discover this ground in the realm of art, and in the operation of the "Aesthetic Imagination"⁹ provides ample evidence for Coleridge's judgment that "the Kritik der Urteilskraft [is] the most astonishing of all his [Kant's] works."¹⁰

⁸Inquiring Spirit, ed. Kathleen Coburn (New York, 1951), 126. Hereafter referred to as IS.

⁹Here, as in the following pages, I follow Cassirer's suggestion that Kantian Imagination be regarded as sharing three "functions": "(a) reproductive imagination, which is not free since it depends on empirical laws, (b) productive imagination, which is not free either since it depends on the a priori laws of the understanding, and (c) aesthetic imagination, which is the principle that underlies our judgments of taste. It is both productive, not merely reproductive, and free, for it is independent of any determinate laws of the understanding" (H.W. Cassirer, A Commentary on Kant's "Critique of Judgment" [London, 1938], 217). Compare Shawcross' tripartite division of the Kantian Imagination, BL, I, lviii.

¹⁰Crabbe Robinson's Diary for November 1810, cited Orsini, 159.

CHAPTER IV

THE CRITIQUE OF JUDGMENT--ART AS MEDIATOR BETWEEN SENSE AND THE MORAL IDEAS

Beauty as a "Necessary Condition of Human Being"

Imagination is Kant's theme in the "Critique of Aesthetical Judgment,"¹--not Imagination in its mere reproductive function, where it is subject to the laws of association--but Productive Imagination, to which Kant now assigns a far more important and expanded role than in the first critique. There, although Imagination was regarded as genuinely active in bringing about unity in the manifold through the production of schema, the faculty was still regarded as in the service of Understanding, with which it combined to generate knowledge of phenomenal nature. But now, in the "Critique of Aesthetical Judgment," Kant asks us to consider the possibility that Imagination, in "gathering up" the manifold, is capable of being both "productive and spontaneous," of operating in "conformity to law without a law"--that is, not as if "compelled" to submit to the laws which determine the limits and scope of discursive knowledge, but in "free conformity" with such laws (C of J, 77-78).² This possibility

¹Note that the Critique of Judgment is divided into two parts, titled the "Critique of Aesthetical Judgment," and the "Critique of Teleological Judgment." Both parts deal with judgments of "purpose," but with this difference: the former is concerned with purely "aesthetical" judgments, where purposiveness is recognized without any specific purpose attached to it, while the latter is concerned with determinative judgments of actual, "teleological" purposes in nature.

²This concept of "imaginative power" (the term is Kant's) is contained in Coleridge's definition of creative Imagination as a "power [which is] first put in action by the will and understanding, and retained

could be realized if there were some class of objects which themselves contained "a collection of the manifold as the imagination itself, if it were left free, would project in accordance with the conformity to law of the understanding in general" (ibid., 78). If there were such objects, the Imagination, in dealing with them would not be under constraint to create schema for them, since loosely speaking, they are schematized in advance.

Now Kant holds that such objects do exist, and that they are a source of immediate, and disinterested pleasure for us. Such objects, whether regarded as "natural" or as created by a man, we call "beautiful," and in the act of perceiving them, "the understanding is at the service of the imagination, and not vice versa" (ibid., 79).

Characteristically, Kant makes this astonishing claim without prelude, and with no prior indication of its importance. But the slightest familiarity with the philosophical issues raised in Romantic poetry and the Transcendental philosophy is enough to reveal the wealth of meaning it contains. For both Kant and the Romantics held, in agreement with Hume, that discursive intelligence is only conversant with phenomena, which are given as in (Euclidean) space and (Newtonian) time, and as determined by the categories of cause and effect. But if Kant's analysis of the sense of beauty is correct, and the laws of association have no authority in the aesthetic order, it becomes possible to regard the aesthetic experience as a "bridge" between empirical fact and the Ideas of Reason; for only when Imagination is "free, spontaneous, and independent of natural determination," is it capable of

under their irremissive, though gentle and unnoticed, controul (laxis effertur habenis) . . ." (BL, II, 12).

judging nature as a phenomenon in accordance with aspects which it does not present in experience either for sense or understanding, and therefore of using it . . . as a sort of schema for, the supersensible (ibid., 171; see below, p. 192ff.

Kant's goal in the Critique of Judgment is not, however, merely to define the possibility of reconciling the sensible with the supersensible, but of grounding the means of this transition in Transcendental principles. Here, his intentions can be most clearly understood when considered in relation to the aesthetics of the "age of sensibility" which he regarded as "Exceedingly beautiful," affording "rich material for the favorite investigations of empirical anthropology."³ But not, it should be noted, for Transcendental philosophy. Burke, for example, considered it the primary business of aesthetics to define a "logic of Taste," to discover "whether there are any principles, on which the imagination is affected, so common to all, so grounded and certain, as

³Amongst the English works on aesthetics which went into German translations prior to publication of the Critique of Judgment are: Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric (1783; Ger. trans. 1785); Edmond Burke, op. cit. (Ger. trans. 1773); Alexander Gerard, Essay on Genius (1774, Ger. trans. 1776); William Hogarth, Analysis of Beauty (1753; Ger. trans. 1754); Henry Home, Elements of Criticism (1762; Ger. trans. 1763-66); Richard Hurd, Discourse Concerning Poetical Imitation (1751; Ger. trans. 1762); Thomas Reid, An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense (1764; Ger. trans. 1782); Reynolds' Discourses (1769-90; Ger. trans. [in part] 1781); and Shaftesbury's Characteristics (1711; Ger. trans. 1776-77). See the Index to James Creed Meredith's translation of the Critique of Aesthetic Judgement (Oxford, 1911), passim. Hereafter referred to as C of AJ.

Samuel Holt Monk calls the Critique of Judgment the "unconscious goal" of eighteenth-century English aesthetics (The Sublime, 6); and E.F. Carritt claims that "There are . . . few original ideas in Kant's aesthetic. He has systematized and hardened distinctions and oppositions current in England for the preceding eighty years . . ." ("The Sources and Effects in England of Kant's Philosophy of Beauty," Monist, XXXV [April, 1925], 323). These views do not, however, do full justice to the nature of Kant's Transcendental "revolution," by which he based old distinctions on completely new foundations.

to supply the means of reasoning satisfactorily about them."⁴ Now this definition of the aims of aesthetics corresponds closely to Kant's, just as Hume's proposal to "march up directly to the capitol or center of . . . human nature itself" to "discover . . . the secret springs and principles, by which the human mind is actuated in its operations" (Hume, 4, 113) foreshadows Kant's whole critical method in general. But Kant is correct in insisting that the empirical philosophers, by neglecting the a priori element in knowledge, can only deal with what is the case, not with what ought to be the case, which he saw as our concern in aesthetics. Therefore, however deeply Burke may probe into the physiology of the sense of beauty, he can never "prescribe to us how we ought to judge" (C of J, 120). This privilege can only arise from a "transcendental discussion of this faculty [of Aesthetical Judgment]," leading to the discovery of "a priori principles" underlying our judgments of beauty; and it is toward the deduction of such principles that the "Critique of Aesthetical Judgment," the first division of the Critique of Judgment, is directed.⁵

The "Four Moments" of the "Critique of Aesthetical Judgment"

The first part of the "Critique of Aesthetical Judgment" consists of Kant's attempt to demarcate a field for investigation; to ascertain that there is such a thing as a judgment of taste, and that such judgments are qualitatively different from judgments of fact, sensuous

⁴Edmund Burke, A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, ed. J.T. Boulton (London, 1958), 11, 13.

⁵For a discussion of the Romantics' attitude towards Burkes' Enquiry, see below, pp. 146-7.

gratification, or moral satisfaction.⁶ It is divided according to the four "moments" of formal logic: quality, quantity, relation, and modality.

Under the first of these heads, Kant develops a principle which is fundamental to both Coleridge and the New Criticism:⁷ the "disinterestedness" of judgments of taste. In our contemplation of beauty, we are concerned, says Kant, with mere "Schein," or appearance, and in no way with the existence of the object as such, or with practical considerations of the "good" or "pleasant."⁸

Secondly, Kant deduces from the "disinterestedness" of judgments of taste their universality. For since they do not "rest on any [private] inclination of the subject," they "must be regarded as grounded on what

⁶Thus Rene Wellek's claim that "In Kant the argument [for the autonomy of art] was stated for the first time systematically by defending the distinction of the aesthetic realm against all sides: against sensualism and its reduction of art to pleasure, against moralism, intellectualism, and didacticism. . . . He has put his finger on the central issue of aesthetics. No science is possible which does not have its distinct object. If art is simply pleasure, communication, experience, or inferior reasoning, it ceases to be art and becomes a substitute for something else" (A History of Modern Criticism [New Haven, 1955-65], I, 230).

⁷"The esthetic attitude is the most objective and the most innocent attitude in which we can look upon the world, and it is possible only when we neither desire the world nor pretend to control it. Our pleasure in this attitude probably lies in a feeling of communion or rapport with environment which is fundamental in our human requirements--but which is sternly discouraged in the mind that has the scientific habit" (John Crowe Ransom, God Without Thunder [Hamden, Connecticut, 1965], 173).

⁸Suzanne Langer, following Schiller, develops her whole aesthetic from the concept of art as "Schein." See especially her Feeling and Form (New York, 1953), and Friedrich Schiller's On the Aesthetic Education of Man, eds. E.R. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby (London, 1967). Hereafter referred to as Aesthetic Letters. Meredith (C of AJ, 238-39) cites passages from Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Alison and Burke which foreshadow Kant's principle of the disinterestedness of judgments of taste.

he can presuppose in every other person" (C of J, 46); i.e., the existence of the cognitive faculties themselves. This universality, however, is "not logical but aesthetical," for aesthetical judgments cannot refer to concepts of what a thing "ought to be": no one, says Kant, can be "forced to recognize anything as beautiful" (ibid., 50). For we are, in Keats's words, "teased out of thought" in our contemplation of beauty, and the universality of our aesthetical judgments is strictly "subjective," based on a "free play" of Imagination and Understanding (ibid., 52).

Under the third head, "relation," Kant introduces the paradox that in judgments of taste, objects are judged as "purposive," that is, as if "produced in accordance with a will which had regulated it according to the representation of a certain rule," and yet as not suggestive of any specific purpose served by its existence.⁹ To illustrate, a flower, and a pair of scissors are both in some sense "purposive," but with this great difference: the purpose to be served by the scissors can be immediately observed from their construction--but what "purpose" can a flower be said to serve?¹⁰ The answer, of course, is none, and we take delight in a flower immediately, from the consideration of its pure form as form,

⁹Somerset Maugham's convivial, little-known reading of Kant's Critique of Judgment, "Reflections on a Certain Book" (in The Vagrant Mood [New York, 1953], 167-201), focusses mainly on this aspect of Kant's exposition.

¹⁰Of course, flowers can be "used" for many purposes--an expression of sympathy at a funeral, to make perfume or brighten up a hospital room--likewise a statue can be "used" to commemorate a hero, or a painting to make a safe investment--Duke Orsino "uses" music as a soporific--but Kant would hold that in none of these cases is an "aesthetical judgment" brought to bear. For it is only when purposiveness is abstracted as a quality in itself; it is only when pure form is considered in and for itself without any concept of a specific purpose that we are judging aesthetically.

as abstract "Schein." And the object of such pure delight we call "beautiful."

In a later section, Kant makes his position here much clearer. It is imperative, he says, for us to distinguish on the one hand between judging according to empirical, or a priori (given) rules of what a thing is or ought to be; and on the other, of judging in terms of purposiveness in the abstract. For if judgments of taste were based merely on the former, "all beauty would be banished from the world, and only a particular name, expressing perhaps a certain mingling of the two above-named kinds of satisfaction ['pleasantness' and 'goodness'], would remain in its place" (ibid., 192). But since we know from experience that we are capable of deriving immediate pleasure from the mere contemplation of an object, it follows that the purposiveness in a judgment of taste "refers aesthetically to the agreement of the representation of the object in the imagination with the essential principles of judgment in general in the subject" (ibid.). Therefore, in the response to beauty, we "invariably seek its gauge in ourselves a priori," a fact which

could not be, on the assumption of the realism [as opposed to the idealism] of the purposiveness of nature, because in that case we must have learned from nature what we ought to find beautiful, and the aesthetical judgment would be subjected to empirical principles (ibid., 195).

The definition of beauty occasioned by the final "moment" of the "Analytic of the Beautiful" is this: "The beautiful is that which without any concept is cognized as the object of a necessary satisfaction" (ibid., 77). Once again, Kant is developing a principle which is designed to distinguish judgments of taste from merely empirical judgments, since the latter relate only to what is the case, not to what must be the case.

Of course, this "necessity" cannot be "derived from definite concepts" or "inferred from . . . experience"--it can only relate to some "subjective principle which determines what pleases or displeases only by feeling and not by concepts, but yet with universal validity" (ibid., 75)--in other words, a "sensus communis,"¹¹ linking together all sentient beings on the level of a common denominator. And such a "sense" is imputable not as an empirical, but as a Transcendental principle, because

if cognitions are to admit of communicability, so must also the state of mind--i.e. the accordance of the cognitive powers with a cognition generally and that proportion of them which is suitable for a representation (by which an object is given to us) in order that a cognition may be made out of it--admit of universal communicability.

For "without this as the subjective condition of cognition, cognition as an effect could not arise" (ibid).¹²

It is impossible, for the purposes of this study, to overemphasize the importance of what Kant is saying here. First, his method of dealing with these questions clearly indicates that his Transcendental Idealism offers if not the first, then at least the most systematic and closely reasoned provisions for the movement from mimeticism to expressionism--from criteria based on the "objective" correlation of artifact to "nature," to canons based on the immediacy of its appeal and the sincerity of the emotions from which it is borne and which it communicates--in the history of criticism.¹³ But even more important, since this

¹¹Meredith remarks, "We are asked to make an admission in order to avoid complete scepticism. Does this not imply (what seems to be the truth) that the only answer to scepticism is to be found in the bearing of the practical upon the theoretical faculty?" (C of AJ, 257).

¹²Compare Coleridge, BL, II, 325.

¹³See Wellek, History of Modern Criticism, I, 230-31.

movement is foreshadowed in such pre-Kantian thinkers as Longinus and even Bacon,¹⁴ is the fact that it is Transcendentally established by Kant; i.e., is proven to be based on the very conditions which allow for "the possibility of a cognition in general." These are the conditions which have been outlined in the first critique, only now, the faculties which must conjoin to allow for cognition are shown to be capable of conforming to each other without the influence of empirical laws. He has, in other words, reversed the whole trend of Neo-classical criticism by demonstrating that judgments of taste demand freedom from concepts of what a work of art should be, what art has been in the past, what the consensus of opinion regarding its value is, what its "instructive" merits are, or how closely it adheres to "general nature."¹⁵ In the place of such criteria, Kant substitutes the immediacy of the spectator's pleasure, avoiding the relativistic implications of this position by showing that such pleasure depends on conditions which are presupposed for all experience.

The Feeling of the Sublime, and the Moral Ideas

Having discovered the a priori basis for judgments of the beautiful in the free play of the cognitive faculties, Kant turns in the "Second Book" of the "Critique of Aesthetic Judgment" to a consideration of the feeling of the sublime. Judgments of the sublime, says Kant, are quite properly regarded as "aesthetic," in that they evoke a purely

¹⁴See M.H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp, 22.

¹⁵Actually Kant tempers his position on many of these questions with his remarks on the function of the critic, and the propriety of "recommen[ding]" the works of the ancients as models; and on how the taste can be "sharpened by exercise." See Sections 32-34; pp. 123-28.

disinterested and immediate pleasure; but the quality of this pleasure is quite different from that which we take in the beautiful, and it arises for completely different reasons. For the feeling of beauty is one of restful harmony, occasioned by a purposive object of definite and limited form which "brings with it a feeling of the furtherance of life, and thus is compatible . . . with the play of the imagination" (C of J, 83). But the pleasure we take in the sublime "arises only indirectly; viz. it is produced by the feeling of a momentary checking of the vital powers and a consequent stronger outflow of them." This is so, because the sublime "appear[s] . . . to be unsuited to our presentative faculty, and . . . to do violence to the imagination" (ibid.); it appears to us as a "violation of purpose" in nature, a fact which directs us to "seek a ground" for such judgments "merely in ourselves and in our attitude of thought, which introduces sublimity into the representation of nature" (ibid., 84). Therefore, the unique value for us of the sublime does not lie in what it tells us about purposes in nature, but rather in what we learn from them of the human mind itself, of its Ideals, and its "super-sensible destination" (ibid., 96).

Obviously, then, the distinction between the beautiful and the sublime is for Kant far more than academic--in fact, Kant's chapters on the sublime offer his clearest explanation of how a basically non-cognitive, "aesthetic" feeling can liberate the mind from the categories of the Understanding and allow us insight into our freedom from the determination of nature.

Kant's argument runs as follows. When we perceive something which is "absolutely great," (Kant cites the Pyramids, St. Peter's and the Milky Way), the mind is lost for some standard of comparison. But

in the very process of seeking to provide some scale of measure for what is apparently immeasurable, the Imagination "reaches its maximum, and, in striving to express it, sinks back into itself" (ibid., 91). But even that momentary glimpse into infinity is enough, says Kant, to convince us that we possess "a faculty of mind which surpasses every standard of sense [Reason]". Only on this assumption can we account for "the bare capacity of thinking this infinite without contradiction" (ibid., 93). Therefore

just as imagination and understanding, in judging of the beautiful, generate a subjective purposiveness of the mental powers by means of their harmony, so . . . imagination and reason do so by means of their conflict. That is, they bring about a feeling that we possess pure self-subsistent reason, or a faculty for the estimation of magnitude, whose superiority can be made intuitively evident only by the inadequacy of that faculty [Imagination] which is itself unbounded in the presentation of magnitudes (of sensible objects) (ibid., 97).

The case is similar in terms of the representation of "might" in nature, such as "Bold overhanging . . . threatening rocks," "volcanoes in all their violence of destruction," or "the boundless ocean in a state of tumult" (ibid., 100). Normally, we would expect such prospects to be a source of fear, and to convince us of our own comparative limitations and weaknesses. But actually, as Coleridge, Wordsworth and Shelley all found in the Alps (see below, p. 174ff.), the contrary is true, and in contemplating the sublime we find ourselves, in Kant's words, in a "state of joy." For so long as we are not bound down with purely practical concerns or excessive timidity, such objects "raise the energies of the soul above their accustomed height and discover in us a faculty of resistance of a quite different kind, which gives us courage to measure ourselves against the apparent almightiness of nature" (ibid.,

100-101). Thus, just as in trying to find a scale of the infinitely great the Imagination discovered a "nonsensuous standard, which has that infinity itself under it as a unity," so does our ability to overcome fear in the face of nature's might teach us of our "superiority to nature even in its immensity."

In this way nature . . . calls up that power in us . . . of regarding as small the things about which we are solicitous (goods, health, and life), and of regarding its might . . . as nevertheless without any dominion over us and our personality to which we must bow where our highest fundamental propositions, and their assertion or abandonment, are concerned. Therefore nature is here called sublime merely because it elevates the imagination to a presentation of those cases in which the mind can make felt the proper sublimity of its destination, in comparison with nature itself (ibid., 101).

This notion, that nature in her most expansive forms can become for us an "emblem of a mind . . . sustained / By recognitions of transcendent power"¹⁶ is important, not only because it was obviously "taken up by . . . Coleridge and Wordsworth,"¹⁷ but also because it provides such a clear indication of how the aesthetical judgment can "mediate" between the concept of nature as determined, and of man as autonomous (in the moral sphere). For while the presence of sublimity has the "frightening" effect of suddenly defining the bounds of sense, it also teaches us that the mind is not confined to these bounds, but possesses "a faculty [Reason] which surpasses all standards of sense" and in fact has a "susceptibility . . . for [moral] ideas" (C of J, 104).

¹⁶Prelude, XIV, 70, 74-5.

¹⁷Carritt, op. cit., 323.

Genius

Kant's concern in his sections on "genius" is to show that the creative arts, and especially poetry, by "presenting to sense" the "moral order" in symbolic form serves an important, and in fact a necessary role in reconciling the (theoretically) polarized realms of man and nature. He begins by distinguishing art from nature,

as doing (facere) is distinguished from acting or working generally (agere); and as the product or result of the former is distinguished as work (opus) from the working (effectus) of the latter (C of J, 145).

In other words, art is always regarded as "a work of man," a man whose faculties are operating through "freedom," i.e. "through a will that places reason at the basis of its actions" (ibid., 146, 145). It is furthermore distinguished from mere "mechanical" productions by proposing "for its immediate design the feeling of pleasure" (ibid., 148). But, since there are a number of objects which have this capacity which we would not call art (Kant mentions jokes and games), Kant makes the further distinction that, properly speaking, "beautiful art is a mode or representation which is purposive for itself and which, although devoid of definite purpose, yet furthers the culture of the mental powers in reference to social communication." For in Kant's view,

The universal communicability of a pleasure carries with it in its very concept that the pleasure is not one of enjoyment, from mere sensation, but must be derived from reflection; and thus aesthetical art, as the art of beauty, has for standard the reflective judgment and not sensation (ibid., 148-49).

But the most important aspect of our contemplation of art is that while we are aware that it is not nature, still "the purposiveness in

its form must seem to be as free from all constraint of arbitrary rules as if it were a product of mere nature." For it is "this feeling of freedom in the play of our cognitive faculties, which must at the same time be purposive" on which rests "that pleasure which alone is universally communicable, without being based on concepts." Thus if we call nature "beautiful," it is because it "looks like art"; and art in turn

can only be called beautiful if we are conscious of it as art while yet it looks like nature. . . . Hence the purposiveness in the product of beautiful art, although it is designed, must not seem to be designed, i.e. beautiful art must look like nature, although we are conscious of it as art" (ibid., 149).

Kant, however, is not content with merely demonstrating how it is possible for men to create just "another nature": like the Romantics, his ultimate intention is to show how a product of genius actually eclipses nature and "expands the mind by setting the imagination at liberty" (ibid., 170). And here is where Kant turns to his discussion of the Aesthetic Imagination, which as I have said is another name for the Productive Imagination, only conceived of as not "under the constraint of the understanding" (ibid., 160).

Now according to Kant, the difference between a "neat and elegant" arrangement of words and a true poem, is the presence in the latter of "Geist,"¹³ a quality which is not, as Plato would have it, a divine gift, but rather "the name given to the animating principle of the mind"; the power that "puts the mental powers purposively into swing,

¹³A basically untranslatable word. Bernard suggests "spirit," and Meredith "soul." The problem of translating this word takes on whole new dimensions in the philosophy of Hegel, where Geist becomes "the total system of all the categories dialectically connected." See Orsini, 240, and 296, n.3.

i.e., into such a play as maintains itself and strengthens the mental powers in their exercise" (ibid., 157). And this "animating principle" is far more than mere "enthusiasm"; it is "no other than the faculty of presenting aesthetical ideas," that is, imaginative representations which transcend all concepts of the Understanding, and which can never be "completely compassed and made intelligible by [discursive] language."¹⁹

The enormous significance for us of this capacity of imagination to represent, or respond to these "aesthetical ideas" derives from the fact that they are direct "counterpart[s]" of "rational ideas" of the Godhead, of human freedom and destiny (ibid., 157). For just as the latter are concepts for which no representation can be adequate, so are "aesthetical ideas" representations to which no concept can be adequate. In either case, we are taken beyond the bounds of sense experience; but the aesthetical ideas do even more; they help us to "remould experience" and thus to

feel our freedom from the law of association²⁰ (which attaches to the empirical employment of imagination), so that the material supplied to us

¹⁹"Kant in effect is saying precisely what Mr. Cleanth Brooks as a modern critic has been saying to his own public over and over: that 'there is no other way' for language to express what it wants to express without having recourse to metaphor; without going to the Concrete of nature for its analogy. I cannot think that Kant would have repudiated his implication, but that he would have stated it with his usual boldness--if he could have foreseen the difficult passages, and the impasses, which the subsequent course of literary criticism would encounter, and the need of developing his own principles most specifically" (Ransom, "The Concrete Universal . . .", 180).

²⁰In terms of the historical relationship between Coleridge and Kant, it is especially fitting that at the very point of identifying the creative Imagination as the agency by which the mind can grow and reach beyond itself, liberating us from the mere mechanical and determined order of nature, Kant should make the specific reference to the philosophy of David Hartley. See C of AJ, 291.

by nature in accordance with this law can be worked up into something different which surpasses nature (ibid., 157; my emphasis).²¹

The Imagination, then, insofar as it "is free to furnish unsought, over and above that agreement with a concept" (ibid., 160) becomes the "missing link": the "bridge" between nature and freedom, the body and the soul. For in its capacity to "go beyond the limits of experience and present them to sense with a completeness of which there is no example in nature," it "brings the faculty of intellectual ideas (the reason) into movement" (ibid., 158), and thus

strengthens the mind by making it feel its faculty--free, spontaneous, and independent of natural determination--of considering and judging nature as a phenomenon in accordance with aspects which it does not present in experience either for sense or understanding, and therefore of using it on behalf of, and as a sort of schema for, the supersensible (ibid., 171; my emphasis).

It is difficult to overemphasize the importance of what Kant is saying here, both in relation to the ultimate goal of his Critical philosophy and to the direction which Transcendental thought took in the English Romantic movement. A "schema," it will be recalled, is a creation of the Productive Imagination which renders sense experience amenable to concepts. Now since the aesthetic experience presupposes that Imagination can operate "spontaneously" under laws of its own origination, placing in

²¹Compare Shaftesbury: "But for the man who truly and in a just sense deserves the name of poet, and who as a real master, or architect in the kind, can describe both men and manners, and give to an action its just body and proportions, he will be found, if I mistake not, a very different creature. Such a poet is indeed a second Maker; a just Prometheus under Jove. Like that sovereign artist or universal plastic nature, he forms a whole, coherent and proportioned in itself, with due subjection and subordinacy of constituent principles" (Characteristics, ed. John M. Robertson [London, 1900], I, 135-36).

abeyance the demands of discursive reasoning, it also opens up the possibility of rediscovering in the mere phenomena of nature "schemata for the supersensible," or "types and symbols of Eternity," as Wordsworth calls them.²² And what is of crowning importance, this possibility is realized strictly within the bounds of Transcendental philosophy, since the unifying activity of the Productive Imagination has already been established as a conditio sine qua non of all experience.

It will be noted, however, that Kant speaks of the Aesthetic Imagination as creating a "sort of schema" for the supersensible. This caution is necessary for Kant, since in order to maintain the integrity of the Ideas of Reason, he cannot allow them to be thought of as being completely reducible to sense experience. Therefore, near the end of the "Critique of Aesthetical Judgment," Kant solves this problem by introducing a new concept: his doctrine of "symbolism."

Beauty as a Symbol of the Morally Good

There are many occasions in the "Critique of Aesthetical Judgment" when Kant indicates that the beautiful and the good share a close and unique relationship. In Section twenty-nine, for example, Kant says that the beautiful is "purposive in reference to the moral feelings . . . preparing us to love disinterestedly . . ." (C of J, 108). And in Section forty-two, Kant maintains that "to take an immediate interest in the beauty of nature . . . is always the mark of a good soul" and that "when this interest is habitual, it . . . indicates a frame of mind favorable to the moral feeling . . ." (ibid., 141). And again, in the same section:

²²Prelude, VI, 639. See below, 179ff.

. . . the mind cannot ponder upon the beauty of nature without finding itself at the same time interested therein. But this interest is akin to moral, and he who takes such an interest in the beauties of nature can do so only in so far as he previously has firmly established his interest in the morally good. If, therefore, the beauty of nature interests a man immediately, we have reason for attributing to him at least a basis for a good moral disposition (ibid., 143).

In the Appendix to the "Critique of Aesthetical Judgment," Kant is even more explicit:

The propaedeutic to all beautiful art, regarded in the highest degree of its perfection, seems to lie, not in precepts, but in the culture of the mental powers by means of those elements of knowledge called humaniora, probably because humanity on the one side indicates the universal feeling of sympathy, and on the other the faculty of being able to communicate universally our inmost feelings. For these properties, taken together, constitute the characteristic social spirit of humanity by which it is distinguished from the limitations of animal life (ibid., 201).

Interesting as these observations are, nowhere do they indicate how beauty, which is essentially sensuous, can relate to moral Ideas, which are "supersensible," and for which "no intuition can be given which shall be adequate" (ibid., 197). In fact, it is not until the penultimate section of the "Critique of Aesthetical Judgment" that Kant enters into a formal discussion of the relationship between beauty and goodness.^{22(a)}

Kant begins by suggesting some of the points on which an analogy between aesthetic and moral worth can be drawn. First, he notes that both kinds of judgment are "disinterested," in the sense that the judge of morality, like the judge of beauty is, ideally at least, not "interested" in his own psychological or cultural predispositions. And it

^(a)
²²Section fifty-nine. A difficult section, but crucial to an understanding of Kant's ultimate philosophical goals. Note that H.W. Cassirer, in his Commentary on Kant's Critique of Judgment, refuses to explicate this section on the grounds that he is "unable . . . to follow Kant's argument" (viii).

follows that if these judgments are made disinterestedly, they are universally imputable: "valid for every man."

Next, Kant says that ^{while} judgments of the beautiful and the good, like all disinterested judgments, result from a certain "free play" of the faculties, with aesthetic judgments, "the freedom of the imagination . . . is represented in judging the beautiful as harmonious with the conformity to law of the understanding," whereas with moral judgments, "the freedom of the will is thought as the harmony of the latter with itself, according to universal laws of reason" (ibid., 199).

Third, Kant notes that similarities in the actual words used in the German language in judging moral actions and objects of beauty, indicate a very obvious kind of community between the two. We note the same phenomenon in English: "that was a beautiful thing to do" is commonly used to describe some act considered ethical; and conversely, poems and paintings are often judged in ethical terms, such as "worthy," "noble," "exemplary," and so forth. And note also that although we do not speak of "evil" art, we do refer to art and actions alike as "good" and "bad." In any case, Kant's argument here is that in all aesthetic judgments, there must be "something analogous to the consciousness of the state of mind brought about by moral judgments" (ibid., 200). Otherwise, he reasons, the linguistic parallels would not apply.

Now all of this evidence leads Kant to one conclusion: since the beautiful cannot be thought of as literally "representative" of the moral Ideas, it is still possible to think of it as a "symbol" of them. That is, while the artist cannot create "schema" for the good, he can set morality forth in a system of symbols by which the mind is "made

conscious of a certain ennoblement and elevation above the mere sensibility to pleasure received through sense" (ibid., 199).

This ingenious interpretation of the beautiful as a "symbol" of the morally good allows Kant to retain his belief that the noumenal realm of freedom is not available through concepts, while still regarding the beautiful as having an influence on our moral being; to say, as he does in the second part of the Critique of Judgment, that

The beautiful arts and sciences . . . make men more civilized, if not morally better, [and] win us in large measure from the tyranny of sense propensions, and thus prepare men for a lordship in which reason alone shall have authority, while the evils with which we are visited, partly by nature, partly by the intolerant selfishness of men, summon, strengthen, and harden the powers of the soul not to submit to them, and so make us feel an aptitude for higher purposes which lies hidden in us (283-84).

In a very important sense, Kant, by making his aesthetic turn on a concept of the Imagination as free from determinate laws of the Understanding and its categories, has landed us squarely into the central issue of Romantic poetics. Is beauty merely a "dull opiate," a means of escape from "reality," or can the "viewless wings of poesy" bear us towards a higher form of reality than that known to the "dull brain"? Is beauty a "vision," or a "waking dream"?²³ Are poets of the "dreamer tribe," or are poets and dreamers "sheer opposite, antipodes"? ("Fall of Hyperion," I, 198-200; ibid., 408)

In the context of the Transcendental philosophy, the question is immensely significant, since for Kant, everything which can be "known"

²³John Keats, "Ode to a Nightingale," 3, 33-4, 79; The Poetical Works of John Keats, ed. H.W. Garrod (London, 1956), 207-9. Hereafter referred to as Works.

to us is known through the agency of the Understanding and its categories. Consequently, it would seem that he must regard the influence from the only criterion of the distinction between appearance and reality that we have.

But if we remember, as it is essential we must, that Kant regarded his aesthetic as the "end" of his "whole critical undertaking," and a "means of combining the two parts of philosophy into a whole" (C of J, 6, 12), we realize that Kant's claim has infinite implications not only for the creative arts, but for philosophy in general. For as Marcuse says, by placing the essentially sensuous faculty of the Imagination at the center of his critical structure, the Kantian philosophy "implies strengthening sensuousness as against the tyranny of reason and, ultimately, even calls for the liberation of sensuousness from the repressive domination of reason."

Indeed when, on the basis of Kant's theory, the aesthetic function becomes the central theme of the philosophy of culture, it is used to demonstrate the principles of a non-repressive civilization, in which reason is sensuous and sensuousness rational.²⁴

Kant's theme, however, is not a philosophy of culture, but the possibility of a philosophy of culture. The former, Kant says, "will take its course in the future as in the past, without any such investigations" (C of J, 6). Kant could not have known it, but such a culture was already developing, in music in his own country, and in poetry in England.

²⁴Eros and Civilization, 164. See also Schiller's Aesthetic Letters, 182-219.

PART TWO

KANT'S "COPERNICAN REVOLUTION" AND
ENGLISH ROMANTICISM

CHAPTER V

KANT'S "TRANSCENDENTAL" METHOD AND THE QUEST FOR PERMANENCE IN ROMANTIC THOUGHT

De Selincourt characterizes Wordsworth's philosophical position in The Prelude as "Hartley transcendentalized¹ by Coleridge, and at once modified and exalted by [his] own mystical experience" (Prelude, lxix). Of course in these terms Kant's philosophy is "Hume Transcendentalized," and De Selincourt as much as says that Wordsworth's thought directly refutes Hartley's. But the most important implication of De Selincourt's statement, and the one which I wish to stress before entering into any detailed examination of the relation between Kantian and Romantic thought, is that the English Romantics shared in the same kind of "revolution" against "Enlightened" thought as did the Transcendental philosophers, in that rather than seeking to derive the principles of self-knowledge and the basis of value from experience, they took the unified consciousness and the ability to discriminate morally and aesthetically as their starting point, and sought to deduce the conditions of this capacity from the inner actuating principles by which "outward forms" are modified in one consciousness. And since for both poet and philosopher these principles are a priori (in Kant's sense that they are the very conditions of our coming to know), moral and aesthetic values are regarded as universal and permanent because of, rather than in spite of, the fact that they

¹Again, the reader is warned of the difference between "Transcendental" and "transcendent." See above, p. 5.

are not derived from experience but are projected into experience from within.

Consequently no attempt to relate Kantian and Romantic thought can proceed without recognizing that both philosopher and poet were involved in a completely unique kind of quest for permanence, a quest which turns inward to transfer the basis of authority from outside nature and written dogma to living human consciousness itself. For what is unique in Transcendentalism is not the distinction it makes between Verstand and Vernunft, which had already been drawn by Boehme (see below, 98n.), and which Coleridge found in Milton (see BL, I, 109),² and Kant hardly originated the concept of freedom of the will, or the idea that morality involves doing one's duty. Moreover, the doctrine of Ideas stems from Platón; the distinction between beauty and sublimity from Burke and others--even the notion that Imagination can be considered as productive as well as reproductive is not original in Kant.³ Rather, it was Kant's concern with formulating these crucial distinctions only through a "discrimination of what is essential, i.e. explicable by mere consideration of the faculties in themselves, from what is empirical,"⁴ which gives his philosophy affinities with Romantic thought.

²And possibly in Bacon and the Cambridge Platonists. See Muirhead, 65; and J.A. Appleyard, Coleridge's Philosophy of Literature (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), 121.

³See Ernest Tuveson, The Imagination as a Means of Grace (Berkeley, 1960), Chapter Seven.

⁴Coleridge, Shakespearean Criticism, ed. T.M. Raysor, 2nd ed. (London, 1960), II, 189. Hereafter referred to as SC.

Coleridge, in fact, considered the quest to define the Transcendental conditions of self-consciousness a necessity of our being: "it is not in human nature," he said, "to meditate on any mode of action, without inquiring after the law that governs it." And it is for this reason that "the metaphysician took the lead of the anatomist and natural philosopher" (BL, I, 66). For while the empiricist is concerned solely with experience a posteriori, the metaphysician seeks to discover

that . . . critique of the human intellect, which, previously to the weighing and measuring of this or that, begins by assaying the weights, measures, and scales themselves; that fulfilment of the heaven-descended nosce teipsum, in respect to the intellective part of man, which was commenced . . . by Lord Bacon . . . and brought to a systematic completion by Immanuel Kant. . . .⁵

Such philosophy Coleridge, following Kant,⁶ calls "transcendental," which the poet, like the philosopher, sharply discriminates from

those flights of lawless speculation which, abandoned by all distinct consciousness, because transgressing the bounds and purposes of our intellectual faculties, are justly condemned as transcendent (BL, I, 164; c/f Friend, 111n.).

Transcendental philosophy, then, is concerned only with such principles as are "a priori," a term which Coleridge uses in the Kantian sense of implying "those necessities of the mind or forms of thinking, which, though first revealed to us by experience, must yet have pre-existed in order to make experience itself possible . . ." (Friend, 166n.). These principles must be the starting-points of all philosophy, because they

⁵Literary Remains, ed. Hartley Nelson Coleridge, 3 vol. (London, 1836-39), III, 157. Compare Coleridge's remarks on the Cambridge Platonists, cited Orsini, 146.

⁶See C of PR, 58-62.

define the grounds upon which self-consciousness is possible. Any attempt to pass beyond these grounds would amount to "mak[ing] our reason baffle the end and purpose of all reason, namely, unity and system," and cause it to be

driven back from ground to ground, each of which would cease to be a Ground the moment we pressed on it. We must be whirl'd down the gulf of an infinite series (BL, I, 187).⁷

Thus philosophy is ultimately "employed on objects of INNER SENSE, and cannot, like geometry, appropriate to every construction a correspondent outward intuition." All the evidence of philosophy derives, then, from "the most original construction," and so our central concern as thinking beings is, "what is the most original construction or first productive act for the INNER SENSE"? (BL, I, 171-72)⁸

Discovering an a priori or Transcendental basis for this "first productive act" is a large part of the goal of The Friend, and the Biographia Literaria, as in fact it is of Wordsworth's Prelude, where the poet records how he, too, found it necessary, in order to grow mentally, not merely to challenge the reality of the present objects of his

⁷A debate with a "rising young man of the day" recorded in the Table Talk illustrates this point. Coleridge's adversary was convinced the "facts gave birth to, and were the absolute ground of, principles." Of course, Coleridge insisted on the need for some prior "principle of selection." "But then, said Mr.--, "that principle of selection came from facts!"--"To be sure!" I replied; "but there must have been again an antecedent light to see these antecedent facts. The relapse may be carried in imagination backwards forever,--but go back as you may, you cannot come to a man without a previous aim or principle" (IS, 122).

⁸Compare Thomas DeQuincey's conviction that "The purpose of philosophy is not so much to accumulate positive truths in the first place as to rectify the position of the human mind, and to correct its mode of seeing" ("Letters to a Young Man," Collected Writings, ed. Masson [Edinburgh, 1889-90], X, 78).

experience, but to subject the whole framework of his thought to a diligent criticism:

So I fared,
 Dragging all precepts, judgments, maxims, creeds,
 Like culprits to the bar; calling the mind,
 Suspiciously, to establish in plain day
 Her titles and her honours; now believing,
 Now disbelieving; endlessly perplexed
 With impulse, motive, right and wrong, the ground
 Of obligation, what the rule and whence
 The sanction; till, demanding formal proof,
 And seeking it in everything, I lost
 All feeling of conviction . . . (XI, 293-303).⁹

The glib faith in discursive reason which served Hartley and Godwin so well was shattered by the same logic which led Kant to find a moral principle which was both categorical and imperative:

"The lordly attributes
 Of will and choice," I bitterly exclaimed,
 "What are they but a mockery of a Being
 Who hath in no concerns of his a test
 Of good and evil; knows not what to fear
 Or hope for, what to covet or to shun;
 And who, if those could be discerned, would yet
 Be little profited, would see, and ask
 Where is the obligation to enforce?"
 (ibid., 309-17)

Here, Wordsworth has come to see that such a "sanction," such "formal proof" cannot be derived from experience, since experience can teach us only what is, not what ought to be. Therefore, as in Kant, what is demanded is recourse to a principle which is not derived from experience, and yet which is at the same time applicable to life situations: in

⁹Similarly, the "soul" of the Solitary, at the nadir of his despondency, "Turned inward,--to examine of what stuff / Time's fetters are composed; and life was put / To inquisition, long and profitless!" (Excursion, III, 696-698).

Kantian terms, a principle which is a priori, yet synthetic.

As in Kant, Wordsworth's quest for such a principle leads him directly to a concept of Imagination as Transcendentally operative--a "prime and vital principle" in the "recesses" of our "nature" that

through the growing faculties of sense
Doth like an agent of the one great Mind
Create, creator and receiver both,
Working but in alliance with the works
Which it beholds
(Prelude, XIV, 215-15; II, 256-60).

Wordsworth does not, of course, provide anything as formal as a Transcendental "deduction" of this "power," but he does regard the primal synthesis as a condition rather than an effect of experience, a fact which is clearly reflected in the famous passage from Book XIV of the Prelude, where his "long labour" is symbolized as the tracing of a "stream" from the "blind cavern whence is faintly heard / Its natal murmur"; leading him to a vision of "Faith in life endless, the sustaining thought / Of human Being, Eternity, and God" (XIV, 195-96, 204-7).

This imagery occurs in a similar context in this passage from Book III of the Excursion, which provides a far more specific analogue to Kant's Critical method:

. . . as the Hindoos draw
Their holy Ganges from a skiey fount,
Even so deduce the stream of human life
From seats of power divine; and hope, or trust,
That our existence winds her stately course
Beneath the sun, like Ganges, to make part
Of a living ocean; or, to sink engulfed,
Like Niger, in impenetrable sands
And utter darkness . . . (254-62, my emphasis).

"Such a stream / Is human life," as the Wanderer says later, adding that

the Spirit fares
In the best quiet to her course allowed;
And such is mind,--save only for a hope
That my particular current soon will reach
The unfathomable gulf, where all is still!"
(ibid., 986-end)¹⁰

Identical imagery occurs in similar contexts in Coleridge's
"Kubla Khan," and in the later "Tombless Epitaph":

not a rill
There issues from the fount of Hippocrene,
But he had traced it upward to its source,
Through open glade, dark glen, and secret dell,
Knew the gay wild flowers on its banks, and culled
Its med'cinable herbs. Yea, oft alone,
Piercing the long-neglected holy cave,
The haunt obscure of old Philosophy . . .¹¹

In the Biographia, Coleridge uses similar terms in referring to
the Transcendental philosophy as the "domain" of those few,

who measuring and sounding the rivers of the vale at the feet of their
furthest inaccessible falls have learned, that the sources must be far
higher and far inward; . . . who even in the level streams have detected
elements, which neither the vale itself or the surrounding mountains
contained or could supply (I, 166).

For these "elements" are sui generis; the mind is, at birth, not a
tabula rasa, or empty room filled with the bric-a-brac of separate and

¹⁰Compare Wordsworth's poem "The Longest Day," where he advises his
daughter Dora to "Follow . . . the flowing river . . . Toward the mighty
gulf of things . . . (49, 58; Works, I, 251).

¹¹Poetical Works, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge (London, 1912), I,
413-14. Hereafter referred to as Works.

distinct experiences; but a creative, agential force, that will "furnish proofs by its own direction, that it is connected with master-currents below the surface . . ." (ibid., 167).

In Keats and Shelley, this quest for "sources . . . far higher and far inward" is often symbolized by a mythic Theseus-type journey, "homeward to the habitual self," down into a den, dale, vale, grot, cop-pice, mine, cell and so on. As Endymion (whose name derives from the Greek enduein, to "dive into") is told:

"He ne'er is crown'd
With immortality, who fears to follow
Where airy voices lead: so through the hollow,
The silent mysteries of earth, descend!"
(Endymion, II, 276, 211-14; Works, 86,85)

The "Cave of Quietude" into which Endymion descends in Book IV is, specifically, "Made for the soul to wander in and trace / Its own existence" (514-15). This realm is "the proper home / Of every ill"; and "the man is yet to come / Who hath not journeyed in this native hell" (521-23).

Similarly, the quest of Shelley's Alastor takes him down "Nature's most secret steps" into "secret caves / Rugged and dark";¹² and later, he follows a mysterious stream "Whose source is inaccessibly profound" through an "oozy cavern" and "labyrinthine dell," "black gulfs, and yawning caves" until he reaches a "silent nook" where he learns of the principles of his mortality (503, 510, 541, 548, 572; ibid., 191-93).

Such examples could be multiplied to include the poet in the

¹²Complete Works, ed. Roger Ingpen and W.E. Peck (New York, 1926-30), I, 179; lines 81, 87-8. Hereafter referred to as Works.

"Fall of Hyperion," Byron's Childe Harold, Coleridge's Ancient Mariner or Wordsworth's Wanderer; all of whom, like Kant, are mental travellers, bent on a journey beyond phenomenal experience to the "goal of consciousness" (Keats, Endymion, II, 283). For implicit in both the Transcendental philosophy and Romantic poetry is the conviction that only when the sources of certainty and self-consciousness are identified in the creative faculties of the individual sensibility can the hollow abstractions of the schools, and the facile optimism of Pope and Leibniz be exposed as we seek to establish the purpose and permanence of our values, and our metaphysical aspirations.

CHAPTER VI
SENSATIONALISM IN ROMANTIC THOUGHT: THE
"DESPOTISM OF THE EYE"

"One-Fold Vision"

Kant begins his critical examination of pure reason with a theory of perception which attempts to undercut the main principles of Lockean sensationalism by deducing the ideality of space and time. But while the Romantics were completely in accord with Kant on the necessity to refute this aspect of the empirical doctrine, it is obvious that they found something far more invidious than Kant in sensationalism, which they variously refer to as the "Philosophy of the Five Senses," the "despotism of the eye," and the "thralldom" of "sensible impressions."¹

The reason for this perjorative attitude towards sensationalism amongst the Romantic poets is not hard to find, since they regarded the poet as a participator in the "eternal, the infinite, and the one," his productions as "the first and last of all knowledge," and his task,

To open the Eternal Worlds, to open the immortal
Eyes
Of Man inwards into the Worlds of Thought, into
Eternity
Ever expanding in the Bosom of God, the Human
Imagination.²

¹Blake, "Song of Los," pl. 4, 16; Writings, 246; Coleridge, BL, I, 74; Wordsworth, Prelude, XIV, 106.

²Shelley, Defense of Poetry, Works, VII, 112 (hereafter referred to as D of P); Wordsworth, Preface to the Lyrical Ballads, in Prose Works,

But sensationalism, in teaching that space and time are real aspects of things-in-themselves, does not simply represent the concept of "Eternal Worlds" beyond space and time as unreducible to concepts, as it is in Kant; it dismisses the whole notion of a noumenal order out-of-hand. It is hard to see what the function of a poet might be under this dispensation, but Locke gives us some idea:

. . . if he [the student] have a poetic vein, it is to me the strangest thing in the world that the father should desire or suffer it to be cherished or improved. Methinks the parents should labour to have it stifled and suppressed as much as may be . . . for it is very seldom seen that any one discovers mines of gold or silver in Parnassus. It is a pleasant air, but a barren soil; and there are very few instances of those who have added to their patrimony by any thing they have reaped from thence. . . . If therefore you would not have your son the fiddle to every jovial company, without whom the sparks could not relish their wine nor know how to pass an afternoon idly; if you would not have him to waste his time and estate to divert others, and condemn the dirty acres left him by his ancestors, I do not think you will much care he should be a poet, or that his school-master should enter him in versifying (Locke, 9-10).³

For Blake, whom George Mills Harper saw as "the first great artist to reject Locke's theory,"⁴ this attitude towards artistic creativity

ed. W.A. Knight (London, 1896), I, 62 (hereafter referred to as P to LB); Blake, Jerusalem, I, pl. 5, 18-20; Writings, 623.

³Lord Chesterfield, in one of the letters to his son, rejects these admonitions, but the nature of his fatherly advice to the fledgling poet helps to explain Locke's derision for the art: ". . . in prose, you would say very properly, 'it is twelve of the clock at noon,' to mark the middle of the day; but this would be too plain and flat in poetry; and you would rather say, 'the Chariot of the Sun had already finished half its course.' In prose you would say 'the beginning of the morning or the break of day'; but that would not do in verse; and you must rather say, 'Aurora spread her rosy mantle.' Aurora, you know, is the goddess of the morning" (Letters of Philip Stanhope, Fourth Earl of Chesterfield, ed. Bonamy Dobrée [1932], II, 362. As cited by Douglas Bush, in Mythology and the Romantic Tradition [New York, 1957], 20).

⁴The Neoplatonism of William Blake (Chapel Hill, 1961), 63.

the disconnected impressions of sense, was foreign . . . from the first" (BL, I xii). As Coleridge himself said in an early letter to Poole:

from my early reading of Faery Tales, & Genii, &c, &c, my mind had been habituated to the vast--& I never regarded my senses in any way as the criteria of my belief. I regulated all my creeds by my conceptions not by my sight--even at that age.¹⁰

The effect of reading these "romances" was to give to his mind a "love of the Great and the Whole." And while some might possibly arrive at "the same truths" through the "testimony of their senses," they seemed to Coleridge to "want a sense which I possess. They contemplate nothing but parts, and all parts are necessarily little. And the universe to them is but a mass of little things" (ibid.). Thus, like Blake, Coleridge came to regard servile dependence on "outward forms" as reflecting, or at least leading to an impoverished attitude toward the relation of man and nature, in which the "one divine and invisible life" is "scatter[ed] . . . into countless idols of the sense" with the result that we become "a slave to the things of which [we were] formed to be conquerer and sovereign" (Friend, 467). This is the condition which Coleridge describes in the "Dejection Ode," when, in the absence of the "sweet voice" of "joy," he begins to see, in Blake's words, "with" rather than "thro' the Eye": clouds are no more than clouds, the moon is a mere "green

¹⁰Letters, I, 354. Compare Coleridge's attempt to define the differences between himself and his wife: "As I seem to exist, as it were, almost wholly within myself, in thoughts rather than in things, in a particular warmth felt all over me, but chiefly felt about my heart & breast, & am connected with things without me by the pleasurable sense of their immediate Beauty or Loveliness . . . so you on the contrary exist almost wholly in the world without you / the Eye & the Ear are your great organs, and you depend upon the eyes & ears of others for a great part of your pleasures . . ." (Letters, II, 881-82).

light" and the stars celestial fixtures--their beauty "seen" but not "felt." Now the feeling that the poet is different from nature grows, until he believes that he is separate from nature, and the sense of isolation and existential Angst increases. His mind is passive, stagnant, and his eye, consequently, becomes subject to the "tyranny" of "outward forms," and any hope of winning the "passion and the life, whose fountains are within" is lost ("Dejection: And Ode," 45-46; Works, I, 365).¹¹

Coleridge was later to provide a more systematic refutation of sensationalism, when he distinguished the "error" of George Berkeley's philosophy as that of going beyond the "real minimum," raw sense data, to "the extinction of all degrees, and yet thought of as still existing":

The true logic would in this case have been: perception diminishing from its minimum (in which it is called sensation) into an absolute 0, sensation becomes = 0; but no! this hypothetical subminimal perception, = 0, is still somewhat . . . and this, the proper offspring of the unitive and substantiating function of the Understanding, is, by the imagination, projected into an ens reale, or, still more truly, a strange ens hymbridum betwixt real and logical, and partaking of both: namely, it is, yet it is not as this or that, but as sensation per se; i.e., the perceptum, surviving its annihilation, borrows the name by which, in its least degree, it has been distinguished and commences a new genus without species or individual . . . (Muirhead, 77).

¹¹Compare this passage, from "Lines: Written in the Album at Elbingerode, in the Hartz Forest":

. . . I had found
That outward forms, the loftiest, still receive
Their finer influence from the Life within;--
Fair cyphers else: fair, but of import vague
Or unconcerning, where the heart not finds
History or prophecy of friend, or child,
Or gentle maid, our first and early love,
Or father, or the venerable name
Of our adored country! (16-24; Works, I, 315-16)

In summarizing Wordsworth's account of his "debt" to Coleridge, as expressed in Book II of the Prelude, Newton Stallknecht lists first Wordsworth's "Repudiation of strict sensationalism and associationism,"¹² and Havens agrees: this rejection of empiricist psychology is "the most marked of Wordsworth's departures from . . . [the] eighteenth-century philosophers."¹³ In fact, Coleridge went so far as to characterize Wordsworth's intention in the Prelude as "to treat man as man,--a subject of eye, ear, touch, and taste, in contact with external nature, and informing the senses from the mind, and not compounding a mind out of the senses."¹⁴

It is worth digressing here momentarily to consider Arthur Beatty's specific contradiction of Coleridge on this point. Beatty holds that

there can be no manner of doubt that he [Wordsworth] approaches the problem of mind from the angle of Locke, basing his whole theory on the assumption that thought originates in experience, and that out of the product of sensation . . . ideas and the more complex forms of mentality are developed.¹⁵

Two points can be made in answer to Beatty here. First, it is very misleading to suggest that Locke had a patent on the doctrine that "thought originates in experience," or that one must be a Lockean to accept this

¹²Strange Seas of Thought (Durham, North Carolina, 1945), 142.

¹³Raymond Havens, The Mind of a Poet (Baltimore, 1941), II, 322. Hereafter referred to as Havens.

¹⁴Specimens of the Table Talk of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Hartley Nelson Coleridge, 3rd. ed. (London, 1851), 185 (July 21, 1932); my emphasis. Hereafter referred to as Table Talk.

¹⁵William Wordsworth: His Doctrine and Art in Their Historical Relations, 2nd ed. (Madison, 1927), 108.

position: in fact, the very first words in Kant's whole critical canon make precisely the same point.¹⁶ Second, surely the question is begged by Beatty's vague term "the more complex forms of mentality," which could mean anything the interpreter desired it to mean, from the "Transcendental Unity of Apperception" of Kant, to Hartlean vibrations.

Opposed to Beatty is A.C. Bradley, who writes that

His [Wordsworth's] poetry is immensely interesting as an imaginative expression of the same mind which, in his day, produced in Germany great philosophies. His poetic experience, his intuitions, his single thoughts, even his large views, correspond in a striking way, sometimes in a startling way, with ideas methodically developed by Kant, Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer.¹⁷

If we restrict Bradley's observation to Wordsworth's attitude towards perception, there can be no doubt that the poet is very far from Locke's position that "in bare naked perception the mind is, for the most part, only passive; and what it perceives it cannot avoid perceiving" (Locke, 126). In fact, as Havens points out, "for Wordsworth there was no such thing as pure sense impressions since even the earliest and simplest of these are modified by the mind of the beholder" (Havens, II, 321). For example, speaking of the blessed "infant Babe," Wordsworth

¹⁶"There can be no doubt that all our knowledge begins with experience" (C of PR, 41).

¹⁷See above, p. 1. Compare C.H. Herford's observation that in the Prelude and the Immortality Ode, Wordsworth developed "a point of view which the influence of Coleridge--and especially of the Kantian Coleridge of 1800-- tended to confirm . . ." (The Age of Wordsworth [London, 1918], 156).

Similarly, Havens says that the doctrine of "creative activity in perception . . . Coleridge seems to have found in The Critique of Pure Reason . . . and, in the course of extended discussions, to have passed on to his friend" (Havens, I, 205).

And Stallknecht says that "Wordsworth's efforts to describe imagination . . . stand closer to those of the great philosophers [the German Idealists] than to Hartley's comparatively shallow comments" (op. cit., 38).

writes:

Is there a flower, to which he points with hand
 Too weak to gather it, already love
 Drawn from love's purest earthly fount for him
 Hath beautified that flower; already shades
 Of pity cast from inward tenderness
 Do fall around him upon aught that bears
 Unsightly marks of violence or harm.

. . . .

For feeling has to him imparted power
 That through the growing faculties of sense
 Doth life an agent of the one great Mind
 Create, creator and receiver both,
 Working but in alliance with the works
 Which it beholds (Prelude, II, 245-51; 255-60).

As in Coleridge, those times when nature appears as nothing but "forms
 and images / Which float along our minds" are considered as

Relapses from the one interior life
 Which is in all things, from that unity
 In which all beings live with God, are lost
 In god and nature, in one mighty whole
 As indistinguishable as the cloudless east
 At noon is from the cloudless west when all
 The hemisphere is one cerulean blue [.]
 (Prelude, MS RV, 10-16; p. 525)

In Wordsworth, sensation as such is considered solely as a means
 towards a higher, moral end; that is, mental "growth" is conceived of as
 a progression away from the "thralldom" of the bodily eye, a condition
 usually related to the primal innocence of youth with its "dizzy rap-
 tures" and "aching joys"--a state where there is no need for "any
 interest / Unborrowed from the eye"--to the point where the "language of
 the sense" can be translated into thought and morality.¹⁸ "Higher

¹⁸"Lines: Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting
 the Banks of the Wye During a Tour, July 13, 1798," 82-85, 108-11; Works,
 II, 261-63.

minds" are not "enthralled" by sensible impressions, nor are they "mere pensioner[s] / On outward forms" (Prelude, XIV, 106; VI, 737-38). For while the "bodily eye" is the "most despotic of our senses," always "craving combinations of new forms, / New pleasure, wider empire" and "rejoic[ing] / To lay the inner faculties asleep," the fully developed sensibility is not bound by "rules prescribed by passive taste," but is "creative," endowing natural objects "with glory not their own" (XII, 128, 129, 144-47, 154; V, 605). Such minds must need recognize that "The mind is lord and master--outward sense / The obedient servant of her will" (XII, 222-23).

Wordsworth shows us how significant the doctrine of creative perception becomes when seen from the poet's point of view, since the claim that poetic truth is different from and higher than scientific truth rests on the assumption that a different and more inclusive act informs the former than the latter. Thus, Wordsworth tells us that although "the ability to observe with accuracy things as they are in themselves . . . unmodified by any passion or feeling" is a power "requisite for the production of poetry," still

This power, although indispensable to a Poet, is one which he employs only in submission to necessity, and never for a continuance of time: as its exercise supposes all the higher qualities of the mind to be passive, and in a state of subjection to external objects, much in the same way as a translator or engraver ought to be to his original ("Preface to the Edition of 1815," Prose Works, 203).¹⁹

II

¹⁹Compare Coleridge: "[The fine arts] . . . certainly belong to the outward world, for they operate by the images of sight and sound and other sensible impressions, and, without a delicate tact for these, no man ever was or could be either a musician or a poet, nor could he attain excellence in any one of these arts; but as certainly he must always be a poor and unsuccessful cultivator of the arts, if he is not impelled by a mighty inward force; nor can he make great advance in his

Wordsworth's meaning is clarified when he compares his own work to that of the eighteenth-century landscape poets. The "strong infection of the age," he says, was to give way

To a comparison of scene with scene,
Bent overmuch on superficial things,
Pampering myself with meagre novelties
Of colour and proportion; to the moods
Of time and season, to the moral power,
The affections and the spirit of the place,
Insensible (Prelude, XII, 115-121).

Wordsworth is referring to what Blake called "poetry of the five senses," poetry which does not echo in the moral sphere, because of its preoccupation with the mere theatricality of nature. But Wordsworth, because of his keenly developed sense of moral responsibility, was able to "pierce through the veil of the senses and to read into nature spiritual values that the enthusiasts of the preceding decades never discovered" (Monk, op. cit., 228). And this is the "enormous gulf" which "separates" Wordsworth from such "picturesque tourists" as Dyer and Akenside, who described what their eyes saw, unmodified by human values, oblivious to religious implications. And it is in this sense that Samuel Monk compares Wordsworth with Kant:

His [Wordsworth's] nature poetry . . . is as much a critique of pure reason, as was Kant's system of philosophy. To both, the two chief realities were God and the mind of man, and both could turn to account the intuitions and the adventures of the mind as it explored the universe (op. cit., 229).

For just as Kant allows the dictates of pure reason to give way to those

art if in the course of his progress the obscure impulse does not gradually become a bright and clear and burning Idea" (Muirhead, 197-98).

of the practical reason in the moral sphere, so does Wordsworth "turn to account," in practise, that "glorious habit by which sense is made / Subservient . . . to moral purposes, / Auxiliar to divine" (Excursion, IV, 1247-49).

Beyond Space and Time

An even more interesting and specific point of comparison between the Kantian and Romantic theories of perception than this mutual disdain for sensationalism lies in the fact that their attack on this doctrine is based on exactly the same premise: that space and time are Ideal forms, not aspects of things in themselves. Everybody knows, for example, of Coleridge's famous report to Poole that he had "not only completely extricated the notions of Time, and Space; but [had] overthrown the doctrine of Association, as taught by Hartley, and with it all the irreligious metaphysics of modern Infidels--especially, the doctrine of necessity."²⁰ Similarly, Wordsworth spoke of the mental "founts / Flowing of space and time,"²¹ and held that "the disturbances of space and time" are "from human will and power / Derived" (Prelude, XI, 332-33). Even Keats became convinced, when "seeing for the first hour the Lake and Mountains and Winander" that "there is no such thing as time and space" (Letters, I, 298).

But although the Romantics were at one with Kant in accepting the ideality of space and time, once again, this notion had far different

²⁰Letters, II, 385 (March 16, 1801).

²¹"Musings Near Aquapendente," Works, III, 212, 360-61.

and more extensive consequences for them than it did for the philosopher. For in Kant's scheme, the idea that intuition is necessarily given to discursive Understanding in terms of space and time established the unknowability of the "supersensible" by limiting cognition to finite concepts. But when we turn to the Romantics, we at once realize that this same notion can have a liberating as well as a limiting effect on human thought, so long as it is recognized that men may communicate on levels other than the discursive. In other words, if Kant's demonstration that there must be a realm beyond the phenomenal which is eternal and immutable is accepted, it remains only to postulate the existence of a faculty²² of suspending phenomenal time and "isolating" phenomenal space, or piercing the veil of the senses and "cleansing the doors of perception," to regard man as capable of coming into contact with this order. And this is not to say that the Romantics merely assumed what Kant denied and proceeded to "rationalize" their position in their statements about the power of the poetic Imagination. The possibility of penetrating the veil of phenomenal space and time and coming into direct contact with the noumenal received direct and vivid testimony through their visionary experiences, just as the capacity to produce living art testified to the possibility of articulating and communicating these "truths." Hence Coleridge could

never believe, that it was possible for him [Kant] to have meant no more by his Noumenon, or THING IN ITSELF, than his mere words express; or

²²This faculty is, in Romantic thought, the Imagination. For a discussion of the relationship between the Kantian and Romantic concepts of Imagination, both as a "prime Agent of all human Perception" and as an idealizing and unifying power, see below, p. 192ff.

that in his own conception he confined the whole plastic power to the forms of the intellect, leaving for the external cause, for the materiale of our sensations, a matter without form, which is doubtless inconceivable (BL, I, 100).

As Shawcross says, while "agreeing with Kant that the mere intellect cannot grasp the supersensuous," Coleridge "could not follow him in asserting that the supersensuous cannot be given in experience" (*ibid.*, xlii). For Coleridge, experience testified otherwise; and for the same reason, Shelley regarded poetry as a medium of visionary experience, "purg[ing] from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being."²³ For what is this "film of familiarity" if not the dull habit of seeing objects only as "outward forms" inhabiting an "inanimate cold world"; as finite, and inconsequential--at best, perhaps, "useful" for the achievement of some ulterior purpose?²⁴

From one point of view, this Romantic fascination with the ideality of space and time reflects a universal concern of art, since the space and time of art are, in Susanne Langer's words, "virtual" rather than "experiential."²⁵ The artist, that is, creates "illusions" of life situations, and so he must be able to "control" phenomenal space and "clock" time, making them counters for the free play of his inspiration. This is why Blake's Los can say that "both Time & Space obey my will" (Milton, pl. 22, 17)²⁶ and why Coleridge says of the Intimations

²³D of P, 137. Coleridge also uses the phrase "film of familiarity" in a similar context, in BL, II, 6.

²⁴In his article "Coleridge's Concept of Nature" (JHI, XXV #1, Jan-Mar 1964), Craig W. Miller connects Coleridge's understanding of the ideality of space and time with his concept of organic "life" as a fusion of structure (time) and free energy (space). See esp. 87-91.

²⁵Feeling and Form, passim.

²⁶Compare Coleridge: "The reason is aloof from time and space; the imagination has an arbitrary control over both; and if only the poet

Ode that it was

intended for such readers only as had been accustomed to watch the flux and reflux of their inmost nature, to venture at times into the twilight realms of consciousness, and to feel a deep interest in modes of inmost being, to which they know that the attributes of time and space are inapplicable and alien, but which yet can not be conveyed save in symbols of time and space (BL, II, 120).

The reason why that which is true of art generally is especially true for Romantic art derives from the intensity of the Romantic's belief in the sanctity of the creative act and the uniqueness of its mission: the "making" of those "semblances of truth" whose non-discursive character can "tease us out of" the normal stock response to human nature to which we are enslaved by practical exigency.

Blake's voice is the strongest of the Romantics on this point. For Blake, space and time are far more than a mere "veil" suspended between things as they seem and things as they are--he sees these dimensions as "fallen" states of mind, through which we are condemned to see the world in a finite aspect, as Newton and Locke saw it. Space and time are nothing but the "fallen forms" of infinity and eternity which, in the whole man, comprise the true "mental categories through which we perceive the unfallen world."²⁷ Thus Blake insists again and again on the invidious consequences of limiting our understanding of ourselves to our spatio-temporal ordering mechanisms:

have such power of exciting our internal emotions as to make us present to the scene in imagination chiefly, he acquires the right and privilege of using time and space as they exist in the imagination, obedient only to the laws which the imagination acts by"(SC, I, 176).

²⁷Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry, 46.

in an iron chain."²⁹

Wordsworth too, as I have said, visualized the possibility that "the disturbances of space and time" are "from human will and power / Derived" (see above, p. 83), and like Blake, he speaks of "time's fetters," and sees the "sad dependence on time" of the human sensibility as a demeaning "vassalage that binds her [the "heart"] to the earth" (Excursion, IV, 421-22). Similarly in the Prelude, Wordsworth says that we are in "meagre vassalage" to the "bodily eye" because her powers are "stinted"--unable to present schema for the eternal and infinite, thus unreasonably limiting our notions of what we are and what we can know of ourselves (V, 517-17). And if science is to be "worthy of her name," it must no longer be "chained to its object in brute slavery" (Excursion, IV, 1253-56). And when the Wanderer eulogizes "Contemplation," it is because in meditation, "time and conscious nature disappear, / Lost in unsearchable eternity" (ibid., III, 111-12). Even the wisdom of the child in Wordsworth's thought derives from the fact that it has "recently come from a world in which it was free of the manacles of space and time" (Havens, II, 400: my emphasis).³⁰ Thus the child converses with the "eternal deep" and the "eternal mind"; and things are seen **by** him as in a spaceless "celestial light": "Heaven lies about us in our infancy,"

²⁹"Earth's Answer," Writings, 211, 6, 14, 25; "The Tyger," ibid., 214, 4, 16; ibid., 217, 7; ibid., 218, 20.

³⁰"The days of the child seem to unfold in some sense outside of our time. These days of childhood . . . seem to the child as if they were eternal. . . . Of course the important persons who bring up the child strictly impose the scheme of their time on him . . . but he feels the imposition of adult time by adults as an alien intrusion into his own time, which is essentially in some sense infinite" ((Marie Bonaparte, Chronos, Eros, Thanatos, 11-12; cited Norman O. Brown, Life Against Death [New York, 1959], 94).

but the exigencies of practise soon enclose the boy in the "prison-house" of custom and habit. Immortality "broods" over the boy as a "Master o'er a Slave," yet the years soon bring the "inevitable yoke" ("Ode: Intimations of Immortality," 113-14, 4, 66-67, 117-18, 125). As Wordsworth said later, when we age, we become

most pitiably shut out
From that which is and actuates, by forms,
Abstractions, and by lifeless fact to fact
Minutely linked with diligence uninspired,
Unrectified, unguided, unsustained,
By godlike insight

("Musings Near Aquapendente,"
325-30; Works, III, 211).

But because the child is not "enthralled" by "sensible impressions," it is

more prompt
To hold fit converse with the spiritual world,
And with the generations of mankind
Spread over time, past, present, and to come,
Age after age, till Time shall be no more
(Prelude, XIV, 107-11).

This section may be summarized by saying that while both the Transcendental philosophy and English Romanticism were able to break from eighteenth-century concepts by treating the perceptual process as partially creative of experience, the Romantic notion of perception ultimately strives to turn Kant against himself. For whereas Kant regarded the doctrine of the ideality of space and time as proof that there can be no knowledge of the "supersensible," for the Romantics, this same capacity to "isolate" space and time and consider them "Transcendentally," apart from specific notices of single objects and events--

that is, not as aspects of things-in-themselves but as mere perceptual modes which enable us to represent to ourselves things existing separately or collectively, events recurring simultaneously or successively-- spells the possibility of our liberation from the "thralldom" of sensation. As Norman O. Brown puts it, this doctrine "opens up the possibility of man's emancipation from the tyranny of time" since "if the human mind were to break through the veil of phenomena and reach 'noumenal' reality, it would find no time" (op. cit., 94; my emphasis). For the Romantics, as I have said, this possibility is realized in the aesthetic experience, and in those "spots of time" when the soul "Put[s] off her veil, and, self-transmuted,... . [stands] / Naked, in the presence of her God" (Prelude, IV, 151-52).

CHAPTER VII

THE VERSTAND, THE VERNUNFT, AND THE BOUNDS OF INTELLECT IN ROMANTIC THOUGHT

In Part One, we saw how Kant's division of the "Transcendental Doctrine of Elements" into the "Transcendental Aesthetic" and the "Transcendental Logic" reflected his belief that there are a priori principles underlying both the process of perception and of conceptualization; that is, that the human mind is creative of experience on both the "aesthetical" (in the original sense of "relating to the senses") and "logical" levels.

Now there are of course numberless references throughout Romantic poetry to those aspects of experience which we "half-create," to the "Powers" which "of themselves our minds impress":¹ the "source of human thought its tribute brings / Of waters with a sound but half its own" says Shelley in "Mont Blanc," and near the end of the same poem, he asks:

And what were thou, and earth, and stars,
 and sea,
If to the human mind's imaginings
Silence and solitude were vacancy?
 (5-6, 142-44; Works, I, 233)

In "Yarrow Unvisited," Wordsworth makes a similar point, and in very similar language:

¹Wordsworth, "Expostulation and Reply," 21-2; Works, IV, 56.

Yea, what were mighty Nature's self?
 Her features, could they win us,
 Unhelped by the poetic voice
 That hourly speaks within us?
 (85-89; Works, III, 264)²

And these lines recall Coleridge's impassioned rejection of eighteenth-century "mechanistic" philosophy and all its implications in the Dejection Ode:

Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth
 A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
 Enveloping the Earth--
 And from the soul itself must there be sent
 A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
 Of all sweet sounds the life and element!
 (53-8; Poems, I, 365)

But while it is valid to say that both Kant and the Romantics supplanted a "passive" concept of mind with an "active" one, it would be extremely misleading to draw a one-to-one comparison between Wordsworth's "plastic power" and Kant's ". . . what our own faculty of knowledge . . . supplies from itself." In fact, as Lovejoy says, since in Kant this "activity" is "without freedom" and is "pre-determined" by the structures of thought, in this, Kant's reasoning is "as deterministic in its implications as the Hartlean doctrine itself."³

²Note that Meredith chooses these four lines for the motto to his edition of Kant's Critique of Aesthetic Judgement (iii).

³Arthur O. Lovejoy, Essays in the History of Ideas (Cambridge, 1936), 256, 259. Lovejoy says that "the effect of the Kantian arguments for the 'activity of the mind' should have been to confirm Coleridge in his necessitarianism--by providing him with a new and better proof of it than could be got from Hartley or Priestley" (ibid., 257). This is undoubtedly so if by "activities of the mind" we imply simply the operation of the categories. But this definition of the word "activity" is unnecessarily narrow in the context of the Transcendental philosophy, as we learn when we come to the work which Coleridge, like Schiller, Goethe

But Lovejoy's point, although certainly correct, should not be taken as implying that the very important teaching of the "Transcendental Logic" has no relation to Romantic thought. For it is here that Kant lays the Transcendental foundations for one of the most crucial and definitive premises of Romanticism: that the faculty by which we discourse about matters of empirical fact can provide no knowledge whatsoever of those issues which they considered central to morality and creativity--freedom, immortality, and the existence of God.

The "False Secondary Power"

All of the Romantics spoke of a faculty akin to Kant's Verstand, and although they more often than not refer to it generically as "reason," it means basically the same thing: it is the function of consciousness whose sphere of influence is limited to the "vanishing apparitions" of the phenomenal order.⁴ For the Romantics, its metier is restricted to empirical awareness, or scientific investigation, since it operates by regulated analysis, classification, judgment and differentiation of sense data, all of which, significantly, takes place in isolation from values and ideals, in accordance with pre-established laws. Familiar only with appearance, it is conversant solely with what is, not with what ought to be.

But while both Kant and the Romantics were determined to isolate the power by which we make empirical judgments and limit its sphere of

and many others, found the most impressive of all Kant's works, the Critique of Judgment (see below, Chapter IX).

⁴Shelley, D of P, 137.

authority to the phenomenal realm, it is obvious again that the Romantics had a far different, a far more pejorative attitude to the function of discursive Understanding than Kant, a fact which is due both to the intensity with which they shared the visionary experience of the "one life," and the earnestness with which, as "unacknowledged legislators of the world," they felt bound to communicate it.⁵ Thus, when Blake contemplates the Lockean concept of mind, distinctions are drawn and consequences specified which extend far beyond anything Kant might have intended. For Blake the world-view which emerges from naive empiricism is not only false, but perverse, because (as Frye says) of the "emotional implications" which necessarily "accompany it into the mind," where they inevitably "breed . . . into cynical indifference, short-range vision, selfish pursuit of expediency, and all the other diseases of Selfhood, ending in horror and despair" (Fearful Symmetry, 384).

In Blake's mythological system, it is Urizen ("your reason") which corresponds to the faculty of Verstand, and while it would be foolish to draw a direct parallel between the Kantian and Blakean faculties, a certain resemblance is obvious in Blake's description in the Four Zoas of Urizen's proud but foredoomed attempts to over-extend his limited powers and achieve dominion over Los, the creative principle. And while Kant regarded these pretensions of our finite Understanding as leading to "sceptical despair" or "dogmatism" (C of PR, 385), Blake saw

⁵Whether Kant ever experienced this mystical feeling is irrelevant here. Obviously, in his role as a philosopher, he had far less emotionally at stake than did the poets in denying that divergence from some psychological or sociological norm was reprehensible, that revelation was akin to mental instability, or that the test of art lay in the consensus gentium. As Camus said, "Je n'ai jamais vu personne mourir pour l'argument ontologique" ("Le Myth de Sisyphe," Essais [Bruges, 1965], 99).

them as giving rise to social and psychological repression, to spiritual isolation and to the devitalizing of inspiration and true creativity:⁶

Urizen beheld the terror of the Abyss, wandering among
 The horrid shapes & sights of torment in burning
 dungeons & in
 Fetters of red hot iron; some with crowns of
 serpents & some
 With monsters girding round their bosoms; some
 lying on beds of sulphur,
 On racks & wheels; he beheld women marching o'er
 burning wastes
 Of Sand in bands of hundreds & of fifties & of
 thousands, stricken with
 Lightnings which blazed after them upon their
 shoulders in their march

. . .

Then he beheld the forms of tygers & of Lions, dis-
 humaniz'd men.
 Many in serpents & in worms, stretched out enormous
 length
 Over the sullen mould & slimy tracks, obstruct
 his way
 Drawn out from deep to deep, woven by ribb'd
 And scaled monsters or arm'd in iron shell, or
 shell of brass
 Or gold; a glittering torment shining & hissing
 in eternal pain . . .
 (Four Zoas, VI, 102-8; 116-21; Writings, 314-15).

The futile, but (as Kant said) inevitable, struggle of our intellect to "transcend those limits of sensibility within which alone objects can be given to us" (C of PR, 264) is symbolized by Blake as Urizen's ludicrous attempt to escape the "world of Cumbersome wheels" which he himself had

⁶As did Shelley: "The rich have become richer, and the poor have become poorer; and the vessel of the state is driven between the Scylla and Charybdis of anarchy and despotism. Such are the effects which must ever flow from an unmitigated exercise of the calculating faculty" (D of P, 132).

created, hoping to be able to "view all things beneath my feet":

labouring up against
futuraity,
Creating many a Vortex, fixing many a Science in
the deep,
And thence throwing his venturous limbs into the
vast unknown,
Swift, swift from Chaos to chaos, from void to
void, a road immense.
For when he came to where a Vortex ceas'd to
operate,
Nor down nor up remain'd, then if he turn'd &
look'd back
From whence he came, 'twas upward all; & if he
turn'd & view'd
The unpass'd void, upward was still his mighty
wand'ring,
The midst between, an Equilibrium grey or air
serene
Where he might live in peace & where his life
might meet repose (ibid., 186-95).

Kant observed that our finite intellect, when faced with these perplexities, will inevitably assume an "obstinate attitude" and attempt to fix all experience within its limited sphere of authority. It is likewise with Blake's Urizen, who, after meeting this frustration,

began to form of gold, silver & iron
And brass, vast instruments to measure out the
immense & fix
The whole into another world better suited to
obey
His will, where none should dare oppose his will,
himself being King
Of All, & all futurity be bound in his vast chain.
And the Sciences were fix'd & the Vortexes began
to operate
On all the sons of men, & every human soul terrified
At the turning wheels of heaven shrunk away inward,
with'ring away.
Gaining a New dominion over all his Sons & Daughters
& over the
Sons & Daughters of Luvah in the horrible Abyss
(ibid., 229-38).

Blake's most clear and specific discussion of the nature and limits of the Verstand is contained in the closely reasoned little prose poems on natural religion, etched about 1788. Eight years prior to the etching of these pamphlets, Kant had exposed the speciousness (if not the vacuity) of natural religion by demonstrating that the "physio-theological argument" maintained by the Deists rested ultimately on the ontological argument, which was unsound because it illegitimately applied an empirical judgment to a non-empirical "Idea" of pure Reason.⁷ This procedure, according to Kant, is unacceptable because "in dealing with objects of pure thought, we have no means whatsoever of knowing their existence, since it would have to be known in a completely a priori manner."

Our consciousness of all existence . . . belongs exclusively to the unity of experience; any [alleged] existence outside this field, while not indeed such as we can declare to be absolutely impossible, is of the nature of an assumption which we can never be in a position to justify (C of PR, 506).

Now Blake bases his rejection of natural religion on the same philosophical premise as Kant; that is, that it is logically impossible for our mere "reasoning power" to extend beyond "objects of sense" in order to lend insight into the noumenal order. As Blake put it, "From a perception of only 3 senses or 3 elements none could deduce a fourth or fifth"; and "As none by travelling over known lands can find out the unknown, So from already acquired knowledge Man could not acquire more. . . ."⁸

⁷James Benziger, in Images of Eternity (Carbondale, 1962) briefly describes the relation between the Kantian and Romantic attitudes towards Deism. See esp. 17-18.

⁸"There is No Natural Religion" [First Series], proposition III; "All Religions Are One," principle 4th; Writings, 97, 98.

Therefore our concept of God cannot derive from the "Philosophical & Experimental" faculties, which are barred by their very nature from metaphysical exploration.⁹

There is an intimate relation between Coleridge and Wordsworth's rejection of the teachings of Godwin and Hartley on the one hand, and Kant's repudiation (under the influence of Rousseau¹⁰) of rationalistic and empirical dogmatism on the other, since in both cases the reaction sprang from the conviction that the failure of Empirical philosophers to distinguish between the Verstand and the Vernunft had caused them, according to their "uncritical" premises, to claim too much for the former or too little for the latter--if in fact the distinction was made at all. Consequently, Kant's great Critical system and the art of Coleridge and Wordsworth share this intent: to challenge the imperious claims of our finite Understanding to be the sole arbiter of what is true and good

⁹"Rejecting the utilitarian morality of rationalism, Blake . . . asserted a more plausible ethics; for . . . [he] insisted that genuine religious experience involved a truly imaginative moral act, in which the selfish isolation of individual need is transcended in the sense of a larger unity and a nobler universe. . . . All this points back to Boehme, to his old distinction between Verstand and Vernunft, and these very terms, of course, became the tool by which the flat rationalism of the Enlightenment, in England as well as Germany, was pried apart" (Mark Schorer, William Blake: The Politics of Vision [New York, 1959], 118-19).

¹⁰"I am by disposition an enquirer. I feel the consuming thirst for knowledge, the eager unrest to advance ever further, and the delights of discovery. There was a time when I believed that this is what confers real dignity upon human life, and I despised the common people who know nothing. Rousseau has set me right. This imagined advantage vanishes. I learn to honor men, and should regard myself as of much less use than the common labourer, if I did not believe that my philosophy will restore to all men the common rights of humanity" (Kant, Literary Remains, Works [Hartenstein], iii, 624. Cited Commentary, lvii and 578).

and beautiful, and to relocate the source of moral and aesthetic criteria beyond the pale of "consequitive reasoning."

Therefore, like Blake, Coleridge treated the faculty of Verstand far more perjoratively than did Kant. For example, in the Biographia Literaria, he specifically states that the greatest "boon" for him of his reading in metaphysical philosophy was to "keep alive the heart in the head" by leaving him with "a stirring and working presentiment, that all the products of the mere reflective faculty partook of DEATH, and were as the rattling twigs and sprays in winter, into which a sap was yet to be propelled from some root to which I had not penetrated, if they were to afford my soul either food or shelter" (BL, I, 98). This "presentiment" subsequently gelled into conviction when the "giant's hand" of Kant took possession of him. And although, as I have said, he was troubled (like others after him) by some of the consequences of Kant's firm distinction between "phenomena" and "noumena," he certainly found Kant's Transcendental distinction between Verstand and Vernunft most congenial, as the fifth and ninth numbers of the Friend, and the MS Logic indicate.¹¹

Wordsworth hardly needed Coleridge to teach him that the accumulation of empirical facts did not exhaust our mental capacities, but as I shall point out later, Coleridge, through his reading in Kant, was able to provide a firm philosophical basis for Wordsworth's intuitions. And again, as this conviction grew in Wordsworth, we find the Verstand

¹¹"To establish this distinction [between Vernunft and Verstand] was one main object of THE FRIEND" (BL, I, 109-10). See Shawcross' note on this remark, *ibid.*, 250-51. In the MS Logic, Coleridge devised his own "Table of Categories" for the Understanding, which is similar in all essentials to Kant's. See Orsini, Ch. Three, *passim*.

referred to in quite un-Kantian pejoratives--it is the "meddling intellect," an "inferior Faculty," "toiling reason," "that humbler power," and so on.¹²

This attitude is hardly separable from Wordsworth's opinion of the scientist, whom he regarded as restricted, by the very nature of his calling, to a loveless task of making superficial generalizations about natura naturata. A rare comic passage in the Excursion illustrates this attitude, as the Wanderer describes the intrusion of a botanist into the dales, "peep[ing] round" for "some rare flowerlet of the hills"--a "harmless Man," intent on his "outward quest" with a sense "keen and eager, as a fine-nosed hound" (III, 165-72). Only slightly less harmless is the geologist, who can be traced by the "scars which his activity has left / Beside our roads and pathways," smiting the edge of a "luckless rock," classifying it "by some barbarous name" and marching on to some new conquest (ibid., 175-85). The Wanderer magnanimously allows these heathens free access to the hills--at least, their minds are "full" and their pastime "free from pain" (ibid., 193).

But science can be beneficial to the arts, says Wordsworth condescendingly, since when the scientist has learned to make his sense "Subservient . . . to moral purposes," his work can become "a support . . . to the mind's excursive power" (ibid., IV, 1248, 1262-63). But without this moral orientation in science, it is only "a succedaneum, and a prop / To our infirmity" (Prelude, II, 214-15).¹³ For however hard

¹²"The Tables Turned," 26; Excursion, IV, 1130; "To My Sister," 26, Prelude, A, XI, 124; my emphasis.

¹³As Wordsworth is said to have remarked to Hamilton: "All science which waged war with and wished to extinguish Imagination in the mind of

Wordsworth may have sought to "achieve a poetic vision which respected this order [of the Newtonian universe],"¹⁴ he was obviously and rightly suspicious about the incursion of scientism into those matters--the sense of beauty, personal growth, the mystic and moral experience, and love--which "We murder to dissect" ("The Tables Turned," 28). And since such matters are the very thematic material of his poetry, reason is "of least use / Where wanted most" (Prelude, XI, 308-9).

That Wordsworth fully understood the philosophical (Transcendental) rationale for fixing the limits of discursive Understanding, is obvious from the famous passage in Book II of the Prelude where, addressing Coleridge, he says:

No officious slave
Art thou of the false secondary power
By which we multiply distinctions, then
Deem that our puny boundaries are things
That we perceive, and not that we have made.
(215-19).¹⁵

man, and to leave it nothing of any kind but the naked knowledge of facts was . . . of a dangerous and debasing tendency" (R.P. Graves, Life of W.R. Hamilton, I, 311-14; cited Havens, I, 147).

¹⁴Geoffrey Durrant, William Wordsworth (Cambridge, 1969), 5. Professor Durrant opposes Wordsworth to Blake here, saying that Blake "rejected science" whereas Wordsworth "did not dream of challenging the authority of the physical sciences" (ibid., 6). But this distinction depends on what is meant by "authority," for while Wordsworth hardly denied the propriety of the scientific investigation of natural phenomena, he certainly did "reject," no less than did Kant, "scientific" or non-normative theories of ethics and aesthetics. And Blake, like Wordsworth, Keats and Shelley, did not "reject science" as much as he dismissed its imperious pretensions. Note that Blake has Locke, Newton and Bacon beside Milton, Shakespeare and Chaucer at the end of the apocalypse in Jerusalem, where they are an integral part of the great dialectical vision of the poem. See S. Foster Damon, A Blake Dictionary (Providence, 1965), 243.

¹⁵Havens points out that this passage appears in the very earliest known MS for Book II, clearly proving, he says, that "The Prelude was,

This is a powerful passage, almost every word of which radiates deep insight and conviction. People who overly trust to the leadings of Verstand are "officious": a beautifully chosen word (substituted for the weaker "timid" in MS "D") connoting clerical fussiness, dry loveless pusillanimity about details of motive and method. Such people are "slaves"; slaves to utility and things that change, to space and time, custom and habit, immunized from spontaneous impulse and therefore from passion, inspiration, creativity. This is why Verstand is a "secondary" power--its processes are subject to the laws of association, and therefore conversant only with facts, never values. But more important, Wordsworth realizes that it is a "false" power, for the very Kantian reason^{that} the discursive Understanding can easily lead us into the debilitating illusion that "Our puny boundaries are things / That we perceive, and not that we have made."¹⁶ This is the confusion, typical of

ab ovo, a philosophical work" (Havens, II, 317). Note that the passage exists almost intact in MS 2 of Peter Bell, which actually dates it as early as 1799. See Prelude, 525.

¹⁶Compare the passage from Book VIII of the Prelude, where Wordsworth speaks of the "dead letter" of book learning, ""

Whose truth is not a motion or a shape
Instinct with vital functions, but a block
Or waxen image which yourselves have made,
And ye adore! (298-301)

The "uncritical" failure to recognize that our "puny boundaries" are things . . . that we have made" was, as Coleridge saw, the fatal error of Hartley, who mistook, as all uncritical philosophers must, "the conditions of a thing for its causes and essence; and the process, by which we arrive at the knowledge of a faculty, for the faculty itself" (BL, I, 85). In Blake, this error is the hubris of Urizen, who knew not "the course of his own [deceit], but thought himself the sole author / Of all his wandering Experiments in the horrible Abyss" (Four Zoas, VII(a), 159-60; Writings, 324). It was similarly Swedenborg's error, and Blake's derision towards Swedenborg's uncritical attitudes is reminiscent of Kant's censure of Hume and the "dogmatists" (C of PR, 127-28):

"Enlightened" thought, which "uncritically" assumes man's inability to transcend the "natural" realm of stimulus and response to which his flesh is heir. It is, as Kant demonstrated, both untrue to experience and dogmatic. Furthermore, it is an error which must be dispelled if all the evidence of moral experience is to have any significance whatsoever, and one which can be dispelled, as Wordsworth goes on to say, through a reasoned critique of our mental faculties, leading to that most precious of all insights: "Profoundest knowledge to what point, and how, / The mind is lord and master--outward sense / The obedient servant of her will" (XII, 221-23).

The Vernunft, and the Status of the Metaphysical
"Ideas" in Romantic Thought

In Part One, I pointed out that Kant regarded the demands of our Reason for an unconditioned system and order as absolutely essential to the growth of our moral beings. For without these demands, he says, we would never become aware of our noumenal freedom and therefore would never be capable of judging moral behaviour. In Kant's system, the Vernunft generates these metaphysical "yearnings" by providing us with

A man carried a monkey about for a shew, & because he was a little wiser than the monkey, grew vain, and conceiv'd himself as much wiser than seven men. It is so with Swedenborg: he shews the folly of churches, & exposes hypocrites, till he imagines that all are religious, & himself the single one on earth that ever broke a net. . . .

And now hear the reason. He conversed with Angels who are all religious, & conversed not with Devils who all hate religion, for he was incapable thro' his conceited notions"

(MHH, pl. 21-22; Writings, 157).

Ideals for action, Ideals which "make possible a transition from the concepts of nature to the practical concepts, and in that way . . . give support to the moral ideas themselves, bringing them into connection with the speculative knowledge of reason" (C of PR, 320).

Kant's Transcendental distinction between the faculty by which we conceptualize matters of fact, and the faculty of moral and religious Ideas was a key factor in his own break from rationalistic dogmatism and scepticism,¹⁷ and while this distinction does not pass unchanged into Romantic thought, the idea that our metaphysical yearnings are not gratuitous or reprehensible (as they are so often represented by the Augustan poets) but serve a necessary and even salutary function does. For the Romantic mind was "attuned to the vast," and everywhere in the poetry of the period we find expressed this urgent need to discover forms of expression which would dignify and articulate the intensity with which we are driven to assert our freedom from the realm of determination and laws of association, to experience the mysterious, to transcend the bounds of sense to "see as a god sees":¹⁸

Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from Heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

¹⁷As it was for Coleridge: "The unspeakable importance of the Distinction between the Reason and the Human Understanding, as [sic: is?] the only Ground of the Cogency of the Proof a posteriori of the existence of a God from the order of the known Universe. Remove or deny this distinction, and Hume's argument from the Spider's proof that Houses &c were spun by Men out of their Bodies becomes valid" (IS, 382).

¹⁸Keats, The Fall of Hyperion, I, 304; Works, 410.

Higher still and higher
 From the earth thou springest
 Like a cloud of fire;
 The blue deep thou wingest,
 And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest
 (Shelley, "To a Skylark," 1-10; Works, II, 302).

The demand, here symbolized (as so often in Romantic poetry) as envy for a bird (or in figures relating to flight in general¹⁹) is for a transcendent "overview," for an opportunity to meditate on "Things more true and deep" than those truths for which the "calculating faculty" can supply concepts.

In Keats' Endymion, these same metaphysical compunctions of the "Brain-sick shepherd prince" are symbolized by the flight of a "golden butterfly" which appears in Book II to lead the poet out of "langour's sullen bands" (again, note the bondage imagery applied to the phenomenal world), leading him above consciousness, beyond space and time.²⁰ And in "Sleep and Poetry," Keats speaks of his plan to write on "All that was for our human senses fitted," after which

¹⁹This imagery occurs in a similar context in the Critique of Pure Reason, where Kant speaks of the dangers inherent in Plato's uncritical extension of the empirical faculties into the realm of Ideas: "Misled by such a proof of the power of reason [as is derived from the possibility of pure Geometry], the demand for the extension of knowledge recognizes no limits. The light dove, cleaving the air in her free flight, and feeling its resistance, might imagine that its flight would be still easier in empty space" (C of PR, 47).

It is worth noting how often flight imagery appears in Augustan poetry with derogatory connotations. In the first Epistle of the Essay on Man, for example, Pope speaks chidingly of the "giddy heights" to which men will "sightless soar": the "hope" of the "poor Indian" does not lie above or beyond, but "Behind the cloud-topt hill." Therefore, "He asks no Angel's wing, no Seraph's fire," settling instead for the more mundane company of his "faithful dog" (11-12, 99-112; Poems, ed. John Butt [London, 1963], 508).

²⁰44, 61, 66-130; Works, 80-83.

. . . the events of this wide world I'd seize
 Like a strong giant, and my spirit tease
 Till at its shoulders it should proudly see
 Wings to find out an immortality
 (80-84; Works, 44).

The same aspirations are expressed in similar terms in the verse epistle to his brother George:

Fair world, adieu!
 Thy dales, and hills, are fading from my view;
 Swiftly I mount, upon wide spreading pinions,
 Far from the narrow bounds of thy dominions.
 Full joy I feel, while thus I cleave the air,
 That my soft verse will charm thy daughters fair,
 And warm thy sons! (103-9; Works, 28)

In Kant, the restlessness which the Vernunft visits upon us serves the "lofty" and "excellent" purpose of drawing our attention towards those aspects of the human condition which distinguishes us from brute animals--our moral freedom and our "supersensible destiny." Similarly, in Keats, as in Blake, Wordsworth and Coleridge, this innate discontent with the "real" world of the senses is an essential ingredient of mental and spiritual growth, since if we were ever capable of taking satisfaction in purely empirical accounts of experience, there would, as Kant put it, be no accounting for the force of Ideals, and we would too easily submit to a puerile philosophy of "whatever is, is right." Consider, for example, the "Glaucus episode" of Keats' Endymion. Glaucus had spent his years, like Blake's Thel, in Beulah, or in the "infant or thoughtless chamber," as Keats called it:²¹

²¹"The first [chamber] we step into we call the infant or thoughtless Chamber, in which we remain as long as we do not think--We remain there a long while, and notwithstanding the doors of the second Chamber remain wide open, showing a bright appearance, we care not to hasten to it; but are at length imperceptibly impelled by the awakening of the thinking principle--within us . . ." (Letters, I, 280-81).

the crown
 Of all my life was utmost quietude:
 More did I love to lie in cavern rude,
 Keeping in wait whole days for Neptune's voice,
 And if it came at last, hark, and rejoice!
 (III, 352-56)

"Why was I not contented?" asks Glaucus.

Wherefore reach
 At things which, but for thee, O Latmian!
 Had been my dreary death? Fool! I began
 To feel distemper'd longings: to desire
 The utmost privilege that ocean's sire
 Could grant in benediction: to be free
 Of all his kingdom (ibid., 371-78).

In Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," our yearnings to escape the bounds of sense and determined action are symbolized, as they are in Kant (see above, p. 29) by a sea-voyage, which is fraught with the kind of danger and temptation, with the "Hard and bitter agony"²² which must accompany the prospective loss of empirical self-hood, but which is at the same time necessary to the stimulation and growth of our Ideals, as is made quite clear in the motto attached to the poem:

I readily believe that there are more invisible than visible things in the universe. But who will tell us the family, the ranks, the relationships, the differences, the respective functions of all these beings? What do they do? Where do they dwell? The human mind has circled around this knowledge, but has never reached it. Still, it is pleasant, I have no doubt, to contemplate sometimes in one's mind, as in a picture, the image of a bigger and better world; lest the mind, accustomed to the details of daily life, be too narrowed and settle down entirely on trifling thoughts. Meanwhile, however, we must be on the lookout for truth and observe restraint, in order that we may distinguish the certain from the uncertain, day from night.²³

²²T.S. Eliot, "Journey of the Magi," 39; Collected Poems (London, 1963), 110.

²³As translated by Russell Noyes, in English Romantic Poetry and Prose (New York, 1956), 392.

No doubt, Coleridge was attracted to this passage from Thomas Burnet's Archaeologiae Philosophicae because it furnished him with a compact and precise statement of some of his most important intentions in the "Ancient Mariner." For not only does it establish the mood of the "supernatural" with its initial, forthright credo in the existence of "invisible beings," it also serves to invite us to treat the poem as a psychological allegory, since it touches on two of his most central philosophical beliefs: the significance of the part played by human Ideals in rendering us dissatisfied with the "details of daily life" and the "trifling thoughts" of the Verstand, and the inability of this finite faculty to transcend sense experience.

In these terms, the relation of the motto to the poem is clear. The mariner begins his journey as an homme moyen sensuel ("Merrily did we drop . . ."), a man most comfortable in a world regarded as "a mass of little things." But prospects for a gentle voyage are soon shattered by the "STORM-BLAST," Coleridge's symbol for what Kant called the "impetuous" forces which "drive" us by an "inward need, to questions such as cannot be answered by any empirical employment of reason" (C of PR, 56). Plunging into a clinging mist, and losing the light of the sun,²⁴ the voyager's normal rational orientation and associative powers are rendered useless:

And through the drifts the snowy clifts
Did send a dismal sheen:
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken--
The ice was all between (55-58)

²⁴According to Robert Penn Warren, the "sun" is a symbol for finite intellect in Part One of Coleridge's poem. See his essay "A Poem of Pure Imagination," in Selected Essays (New York, 1966), 240ff.

The albatross then appears, and with it the means of escape from the treacherous ice. But the mariner, too long accustomed to seeing his environment "with" rather than "thro'" his eyes, proves himself unworthy of the albatross's blessing, and mindlessly destroys the great white bird. And with this act, evil is brought into the poem's cosmology, just as Adam's fully conscious and deliberate decision to eat the apple of knowledge introduced evil into Milton's system.²⁵

As in Paradise Lost, the hero's sin results in a period of profound spiritual suffering, symbolized by an intense and disabling thirst, which is quenched only when the passionate "yearning" arises from the depths of his soul, a yearning to transcend his worldly selfhood and see himself in relation to a larger whole:

O happy living things! no tongue
 Their beauty might declare:
 A spring of love gushed from my heart,
 And I blessed them unaware:
 Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
 And I blessed them unaware (282-287).

Like Kant, Coleridge attributed this yearning towards a transcendence of the bounds of sense to the "Reason," the function of consciousness "to which the Understanding must convert itself in order to obtain from within what it would in vain seek for without, the knowledge of necessary and universal conclusion--of that which is because it must be, and not because it had been seen" (IS, 126). The Reason is

²⁵As Coleridge said in the Statesman's Manual: "The rational intellect, . . . taken abstractedly and unbalanced, did, in itself (ye shall be as Gods . . .), . . . form the original temptation, through which men fell: and in all ages has continued to originate the same, even from Adam, in whom we all fell, to the atheists who deified the human reason in the person of a harlot during the earlier period of the French Revolution"(456-57).

the "Source of Ideas" (ibid.), an organ "bearing the same relation to spiritual objects, the universal, the eternal, and the necessary, as the eye bears to material and contingent phenomena" (Friend, 144). It is the faculty of "conscious self-knowledge" and therefore of the "supersensuous," an organ whose function it is to "subordinate" sense and thought "to absolute principles or necessary laws" (ibid., 146). Its operations thus ensure that the mind will not be satisfied unless it perceives the part in relation to the whole--the "water-snakes" in relation to all creation (which includes the mariner himself)--for "We can neither rest in an infinite that is not at the same time a whole, nor in a whole that is not infinite."

Hence the natural man is always in a state either of resistance or of captivity to the understanding and the fancy, which can not represent totality without limit: and he either loses the one in the striving after the infinite, that is, atheism with or without polytheism, or he loses the infinite in the striving after the one, and then sinks into anthropomorphic monotheism (SM, 456).

And because no amount of empirical facts can ever attain to completeness, the function of Reason is an "endless occupation for the soul" as Wordsworth said (Prelude, XIV, 119), and its operations therefore promise constant growth, growth which is the enabling factor of the moral life. Of course, we may choose to avoid meeting experience completely, which would exonerate us from responsibility of any kind; but at least for "one of three," the mental voyage is a spiritual commitment, and one which ensures our passage out of Edenic bliss into a state of "higher innocence." As the Wanderer says:

Them only can such hope inspire whose minds
 Have not been starved by absolute neglect;
 Nor bodies crushed by unremitting toil;
 To whom kind Nature, therefore, may afford
 Proof of the sacred love she bears for all;
 Whose birthright, Reason, therefore, may ensure
 (Excursion, IX, 96-101).

"Man must & will have Some Religion," said Blake (Jerusalem; Writings, 682), and when he ceases to "seek immortal moments," and to "Converse with god," ("Annotations to Lavater," Writings, 80), he becomes bound by manacles forged by his own mind, "Deem[ing] that our puny boundaries are things / That we perceive," thus forfeiting his very human-ness, his ability to love and communicate, to create, to find beauty in "slimy" objects, to experience guilt and sorrow and to be shriven: he has lost the toss of the dice which saved the ancient mariner.

This conviction is especially strong in Wordsworth, who was fully aware both that we possess "Dumb yearnings" and "hidden appetites" which "must have their food" (Prelude, V, 506-7), and that without these "yearnings," we would never become aware just how "stinted" our "false secondary power" was; that, in other words, if we were capable of being rendered satisfied with purely rational accounts of experience, all the impetus for growth would disappear, and we would likely as not find ourselves subscribing to Deism or intellectual equalitarianism.

As in Keats and Shelley, these immortal longings are often symbolized by Wordsworth in figures relating to flight:

Up with me! up with me into the clouds!
 For thy song, Lark, is strong;
 Up with me, up with me into the clouds!
 Singing, singing,

With clouds and sky about thee ringing,
 Lift me, guide me, till I find
 That spot which seems so to thy mind!

. . .

Up to thee would I fly,
 There is a madness about thee, and joy divine
 In that song of thine;
 Lift me, guide me high and high
 To thy banqueting place in the sky
 ("To a Sky-Lark," 1-7, 11-15; Works,
 II, 141).

And in the 1805 version of the Prelude, Wordsworth talks of how,
 "enflam'd / With thirst of a secure intelligence" he was driven to
 pursue

A higher nature, wish'd that Man should start
 Out of the worm-like state in which he is,
 And spread abroad the wings of Liberty,
 Lord of himself, in undisturb'd delight . . .
 (A, X, 836-39).

But this "noble aspiration" led to despair because he

sought
 To accomplish the transition by such means
 As did not lie in nature, sacrificed
 The exactness of a comprehensive mind
 To scrupulous and microscopic views
 That furnish'd out materials for a work
 Of false imagination, placed beyond
 The limits of experience and of truth
 (ibid., 842-49).

But perhaps the most prevalent imagery associated in Wordsworth
 with this compunction to embrace "something loftier, more adorned, /
 Than is the common aspect, daily garb, / Of human life" (Prelude, V,
 575-7) involves climbing, sublime heights, mountains and elevated

plateaus,²⁶ from where Wordsworth received insight into the "majestic intellect," its "acts / And possessions, what it has and craves, / What in itself it is, and would become." From the top of Mount Snowden, he

beheld the emblem of a mind
That feeds upon infinity, that broods
Over the dark abyss, intent to hear
Its voices, issuing forth to silent light
In one continuous stream; a mind sustained
By recognitions of transcendent power,
In sense conducting to ideal form,
In soul of more than mortal privilege
(XIV, 70-77).

The phrase "sense conducting to ideal form" is of course reminiscent of the Kantian Vernunft,²⁷ that faculty which eschews "logic and minute analysis" and demands a larger vision of man, of nature, and of human life. Wordsworth placed a great deal of emphasis on the importance of this distinction which Coleridge, who considered it the starting-place of all philosophy, had "passed on" to him (Havens, I, 139), as this passage from Book XII indicates:

²⁶Imagery involving climbing or looking upward, standing on tip-toe etc. is of course common in Romantic poetry, giving it a decided "vertical" orientation, as opposed to Augustan poetry, where the imagery is much more "horizontal." One need only think of the number of poems of this period which begin with the poet gazing at clouds, the moon, a bird, mountains or stars (e.g., "Eolian Harp," "Ode to the Departing Year," "France: An Ode," "Lewti," "The Nightingale" etc. in Coleridge alone) to assess the force with which this transcendental yearning was felt.

²⁷Wordsworth has obviously what he called the Imagination in mind here. But he was "less aptly skilled" than Coleridge or Kant in "rang[ing] the faculties / In scale and order" (Prelude, II, 222-24), and since my purpose is not so much to draw parallels between Kant and the Romantics as to show how the principles of Transcendental Idealism "became constitutive" of Romanticism, there is no need to quibble over terminology.

This narrative, my Friend! hath chiefly told
 Of intellectual power, fostering love,
 Dispensing truth, and, over men and things,
 Where reason might yet hesitate, diffusing
 Prophetic sympathies of genial faith . . .
 (44-48).

Elsewhere, Wordsworth distinguishes specifically between "the grand / And simple Reason" and "that humbler power / Which carries on its no inglorious work / By logic and minute analysis" (A, XI, 123-26).

However "akin to the Vernunft" (Havens, II, 563) this "intellectual power" may be, there can be no denying that the limits which Kant attached to the human intellect are not those accepted by Wordsworth--or by the Romantic poets in general, for that matter. For Kant held, it will be recalled, that the Vernunft "is never in immediate relation to . . . object[s] . . . but only orders them," and "unifies the manifold of concepts by means of ideas, positing a certain collective unity as the goal of the activities of the understanding, which otherwise are concerned solely with distributive unity" (C of PR, 533). Moreover Kant maintained, with greatest emphasis, that these transcendent Ideas of Reason "never allow of any constitutive employment" (ibid.), but are merely regulative, a position which, as I have said, Coleridge could not accept.²⁸ He could agree with Kant, as Shawcross says, that the

²⁸It is understandable, and very illuminative of his thought, that Coleridge should consider the question of "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" to be "the highest problem of philosophy, and not part of its nomenclature" (SM, 484). Compare Coleridge's remark in a letter to J. Gooden

"mere intellect cannot grasp the supersensuous," but "could not follow him in asserting that the supersensuous cannot be given in experience." For "the facts of his own conscious life told another tale: and the task still remained for him, of constructing a philosophy with which these facts were in harmony" (BL, I, xlii).

As Orsini points out, the "philosophy" which Coleridge developed attempted to solve this problem by referring the Antinomies to the Understanding rather than to the Reason, leaving him free to redefine Vernunft as a faculty of direct insight into the noumenal realm; and organ generative of Ideas which can "constitute" our experience.²⁹ Of course, in Kantian terms, this is "dogmatism," and Coleridge's redefinition of Kant's faculty psychology convinced Winkelmann, for one, that he "did not think the Critique of Pure Reason through to the end, but went his own way," and even that Coleridge "scarcely glanced at the Transcendental Dialectic."³⁰ And Orsini notes that the MS Logic "stopped short of the Dialectic," suggesting to him that Coleridge

of January 14, 1820, to the effect that "there neither are, have been, or ever will be but two essentially different Schools of Philosophy: the Platonic and the Aristotelean. To the latter, but with a somewhat nearer approach to the Platonic, Emanuel Kant belonged; to the former Bacon and Leibniz and in his riper and better years Berkeley--and to this I profess myself an adherent . . ." (Unpublished Letters of S.T. Coleridge, ed. E.L. Griggs [New Haven, 1933], II, 264-65).

²⁹Orsini, 138. This attitude is very much in keeping with a remark made by Coleridge in a letter of April 8, 1825, which cites the "main fault" of the first critique as an error in the title, "which to the manifold advantage of the work might be exchanged for 'An Inquisition respecting the Constitution and Limits of the Human Understanding'" (Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. E.H. Coleridge [Boston, 1895], II, 735). Note that Kant himself makes a similar observation in the Preface to the Critique of Judgment (C of J, 4).

³⁰Elisabeth Winkelmann, Coleridge und die Kantische Philosophie (Leipzig, 1933), 175, 246; my trans.

never acknowledged the complete force of Kant's denial of a constitutive basis for the Ideas of Reason (Orsini, 138).

But ultimately, the question of whether or not Coleridge's alteration of the Kantian scheme of faculties amounts to a confused or indifferent reading of the Dialectic is irrelevant, since however completely Kant might have destroyed traditional metaphysics, there was in Coleridge a "passion to believe"³¹ which was beyond the influence of the Antinomies. And perhaps it is at this point that a basic, rudimentary difference emerges, not just between Coleridge and Kant, but between poetry and philosophy in general. For in Kant, the force of the natural dialectic of Reason is so strongly felt and its consequences considered so inevitable, that he can only advise us to act "as if" the "sum of all appearances . . . had a single, highest and all sufficient ground beyond itself." For "it is in the light of this idea of a creative reason that we so guide the empirical employment of our reason as to secure its greatest possible extension--that is, by viewing all objects as if they drew their origin from such an archetype" (C of PR, 551).

It would appear, then, that the "faith" for which Kant has so laboriously "made room" (see above, pp. 5, 15) is faith only in "what it were best for us to believe," regardless of the existential status of the objects of these beliefs.³² Certainly, it is not the kind of

³¹"Religious Belief is an act, not of the understanding, but of the will. To become a believer--one must love the doctrines and must resolve with passion to believe" (Crabbe Robinson, Diary, &c., MS Dec. 20; cited Shawcross, BL, 236n.).

³²But see Commentary, 554, where Smith shows that "this argument does not do justice to the full force of his [Kant's] position."

"collective faith" which Coleridge described as "a total act of the whole moral being" (BL, I, 84); or that "faith in life endless" which Wordsworth called "the sustaining thought of human Being, Eternity, and God" (Prelude, XIV, 204-5).³³

If we inquire into the difference between the kind of faith Kant speaks of, and that practised by the Romantics, Coleridge supplies the answer when he identifies the "living sensorium" of his faith as the "heart" (BL, I, 84). Kant's philosophy, of course, could make no provision for this sort of criterion, since the "appetites" or "passions" are notoriously changeable, and as such can lay no claim to a priori validity. Consequently, they can play no part in a critique of pure Reason--even pure Reason in practise. But for the Romantics, emotion is intimately related to the degree and the kind of awareness which it is possible for us to achieve. And when Coleridge speaks of our capacity to transcend the passive influence of "outward forms," he introduces a variable which has no counterpart in the critical philosophy:

Joy, virtuous Lady! Joy that ne'er was given,
Save to the pure, and in their purest hour,

³³Whitehead speaks of "faith" in similar terms. Faith, he says, "cannot be justified by any inductive generalisation," but rather "springs from direct inspection of the nature of things as disclosed in our own immediate experience." "To experience this faith is to know that in being ourselves we are more than ourselves: to know that our experience, dim and fragmentary as it is, yet sounds the utmost depths of reality: to know that detached details merely in order to be themselves in a system of things: to know that this system includes the harmony of logical rationality: to know that, while the harmony of logic lies upon the universe as an iron necessity, the aesthetic harmony stands before it as a living ideal moulding the general flux in its broken progress towards finer, subtler issues (Science and the Modern World, 27-28).

acts not nor can exist
 Without Imagination, which, in truth,
 Is but another name for absolute power
 And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,
 And Reason in her most exalted mood
 (Prelude, XIV, 188-92).

This insistence on the "passions" as essential to metaphysical insight would, as I have said, have repulsed Kant, who believed that any inquiry into the limits of human thought must proceed dispassionately, and deal only with elements which are independent of experience. And in fact Wordsworth himself lived to doubt the stability of this delicate synthesis of thought and feeling which afforded him his most visionary insights, gravitating more and more towards a Kantian position, seeking for a "help and stay secure," and finding it, like Kant, in "the measures and the forms, / Which abstract intelligence supplies; / Whose kingdom is, where time and space are not."³⁶ And it is in this context that the relationship between the ethical theories of Kant and the Romantics can be most fruitfully explored.

³⁶"Resolution and Independence," 139; Works, II, 240; Excursion, IV, 74-76.

CHAPTER VIII

FROM "PRACTICAL REASON" TO THE ETHICS OF LOVE

In the famous passage in the Biographia Literaria where Coleridge speaks of how Kant "took possession of me as with a giant's hand," the poet specifies four works of Kant which he was always to read with "undiminished delight and increasing admiration" (I, 99). These works, here listed in Coleridge's order, were the Critique of Pure Reason (1781), the Critique of Judgment (1790), the Metaphysical Elements of Natural Philosophy (1786), and Religion Within the Bounds of Pure Reason (1793).

The omission from this list of either of Kant's ethical treatises is evidence not only of Coleridge's private reservations about their teachings, but suggestive more generally of the inimicality of Kant's ethical science to Romanticism as it developed in England. For whereas in Kant moral principles are weakened or invalidated by the influence of any emotive element, the English Romantics for the most part would have agreed with Shelley's conviction that "until the mind can love, and admire, and trust, and hope, and endure, reasoned principles of moral conduct are seeds cast upon the highway of life which the unconscious passenger tramples into dust, although they would bear the harvest of his happiness" (Preface to Prometheus Unbound, Works, II, 174-75).

But in spite of this fundamental difference between Kant and the Romantics on the source of "principles of moral conduct," it is perfectly

reasonable to regard Romanticism and Transcendental Idealism as complementary responses to naturalistic systems of ethics, systems which taught that "morality is determined by sentiment" and that virtue is "whatever mental action or quality gives to a spectator the pleasing sentiment of approbation; and vice the contrary" (Hume, 241). For although "love" is a felt quality, and as such would have to be regarded in Kantian terms as relating to the phenomenal self, the Romantics saw love as a sensus communis, as transcending self-interest, just as completely as any a priori postulate of pure Reason. Again, I quote from Shelley:

Thou demandest what is love? It is that powerful attraction towards all that we conceive, or fear, or hope beyond ourselves, when we find within our own thoughts the chasm of an insufficient void, and seek to awaken in all things that are, a community with what we experience within ourselves ("On Love," Works, VI, 201).

For Coleridge, the rigourousness of Kant's ethic was a result of the philosopher's inability to reconcile the phenomenal and noumenal selves, to escape his vision of man as a schizoid being:

A rational being [says Kant] must regard himself as intelligence . . . as belonging to the world of understanding and not to that of the senses. Thus he has two standpoints from which he can consider himself and recognize the laws of the employment of his powers and consequently of all his actions: first, as belonging to the world of sense, under laws of nature . . . and, second, as belonging to the intelligible world under laws which, independent of nature, are not empirical but founded only on reason (FMM, 107).

This is the basis of Coleridge's complaint, made in a marginal note in Tennemans' Geschichte der Philosophie, that the Kantians "separate the Reason from the Reason in the Will." Such a separation, however, he sees as unnecessary, because

Whether the object given in the Idea belongs to it in its own right as an Idea, or is superinduced by moral Faith, is really little more than a dispute in terms, depending on the Definition of Idea. . . . What more cogent proof (of the objective reality of the Ideas) can we have than that a man must contradict his whole human being in order to deny it? (Cited by Shawcross, BL, I, 246)

Thus Coleridge rejects Kant's "stoic principle," because it is "false, unnatural, and even immoral, where in his *Critik der Practischen Vernunft* he treats the affections as indifferent. . .". Surely, he argues, we cannot honestly hold that "a man who disliking, and without any feeling of love for, Virtue yet acted virtuously, because and only because it was his Duty, is more worthy of our esteem, than the man whose affections were aidant to, and congruous with, his Conscience" (Letters, IV, 791-92). Again and again, it is this disregard for the "affections" in Kant's thought, for the emotional side of our being that brings the poet into conflict with the philosopher. "We have hearts as well as Heads," states Coleridge. "We can will and act, as well as think, see, and feel":

Is there no communion between the intellectual and the moral? Are the distinctions of the Schools separates in Nature? Is there no Heart in the Head? No Head in the Heart? Is it not possible to find a practical Reason, a Light of Life, a focal power from the union or harmonious composition of all the Faculties? (IS, 126)

As is so often the case, Coleridge is seeking to probe beyond Kant's theory, in order to acknowledge the experience behind the theory. This is especially evident in his notes on Kant's Vermischte Schriften:

Away with Stoic Hypocrisy! I know that in order to [comprehend] the idea of Virtue we must suppose the pure good will or reverence for the Law as excellent in itself--but this very excellence supposes consequences, tho' not selfish ones. Let my maxim be capable of becoming

the Law of all intelligent Being--well! but this supposes an end possible by intelligent Beings. For if the Law be barren of all consequences, what is it but words? To obey the Law for its own sake is really a mere sophism in any other sense: you might as well put abracadabra in its place (ibid., 142).

Most of the references to Kant's ethics in the Notebooks follow this pattern. For example, after citing Kant's insistence that "It is not enough that we act in conformity to the Law of moral Reason--we must [act] likewise FOR THE SAKE of that law," Coleridge adds: ". . . but N.B. will not a pure will generate a feeling of Sympathy / Does even the sense of Duty rest satisfied with mere Actions, in the vulgar sense, does it not demand, & therefore may produce, Sympathy itself as an Action/?--This I think very important."¹

Had Blake ever read Kant's ethical treatises, doubtlessly he would have reacted to their stoicism at least as strongly and adversely as Coleridge. But Blake was hardly less antagonistic than Kant towards the contention that men are ultimately motivated by utility and self-interest, a position which he regarded as at worst blasphemous, and at best, a cover for malicious intentions:

Those who say that men are led by interest are knaves. A knavish character will often say, "of what interest is it to me to do so and so?" I answer, "of none at all, but the contrary, as you well know. It is of malice and envy that you have done this; hence I am aware of you, because I know that you act, not from interest, but from malice, even to your own destruction" ("A Descriptive Catalogue"; Writings, 572-73).

Contrary to the principles of naturalism, Blake held that "Moral Rectitude" must be sharply distinguished from "Opinions concerning historical

¹Notebooks, ed. Kathleen Coburn (New York, 1957-62), I, #1705 (Dec., 1803).

fact." Against Watson and Locke, he insisted that conscience was not merely our own judgment of the "turpitude" of our actions: "Conscience . . . is unequivocal. It is the voice of God. Our judgment of right & wrong is Reason" ("Annotations to Watson"; Writings, 384, 385).

Watson's remark that it is possible to conceive of murderers and thieves as following "the dictates of conscience" meets these vehement protestations from Blake:

Contemptible Falshood & Wickedness. Virtue & honesty, or the dictates of Conscience, are of no doubtful Signification to anyone. Opinion is one Thing. Principle another. No Man can change his Principles. Every Man changes his opinions. He who supposes that his Principles are to be changed is a Dissembler, who Disguises his Principles & calls that change (ibid., 386).

Of course, Kant held no patent on ethical absolutism, and it would be foolish to seize upon these comments as indicative of a profound community of thought between Romanticism and Transcendental Idealism. But at the same time, we know that Blake was not proposing, here, or anywhere else, to substitute one form of servitude for another. For Blake, no less than for Kant, the concept of "Moral Duty," or conscience, considered as "superimposed," is nothing but repression clothed in hypocritical wellmeaningness, because it is then reduced to self-interest:²

²And the same held for Coleridge: "TREMENDOUS as a Mexican god is a strong sense of duty--separate from an enlarged and discriminating mind, and gigantically disproportionate to the size of the understanding; and, if combined with obstinacy of self-opinion and indocility, it is the parent of tyranny, a promotor of inquisitorial persecution in public life, and of inconceivable misery in private families. Nay, the very virtue of the person, and ~~the~~ consciousness that it is sacrificing its own happiness, increases the obduracy, and selectes those whom it best loves for its objects" (Anima Poetae, ed. E.H. Coleridge [Boston,

to apply his "Copernican" twist to ethical science by making man self-legislating in the realm of moral behaviour. And it is this Kantian concept of duty as "sui generis" (Coleridge, SM, 459)--that is, not superimposed by an anthropomorphic "Nobodaddy" but arising from the conditions which define the humanity in us--Reason and Will--that increasingly suggests itself to Coleridge. As he says in the Aids to Reflection, the "ground-work of personal being" is "that which should, of itself, suffice to determine the will to a free obedience of the law, the law working therein by its own exceeding lawfulness" (Shedd, I, 286; my emphasis). And notwithstanding his firm rejection of Kant's "stoic principle," Coleridge held that it is "by virtue of its rationality" that the mind "comprehends the moral idea" and "gives to the idea causative power, as a will" (ibid., 296n; my ~~em~~ emphasis). And again, in the Statesman's Manual, Coleridge states that

The first man, on whom the light of an idea dawned, did in the same moment receive the spirit and credentials of a lawgiver; and as long as men shall exist, so long will the possession of that antecedent knowledge (the maker and master of all profitable experience) which exists only in the power of an idea, be the one lawful qualification of all dominion in the world of senses (ibid., 445; my emphasis).

The concept that man is self-legislating in the moral sphere, and that standards of conduct derive from "Reason, and her pure / Reflective acts to fix the moral law" (Prelude, III, 83-4) comes comparatively late in Wordsworth's development, and then, only because he had begun to feel "the weight of too much liberty." In the Preface to the Lyrical Ballads, Wordsworth describes the poet as "a man . . . endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be

common among mankind." He is "the rock of defence of human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love."

The poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time. The objects of the Poet's thoughts are everywhere; though the eyes and senses of man are, it is true, his favourite guides, yet he will follow wheresoever he can find an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings (58, 62).

But in the Eden-like setting of the first three stanzas of "Resolution and Independence," this rather idealistic view of the poet is somewhat mitigated, as he is now obviously seen as an observer of, and hardly a participator in nature's functions. Note the distinct passiveness in these end-stopped lines:

I was a Traveller then upon the moor;
I saw the hare that raced about with joy;
I heard the woods and distant waters roar;
Or heard them not, as happy as a boy . . .
(15-18; Works, II, 235).

There is even a sense in which nature's beauties have become no more than a source of escapism to the poet:

The pleasant season did my heart employ:
My old remembrances went from me wholly;
And all the ways of men, so vain and melancholy
(19-21).

And as the poet now lacks anything to "give," he finds himself unable to "receive," and, like Coleridge in his poem on Dejection of the same year, he finds himself sunk in despondency, overcome by an unknowable and unnamable grief. In his despair, he becomes aware that he had

spent his life with no abiding sense of responsibility, either to himself or to others, blindly trusting in the benevolence of nature, "As if all needful things would come unsought / To genial faith" (38-9). Consequently, he seeks for a "help and stay" which is more "secure" than that offered by the "passions and volitions": i.e., which transcends the vagaries and mutability of phenomenal self-interest.

Similarly, in the Prelude, Wordsworth speaks of how his early conviction that a "spirit strong / In hope, and trained to noble aspirations / . . . serves at once / For a way and guide" had to give way to, or at least be buttressed by the more "rational" belief

That 'mid the loud distractions of the world
A sovereign voice subsists within the soul,
Arbiter undisturbed of right and wrong,
Of life and death, in majesty severe
Enjoining, as may best promote the aims
Of truth and justice, either sacrifice,
From whatsoever region of our cares
Or our infirm affections Nature pleads,
Earnest and blind, against the stern decree
(X, 165-66, 169-70, 182-90).

The terms "a sovereign voice," "majesty severe," "sacrifice" and "stern decree" give this passage a distinctly Kantian tone. And although it is possible to regard this passage as expressing a belief in a "moral sense" akin to that of Shaftesbury, Wordsworth has already quite specifically identified the source of this "Arbiter undisturbed of right and wrong" as "Reason, and her pure³ / Reflective acts to fix the moral law / Deep in the conscience" (III, 83-85).

³This interesting use of the word "pure" should almost certainly be understood in the Kantian sense of "rein"; i.e., as completely a priori, signifying negatively what is independent of experience, and positively that which arises from Reason itself, characterized by universality and necessity.

But of all the references to the problems surrounding formal ethics in the Prelude, the most important occurs in Book XI, where Wordsworth tells of how, after considerable thought and soul-searching, he found it necessary to deny all moral schemes (including the Godwinian) which were based on empirical grounds--which attempted, that is, to derive an "ought" from an "is":

This was the crisis of that strong disease,
 This the soul's last and lowest ebb; I drooped,
 Deeming our blessed reason of least use
 Where wanted most: "The lordly attributes
 Of will and choice," I bitterly exclaimed,
 "What are they but a mockery of a Being
 Who hath in no concerns of his a test
 Of good and evil; knows not what to fear
 Or hope for, what to covet or to shun;
 And who, if those could be discerned, would yet
 Be little profited, would see, and ask
 Where is the obligation to enforce?
 And, to acknowledged law rebellious, still,
 As selfish passion urged, would act amiss;
 The dupe of folly, or the slave of crime"
(306-320).

Wordsworth is making a very important, and a very Kantian point here.

In effect, he is saying that even if we could discern what we ought to covet, and what we ought to shun, would we not still in the final result, as Hobbes insisted, be motivated primarily by "selfish passion"?

This is exactly the reasoning which convinced Kant of the necessity of discovering a principle of conduct which was both categorical and imperative, and although Wordsworth was capable at this point in his life of being saved by his sister's love, quite a different "correction" for the despondency of the Solitary (which was brought on by exactly the same line of reasoning--see esp. III, 209-24 and 977-end) is provided by the Wanderer, whose "eloquent harangue" of some 1,300 lines suggests

just how closely Wordsworth had moved towards Kant's ethical position by 1815.⁴

Primarily, the Wanderer's discourse is designed to bolster the Solitary's faith in human nature by persuading him that although "Possessions vanish, and opinions change, / And passions hold a fluctuating seat," still, support can be found in "the measures and the forms, / Which an abstract intelligence supplies; / Whose kingdom is, where time and space are not"; i.e. in the dictates of Pure Reason, or "Duty" (IV, 69-76; my emphasis). For enslaved as we are to the "domineering faculties of sense," and by

Idle temptations; open vanities,
Ephemeral offspring of the unblushing world;
And, in the private regions of the mind,
Ill-governed passions, ranklings of despite,
Immoderate wishes, pining discontent,
Distress and care . . . (ibid., 209-14),

what is left for us but "To seek / Those helps for his occasions ever near / Who lacks not will to use them" (214-16)? "Above all," adds the Wanderer in his most Kantian vein,

⁴In 1809, Wordsworth wrote a sonnet in praise of Kant's "stern" ethical system:

ALAS! what boots the long laborious quest
Of moral prudence, sought through good and ill;
Or pains abstruse--to elevate the will,
And lead us on to that transcendent rest
Where every passion shall the sway attest
Of Reason, seated on her sovereign hill;
What is it but a vain and curious skill,
If sapient Germany must lie deprest,
Beneath the brutal sword? . . .
(1-9; Works, III, 130).

the victory is most sure
 For him, who, seeking faith by virtue, strives
 To yield entire submission to the law
 Of conscience--conscience revered and obeyed,
 As God's most intimate presence in the soul,
 And his most perfect image in the world
 (222-27).

And again:

Access for you
 Is yet preserved to principles of truth,
 Which the imaginative Will upholds
 In seats of wisdom, not to be approached
 By the inferior Faculty that moulds,
 With her minute and speculative pains,
 Opinion, ever changing! (1126-32)

Thus, as Stallknecht says, "The Wordsworth of The Excursion is looking for aid, and like Kant he finds it in faith."⁵

If the "years that bring ^{the} philosophic mind" gave us the Discourse of the Wanderer, they also gave us the "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," and the "Ode to Duty," poems which were written while Wordsworth's poetic powers were still very strong,⁶ and which make an exciting and celebratory statement of what often seems so tired and prosaic in the Excursion. The general theme of the two poems is similar: a certain visionary power has been lost, and has been supplanted by a new

⁵"Wordsworth and Philosophy," PMLA, XLIV (1929), 1141.

⁶Moorman supplies good evidence that the "Ode to Duty" was written in early 1804, which would put it in the same short period which saw "the completion of the Ode: Intimations of Immortality, and the composition of the third, fourth, and fifth books of The Prelude" (William Wordsworth: A Biography [London, 1968], II, 1-2), making it predate such poems as "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," and "She Was a Phantom of Delight."

intellectual strength which emphasizes the part played by the creative will in spiritually and morally adjusting to a world where "joy" is no longer "its own security."

The "Ode to Duty," which "had its origins in conversations with Coleridge during the New Year stay [1804] at the cottage"⁷ provides an excellent example of how a basically Kantian concept was transformed to suit the Romantic temper. It begins with Kant's observation that the voice of duty is "STERN,"--commanding absolute respect, and not admitting of any exceptions. Further, it is a completely a priori "law," not derived from experience, but from pure Reason. As such, it is immutable and universal, therefore capable of freeing us from "empty terrors," "vain temptations," and "chance desires," offering instead the "confidence of reason" and promising "repose that ever is the same."⁸

Next, in stanzas two through five, Wordsworth draws the essential (for Kant) distinction between acting "in accordance with" duty, and acting "from" duty. But here, Wordsworth makes a significant departure from Kant, one which reflects Coleridge's criticisms of the stoicism of Kant's ethical position, and Wordsworth's own predilection for the more simple and fundamental passions of "humble" and "rustic" life:

Serene will be our days and bright,
And happy will our nature be,
When love is an unerring light,

⁷Moorman, op. cit., II, 2. Moorman's claim is borne out by the fact that Coleridge had taken up the Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals in December 1803, leaving numerous notes to record his reactions--some of which have echoes in the "Ode to Duty." See Orsini, 152, and below.

⁸Lines 1, 5, 6, 7, 38, 63, 40; Works, IV, 83-6. Compare Coleridge's late poem, "Duty Surviving Self-Love," Works, I, 459.

And joy its own security.
 And they a blissful course may hold
 Even now, who, not unwisely bold,
 Live in the spirit of this creed;
 Yet seek thy firm support, according to their need
 (17-24).

Of course, for Kant, an action has "moral import" only insofar as it is performed with a conscious submission to one's duty under the "ever-present consciousness of continuing demerit" (Commentary, lviii). But in this stanza, Wordsworth looks to duty only as a stop-gap, a temporary expedient to be called on only when we "tire" of "uncharted liberty" or when the "genial sense of youth" flags, a position which mollifies Kant's stoicism, but at the expense of sacrificing its validity as a Transcendental principle.

The fourth and final point I wish to make about the relation of Kant's moral system to the "Ode to Duty" is perhaps the most important, since it involves the essence of Kant's "Copernican revolution" as it applies to ethics. Kant, it will be recalled, stressed emphatically that blind obedience to some superimposed moral code, such as the Ten Commandments, is no mark of a moral nature, since the question still arises as to why we "ought" to follow the law of Moses. The moral law for Kant must arise from within, not as derived from experience, but as legislative for experience. Only on this assumption, he said, could the a priori nature of morality be established.

It is true, however, that Wordsworth often does give the Transcendental origin of morality a distinctly Deistic bearing: the old man in "Resolution and Independence" is first seen "Beside a pool bare to the eye of heaven"; his frame seemed bent with "A more than human weight";

his words were "above the reach / Of ordinary men," and his shelter and sustenance was found "with God's good help" (54, 70, 95=6, 104). And of course there is the very specific prayer of the last two lines:

"God," said I, "be my help and stay secure;
I'll think of the Leech-gatherer on the lone-
ly moor!" (139-40)

And in the "Ode to Duty," the moral law is called "the Voice of God," and it wears "The Godhead's most benignant Grace" (1, 50). But do these references to God signify that Wordsworth is formally petitioning for the aid of an "exterior moral authority" (Moorman, op. cit., II, 5) or of a moral code which is "imposed from above"⁹ as though he had suddenly come to see God as "up there" and man as "down here"? Or is his praise of God tantamount to praise of God's gifts in man? Is there reason, that is, to think that Wordsworth has succumbed, as is often thought, to an early middle age with its concomitant diseases of narrow and reactionary religious and political sectarianism, sanctioning the dominion of Blake's despised Rahab--the "System of Moral Virtue" (Jerusalem, pl. XXXIX, 10)--or is he, as in the Immortality Ode, celebrating a new stage of personal growth, and the discovery of a new kind of creative power which compensates for the loss of "vision" and eases and justifies the passage from Eden?

Answering this question involves raising the problem of Wordsworth's religion, which has always created difficulties for critics. As Havens says:

⁹Carl Woodring, Wordsworth (Boston, 1965), 83.

Any study of Wordsworth's religion must inevitably come to the conclusion that no formulation of his beliefs is possible. He was himself not clear about them; he did not follow up their implications or concern himself about possible inconsistencies. He felt differently at different times and expressed in his poetry the sincere feeling of the moment, which frequently was made up of vague aspiration and something approaching prayer or worship directed towards he knew not whom or what (Havens, I, 197).

Uncertain as Wordsworth's religious position was, an observation made by Crabbe Robinson in his diary for January third, 1815, is probably not too far from the mark. Wordsworth's religion, he said, is "like [that] of the German metaphysicians, a sentimental and metaphysical mysticism in which the language of Christianity is used" (cited Havens, I, 189). And for all his suspicions about generalizing Wordsworth's religious beliefs, at least Havens feels free to say that

It is doubtful if between 1793 and 1807 Wordsworth gave much thought to God as the creator or as one who exists apart from man and the world which man sees. Still less heed, presumably, did he pay to the God of the Old Testament or of the Anglican Church of his day, or to the orthodox creed (Havens, I, 198).

In a similar vein, Helen Darbishire, in the Introduction to her edition of Wordsworth's Poems in Two Volumes (Oxford, 1952), writes that

Morality for Wordsworth is not a code of rules imposed by the divine will on man. Rather it is the active co-operation of human imagination and human will with the divine order of the universe. There is perhaps no stranger case in literature of the sheltering power of reputation than the general acceptance of Wordsworth as a moralist of the Sunday-school order (xiv).

All the evidence of the "Ode to Duty" bears out Darbishire's position. First, there is the genuine celebratory tone of the poem, a tone which can only be attributed to the consciousness that our ability to follow duty a contre coeur is conclusive evidence that man is "destined to be

legislative in the realm of ends, free from all laws of nature and obedient only to those which he himself gives" (Kant, FMM, 323). And moreover, Wordsworth clearly recognizes that if his accedence to the moral law were not freely willed, but were rather an enforced and passive compliance with a superimposed moral code, then he has merely substituted one form of servitude for another.¹⁰ He specifically states that his submission is "Through no disturbance of my soul, / Or strong compunction in me wrought" (33-4); and that he would "feel past doubt / That my submissiveness was choice" (43-44). This adjuratory tone pervades the whole poem ("thee I would serve more strictly, if I may"; "I supplicate for thy control"; "I myself commend unto thy guidance"; "thy Bondman let me live," etc.), and is its most important single element, since it indicates that the moral position that Wordsworth is taking is essentially humanistic, centralizing the function of man's own creative will in determining the rules for his own conduct. As Margaret Sherwood says:

Kant's Categorical Imperative rests upon belief in the creative power of the human soul, in the ability of the individual to make his being, in thought and act, an integral part of the law of the universe. For both Kant and Wordsworth the answer to the riddle of the Sphinx lies in the will (Undercurrents of Influence, 200-201).

¹⁰Note that Coleridge emphasized this point in his notebook in December, 1803: "Reverence for the LAW of Reason . . . truly is a feeling, but says Kant it is a self-created, not a received passive Feeling-- . . . As an imposed Necessity it is Fear, or an Analogon of Fear; but as a Necessity imposed on us by our own Will it is a species of Inclination / & in this word, as in many others, Man's double Nature appears, as Man & God" (I, #1710). Compare SC, II, 106.

Near the end of the Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals, Kant says that to comprehend "how pure reason . . . can of itself be practical . . . all human reason is wholly incompetent, and all the pains and work of seeking an explanation of it are wasted." "It is just the same as if I sought to find out how freedom itself as causality of a will is possible; for, in so doing, I would leave the philosophical basis of explanation behind, and I have no other" (339).

It would be too much to claim for the relationship between Kant and the Romantics that this humble admission is meant to imply the existence of an alternative "basis of explanation," equally valid ~~as~~ the "philosophical," in which this apparently grudgingly accepted isolation of pure reason from practical reason, truth from value, freedom from determination, "the head from the heart" might be disclaimed. But such an "explanation" is precisely what is contained in the Romantic understanding of the Imagination as a "co-adunative" function of the soul, a function whose capacity to bridge the gap between the "real" world of existences and the "ideal" world of values finds its most eloquent and convincing testimony in products of art.

It follows that any attempt to demonstrate that Kantian or Kant-like ideas lie at the philosophical foundation of Romanticism must draw heavily on the acceptance of two points: that the Critique of Judgment was not merely an afterthought for Kant, but does indeed amount to what he said it did--"a means of combining the two parts of philosophy into a whole"--and second, that the Romantics' understanding of the genesis, the form, and the function of art, in its essential aspects, develops from and builds upon the revolutionary concept of mind as creative of

experience first established by Kant. The first of these contentions I have tried to demonstrate in Part One. To demonstrate the second is the purpose of the remainder of this study.

CHAPTER IX

THE CRITIQUE OF JUDGMENT AND ROMANTIC POETICS

Function: Art as Mediator Between Man and Nature

The rich and productive confluence of ideas linking Transcendental Idealism and English Romanticism has its most significant juncture in the aesthetic sphere, since for the philosopher and the poets alike, it is only through the capacity of art and natural beauty to "liberate" sensation from passive servility to "outward forms" that the polarized realms of man and nature are finally reconciled.

In Kant, as we have seen, this theoretical "polarization" of man and nature derives from our consciousness of nature on one hand as phenomenon: as finite and determined by natural laws; and of ourselves on the other hand as "free," self-determining members of a noumenal "kingdom of ends."¹

Now central to what Frye has called "The Romantic Myth," and corresponding to Kant's concept of the theoretical estrangement of man

¹Coleridge is alone amongst the Romantics in exploring the philosophical as well as mythological dimension of this division of the realms of man and nature. Like Kant, he saw that this division follows directly from the position that nature is "given" as phenomenal--"external" and determined; while man, insofar as he has "reflexion, freedom, and choice" (BL, II, 257) belongs (partly) to a noumenal order, and thus is not wholly determined by inclinations or natural laws. As he said in his Annotations to Schelling's *Philosophische Untersuchungen*: "All that we want to prove is the possibility of Free-Will, or, what is really the same, a Will. Now this Kant had unanswerably proved by showing the distinction between phaenomena and noumena, and by demonstrating that Time and Space are relevant to the former only . . . and irrelative to the latter, to which class the Will must belong" (Shedd, III, 698).

Of all the Romantics, Coleridge is the most specific regarding the capacity of art to "reconcile" the "two worlds" of man and nature. W.J. Bate, in fact, calls the whole theory of Imagination developed by Coleridge "essentially no more than a roundabout psychological justification for his conception of the mediating function of art,"⁴ and J.A. Appleyard calls this conception of art the "central principle of Coleridge's literary philosophy":

. . . the conception of imagination as the synthetic faculty, of the organic metaphor to express the mode of existence of artifacts, of the reconciliation of opposites or of multitude in unity as the paradigm of artistic marking, and of the symbol as the shape of the mind's non-discursive experience of the external--are all finally intelligible only in the context of the imaginative abridgement of reality by the mind that constitutes the essential activity of art.⁵

There are two key passages in Coleridge's prose which make this function especially clear. Both are well-known, but they do serve to bring this important aspect of his relation to Kantian thought into sharper focus. The first is from the manuscript "Semina Rerum":

Beauty too is spiritual, the shorthand hieroglyphic of Truth--the mediator between Truth and Feeling, the Head, and the Heart. The sense of Beauty is implicit knowledge--a silent communion of the Spirit with the Spirit in Nature, not without consciousness, though with the consciousness not successively employed (As cited in Muirhead, 195).

The second quotation is from the lecture of 1818 entitled "On Poesy or Art." It reads:

⁴"Coleridge on the Function of Art," in Perspectives of Criticism, ed. H. Levin (Cambridge, Mass., 1950), 125-26.

⁵Coleridge's Philosophy of Literature, 246.

Art, used collectively for painting, sculpture, architecture and music, is the mediatress between, and reconciler of, nature and man. It is, therefore, the power of humanizing nature, of infusing the thoughts and passions of man into every thing which is the object of his contemplation; color, form, motion, and sound, are the elements which it combines, and it stamps them into unity in the mould of a moral idea (BL, II, 253).

In this way, art, through its power to "superinduce upon, the forms themselves the moral reflexions to which they approximate, to make the external internal, the internal external, to make nature thought, and thought nature" becomes seen as a "middle quality between a thought and a thing" or a "union and reconciliation of that which is nature with that which is exclusively human" (*ibid.*, 258; 254-55).

Outside of Coleridge, the notion that beauty can "create a bower" for us where fact (the object observed) and moral value are reconciled is largely implicit in Romantic thought. In Shelley's Defence of Poetry, for example, the idea emerges as the identification of the aesthetic Imagination as "the great instrument of moral good" (148).⁶ It is, he says, for want of the "creative faculty" that all our knowledge of "what is wisest and best in morals" is allowed to "'wait upon I would, like the poor cat i' the adage'." Thus he asks:

To what but a cultivation of the mechanical arts in a degree disproportioned to the presence of the creative faculty, which is the basis of all knowledge, is to be attributed the abuse of all invention for abridging and combining labour, to the exasperation of the inequality of mankind? From what other cause has it arisen that these inventions which should have lightened, have added a weight on the curse imposed on Adam? Thus Poetry, and the principle of Self, of which money is the visible incarnation, are the God and Mammon of the world (134).

⁶In the Ecclesiastical Sonnets, Wordsworth also refers to the Imagination as "the mightiest lever / Known to the moral world" (I, xxxiv, 9-10; Works, III, 358).

Like Shelley, Wordsworth too saw a very close resemblance between morality and responsiveness to beauty. As he said in the famous letter to Lady Beaumont of May 21, 1807:

It is an awful truth, that there neither is, nor can be, any genuine enjoyment of Poetry among nineteen out of twenty of those persons who live, or wish to live, in the broad light of the world--among those who either are, or are striving to make themselves, people of consideration in society. This is a truth, and an awful one, because to be incapable of a feeling of Poetry in my sense of the word is to be without love of human nature and reverence for God.⁷

In "Tintern Abbey," the feelings aroused by the "beauteous forms" of nature are such

As have no slight or trivial influence
On ~~the~~ best portion of a good man's life,
His little, nameless, unremembered acts
Of kindness and of love
(31-5; Works, II, 260).

Similar sentiments abound in the Excursion. Here is an example from Book IV:

the Man--
Who . . . communes with the Forms
Of nature, who with understanding heart
Both knows and loves such objects as excite
No morbid passions, no inquietude,

⁷The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years, ed. E. De Selincourt (Oxford, 1937), I, 126. Compare this passage from MS 18a of the Prelude:

. . . can he
Who thus respects a mute insensate form,
Whose feelings do not need the gross appeal
Of tears and of articulate sounds, can he
Be wanting in his duties to mankind
Or slight the pleadings of a human heart?
(71-76, p. 613)

No Vengeance, and no hatred--needs must feel
 The joy of that pure principle of love
 So deeply, that, unsatisfied with aught
 Less pure and exquisite, he cannot choose
 But seek for objects of a kindred love
 In fellow-natures and a kindred joy (1207-17).⁸

Keats is less specifically moralistic than Wordsworth, but the notion that art projects, and is generated by an imaginative synthesis of "ideality" with the "visible world that we know" pervades his whole poetic output:⁹ compare the often-quoted "message" of the last lines of the "Ode on a Grecian Urn" with this statement from a letter to George and Tom Keats of December 21, 1817: ". . . the excellence of every Art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeables evaporative, from their being in close relationship with Beauty & Truth . . ." (Letters, I, 192); and this, from a later letter to the George Keatses: "I can never feel certain of any truth but from a clear perception of

⁸Compare Schiller: "What is man before beauty cajoles from him a delight in things for their own sake, or the serenity of form tempers the savagery of life? A monotonous round of ends, a constant vacillation of judgements; self-seeking, and yet without a Self; lawless, yet without Freedom; a slave, yet to no Rule. . . . He never sees others in himself, but only himself in others; and communal life, far from enlarging him into a representative of the species, only confines him ever more narrowly within his own individuality. In this state of sullen limitation he gropes his way through the darkness of his life until a kindly nature shifts the burden of matter from his beclouded senses, and he learns through reflection to distinguish himself from things, so that objects reveal themselves at last in the reflected light of consciousness" (Aesthetic Letters, 171, 173).

⁹Thorpe says that: "For Keats, the poet's realization of truth can come only through a harmonization of the whole realm of imaginative ideality with the visible world we know. The spirit of the imaginative world can be known and comprehended only through a vivid comprehension of this. The materials of the poetic imagination then are those of actuality as we know it, abstracted from its accidents of time and place, operated on by the poet's intellect as certain chemicals operate upon a mass of neutral matter, and, so, transformed into symbols of universal truth and life" (The Mind of John Keats, 101).

its Beauty" (ibid., II, 19).¹⁰

But in what sense, we must ask, can an object of any kind, which exists purely in space and in time, be said to "relate" to "Truth," conceived of as universal and eternal? That is, what specifically is it about the form and effect of beautiful things which allows us to consider them as forming a link between the purely objective and the purely subjective? And secondly, if it is true, as Coleridge says, that through art the internal becomes external and the external internal; that nature becomes thought and thought nature, what guarantee do we have of the permanence of art and the universality of its appeal?

For both Kant and the Romantics, the answer to the first of these questions is revealed partly in the sensually "liberating" effect on us of beauty in art and beauty and sublimity in nature, and partly by the unique, "free" conformity of imaginative and intellectual powers which define what Coleridge calls "the mystery of genius in the Fine Arts" (BL, II, 258). But since these topics are dealt with in detail in the remaining two sections of this study, I shall turn here briefly to the second question, that of the "objectivity" of the sense of beauty in Romantic thought.

As we saw in Part One, Kant solved the problem of the universality of aesthetic judgment by "Transcendentalizing" the sense of beauty

¹⁰Compare Akenside's lines:

Thus was Beauty sent from heaven,
The lovely ministress of Truth and Good
In this dark world; for Truth and Good are one,
And Beauty dwells in them and they in her,
With like participation
("The Pleasures of Imagination," I, 372-76;
Poetical Works, ed. Alexander Dyce [London,
1845], 16).

and the laws of artistic production in those faculties of mind which must be, he thought, presupposed for all experience. Now the Romantics, of course, did not feel the need for such a formal Transcendental "deduction" of the faculty of aesthetic judgment: for them, the reconciling power of beauty is an intuitive conviction, a deep-lying, and unquestionable fact of experience, "Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart"--the full emotive and cognitive significance of which we are invited to share through the medium of their art. Still, it would be wrong not to see the Romantics as thinking along the same lines as Kant, a fact which can be substantiated by comparing their respective attitudes towards the most influential eighteenth-century psychological treatise on aesthetics, Burke's Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (1756). In Kant's opinion, Burke's attempt to supply a physiology of the aesthetic response was largely inconsequential for philosophy, since at best it might lead to generalizations regarding how people do judge art, never to how they ought to judge. Such an empirical critique can never lead us beyond ourselves; it would be valid, says Kant, "merely egoistically," just as the sceptic desires (C of J, 119). And it was precisely for this reason that Coleridge judged the Enquiry "a poor thing";¹¹ and Wordsworth as "little better than a tissue of trifles."¹² And Blake denounced the work outright as "founded on the Opinions of Newton & Locke":

¹¹Table Talk, 54 (July 12, 1827).

¹²E.A. Shearer, "Wordsworth and Coleridge Marginalia in a copy of Richard Payne Knight's Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste," Huntington Library Quarterly, I (October, 1937), 77.

I read Burke's Treatise [says Blake] when very Young; at the same time I read Locke on Human Understanding & Bacon's Advancement of Learning; on Every one of these Books I wrote my Opinions, & on looking them over find that my Notes on Reynolds in this Book [Reynold's Discourses] are exactly similar. I felt the Same Contempt & Abhorrence then that I do now. They mock Inspiration and Vision. Inspiration & Vision was then, & now is, & I hope will always Remain, my Element, my Eternal Dwelling place; how can I then hear it Contemned without returning Scorn for Scorn? ("Annotations to Reynolds," Writings, 476-77)

Since, then, both Kant and the Romantics agreed that the sense of beauty cannot be derived from experience, it follows for both that it must be, at least partly, "superinduced" upon experience by the active intelligence. And this is precisely what Coleridge has in mind when he says that the principles of taste have a "foundation" in the "noblest faculties of the human mind," that they are "inborn and constitutive":¹³

For it is self-evident, that whatever may be judged of differently by different persons, in the very same degree of moral and intellectual cultivation, extolled by one and condemned by another, without any error being assignable to either, can never be an object of general principles: and vice versa, that whatever can be brought to the test of general principles presupposes a distinct origin from these pleasures and tastes, which . . . are made to depend on local and transitory fashions, accidental associations, and the peculiarities of individual temperament (BL, II, 235-36).¹⁴

¹³Coleridge's opinion that "The Beautiful arises from the perceived harmony of an object . . . with the inborn and constitutive rules of the judgement and imagination" (BL, II, 243) is one of Schiller's central tenets. As he says in the Aesthetic Letters, ". . . before any weight can be attached to . . . [the evidence of experience], it would first have to be established beyond all doubt that the beauty of which we are speaking, and the beauty against which those examples from history testify, are one and the same. But this seems to presuppose a concept of beauty derived from a source other than experience, since by means of it we are to decide whether that which in experience we call beautiful is justly entitled to the name. . . .

"This pure rational concept of Beauty, if such could be found, would therefore--since it cannot be derived from any actual case, but rather itself corrects and regulates our judgement of every actual case--have to be discovered by a process of abstraction, and deduced from the sheer potentialities of our sensuo-rational nature" (69, my emphasis).

¹⁴Elsewhere, Coleridge wrote: "The principles (as it were the skeleton) of Beauty rests on a priori Laws no less than Logic. The Kind

Wordsworth makes the same point, although less discursively, when he says that just as we all possess "Reason," "Imagination," "freedom in the will," and "conscience to guide and check," so it is given to each of us to perceive, and respond equally to the beautiful forms of nature:

The sun is fixed,
And the infinite magnificence of heaven
Fixed, within reach of every human eye;
The sleepless ocean murmurs for all ears;
The vernal field infuses fresh delight
Into all hearts. Throughout the world of sense,
Even as an object is sublime or fair,
The object is laid open to the view
Without reserve or veil; and as a power
Is salutary, or an influence sweet,
Are each and all enabled to perceive
That power, that influence, by impartial law
(Excursion, IX, 209-20; my emphasis).

At first, there seems nothing uniquely "Kantian" in this passage: the doctrine of an innate and communally shared aesthetic sense was commonplace in eighteenth-century aesthetics.¹⁵ But whereas Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Burke et al attempted to found their aesthetic on an empirical science of "feeling," or on the "motions of the soul," it is of utmost importance to note that Wordsworth, like Kant, has here Transcendentalized" the aesthetics of sentiment by grounding the sense of beauty

is constituted by Laws inherent in the Reason; it is the degree, that which enriches the formalis into the formosum, that calls in the aid of the senses. And even this, the sensuous and sensual ingredient, must be an analogon to the former" (MS, cited in Muirhead, 205n.).

¹⁵Hutcheson is typical here: ". . . how suitable it is to the sagacious Bounty which we suppose in the DEITY, to constitute our internal Senses in the manner in which they are; by which Pleasure is join'd to the Contemplation of those Objects which a finite Mind can best imprint and retain the Ideas of with the least Distraction" (An Enquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue [1725], cited in E.F. Carritt, Philosophies of Beauty [Oxford, 1962], 73).

on the mandate of "impartial law." A similar use of the word "law" by Wordsworth has already been considered in the context of the "Ode to Duty" (see above, p. 132), where it was seen to denote a fiat which is "external," in the sense of being prior to, or at least not derived from experience--in Kant's words, a principle which is "synthetic" yet a priori. And the word "impartial" of course gives added emphasis to the view that for Wordsworth, as for Kant, beauty is not completely derived from experience a posteriori, but is at least partly projected into experience in accordance with necessary laws of creative intelligence, and that it is therefore a "necessary part of our existence" and our "natural and inalienable inheritance" (P to LB, 60).

The "Liberation of the Sensuous": The Effect of
Beauty and Sublimity in Romantic Poetics

In the preceding section I attempted to show agreement between the aesthetics of Transcendental Idealism and Romanticism on two essential points: first, that art serves somehow to mediate between man and nature; and second, that the quality of our response to art is determined at least partly by principles and laws which we ourselves "superinduce" upon our experience. The first point demonstrates the centrality of art for both poet and philosopher; and the second assures us that both regarded themselves as dealing with a Transcendental, not merely a psychological question.

Having established the mutual attitudes of Kant and the Romantics towards the central importance of the aesthetic order in human culture, it is possible now to compare the grounds upon which they attributed to art and natural beauty the capacity to mediate between fact and value,

grounds which Ransom recognizes as forming a "common understanding of poetry" between the poets and the philosopher. He describes this "understanding" as follows:

Poetry is the representation of natural beauty. The spectacular faculty of the Imagination is its agent. Kant calls it the faculty of presentation; and says it is equivalent in the poet to Genius. The play between the understanding¹⁶ with its moral Universal on the one hand, and on the other hand Imagination presenting the purposive Concrete of nature, is unpredictable and inexhaustible. Coleridge, at least by the time of the Biographia Literaria, made a sort of official English version of Kant's view, and all critics are familiar with it (op. cit., 171; my emphasis).

This passage raises a great number of interesting issues, but the one I wish to center on here is the notion, rightly attributed to Kant, that in the judging of art the cognitive faculties are in a state of free "play," a concept which Kant frequently refers to throughout the Critique of Judgment¹⁷ to distinguish the formal, conceptual, and end-oriented nature of ordinary discursive thinking from the free, non-purposive characteristic of the aesthetic judgment. And this distinction, as we saw in Part One, is crucially important for Kant on two grounds: first, since the aesthetic response is one of disinterested, or immediate pleasure, feeling is brought into the Transcendental

¹⁶Ransom errs in attributing the "moral Universal" to "the understanding" rather than to the faculty of Reason, since Verstand in Kant is conversant only with phenomena. But his main point, that art for Kant is a representation of the "play" between the real and ideal is correct, and in fact forms the basis of Ransom's own thinking about literature. See Handy, Kant and the Southern New Critics, 8-10; and compare Murray Krieger: "We could go on with other critics in this group [the "New Critics"], showing how each of them comes to his theory by opposing the act of poetic creation to the act of cognition and of practical choice. The Kantian triad of faculties . . . is evidently at the root of all these theories" (The New Apologists for Poetry [Bloomington, Illinois, 1963], 91).

¹⁷See esp. pp. 34, 52, 58, 75, 77, 109, 129, 157, 161, and 171.

philosophy in the Critique of Judgment, and is shown to occupy a central position between knowledge and desire, or theoretical and practical reason; and second, because only so far as the Imagination can be regarded as able to enter into free conformity with the understanding, "without the aid of concepts," is it possible, within the limits of the Transcendental philosophy, to consider the mind as capable of the kind of creative activity necessary to render the "Ideas of Reason" susceptible to images of sense. And it is my purpose, in the remainder of this chapter, to demonstrate that both of these notions are woven very deeply into the fabric of Romanticism, and that they posit there what amounts to the most significant role claimed for the artist since the Renaissance.

Beauty as a source of "immediate" pleasure

In his Defence of Poetry, Shelley describes "the end of social corruption" as the destruction of "all sensibility to pleasure" (123-24). Against this tide of repression stands the poet, producing and preserving pleasure in the "highest sense"; that is, not the pleasure which derives from "banishing the importunity of the wants of our animal nature, the surrounding men with security of life, the dispersing the grosser delusions of superstition, and the conciliating such a degree of mutual forbearance among man as may consist with the motives of personal advantage" (132)--but "aesthetic" pleasure, pleasure which is its own judge and justification, pleasure which is eternal--"a joy forever"--because it is not dependent on the vicissitudes of present need or desire.

There is, of course, a wide gulf separating Shelley's Defence of Poetry from Kant's Critique of Judgment. But in distinguishing so clearly between pleasure of utility and pleasure which is "disinterested"--

pleasure which is intermediate and pleasure which is immediate--and by specifying the propagation of the latter as the exclusive province of art, Shelley expresses one of the most important assumptions linking Transcendental Idealism and Romantic literature. For Kant saw that if aesthetic pleasure were merely "pathological" or "intellectual," it would not differ from the delight we take in what is merely "pleasant," or in the "good" (C of J, 58). Hence, the whole strategy of the Critique of Judgment--to show that there are a priori factors governing the operation of the aesthetic function--would be lost, with the result that there would be no grounds for attributing to humanity the capacity to pass from mere dependence upon sense to that "fellowship with essence" which poet and philosopher alike regarded as expressive of man's most fully released potential.¹⁸ Thus Wordsworth says that "The Poet writes under one restriction only, namely, that of the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a human Being possessed of that information which may be expected from him, not as a lawyer, a physician, a mariner, an astronomer or a natural philosopher, but as a Man." Aside from this "one restriction," Wordsworth adds, there is "no object standing between the Poet and the image of things; between this, and the Biographer and Historian there are a thousand" (P to LB, 60; my emphasis).¹⁹ And like Kant and Shelley, Wordsworth specifically denies that this "necessity of producing immediate pleasure" is a "degradation of the Poet's art,"

¹⁸The idea that utility plays no part in aesthetic judgments had already been proposed by Burke (who in this respect broke from Shaftesbury, Hogarth, Blair and others); but Kant was the first to see that the immediacy of aesthetic pleasure assures its permanence and universality, a conclusion which follows from his Transcendental method. See C of AJ, 250-51.

¹⁹See W.J.B. Owen, Wordsworth as Critic (Toronto, 1969), 77n.

since (as Kant showed) pleasure is gratuitous only insofar as it is bound up with merely subjective elements, whereas aesthetic pleasure, because it is determined by a priori factors, is universal, and an essential aspect of the human birthright.²⁰ Thus for Wordsworth poetry is "a homage paid to the native and naked dignity of man, to the grand elementary principle of pleasure, by which he knows, and feels, and lives, and moves." And aesthetic pleasure is a "necessary part of our existence, our natural and inalienable inheritance," while the pleasure taken in the accumulation of knowledge is "a personal and individual acquisition, slow to come to us, and by no habitual and direct sympathy connecting us with our fellow-beings" (P to LB, 60-61).

This, of course, is the same basis on which Coleridge, who in 1797 had symbolized artistic creativity as the building of a "pleasure-dome,"²¹ sought to distinguish judgments of the beautiful:

The sense of beauty subsists in simultaneous intuition of the relation of parts, each to each, and of all to a whole: exciting an immediate and absolute complacency, without intervenence, therefore, of any interest, sensual or intellectual. The BEAUTIFUL is thus at once distinguished from both the AGREEABLE, which is beneath it, and from the GOOD, which is above it: for both these have an interest necessarily attached to them: both act on the WILL, and excite a desire for the actual existence of the image or idea contemplated: while the sense of beauty rests gratified in the mere contemplation or intuition, regardless whether it be a fictitious Apollo, or a real Antinous (BL, II, 239).

²⁰Since Kant's purpose is merely to establish the pure (a priori) possibility of aesthetic experiences, he does not pursue the social or psychological implications of this position. But near the end of the "Critique of Aesthetic Judgment," he does say that all "free play of sensations (that have no design at their basis) gratifies, because it furthers the feelings of health," and that such gratification allows us to "reach the body through the soul and use the latter as the physician of the former" (C of J, 176, 177).

²¹"Kubla Khan," 2. See also lines 31, 36, and 46.

And in the Biographia, Coleridge speaks of the "sudden charm"²² of beauty; of how the reader of poetry must feel as if "carried forward, not merely or chiefly by the mechanical impulse of curiosity, or by a restless desire to arrive at the final solution; but by the pleasurable activity of mind excited by the attractions of the journey itself" (ibid., II, 11).²³

Elsewhere, Coleridge uses the same criterion to distinguish between the realms of artistic and scientific discourse: "The common essence of all [the fine arts] consists in the excitement of emotion for the immediate purpose of pleasure through the medium of beauty; herein contra-distinguishing poetry from science, the immediate object and primary purpose of which is truth and possible utility" (ibid., 221). Significantly, Coleridge later asks us to direct our attention to "the full force of the word 'immediate'" in this definition (ibid., 224), since if the pleasure we take in the beautiful is to be considered universal, beauty must be distinguished from those "objects of mere desire" which "constitute an interest . . . and which is therefore valued only as the means to the end" (ibid.)

²²BL, II, 5. Compare Keats's observation that "the simple imaginative Mind may have its rewards in the repetition of its own silent Working coming continually on the spirit with a fine suddenness. . . . (Letters, I, 185). And describing the visitation of "Intellectual Beauty," Shelley says "Sudden, thy shadow fell on me . . ." ("Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," 59; Works, II, 59).

²³This is what Coleridge means when he says that "pleasure is the magic circle out of which the poet must not dare to tread" (SC, II, 43). Although Elizabeth Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby, in the Introduction to their edition of Schiller's Aesthetic Letters say that there is "no . . . evidence that Coleridge read Schiller's treatise" (cliv), it should be noted that the term "magic circle" is a literal translation of Schiller's "Zauberkreise": "The psyche of the listener or spectator must remain completely free and inviolate; it must go forth from the magic circle of the artist pure and perfect as it came from the hands of the Creator" (157).

"Negative capability."--Kant's notion that aesthetic pleasure is not derived from concepts but is "immediate" and "disinterested" raises no problem in the case of what he calls "natural beauty," since, in his words, "Hardly anyone but a botanist knows what sort of a thing a flower ought to be" (C of J, 65). But in the case of works of art, especially the more complex forms such as drama, the question arises as to how our consciousness of such objects as art, that is, as at a remove from "reality," does not preclude that free play of the faculties upon which rests the very claim of taste to mediate between image and Idea.

Kant does not attempt to answer this question directly, since for him it would not be a philosophical, but a psychological matter. But Coleridge grasped the significance of the problem, and his treatment of it provides one of the most interesting examples of how an idea which is only germinal in the Transcendental philosophy took root and flowered in Romantic thought. Granting, he says, that we are always conscious of, say, a painting or a play, as removed from reality, this awareness itself will not constitute an interest so long as we are capable of meeting this object half-way, through an act of will--through a "willing suspension of disbelief" (BL, II, 6). That is, we must be willing to practise, for the moment, that "negative faith,"²⁴ which simply permits the images presented to work by their own force, without either denial

²⁴Compare the terms "negative belief" and "negative reality" in SC, I, 179, 116. Keat's phrase "Negative Capability" naturally comes to mind here (Letters, I, 193). Ransom says that although "Negative Capability . . . is not a Kantian phrase," it "sounds like one, and might have been one if Kant . . . had elaborated his views further than he did" ("The Concrete Universal . . .", 182).

or affirmation of their real existence by the judgment . . ." (ibid., 107; see also 187).²⁵

On this principle, Coleridge builds a theory of dramatic "illusion" which is designed to counter Johnson's notion that the dramatist must aim at perfect "delusion" (SC, I, 115-16). This distinction must be maintained, says Coleridge, for an "interest" is clearly involved in the perception of the former, while with the latter, we are merely "brought up to this point" of utter delusion only "as far as it is requisite or desirable, gradually, by the art of the poet and the actors; and with the consent and positive aidance of our own will. We choose to be deceived" (ibid., 116).²⁶ Elsewhere, in a note prepared for a lecture on this subject, Coleridge refers to this distinction between "copy" or "delusion," and "imitation" or "illusion" as "the universal principle of the fine arts":

In every well-laid out grounds, what delight do we feel from that balance and antithesis of feelings and thought. "How natural!" we say; but the very wonder that furnished the how implies that we perceived art at the same moment. We catch the hint from nature itself. Whenever in mountains or cataracts we discover a likeness to anything artificial which we yet

²⁵Edward Bullough, in his famous essay "'Psychical Distance' as a Factor in Art and an Aesthetic Principle," defines "negative capability" in terms of the "distancing-power of the individual." Like Coleridge, he regards the "anti-realistic nature" of art as its "general characteristic": "'Art is an imitation of nature,' was the current art-conception in the eighteenth century. It is the fundamental axiom of the standard work of that time upon aesthetic theory . . . Though it may be assumed that since the time of Kant and of the Romanticists this notion has died out, it still lives in unsophisticated minds" (in Art and Philosophy, ed. W.E. Kennick [New York, 1964], 539, 543-44). Compare Ransom, The World's Body (New York, 1938), 131.

²⁶Compare Bullough's statement that "What is . . . both in appreciation and production, most desirable is the utmost decrease of [psychic] Distance without its disappearance" (op. cit., 539).

know was not artificial, what pleasure! So in appearances known to be artificial that appear natural. This applies in due degrees regulated by steady good sense, from a clump of trees to the Paradise Lost or the Othello (SC, I, 181).²⁷

It would be difficult to find a passage in Coleridge more suggestive of the congeniality of Kantian Transcendentalism to his own unique temperament, and by implication to the Romantic temperament generally. The central notion here probably derives from Kant's observation that "Nature is beautiful because it looks like art, and art can only be called beautiful if we are conscious of it as art while yet it looks like nature" (C of J, 149). But what is far more important here is Coleridge's clear recognition that he is not dealing with a merely subjective principle, but with a "principle . . . common to all," because it is a priori--"the condition of all consciousness, without which we should feel and imagine only by discontinuous moments, and be plants or animals instead of men."²⁸

²⁷Compare Coleridge's notes on the difference between a landscape by Claude and a theatrical forest-scene, in SC, I, 176-79, and these comments from a newspaper report of a lecture given by Coleridge in 1818: "The end of dramatic poetry is not to present a copy, but an imitation of real life. Copy is imperfect if the resemblance be not, in every circumstance, exact; but an imitation essentially implies some difference. The mind of the spectator, or the reader, therefore, is not to be deceived into any idea of reality, . . . neither . . . is it to retain a perfect consciousness of the falsehood of the presentation. There is a state of mind between the two, which may be properly called illusion, in which the comparative powers of the mind are completely suspended; as in a dream, the judgment is neither beguiled, nor conscious of the fraud, but remains passive. Whatever disturbs this repose of the judgment by its harshness, abruptness, and improbability, offends against dramatic propriety" (ibid., II, 258).

²⁸SC, I, 181. Like Coleridge, Schiller finds in our ability to distinguish between "copy" and "imitation" (Schein) nothing less than the mark of "a genuine enlargement of humanity and a decisive step towards culture." For, "To strive after autonomous semblance demands higher powers of abstraction, greater freedom of heart, more energy of will,

I mean that ever-varying balance, or balancing, of images, notions, or feelings . . . conceived as in opposition to each other; in short, the perception of identity and contrariety, the least degree of which constitutes likeness, the greatest absolute difference; but the infinite gradations between these two form all the play and all the interest of our intellectual and moral being, till it lead us to a feeling and an object more awful than it seems to me compatible with even the present subject to utter aloud . . . (SC, 181-82).

Whether these ideas are Coleridge's or Schelling's²⁹ is unimportant.

What counts is that Coleridge made them his own, and that they derive ultimately from Kant's programme to ground the sense of beauty in Transcendental principles, to remove beauty from the realm of egocentric and contingent sentiments and make it "a necessary condition of the Human Being" (Schiller, Aesthetic Letters, 69-71).

"Purposiveness without purpose": art as living organism.--In the previous section, we saw that Kant's view of aesthetic pleasure as "immediate" and "disinterested" led him to the belief that some sort of analogy must apply between art and nature, both in the forms and psychological effects of the objects involved; an analogy which he expresses in the famous formula, "Nature is beautiful because it looks like art, and art can only be called beautiful if we are conscious of it as art while yet it looks like nature" (C of J, 149).³⁰ In other words, while

than man ever needs when he confines himself to reality; and he must already have left this reality behind if he would arrive at that kind of semblance. . . . Chained as he is to the material world, man subordinates semblance to ends of his own long before he allows it autonomous existence in the ideal realm of art. . . . Wherever, then, we find traces of a disinterested and unconditional appreciation of pure semblance, we may infer that a revolution of this order has taken place in his nature, and that he has started to become truly human" (Aesthetic Letters, 205). Compare Schopenhauer, The World as Will and Representation, trans. E.F.J. Payne (New York, 1966), I, 195-200. See also Suzanne Langer, Feeling and Form, Chapter Four.

²⁹See Raysor's note on this passage, SC, I, 181.

³⁰Wellek sees in Kant's aesthetic the first formal statement of the organic theory of art, a theory which "point[s] to a final overcoming of

an object of art is clearly the result of "a will that places reason at the basis of its actions" (ibid., 145), the artist's engagement with rules, like his intentions (to please and instruct, clarify or confuse, charm or frighten, goad to action or put at rest) must never obtrude: the rules of his art must never be "painfully apparent"³¹--there must be "no trace of the rules having been before the eyes of the artist and having fettered his mental powers" (ibid., 150). For otherwise our attempts to suspend our disbelief will be stifled, and the object could not become a source of "immediate pleasure."

Now this concept of a work of art as a natural organism, as an object which is "purposive" without revealing any purpose, as made without giving the appearance of being made, as designed without having "a palpable design on us" becomes, of course, one of the most seminal principles of Coleridge's criticism, where its viability as both a descriptive and prescriptive criterion is firmly established.

But in adopting the principle of organicism, Coleridge makes one characteristic divergence from the purely Kantian position, a divergence which is fundamental, but which does not undermine the Transcendental foundation which Kant showed gave the principle universal validity.

To understand this divergence, it is necessary first to understand the difference between Kant's and Coleridge's view of the "purposiveness" of nature. Now in reading the Critique of Judgment, Coleridge would

the deep dualism which is basic to Kant's philosophy." He explains the analogy between art and nature in Kant this way: "The work of art is a parallel to an organism, not only in a metaphorical sense which compares the unity of a work of art to that of an organism, but because both art and organic nature must be conceived of under the terms of 'purposeless purposiveness'" (A History of Modern Criticism, I, 230-31).

³¹"Ohne Peinlichkeit"--without duress, or signs of excessive strain.

have found support for one of his most cherished notions: that the "purposiveness" that men ascribe to nature is necessary to the support of our whole moral and religious thought-structures. "There is a need," Kant writes,

to assume a morally legislating Being outside the world, without any reference to theoretical proofs, still less to self-interest, from pure moral grounds free from all foreign influence. . . . In addition, we feel ourselves constrained by the moral law to strive for a universal highest purpose which yet we, in common with the rest of nature, are incapable of attaining, and it is only so far as we strive for it that we can judge ourselves to be in harmony with the final purpose of an intelligent world cause (if such there be) (C of J, 297).

But according to Kant, purposiveness in nature is only a "regulative," not a "constitutive" notion, since any reference to final purpose must refer to "something supersensible." For "the purpose of the existence of nature must itself be sought beyond nature" (*ibid.*, 225). Thus when Kant identifies "man" as "the final purpose of nature,"³² he is only speaking of how we should judge the operation of nature, as it relates to our best (moral) interests. Teleology only proves, then, that according to the constitution of our cognitive faculties and in the consequent combination of experience with the highest principles of reason, we can form absolutely no concept of the possibility of such a world as this save by thinking a designedly working supreme cause thereof (*ibid.*, 246-7).

Now Coleridge would have agreed with Kant that "without men the whole creation would be a mere waste, in vain, without final purpose" (*ibid.*, 293). But he could never have conceded that such a proposition is merely a "regulative concept for the reflective judgment" (*ibid.*, 222);³³ nor, according to his own premises, was he obliged to, since he

³²*Ibid.*, 286; c/f 225, 276, 279, 280-81, 285, 293-94, 300.

³³Coleridge does see, however, that some such principle underlies all scientific investigation (a position which, as S. Körner points out,

never accepted the strictures of the Transcendental Dialectic (see above, pp. 114-16). Knowledge of final purpose, like knowledge of God and freedom of the will, is for Coleridge a matter of "intuitive conviction":

Look round you, and you behold everywhere an adaptation of means to ends. Meditate on the nature of a being whose ideas are creative, and consequently more real, more substantial than the things that, at the height of their creaturely state, are but their dim reflexes; and the intuitive conviction will arise that in such a being there could exist no motive to the creation of a machine for its own sake; that, therefore, the material world must have been made for the sake of man, at once the high-priest and representative of the Creator, as far as he partakes of that reason in which the essences of all things co-exist in all their distinctions yet as one and indivisible (Friend, 466):

As a consequence of this extension of the strict Transcendentalist position, Coleridge is much more specific about the nature of beauty than Kant. He speaks of beauty, that is, as an objective quality, since its principles correspond to those which comprise "the most comprehensive formula to which life is reducible";³⁴ an abiding dialectic of form and free energy, of unification and individuation, the chasm and the

is not necessarily threatened by the advance since Darwin of mechanistic explanation--see Kant [London, 1964], 207-17). As he says in the Friend, each scientist "admits a teleological ground in physics and physiology; that is, the presumption of a something analogous to the causality of the human will, by which, without assigning to nature, as nature, a conscious purpose, he may yet distinguish her agency from a blind and lifeless mechanism. Even he admits its use, and, in many instances, its necessity, as a regulative principle; as a ground of anticipation, for the guidance of his judgment and for the direction of his observation and experiment" (45051).

³⁴"Theory of Life," Shedd, I, 386. Abrams describes Goethe's relation to Kant in similar terms: ". . . to Goethe . . . it proved irresistible to make such a purely internal teleology a constitutive element in living nature, and then to go beyond Kant and identify completely the unconsciously purposeful process and product of "nature" in the mind of genius with the unconsciously purposeful growth, and the complex inter-adaptations of means to ends, in a natural organism" (Mirror and the Lamp, 208). For my application of the organic theory to the actual creative process, see below, pp. 188-90.

river, the force and the green fuse. "Life," says Coleridge, must be considered as

the copula, or the unity of thesis and antithesis, position and counter-position,--Life itself being the positive of both; as, on the other hand, the two counterpoints are the necessary condition of the manifestations of Life. These, by the same necessity, unite in a synthesis; which again, by the law of dualism, essential to all actual existence, expands, or produces itself, from the point into the line, in order again to converge, as the initiation of the same productive process in some intenser form of reality. Thus, in the identity of the two counter-powers, Life subsists; in their strife it consists: and in their reconciliation it at once dies and is born again into a new form, either falling back into the life of the whole, or starting anew in the process of individuation (ibid., 392).

This definition of life is, as others have pointed out, "essentially the same as Coleridge's definition of beauty and of the poetic imagination," and so it is inevitable that "the account of individuation in its highest degree is also Coleridge's account in other contexts of ideal aesthetic and poetic structure."³⁵ For example, in the "Principles of Genial Criticism," the beautiful is defined as "that in which the many, still seen as many, becomes one": as "Multeity in Unity" (BL, II, 232), and he offers Raphael's sensuous fresco "Galatea" as an example of this formula. The circular arrangement, effected by the placement of the four cherubs is clearly, as Coleridge says, "perceived at first sight" (ibid., 234-35). But unlike many of Raphael's earlier frescoes (the "School of Athens," for example), there is a powerful tension here between the manner and the matter, caught in the taut strings of the cherubs' bows, and the straining of the dolphins to break their reins, which is balanced on

³⁵R.H. Fogle, The Idea of Coleridge's Criticism (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1962), 24. c/f Gordon McKenzie, Organic Unity in Coleridge (Berkeley, 1939); and Abrams, op. cit., 218-225.

the left by the rearing stallion. In this "balance" Coleridge finds

the perfect reconciliation, effected between these two conflicting principles of the FREE LIFE, and of the confining FORM! How entirely is the stiffness that would have resulted from the obvious regularity of the latter, fused and . . . almost volatized by the interpenetration and electrical flashes of the former (*ibid.*, 235).

The viability of the concept of organic unity as a critical principle is now clear. For just so far as a work of art achieves the ideal of a reconciliation of matter and manner, image and idea, form and free energy, purpose and material, does it make nature thinkable and thought natural--that is, does it become an "imitation" in the truest sense--not of nature, but of beauty in nature; a "semblance" which pleases in and for itself, intuitively, "without, and aloof from, and even contrarily to, interest" (*ibid.*, 257).³⁶

Coleridge's most representative criticism proceeds from this ideal of perfect organic unity, recognized in the inseparability of form from content and part from whole. In the case of a poem, the "form" is, of course, the regularity of rhythm, or "meter," while the "content" is

³⁶Compare Schiller: ". . . beauty results from the reciprocal action of two opposed drives and from the uniting of two opposed principles. The highest ideal of beauty is, therefore, to be sought in the most perfect possible union and equilibrium of reality and form" (*Aesthetic Letters*, 111). Kant stops short of anything as "metaphysical" as a Coleridgean-Schillerean dialectic, but the following passage from the *Critique of Judgment* certainly suggests that the notion is implicit in his philosophy of criticism: ". . . it is not inexpedient to recall that, in all free arts, there is yet requisite something compulsory or, as it is called, mechanism, without which the spirit [*Geist*], which must be free in art and which alone inspires the work, would have no body and would evaporate altogether; e.g. in poetry there must be an accuracy and wealth of language, and also prosody and measure. It is not inexpedient, I say, to recall this, for many modern educators believe that the best way to produce a free art is to remove it from all constraint, and thus to change it from work into mere play" (147).

the combination of passion and thought which initiated the creative impulse. And according to the ideal of organic unity, meter must never give the impression of being "superimposed," for "nothing can permanently please, which does not contain in itself the reason why it is so, and not otherwise" (BL, II, 9). Therefore if meter is "superadded," then "all other parts must be made consonant with it" (ibid., 9-10); and although meter is obviously introduced "by a voluntary act," it exists in all true poetry as a "partnership" of "spontaneous impulse and of voluntary purpose" (ibid., 50), a notion which is beautifully expressed in this passage from the Shakespearean Criticism:

The spirit of poetry, like all other living powers, must of necessity circumscribe itself by rules, were it only to unite power with beauty. It must embody in order to reveal itself; but a living body is of necessity an organized one,--and what is organization, but the connection of parts to a whole, so that each part is at once end and means! This is no discovery of criticism; it is a necessity of the human mind--and all nations have felt and obeyed it, in the invention of metre and measured sounds as the vehicle and involucrum of poetry, itself a fellow-growth from the same life, even as the bark is to the tree (I, 197; my emphasis).

Shakespeare, of course, exemplifies this ideal balance of "creative power and the intellectual energy" (BL, II, 19), or what Schiller called the "play-drive" and the "form-drive." For Coleridge, as Fogle^s says,

Shakespeare is like organic nature according to the "law of bicentrality," in which every part has a center or principle both within and outside itself, like a system of concentric circles of which the master circle would be the total idea of Shakespeare. Within this all-inclusive unity there would be various lesser unities and systems, each self-contained and yet a part in a graduated structure of subordination and degree which ranges from the lowest to the highest, from the simplest to the most complex. Like the principle of life, Shakespeare is almost infinitely various and yet forever the same (op. cit., 110).³⁷

³⁷Compare Abrams, op. cit., 221-22.

In Coleridge's own words, Shakespeare is "a nature humanized, a genial understanding directing self-consciously a power and an implicit wisdom deeper than consciousness" (SC, I, 198).

Coleridge's criticism of Wordsworth, on the other hand, is based primarily on Wordsworth's violations of the ideal of organic unity: Coleridge cites the "INCONSTANCY of the style," by which the reader's feelings are "alternately startled by anticlimax and hyperclimax" (ibid., 97-8); the "matter-of-factness" which threatens to disrupt the free play of the faculties by introducing mundane and habitual chains of association (ibid., 101); his "undue predilection for the dramatic form" and his penchant for introducing "thoughts and images too great for the subject" (ibid., 109).³⁸

Beauty, sublimity, and the "free play" of the faculties

Beauty: the "state of effeminacy."--The idea that it is possible for us to judge certain objects purely aesthetically, as "purposive without purpose," and that works of art can (and indeed must) be

³⁸Notwithstanding this criticism, Wordsworth did distinguish between organic and mechanic form, a distinction which Rader says he learned from Kant via Coleridge: "It was not so much Kant or Plato but the transformation of Platonism and Kantianism in the fertile mind of Coleridge that impressed Wordsworth. From Kant's Critique of Judgment Coleridge may have drawn his distinction between "mechanistic" and "organic" form . . . [which] underlies . . . [his] contrast between fancy and imagination" (Melvin Rader, Wordsworth: A Philosophical Approach [Oxford, 1967], 184.)

And although Wordsworth does speak of "superadding" meter to poetry in the Preface to the Lyrical Ballads, the idea that the laws of artistic production are sui generis is not alien to his thought, as the sonnets "Nuns Fret Not" and "A Poet! He Has Put His Heart to School" (Works, III, 1, 52) indicate. As Rader says, "The world as he [Wordsworth] envisioned it is pervaded everywhere with life, organic relations, and vivid values. The poet, rising to the level of imaginative genius, is by very nature a kind of metaphysician, and his insight into the meaning of things is not one whit inferior to that of the scientist" (op. cit., 185).

considered as such a class of objects, marks a very important moment in Kantian-Romantic aesthetics. For the fact that such objects are judged without reference to the discursive intellect, and that the pleasure we receive from them is immediate convinced Kant that Imagination is not always necessarily under the "constraint of the understanding," but "from an aesthetical point of view" is "free to furnish unsought, over and above that agreement with a concept, [an] abundance of undeveloped material for the understanding" (C of J, 160; my emphasis).³⁹ Beauty, in other words, has the effect of liberating consciousness from that "despotism of the eye" and the domination of reason which characterizes "mechanistic" concepts of mind and reality, a fact which, as Marcuse says, "invoke[s] the inherent truth values of the senses against their depravation under the prevailing reality principle" (Eros and Civilization, 165).⁴⁰

³⁹For a fuller discussion of the relationship between the Kantian and Romantic conceptions of the Imagination, see below, p. 192ff.

⁴⁰The capacity of the mind, under the influence of aesthetic forms, to enter into a state of "free play," plays a significant role in Gestalt therapy. Paul Goodman writes: ". . . the naive [disinterested] judgments of beauty and truth--a usual judgment in antiquity and analysed once and for all by Kant--has to do with the surface itself: it is not an adjustment of the organism to the environment, nor a satisfactory completion of an organic drive in the environment, but it is an adjustment of the whole field to the self, to the surface of contact; as Kant well said it, there is a sense of purpose, without a purpose. And the act is pure self, for the pleasure is disinterested and spontaneous; the organism is in abeyance. Is there perhaps a function for it? In a difficult and conflicting field, where almost nothing can exist without deliberateness and caution and effort, beauty is suddenly a symbol of Paradise, where all is spontaneous . . . Then this gratuitous creativity of awareness is truly re-creative for an animal that requires recreation; it helps to relax our habitual prudence, in order that we may breathe" (Frederick Perls, Ralph E. Hefferline and Paul Goodman, Gestalt Therapy [New York, 1951], 405-06). Compare Bosanquet: "Nothing can help us but what is there for us to look at, and that is what we perceive or imagine, which can only be the immediate appearance or the semblance. This is

For the Romantics, this condition of inner harmony which Kant spoke of as the "free play" of the faculties, is a highly prized and spontaneously received state of mind, not available to those "Who strive therefore," but won "on the sudden"; watched for "in quiet till it suddenly shines upon us."⁴¹ It is a state of mind in which the soul "Seeks for no trophies, struggles for no spoils / That may attest her prowess" but is "blest in thoughts / That are their own perfection and reward" (Wordsworth, Prelude, VI, 610-12).

So integral to the Romantic vision of the possibility of fully released human potential is this state of quiet surrender to beauty (usually symbolized by moonlight) that a few important poems of the period fail to touch on it. It is, for example, in just such a state of mind that Coleridge's ancient mariner is able to "win" his redemption:

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony (232-35).

His solitude is compounded by his physical anguish; his heart is as dry as his tongue. But just as he reaches the nadir of despondency, evoked in a specific death wish (line 262), he finds himself miraculously

the fundamental doctrine of the aesthetic semblance. Man is not civilized, aesthetically, till he has learned to value the semblance above the reality. It is indeed . . . in one sense the higher reality--the soul and life of things, what they are in themselves" (Three Lectures on Aesthetics [New York, 1963], 9). See also the chapter on "Play-Forms in Art" in Johan Huizinga, Homo Ludens (Boston, 1966); and the chapter on "Semblance" in Langer, op. cit., 45-68; and Schiller, op. cit., esp. Letter twenty-seven.

⁴¹Keats, Endymion, IV, 532; Coleridge, BL, I, 167 (here quoting Plotinus). Compare Arthur Koestler: "The purely self-transcending emotions do not tend toward action, but towards quiescence, tranquility, and catharsis" (The Act of Creation [New York, 1964], 273).

responding to the beautiful forms of the water-snakes, creatures which seem so abhorrent under "normal" circumstances. But this is no more than an example of the point Coleridge makes in the "Principles of Genial Criticism," where the response to pure beauty is described as "so far . . . from depending wholly on association, that it is frequently produced by the mere removal of associations." "Many a sincere convert to the beauty of various insects, as of the dragon-fly, the fangless snake, &ct., has Natural History made, by exploding the terror of aversion that had been connected with them" (BL, II, 232).

The same quiet solitary surrender to beauty in nature in which the ancient mariner finds his redemption pervades Coleridge's Conversation Poems, which trace the release of the poet's discursive consciousness from the oppression of practical exigencies, the "numberless goings-on of life," and the engendering of a reconciliation of his own existence with that of nature, and ultimately with that of God Himself. The movement of "Frost at Midnight," for example, reflects this "growth pattern" quite clearly. It begins in utter quietude, with the meditative perception of the crystalization of the frost; the stillness broken only by an owlet's cry (which serves to make the calm "available" through contrast). Gradually, the poet's consciousness is "liberated" and he reaches beyond his empirical selfhood to discover a "fundamental attunement"⁴² between himself and nature: in the "hush," even the "film" that flutters on the grate seems to have "dim sympathies" with him--it becomes

a companionable form,
Whose puny flaps and freaks the idling Spirit
By its own moods interprets, every where
Echo or mirror seeking of itself,
And makes a toy of Thought (19-23; Works, I, 241).

⁴²Humphrey House, Coleridge (London, 1962), 75.

The toyings of his thought lead him into contemplation of his unhappy childhood at Christ's Hospital and Ottery, where "pent 'mid cloisters dim" he had been isolated from nature. But his own child, he vows, shall not suffer this fate: he shall "see and hear" those "lovely shapes and sounds" which are the perfect expressions of a perfect God, a God who is "all things in himself," and who shall ensure the child's own capacity to be at one with creation (58-9, 62).

The same movement from a quiet and solitary contemplation of the forms of nature to a theistic metaphysic is a common feature of Wordsworth's poetry. His tranquil recollection of Lake Como in Book VI of the Prelude is an example:

Like a breeze
Or sunbeam over your domain I passed
In motion without pause; but ye have left
Your beauty with me, a serene accord
Of forms and colours, passive, yet endowed
In their submissiveness with power as sweet
And gracious, almost might I dare say,
As virtue is, or goodness; sweet as love,
Or the remembrance of a generous deed,
Or mildest visitations of pure thought,
When God, the giver of all joy, is thanked
Religiously, in silent blessedness;
Sweet as this last herself, for such it is
(675-87).

Note that the word "beauty" in Wordsworth is usually connected with the kind of imagery that suggests peace and inner harmony. In Book XIII of the Prelude, for example, he speaks of "the unassuming things that hold / A silent station in this beauteous world" (46-7); in "Tintern Abbey," the recollections of the "beauteous forms" of the Wye Valley brought him

In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
And passing even into my purer mind,
With tranquil restoration . . . (27-30).

Likewise, the "beauteous evening" of the famous sonnet is "calm and free" and "quiet as a Nun / Breathless with adoration." The sun sinks "in its tranquility" while "The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the Sea" (Works, III, 19; 1-5). And as in Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight," this mood leads inexorably beyond the poet's own sensibility to empathy with a child and a prayer for its future; and then to theistic meditation:

Dear Child! dear Girl! that walkest with me
here,
If thou appear untouched by solemn thought,
Thy nature is not therefore less divine;
Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year;
And worshipp'st at the Temple's inner shrine,
God being with thee when we know it not
(9-14).

But perhaps Wordsworth's most eloquent statement of the value for him of this state of "quiet surrender to beauty" occurs in "Tintern Abbey," where the poet refers to the gift of beauty as

that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,--
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things (41-49).

In Keats, the state of "free play" which identifies the sensual liberation of the aesthetic reaction is also characterized as a "quiet" and "peaceful" experience. As he says at the beginning of Endymion, the function of beauty is to "keep a bower quiet for us," a bower of silent reflection where normal associations give way to a dream logic which has its own truth value. Thus, the Grecian urn is a "bride of quietness,"

and a "foster-child of silence and slow time" (1-2; Works, 209). Its pipes are "unheard"; the imagined town, with its "peaceful citadels" is "silent": the urn is a "silent form" which "doth tease us out of thought" (35, 36, 44). Elsewhere, he compares his reaction to first reading Chapman's Homer with that of "stout Cortez" and his men who, on first seeing the Pacific Ocean, "Look'd at each other with a wild surmise-- / Silent, upon a peak in Darien" ("On First Looking . . . ," 11-14; Works, 38).

But by far the most characteristic Keatsean imagery connected with this "state of effeminacy" in which the "fibers of the brain are relaxed in common with the rest of the body, and to such a happy degree that pleasure has no show of enticement and pain no unbearable frown" (Letters, II, 78-9) involves sleep, dreams, liquor, opiates and poison:⁴³

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
 My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
 Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
 One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk . . .
 ("Ode to a Nightingale," 1-4; Works, 207).

The beauty of the nightingale's song has numbed the poet's consciousness, and he yearns for an expansion of his mind, for a "draught of vintage" or a "beaker full of the warm South" that will break the chains which restrict him to the falsification of reality called ordinary experience, whose values are victimized by mutability and denatured by practical exigencies. For "Here," in the positivist's "reality," ". . . Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes, / Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow" (29-30).

⁴³See Mario L. D'Avanzo, Keat's Metaphors for the Romantic Imagination (Durham, North Carolina, 1967), and George Wilson Knight's essay on Keats in The Starlit Dome (London, 1959), esp. 261-65.

Here, our eyes are blinded by acquisitiveness; we cannot "see" the beauty of the flowers, we cannot smell the "soft incense [that] hangs upon the boughs." So what is demanded is not an escape from all consciousness, but merely from linear consciousness, an abrogation of analysis and "consequitive reasoning."⁴⁴ And thus beauty is comparable to a draught of vintage, in that both "tease us out of thought"; and the same applies to the analogy between sleep and poetry so often affected by Keats, except that while "every man whose soul is not a clod / Hath visions,"

Poesy alone can tell her dreams,
With the fine spell of words alone can save
Imagination from the sable charm
And dumb enchantment
("Fall of Hyperion," 13-14,
8-11; Works, 403).

Another very common chain of imagery in Romantic poetry relating to the free harmonizing of the faculties which characterizes the aesthetic liberation of sensibility involves music, musical instruments, and harmony.⁴⁵ In Blake's Songs of Innocence, for example, almost every poem bears images relating to singing, pipes and flutes playing, bells

⁴⁴It is in a similar vein that Coleridge, on various occasions, relates dramatic illusion to a dream state: "The poet does not require us to be awake and believe; he solicits us only to yield ourselves to a dream; and this too with our eyes open and with our judgement perdue behind the curtain, ready to awaken us at the first motion of our will: and meantime, only, not to disbelieve" (BL, II, 189. Compare SC, I, 179-80; 116).

⁴⁵Marcuse calls these "Orphic symbols," i.e., relating to "the singing god who lives to defeat death and who liberates nature, so that the constrained and constraining matter releases the beautiful and playful forms of animate and inanimate things. No longer striving and no longer desiring 'for something still to be attained,' they are free from fear and fetter--and thus free per se" (op. cit., 177).

ringing and so forth, compared to only three or four such references in the Songs of Experience (of which only one is called a "song," as compared to three in the earlier group). In Coleridge's "Kubla Khan," it is "the symphony and song" of a "damsel with a dulcimer" which the poet must recapture in order to "build that dome" of pleasure (37, 43, 46),⁴⁶ just as the "beautiful and beauty-making power" in the Dejection Ode is called "a strong music in the soul" (63, 60). Similarly, Byron's Childe Harold refers to that "feeling infinite" which is felt "In solitude, where we are least alone" as

A truth, which through our being then doth melt,
And purifies from self: it is a tone,
The soul and source of Music, which makes known
Eternal harmony, and sheds a charm
Like to the fabled Cytherea's zone,
Binding all things with beauty;--'twould disarm
The spectre Death, had he substantial power to harm
(III, xc, Poetry, II, 272).

And Shelley's Prometheus, freed from the Rock, anticipates the time when he and his beloved Asia

will search, with looks and words of love
For hidden thoughts, each lovelier than the last,
Our unexhausted spirits; and like lutes
Touched by the skill of the enamoured wind,
Weave harmonies divine, yet ever new,
From difference sweet where discord cannot be . . .
(III, iii, 34-39; Works, I, 232).

For music is "Itself the echo of the heart, and all / That tempers or improves man's life, now free" (ibid., 47-48).

⁴⁶See George Wilson Knight, op. cit., 95.

In Part One, we saw that for Kant, beauty in nature, and its reconciling effect on us, makes up only part of the aesthetic realm. For Kant felt--and the Romantics also--that there is another kind of disinterested and universally valid judgment which, because it did not assume any purposiveness in the object perceived, told us nothing about nature, yet revealed a great deal about ourselves; that is, that

we possess pure self-subsistent reason, or a faculty for the estimation of magnitude, whose superiority can be made intuitively evident only by the inadequacy of that faculty [Imagination] which is itself unbounded in the presentation of magnitude (of sensible objects) (C of J, 97).

These, of course, are judgments of the "sublime," judgments which take on a tremendous significance for Kant since they lead to a consciousness of the preeminence of the human mind over nature, and teach us to regard "as small [als Klein: as insignificant] the things about which we are solicitous (goods, health, and life)" (ibid., 101), a fact which is sufficient evidence of the susceptibility to moral Ideas of the soul which is "attuned to feel the sublime" (ibid., 104).

Kant's theory of the sublime, then, belongs wholly to the Transcendental philosophy, since the sublime is seen as awakening a sense of "the greatness of the human soul" (Monk, op. cit., 46) rather than as disclosing anything about physical nature. And as we turn to the Romantic attitude towards the sublime aspects of nature, we shall see that it is in this sense, and not as a psychological phenomenon, that the "discipline of fear" had impact for the Romantics.

The sublime: "the discipline of fear."--Of the Romantics, Coleridge makes the clearest theoretical distinction between the beautiful

and the sublime.⁴⁷ With Kant, he regards the former as resulting when "the perfection of form is combined with pleasurable in the sensation excited by the matters or substances so formed," whereas the latter is represented by "boundless or endless allness" (BL, II, 309). An object is therefore called sublime "in relation to which the exercise of comparison is suspended; while on the contrary that object is most beautiful, which in its highest perfection sustains while it satisfies the accompanying Power."⁴⁸ And thus it follows that "no object of sense is sublime in itself; it becomes sublime when [we] contemplate eternity under it."⁴⁹ Or as he said in the Bristol Lectures: "The sense of sublimity arises, not from the sight of an outward object, but from the reflection upon it; not from the impression, but from the idea" (SC, II, 224).

The movement of thought in Coleridge's poetic accounts of the experience of the sublime usually tends to document this theory. Having climbed the "Mount sublime" near his cottage at Clevedon, for example, Coleridge finds himself "Overwhelmed" by the vastness of the scene beneath him, by its "boundless or endless allness":

Oh! what a goodly scene! Here the bleak mount
The bare bleak mountain speckled thin with sheep:
Grey clouds, that shadowing spot the sunny fields;
And river, now with bushy rocks o'er brow'd, . . .

. . .

⁴⁷See Clarence De Witt Thorpe, "Coleridge on the Sublime," in Wordsworth and Coleridge, ed. E.L. Griggs [Princeton, 1939], 192-219).

⁴⁸Cited Shawcross, in "Coleridge Marginalia," Notes and Queries, 10th ser., IV (October 28, 1905), 341.

⁴⁹Cited by Wellek, History of Modern Criticism, II, 160.

The Channel there, the Islands and white sails,
 Dim coasts, and cloud-like hills, and shoreless
 Ocean. . . .

And lost for "comparison," Coleridge can only say of this scene, "It seem'd like Omnipresence!" ("Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement," 29-32, 36-37, 38; Works, I, 107). And although these lines were written, of course, prior to the influence of Kant, Coleridge specifies that his reaction is "aesthetic," in the Kantian sense of being disinterested:

God, methought,
 Had built him there a Temple; the whole World
 Seem'd imag'd in its vast circumference:
 No wish profan'd my overwhelmed heart.
 Blest hour! It was a luxury,--to be! (38-42)

The same movement of thought from the purely sensual to ideas and images of the eternal and the ~~ie~~minent marks the later "Hymn Before Sunrise, in the Vale of Chamouny." But here, the "negative pleasure" which Kant ascribed to the sublime is more in evidence. Twice in the first five lines, for example, the prospect of Mont Blanc is described as "awful." And in line thirteen, Coleridge refers to it as a "dread and silent Mount." The mountain is to Coleridge an example of what Kant called the "Mathematically Sublime"--i.e. "absolute greatness" for which no concept can be supplied. Thus, although the mountain remains "present to the bodily sense," the poet's discursive powers are rendered ineffectual, and he becomes "entranced in prayer," worshipping the "Invisible alone" (14-16; Works, I, 377). Here, the "Soul-debasing" element of fear is purged, and the experience becomes "aesthetic" as the frightening impact of the prospect gives way to what Kant called the "state of joy"

(C of J, 100) which follows the cathartic cessation of actual terror:⁵⁰

Yet, like some sweet beguiling melody,
So sweet, we know not we are listening to it,
Thou, the meanwhile, wast blending with my
Thought,
Yea, with my Life and Life's own secret joy;
Till the dilating Soul, enrapt, transfused,
Into the mighty vision passing--there
As in her natural form, swelled vast to Heaven!
(17-23)

Shelley's "Mont Blanc" is an even more "Idealistic" (in Kant's sense) account of the experience of the sublime than Coleridge's "Hymn," since here, the poet's major concern is not to praise God, but to celebrate the sublime ~~eminence~~ eminence of the human mind itself, for which only the majesty of the "great Mountain" and the "Dizzy Ravine" can be a fit symbol.

The experience here is again an "aesthetic" one in the Kantian sense of "non-conceptual." Coleridge said that he "gazed" at the mount until it "vanish[ed] from my thought," and Shelley has the same reaction:

⁵⁰Compare Coleridge's description of his experience on the "sublime Crag-summit" of Sca' Fell: "My Limbs were all in a tremble--I lay upon my back to rest myself, & was beginning according to my Custom to laugh at myself for a Madman, when the sight of the Craggs above me on each side, & the impetuous Clouds just over them, posting so luridly & so rapidly northward, overawed me / I lay in a state of almost prophetic Trance & Delight -- & blessed God aloud, for the powers of Reason & the Will, which remaining no Danger can overpower us! O God, I exclaimed aloud--how calm, how blessed am I now / I know not how to proceed, how to return / but I am calm & fearless & confident / if this Reality were a Dream, if I were asleep, what agonies had I suffered! what screams! -- When the Reason & the Will are away, what remain to us but darkness & Dimness & a bewildering Shame, and Pain that is utterly Lord over us, or fantastic Pleasure, that draws the Soul along swimming through the air in many shapes, even as a Flight of Starlings in a Wind" (Letters, II, 842).

Dizzy Ravine! and when I gaze on thee
 I seem as in a trance sublime and strange
 To muse on my own separate phantasy,
 My own, my human mind, which passively
 Now renders and receives fast influencings,
 Holding an unremitting interchange
 With the clear universe of things around . . .
 (34-40).

Also in Shelley's poem, although the prospect is outwardly "awful" and even "ghastly," (15, 71) the mind shows its capacity to assimilate the fear, and thoughts of mortality inevitably crowd upon the poet:

I look on high;
 Has some unknown omnipotence unfurled
 The veil of life and death? or do I lie
 In dream, and does the mightier world of sleep
 Spread far around and inaccessible
 Its circles? (52-57)

And later:

All things that move and breathe with toil and
 sound
 Are born and die; revolve, subside, and swell.
 Power dwells apart in its tranquillity,
 Remote, serene, and inaccessible:
 And this, the naked countenance of earth,
 On which I gaze, even these primaeval mountains
 Teach the adverting mind (94-100).

Thus, if man may be "with nature reconciled," it is only because "the adverting mind" is capable of a "leap" into "faith." But conversely, without the complement of the human mind projecting its own values, Mont Blanc would still exist, but to no end:

what wert thou, and earth, and stars, and sea,
 If to the human mind's imaginings
 Silence and solitude were vacancys? (142-end)

Kant's observation, here beautifully expressed by Shelley, that nature in her most awesome and imposing aspects, while initially an object of fear, can yet make manifest to us our own "superiority over nature even in its immensity" (C of J, 101), is, of course, a central leitmotif of Wordsworth's Prelude.⁵¹ It was Wordsworth's "special good fortune," as Durrant puts it, to "have been associated from boyhood with 'high objects'," since

The association of the boy's emotions with the very framework of the universe . . . gives him a profound confidence in the "grandeur" of his own nature. . . . In this way a belief in the value of man himself is established. Modern man sometimes feels that he has "measured out his life with coffee-spoons [sic]." A poet who has measured out his life with mountains, stars, and rivers is less likely to see it as absurd or trivial (Wordsworth, 120).

In the very first lines of the narrative of the Prelude proper, Wordsworth tells of how he was "Fostered alike by beauty and by fear" (I, 302); and the next ninety-eight lines record three different illustrations of the latter influence: the snaring of the woodcocks (306-25); hunting for birds' eggs (326-39); and the episode with the stolen row-boat (357-400). As related, the incidents are not examples of the sublime: the terror is too real--not "cathartized," a fact which is, of course, due to the poet's youth.⁵² It is not until later, when "maturer

⁵¹My understanding of Wordsworth's concept of the sublime is indebted to Chapter Three of Havens, and to Monk (op. cit., esp. 227-32). See also Chapter Nine of Carritt's The Theory of Beauty (London, 1962), and James Scoggins, Imagination and Fancy (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1966), Chapter Six.

⁵²Recall Kant's position, crucial to both his and the Romantics' understanding of the value of this experience, that "He who fears can form no judgments about the sublime in nature, just as he who is seduced by inclination and appetite can form no judgment about the beautiful" (C of J, 100).

seasons called them forth / To impregnate and elevate the mind" (I, 595-96) that they could be assimilated into a larger metaphysic of nature, as they are in the two interpolated reflective passages beginning "Dust as we are" (340-356) and "Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!" (401-14). In the latter passage especially, Wordsworth demonstrates his affinity with Kant; for here, his meditation on these "Sterner interventions" of nature clearly have led him to see creation as purposive:

not in vain
 By day or star-light thus from my first dawn
 Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
 The passions that build up our human soul;
 Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,
 But with high objects, with enduring things--
 With life and nature, purifying thus
 The elements of feeling and of thought,
 And sanctifying, by such discipline,
 Both pain and fear, until we recognize
 A grandeur in the beatings of the heart
 (404-14).

The description of Simplon Pass in Book VI provides another fine example of how the sublime in nature seems to "jolt us out of thought," to misquote Keats, and awaken within us a sense of our own "supersensible destination" (Kant, C of J, 96). Wordsworth's first sensation is of the suspension of time and the infinite extension of space: the heights of the "woods decaying, never to be decayed" are "immeasurable," and the "blasts of waterfalls" are "stationary" (624-26).⁵³

Left thus with no standard by which the prospect may be "schematized," the normal unifying operation of the Imagination is thwarted, and the "sight" of the "raving stream" seems "sick" and "giddy." But at

⁵³Compare Keat's reaction on first seeing the lakes and mountains of Winander, cited above, p. 83.

this point, Wordsworth's mind shows its "susceptibility to Ideas," as Kant would say, since instead of being completely overwhelmed by the scene, it finds itself capable of assimilating the terror--of "sanctifying" the "pain and fear," and therefore able to discover in this sublime prospect the

workings of one mind, the features
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree;
Characters of the great Apocalypse,
The types and symbols of Eternity,
Of first, and last, and midst, and without end
(636-40).

Two other examples of the "impressive discipline of fear" (I, 603) are given in Book XII, as illustrations of those "spots of time" by which "our minds / Are nourished and invisibly repaired" (208, 214-15). But like those in Book I, these childhood experiences were too charged with real terror to have a cathartic effect; and again it is only later when Wordsworth realizes that the real "virtue" of these experiences is, in Kant's words, that they "bring about a feeling that we possess pure self-subsistent reason" (C of J, 93); which is to say that they give

Profoundest knowledge to what point, and how,
The mind is lord and master--outward sense
The obedient servant of her will (220-23).

But it is Wordsworth's account of his experiences on Mount Snowden in Book XIV that comes closest to justifying Carritt's conviction that the "Wordsworthian sublime . . . may be identified with the Kantian."⁵⁴

⁵⁴Carritt, op. cit., 151. As an example of the concept of sublimity "as it was understood by the circle of Coleridge and Wordsworth," Carritt cites this passage from one of Dorothy Wordsworth's journals: "It [the

For it is here that Wordsworth is the most specific about the way in which natural grandeur leads to moral consciousness.⁵⁵

Wordsworth prepares for his final epiphanic passage very carefully: in the first three lines alone, starting from line eleven, there are no less than ten adjectives--almost half the total number of words--including "close," "warm," "wan, dull and glaring," to describe the night; and "Low-hung and thick," the fog. The time is the "dead of night." Finally emerging through the mist, Wordsworth, leading the group of "chance human wanderers," is suddenly bathed in moonlight, and he rewards us with this exquisite description of the "sublime" scene lying beneath him:

at my feet
 Rested a silent sea of hoary mist.
 A hundred hills their dusky backs upheaved
 All over this still ocean; and beyond,

Fall of Reichenbach] was astonishment and awe--an overwhelming sense of the powers of nature for the destruction of all things, and of the helplessness of man--of the weakness of his will if prompted to make a momentary effort against such a force" (Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth, ed. Knight, ii, 209; cited *ibid.*). Carritt, however, doubts the sincerity of the feeling here expressed, claiming that the passage is "almost quoted from Kant's Kritik der Urtheilskraft." The last phrase of Dorothy Wordsworth's description is certainly peculiar enough in style to justify suspicion, but comparison of the passages from the Critique to which Carritt is alluding (see C of J, 83, 101) provides very slender evidence that the book was at hand.

⁵⁵Wordsworth said of the Vale of Chamouny in Book VI of the Prelude that

Whate'er in this wide circuit we beheld,
 Or heart, was fitted to our unripe state
 Of intellect and heart. With such a book
 Before our eyes, we could not choose but read
 Lessons of genuine brotherhood, and plain
 And universal reason of mankind,
 The truths of young and old (541-47).

Far, far beyond, the solid vapours stretched,
 In headlands, tongues, and promontory shapes,
 Into the main Atlantic, that appeared
 To dwindle, and give up his majesty,
 Usurped upon far as the sight could reach
 (41-49).

But as with Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime," Shelley's "Mont Blanc," or Coleridge's "Hymn Before Sunrise," the subject of the Prelude is not mountains, but the liberated consciousness,⁵⁶ and how it becomes aware of the moral Ideas. Thus, in these "circumstances awful and sublime," Wordsworth finds

the emblem of a mind
 That feeds upon infinity, that broods
 Over the dark abyss, intent to hear
 Its voices issuing forth to silent light
 In one continuous stream; a mind sustained
 By recognitions of transcendent power,
 In sense conducting to ideal form,
 In soul of more than mortal privilege
 (70-77).

And the "power" which "all acknowledge when thus moved" is

the express
 Resemblance of that glorious faculty
 That higher minds bear with them as their own.
 This is the very spirit in which they deal
 With the whole compass of the universe:

⁵⁶Compare Monk's observation that "If one contrasts Wordsworth with any or with all of the enthusiastic admirers of nature in the last decades of the eighteenth century, he will observe that the basic difference between them is that while the Blue Stockings and the picturesque travelers strongly resemble faddists, and were concerned in the one instance with the theatricality of nature and in the other with the resemblance of natural scenes to paintings, Wordsworth was mainly interested in his aesthetic experience of nature as it offered support for his religious intuitions of the reality of the One in the Many. . . . And it was because nature had first awakened him to a consciousness of his own individuality and of the closeness of Reality to a sensitive mind that he could afford not to analyse, but to synthesize and interpret" (op. cit., 228).

Kindred mutations; for themselves create
A like existence; and whene'er it dawns
Created for them, catch it, or are caught
By its inevitable mastery,
Like angels stopped upon the wing by sound
Of harmony from Heaven's remotest spheres
(86-99).

Finally, Kant's demonstration that "the mind which is attuned to feel the sublime" presupposes "a susceptibility of the mind for [moral] ideas" (C of J, 104), finds this striking parallel in Wordsworth. It is

given to those who are "By sensible impressions not enthralled," he says,

To hold fit converse with the spiritual world,
And with generations of mankind
Spread over time, past, present, and to come,
Age after age, till Time shall be no more
(106-11).

"Such minds," Wordsworth continues, "are truly from the Deity."

For they are Powers; and hence the highest bliss
That flesh can know is theirs--the consciousness
Of Whom they are, habitually infused
Through every image and through every thought,
And all affections by communion raised
From earth to heaven, from human to divine . . .
(113-18).

Therefore it is here, under the influence of a beneficent nature in her most expansive forms, elevating the mind beyond circumstance and change; it is from "this pure source" that "that repose / In moral judgments . . . / Must come, or will by man be sought in vain" (ibid., 127-30).

The Genesis of Artistic Creativity: The "Mystery of Genius in the Fine Arts"

Lawfulness without law

Kant's approach to the question of artistic genius marks one of the most interesting and important manifestations of the Copernican revolution in philosophy as it applies to the Romantic movement. For by Transcendentally grounding the laws of creativity in the universal forms of consciousness, Kant's philosophy quells the old dispute between the champions of "rules" and ancient models on the one hand, and those of original genius on the other; and thus prepares the way for the Romantic concept of the artist as a man who

out of his own mind create[s] forms according to the severe laws of the intellect, in order to generate in himself that co-ordination of freedom and law, that involution of obedience in the prescript, and of the prescript in the impulse to obey, which assimilates him to nature, and enables him to understand her (Coleridge, BL, II, 258).

Basically, Kant's intention in his sections on "genius" is to develop a concept of artistic creativity which will allow art to be regarded as "universally communicable" without being "bound to concepts" and therefore incapable of "rising aesthetically to ideas" (C of J, 171). This is the concept which Kant describes as "conformity to law without a [superimposed] law": the genius, says Kant, enjoys a certain "happy relation [between the cognitive faculties] which no science can teach and no industry can learn," which enables him to "seize the quickly passing play of imagination and . . . unify it as a concept . . . that can be communicated without any constraint [Zwang--coercion] of rules" (ibid., 161). And therefore the rules of his procedure "cannot be reduced to a formula and serve as a precept" but rather must be "abstracted from the fact, i.e. from the product, on which others may try their own talent by using it as a model, not to be copied, but to be imitated" (ibid., 152).⁵⁷

The problem of reconciling the "mechanical" aspect of creativity with its apparent purposelessness is particularly urgent in Romantic thought. For on the one hand (and this is the aspect of Romantic theory often overlooked), all of the Romantics fully recognized that artistic

⁵⁷Compare Coleridge's distinction between "copy" and "imitation," BL, II, 6, 30, 185, and 225; and SC, I, 115, 177-8, 181, 197; II, 53, 85, 122-3, 158, 214, 251, and 258. Other references to this distinction in Coleridge may be found in the Shawcross edition of BL, 272-3n.

productivity is far from anarchic. Coleridge, for example, continually stressed that "The spirit of poetry . . . must of necessity circumscribe itself by rules"; that genius "must embody in order to realize itself," and that "No work of true genius dare want its appropriate form . . ." (SC, I, 197). And in the *Biographia*, he says that the "rule" to which a poet must "adhere" is evinced through "meditation"; and that in the process of creation, there is always an "intermixture of conscious volition" (II, 64). For as he said earlier, the creative imagination cannot be conceived of except as "co-existing with the conscious will" (ibid., I, 202); and the "synthetic and magical power, to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination" is "first put in action by the will and understanding, and retained under their irremissive, though gentle and unnoticed, controul" (ibid., II, 12). Even Shakespeare, the greatest example of pure artistic talent, was "no mere child of nature; no automaton of genius." Coleridge regarded him, in fact, as a man who had "studied patiently, meditated deeply, [and] understood minutely" (ibid., II, 19).

Similarly, Wordsworth was, as Havens says, "singularly free from that form of anti-intellectualism which consists in the belief that learning encumbers poetic genius, that the true poet does not need books and derives little from the study of his predecessors" (Havens, I, 127). "Such Romantic nonsense received short shrift at Wordsworth's hand," Havens continues, "as would be expected of one whose closest friend was Coleridge." To support his view, Havens cites this remark from a late letter of Wordsworth to W.R. Hamilton:

The logical faculty has infinitely more to do with poetry than the young and the inexperienced, whether writer or critic, ever dreams of . . . a discernment, which emotion is so far from bestowing that at first it is ever in the way of it (*ibid.*, 128).

But a more obvious and direct statement of the same principle is this, from the Preface to the Lyrical Ballads:

However exalted a notion we would wish to cherish of the character of a Poet, it is obvious, that while he describes and imitates passions, his employment is in some degree mechanical, compared with the freedom and power of real and substantial action and suffering (58).⁵⁸

But such sentiments are of course commonplace in eighteenth-century poetics,⁵⁹ and there is no doubt that the overwhelming stress in Romantic thought is on the spontaneity of art. For the Romantics, like Kant, regarded the immediacy of the appeal of art as the source of its claim for universality⁶⁰ and its freedom from such enforced obligations as to strive after "general nature," to appeal to the consensus gentium, or to copy classical models as the condition of its capacity to "ascend to bring light and fire from those eternal regions where the owl-winged faculty of calculation dare not ever soar" (Shelley, D of P, 135). Thus

⁵⁸Durrant notes (*op. cit.*, 117) in this context the importance of the word "thoughtfully" in the lines from Book I of the Prelude, where Wordsworth expresses his intention of writing "immortal verse / Thoughtfully fitted to the Orphean lyre" (232-33).

⁵⁹A typical example is Pope's aphorism:

The winged Courser, like a gen'rous Horse,
Shows most true Mettle when you check his Course
("Essay on Criticism," 87-88; Poems, 146).

⁶⁰"The poet, who composes not before the moment of inspiration, and as that leaves him ceases--composes, and he alone, for all men, all classes, all ages" (An aphorism of Lavater, considered "Most Excellent" by Blake [Writings, 80]).

Wordsworth refers to poetry as a "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings,"⁶¹ Byron as the "lava of the imagination";⁶² Shelley speaks of the mind in creation as a "fading coal, which some invisible influence . . . awakens to transitory brightness" (D of P, 135), and the young Keats, in his "Sleep and Poetry," anticipates the composition of "many a verse from so strange influence / That we must ever wonder how, and whence / It came" (69-71; Works, 43). And as he said in a letter to Hessey, "The Genius of Poetry must work out its own salvation in a man: It cannot be matured by law & precept, but by sensation & watchfulness in itself-- That which is creative must create itself . . . (Letters, I, 374).

Keats's notion, which as we have seen is an integral part of Kant's aesthetic, that genius is creative of its own laws emerges all through Romantic thought as a way, and in fact the only way, of reconciling the willed aspect of creativity with its apparent spontaneity. And in this, the Romantics saw that artistic genius is a perfect counterpart for nature: the former is "the prime genial artist" and the latter

⁶¹Compare Blake's aphorism, "The cistern contains: the fountain overflows" (MHH, pl. 8, 15; Writings, 151). The use of the fountain as a metaphor for the creative mind is found all through Romantic poetry. See especially Coleridge's "Kubla Khan," and Book II of Endymion, where the prolific fountain imagery is clearly meant, says D'Avanzo, to "figure the powerful overflow of the imagination." D'Avanzo, in fact, calls this Book "one of the most profound and complex narratives on the poetic process in all literature" (Keats's Metaphors . . . , 126, 132). See also Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp, 35, 47, 61. Abrams refers to the increased use of the fountain as a symbol for creativity in the early nineteenth-century as "an integral part of a corresponding change in popular epistemology--that is, in the concept of the role played by the mind in perception which was current among romantic poets and critics" (*ibid.*, 57).

⁶²Letters and Journals, ed. R.E. Prothero (New York, 1966), III, 405.

"a nature humanized, a genial understanding directing self-consciously a power and an implicit wisdom deeper than consciousness" (SC, I, 198). It follows then that if poetry must "circumscribe itself to rules," it does so only because it is a "living power," and that if "no work of true genius dare want its appropriate form;" "neither indeed is there any danger of this. As it must not, so neither can it, be lawless! For it is even this that constitutes it [sic] genius--the power of acting creatively under laws of its own origination"(ibid.). And although there is an "intermixture of conscious volition" in all creative acts, the degree of this "intermixture" is exclusively "the prerogative of poetic genius itself" to distinguish. For "Could a rule be given from without, poetry would cease to be poetry, and sink into a mechanical art. . . . The rules of the IMAGINATION are themselves the very powers of growth and production"(BL, II, 64-5).⁶³

Like Coleridge, Wordsworth too regarded nature as the "counterpoise" of genius (Prelude, XII, 41), and sought to "Transcendentalize" his understanding of artistic genesis by grounding it in nature's "steadfast laws," laws which can only be regarded by us as the "visible quality and shape / And image of right reason" (ibid., XIII, 21-23):

From Nature doth emotion come, and moods
Of calmness equally are Nature's gift;
This is her glory; these two attributes
Are sister horns that constitute her strength,
Hence Genius, born to thrive by interchange
Of peace and excitation, finds in her
His best and purest friend; from her receives

⁶³Compare Kant's distinction between "'free'" and "'mercenary'," or "aesthetical" and "mechanical" art, which is made on this same basis (C of J, 146, 148).

That energy by which he seeks the truth,
 From her that happy stillness of the mind
 Which fits him to receive it when unsought
 (ibid., XIII, 1-10).

Thus Wordsworth sees in nature the poet's "Grave Teacher" and "stern Preceptress" (ibid., VIII, 530); and the "guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul / Of all my moral being" ("Tintern Abbey," 110-11). The poet "put[s] his heart to school" in nature, as Wordsworth says in the well-known sonnet; and from nature, he learns that the permanence of a thing of beauty "Comes not by casting in a formal mould, / But from its own divine vitality."⁶⁴ And the Prelude itself, in fact, is specifically "dedicate to Nature's self / And things that teach as Nature teaches" (V, 230-31); and in writing his great poem, Wordsworth says that

my mind hath looked
 Upon the speaking face of earth and heaven
 As her prime teacher, intercourse with man
 Established by the sovereign Intellect,
 Who through that bodily image hath diffused,
 As might appear to the eye of fleeting time,
 A deathless spirit (ibid., 12018).⁶⁵

⁶⁴"A Poet! He Hath Put His Heart to School," 13-14; Works, III, 52.

⁶⁵Wordsworth's comparison of the relation between man and nature to that between student and teacher should not evoke an image of man as a passive recipient of data from external nature. Nature's "fixed laws" serve rather as precedent and inspiration to the act of creation: they

maintain
 A balance, an ennobling interchange
 Of action from without and from within;
 The excellence, pure function, and best power
 Both of the object seen, and the eye that sees
 (Prelude, XIII, 374-78).

An interesting use of the same imagery occurs in the Preface to the Second Edition of the Critique of Pure Reason: "Reason . . . must

While the idea that the mind is capable of "acting creatively under laws of its own origination"; of generating "living and life-producing ideas" which are essentially one with the germinal causes of nature" (BL, II, 258-59) serves both Kant and the Romantics as the basis for a philosophy of art, there can be no doubt that for both, this notion has implications which extend far beyond the realm of formal aesthetics. But Kant, bound as he was to the limitations of his Transcendental method, only hints at the full scope of this discovery. The capacity to create, and respond freely to the forms of art, he says, allows us to "feel our freedom from the law of association" so that "the material supplied to us by nature can be worked up into something which surpasses nature" (C of J, 157). And he will go no further.

But if it is possible for the mind to be free to "strive after something [metaphysical Ideas] which lies beyond the bounds of experience"; and further, if in art these Ideas are "realize[d] to sense" and made "universally communicable" (ibid., 157, 161), is it not then possible to regard poetry, for example, as creating "new materials for knowledge, and power, and pleasure," and even as "the center and circumference of knowledge"? And poets themselves as "the unacknowledged legislators of the world"? (Shelley, D of P; 135, 140)

In strict Kantian terms the answer must, of course, be No, since for Kant the "supersensible" can never be an object of "knowledge." God and freedom of the will are only "regulative ideas"; useful fictions to

approach nature in order to be taught by it. It must not, however, do so in the character of a pupil who listens to everything that the teacher chooses to say, but of an appointed judge who compels the witnesses to answer questions which he has himself formulated" (20).

which we willingly subscribe solely in order to satisfy the quest of Reason for totality in our experience. Consequently, in a Kantian context the poet can do no more than "seek to approximate a presentation of concepts of reason"; he merely "ventures . . . to go beyond the limits of experience and to present them to sense with a completeness of which there is no example in nature" (C of J, 157-58; my emphasis).

But if the Ideas of Reason are regarded as constitutive, as they are (at least tacitly) by the Romantics, the situation changes radically. All that is required now is evidence that the faculty which attempts to "realize to sense these ideas" can be considered both productive, and free from the "constraints of the understanding." The possibility of any unified experience whatsoever demonstrated to both poet and philosopher the "productivity" of this faculty. The existence of art demonstrated to both that this creativity can be lawful without submitting to the formal constraints of discursive knowledge. Both called this faculty "Imagination."

The Kantian Einbildungskraft and the Romantic "Imagination"

In his famous study on Wordsworth's thought, The Mind of a Poet, Raymond Havens writes that

if the romanticists did not discover the imagination they discovered the meaning which it has for serious criticism today. It was not, however, with a poet or critic that his meaning originated but apparently with the greatest of modern philosophers, Kant. He it was who first made clear that in acquiring knowledge of the external world the mind is not passive, as had been thought, but active and creative, and that the primary creative activity in perception belongs to the imagination. These ideas or something like them . . . Coleridge seems to have found in the Critique of Pure Reason . . . and, in the course of extended discussions, to have passed on to his friend [Wordsworth] (I, 205).⁶⁶

⁶⁶Compare D.G. James's statement that "we may resonably [sic]

Of course, it would be foolish to attempt to draw any one-to-one relation between the Kantian Einbildungskraft and the Romantic Imagination--and such is hardly Havens' intention. For the fact is that the Romantics made far greater claims for this "synthetic and magical power"⁶⁷ than did Kant, most of which directly relate to their experience as creative artists, and which could probably not be admitted in any formal, Transcendental deduction. But even so, there are some very important and fundamental similarities between the Kantian and Romantic uses of the word "Imagination"; similarities which link together the most penetrating insights of the poetic and philosophic movements on art, and the nature of reality. And one of the best ways to approach these similarities is to compare Kant's distinction between the "reproductive" and "Productive Imaginations" on the one hand, with Coleridge's distinction between the Fancy and the Imagination on the other.

Reproductive and productive synthesis.--In the Introduction to his edition of the Biographia Literaria, Shawcross says that Coleridge's distinction between Fancy and Imagination should not be construed as having a Kantian foundation since "the ground of that distinction (that the deliverances of fancy are subjective, those of the imagination

regard [Kant's discussion of the Imagination in the Critique of Pure Reason] as the source of Coleridge's reflections on the imagination" (Scepticism and Poetry [London, 1937], 24). Irving Babbitt, in Rousseau and Romanticism (Cleveland, 1955), agrees: "Kant, especially in his 'Critique of Judgment', . . . prepare[s] the way for the conception of the creative imagination that is at the very heart of the romantic movement" (67). Babbitt, however, seriously misrepresents Kant's concept of the creative Imagination as "free . . . from all constraint whatsoever," a fact which accounts in part for his derogatory attitude towards both Kant and the Romantics.

⁶⁷BL, II, 12.

objective) could not be conceded by Kant" (I, xlv).

Now this argument, of course, depends entirely upon what is meant by the terms "objective" and "subjective." Clearly, Shawcross cannot be referring to the old Cartesian distinction between the "independently real" and that which exists only in the field of consciousness, since first, both Coleridge and Kant firmly rejected Descartes' dualism,⁶⁸ and second, in no sense might a "deliverance of the imagination" be considered as existing totally independently of mind. Therefore, it must be assumed that for Shawcross, this terminology refers to those "deliverances" which are based on laws which are merely empirical--a posteriori and therefore contingent--as opposed to those which are grounded on a priori laws, and which are therefore non-contingent and universal. But if this is the case, Shawcross' whole argument is invalid, since it is precisely on this basis that Kant builds his whole distinction between the Reproductive and Productive Imagination.⁶⁹ To repeat what was said earlier, for Kant, any system which utilizes the law of association as a descriptive device must first answer the questions "How is this association itself possible?" and "How are we to make comprehensible to ourselves the thoroughgoing affinity of appearances, whereby they stand and must stand under unchanging laws?" (C of PR, 139) Empiricism cannot answer these questions since it deals only with experience a posteriori, not with the conditions which make experience possible. But this restriction

⁶⁸See C of PR, 344ff; and BL, I, 88ff, and 174ff.

⁶⁹See above, pp. 21-26. It may well be, of course, that Coleridge arrived at this distinction independently of Kant. I am here only objecting to the terms of Shawcross' argument, and the implication of his argument that Coleridge and Kant are in opposition on this important point.

does not apply to Transcendental philosophy, which demands recognition of "an objective ground (that is, one that can be comprehended a priori, antecedently to all empirical laws . . .)" (ibid., 145; my emphasis). Therefore, Kant says that "A pure imagination, which conditions all a priori knowledge, is . . . one of the fundamental faculties of the human soul" (ibid., 146).

Now Coleridge's philosophical motive in distinguishing between the reproductive and productive synthesis is essentially that of Kant: to expose the "sophism" to which he regarded all so-called "mechanical" schemes of philosophy susceptible: "the mistaking the conditions of a thing for its causes and essence; and the process, by which we arrive at the knowledge of a faculty, for the faculty itself" (BL, I, 85). Like Kant, Coleridge is prepared to regard the "mechanical" association of images in the Fancy as a "condition under which alone experience and intellectual growth are possible" (Friend, 467).⁷⁰ Association is "the universal law [my emphasis] of the passive fancy and mechanical memory" (BL, I, 73). But Coleridge realized, like Kant, that we are only conversant with the reproductive synthesis a posteriori, or in the "after-consciousness" as he calls it (ibid., 72). And thus the principle cannot and should not be considered the basis of consciousness. Any attempt to do so is both pernicious and absurd. It is pernicious because

⁷⁰Compare Kant: "If cinnabar were sometimes red, sometimes black, sometimes light, sometimes heavy, if a man changed sometimes into this and sometimes into that animal form, if the country on the longest day were sometimes covered with fruit, sometimes with ice and snow, my empirical imagination would never find opportunity when representing red colour to bring to mind heavy cinnabar. . . . There must then be something which, as the a priori ground of a necessary synthetic unity of appearances, makes their reproduction possible" (C of PR, 132).

The process, by which Hume degraded the notion of cause and effect into a blind product of delusion and habit, into the mere sensation of proceeding life . . . associated with the images of the memory; this same process must be repeated to the equal degradation of every fundamental idea in ethics or theology (*ibid.*, 83).⁷¹

And it is absurd, because

Either the ideas, (or relics of such impression [*sic*],) will exactly imitate the order of the impression itself, which would be absolute delirium: or any one part of that impression might recall any other part, and (as from the law of continuity, there must exist in every total impression, some one or more parts, which are components of some other following total impression, and so on *ad infinitum*) any part of any impression might recall any part of any other, without a cause present to determine what it should be (*BL*, I, 77).

Consequently, Coleridge seizes upon the Kantian conclusion that experience depends upon a prehensive "unity of apperception," generated in the process of sentience:

There are [in every "act of thinking"] evidently two powers at work, which relatively to each other are active and passive; and this is not possible without an intermediate faculty, which is at once both active [productive] and passive [reproductive]. (In philosophical language, we must denominate this intermediate faculty in all its degrees and determinations, the IMAGINATION . . .) (*ibid.*, 86).⁷²

This is not exactly Kantian terminology, nor is it the way Coleridge himself always refers to Imagination. But without stretching the matter, two points can be singled out in this passage to indicate that poet

⁷¹Compare Coleridge's remark included in the Miscellaneous Criticism that a theological system which is "framed in fancy . . . never fails to produce a distortion of faith" (*Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism*, ed. T.M. Raysor [London, 1936], 238).

⁷²Coleridge is considering Imagination here merely in its epistemological aspect. The paragraph continues: "(But, 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.)" (*ibid.*).

and philosopher are thinking in basically the same direction. First, Coleridge's faculty is specifically referred to as an "intermediate" power rather than a source of "immediate" insight into noumenal reality-- a vitally important point if it is to be considered in any way related to the Kantian Einbildungskraft. And this is an aspect of Imagination of which Coleridge never loses sight. As Shawcross says, "The 'philosophic imagination' does not exist for Coleridge," who regarded Imagination "in all its characteristics, [as] essentially a faculty of mediate vision . . ." (BL, I, lxxi). Consequently, a "purely inward direction" of Imagination is "an impossibility, and the attempt to so apply it is but a form of self-deception" (*ibid.*, lxxii). And whereas the "imaginative attitude towards nature" is "indispensible" to a true insight into nature's "meaning," Coleridge "does not conceive of the imagination as establishing our knowledge of that reality; it only illuminates a knowledge already gained . . . through other channels and in other ways" (*ibid.*, lxxiii, xl).⁷³ Thus Coleridge speaks of Imagination

⁷³On this technical matter of faculty psychology, I have restricted the discussion to Coleridge, whose contact with formal philosophy made him more consistent with his terms than the other Romantics. But it is worth noting that Havens argues for exactly the same position regarding Wordsworth's concept of Imagination as Shawcross does for Coleridge's. For Wordsworth, he writes, Imagination "is not an instrument for the discovery of truth. The terms "imaginative intuition" or "imaginative insight" are misleading since they suggest that it is such an instrument, whereas the faculty by which the mind apprehends truth is reason. . . . Reason requires the aid of imagination as it does of the emotions, of the will, and of sensations, but it must guide and direct them; it alone can discover the meaning of what they offer. . . . [But] there is, so far as I recall, nothing in the discussions of the faculty by the two poets [Coleridge and Wordsworth], in their references to it, in their efforts to distinguish it from fancy, or in the illustrations they give of its operations which affirms or implies that the imagination is a faculty of insight" (Havens, I, 230). Wordsworth's identification of "Imagination" as "clearest insight" and "Reason in her most exalted mood" (Prelude, XIV, 191-92) seems to contradict Havens' view, but see his long, reasoned exegesis of this passage, I, 231-37.

as a "reconciling and mediatory power," and as a "completing power which unites . . . the plentitude of sense with the comprehensibility of the understanding" (SM, 436, 461).

The second fundamental similarity between Kant's Produktiv. Einbildungskraft and Coleridge's Imagination is that both names refer to a faculty which is Transcendental, a condition rather than an effect of self-consciousness:

How can we make bricks without straw? or build without cement? We learn all things indeed by occasion of experience; but the very facts so learnt force us inward on the antecedents [my emphasis], that must be presupposed in order to render experience itself possible (BL, I, 94).

A system, which aims to deduce the memory with all the other functions of intelligence, must of course place its first position from beyond ~~the~~ memory, and anterior to it, otherwise the principle of solution would be itself a part of the problem to be solved (ibid., 170-71).

And Coleridge leaves no doubt about the identity of this Transcendental power: the "most original construction," he says, can only be "generated by the act of the imagination," for in this, its most basic form, the Imagination is "the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception . . . " (ibid., 172, 202).⁷⁴

⁷⁴Compare Wordsworth:

No secondary hand can intervene
To fashion this ability; 'tis thine,
The prime and vital principle is thine
In the recesses of thy nature . . .
(Prelude, XIV, 213-216).

Note that in the Dejection Ode, Coleridge refers to the "shaping spirit of Imagination" as a power which "nature gave me at my birth" (85-86), and that Wordsworth holds that even to the "infant Babe" has this "power" been "imparted," the power

I have singled out this point for special emphasis for two reasons: first, because it allows us to see that the Kantian revolution in philosophy and the Romantic revolution in literature both proceed from the "Copernican" position that without the ministrations of an active, Transcendental, "co-ordinating" power, there would be no experience at all; and second, because of the tremendous significance that this discovery has when, in the aesthetic sphere, we realize that no claim for the "permanence" of art or the universality of its appeal is justifiable unless the creative act is seen as a special function of this very pre-figurative force.

The "Aesthetic Imagination" in Kantian and Romantic thought.--If Kant had done no more than demonstrate that Imagination must be considered as productive as well as reproductive, and that its productive activity takes place on a Transcendental level, there would be reason enough to consider his aesthetic as a "theoretical complement" to Romantic practice in poetry. But in fact, as I showed in my exegesis of Kant's aesthetic in Part One, the discrimination of the Transcendental and empirical processes of Imagination does not exhaust his teachings

That through the growing faculties of sense
Doth like an agent of the one great Mind
Create, creator and receiver both,
Working but in alliance with the works
Which it beholds (Prelude, II, 256-60).

Compare Stallknecht: "Imagination is the fundamental principle of the human mind. It underlies all the other mental activities, including analytical reason which is so frequently described as its opposite. We must all imagine or we must be silent and inactive, for imagination is indispensable to all interpretation, expression, and communication. Indeed, the most pedantic scheme of classification, the most pedestrian exercise of labeling and pigeonholing, owes its origin to a once fresh imaginative vision now long forgotten" (Strange Seas of Thought, 239).

regarding this "mysterious" faculty, as he calls it. For Kant held, as we have seen, that art, by incorporating "concepts of Reason" (Ideas) into images of sense, gives the former "the appearance of objective reality" (C of J, 157), and thereby makes possible that "transition from . . . the realm of natural concepts, to the realm of the concept of freedom" which the Transcendental philosophy finally demands. But at the same time, Kant realized that so long as the faculty responsible for "presenting" images is represented as under the "constraint of the understanding," it is necessarily "subject to the limitation of being conformable to the concept of the latter" (ibid., 160), which is to say that the bounds of all possible experience would be fixed within the limits of discursive concepts. Therefore Kant came to regard the act of creation as involving a different role for the Imagination, one in which it is "free to furnish unsought, over and above that agreement with a concept [my emphasis], [an] abundance of undeveloped material for the understanding"; a role in which "the understanding is at the service of the imagination, and not vice versa" (ibid., 160, 79).

Now just how far it is possible to represent Kant's "Aesthetic Imagination" as comparable to poetic Imagination in the Romantic sense is a difficult question to answer directly, since Kant, in his role as a Transcendental philosopher, saw himself as under no obligation to provide a detailed discussion of the creative act itself, but as merely bound to account for the possibility of art generally, by showing that Imagination can be thought of as "free from all guidance of rules and yet as purposive in reference to the presentment of the given concept" (ibid., 161).

Still, there are certain crucial, and unmistakable points of agreement between the Kantian and Romantic understanding of the Aesthetic Imagination--not enough, certainly, to allow the two to be considered as identical, but enough to indicate a certain fundamental similarity underlying their respective attitudes towards the genesis and effect of art, and the significance of its role.

First, and most important, both Kant and the Romantics regarded the Aesthetic Imagination as an extension, or "echo" of the unifying processes of the Productive (Primary) Imagination, rather than of the Reproductive Imagination, or Fancy: as "identical" with the former in the "kind of its agency," i.e. as a unifying power, and "differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation" (BL, I, 202).⁷⁵ The significance of this position becomes obvious when we realize that Kant,

⁷⁵Shawcross concedes that Kant had a strong influence on Coleridge here: "Hitherto Coleridge had thought of this faculty as a distinct poetic faculty, a gift granted in large measure only to a few minds, and perhaps entirely denied to some. But in Kant he found assigned to it a universal function in the construction of experience . . . [and] from this time [Coleridge was] to regard the faculty in a twofold aspect--as the common property of all minds, and also, in its highest potency, as the gift of a few" (BL, I, xliii-xliv). Compare Wordsworth's statement that in the distinction between the artist and the non-artist there "is implied nothing differing in kind . . . but only in degree" (P to LB, 63); Shelley's statement that the poetic "principle of synthesis" is "a principle within the human being, and perhaps within all sentient beings" (D of P, 109), and Blake's belief that "As all men are alike in outward form, So (and with the same infinite variety) all are alike in the Poetic Genius" ("All Religions Are One," Writings, 98).

Kant's influence here extends also to Schelling, who speaks of the Aesthetic Imagination as "simply productive perception repeating itself in its highest potency" (Works, 3, 626; cited E.D. Hirsch, Jr., Wordsworth and Schelling [New Haven, 1960], 101).

no less than the Romantics, was by the very nature of his philosophical goals and strategies committed to the position that the "ineffable state of mind" contained in artistic representations is "universally communicable" (C of J, 161; my emphasis). Otherwise there would be no grounds for including his aesthetic in the realm of Transcendental philosophy. Consequently, it is the Imagination regarded "as a productive faculty of cognition" which is engaged in the creative act, for just as the objectivity and communicability of all knowledge presupposes the a priori synthesis of the manifold in the Productive Imagination, so must the permanence of art and the universality of its appeal assume its origin in Transcendental rather than merely empirical faculties of mind. As Wordsworth said:

The law under which the processes of Fancy are carried on is as capricious as the accidents of things, and the effects are surprising, playful, ludicrous, amusing, tender, or pathetic, as the objects happen to be appositely produced or fortunately combined. . . . If she [Fancy] can win you over to her purpose, and impart to you her feelings, she cares not how unstable or transitory may be her influence . . . But the Imagination is conscious of an indestructible dominion . . . Fancy is given to quicken and to beguile the temporal part of our Nature, Imagination to incite and to support the eternal . . . (Preface to Poems, Prose Works, II, 217).

Coleridge of course agreed: "nothing can permanently please which does not contain in itself the reason why it is so and not otherwise." And it follows, since only organic things contain in themselves the reason why they are so and not otherwise, that Imaginative, and not "fanciful" deliverances can permanently please, since "The rules of the IMAGINATION are themselves the very powers of growth and production" (BL, II, 9, 65).⁷⁶

⁷⁶Or to put the point in Kantian terms, only the forms generated by the Productive Imagination (in its aesthetic capacity) can be "like

Fancy, on the other hand, since it "must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association" (BL, I, 202), can only produce poetry like that of Cowley and Otway (BL, I, 62), Beaumont and Fletcher (SC, II, 90-92), Pope (BL, I, 11), and sometimes Spenser (Miscellaneous Criticism, 37)--poetry which is superficial and transitory, because it does not relate to any a priori conditions of human experience.⁷⁷

The second fundamental parallel between the Kantian and Romantic conceptions of the Aesthetical Imagination concerns their means of distinguishing what Coleridge calls the "mode" of its operation. Here, the poets and the philosophers are in basic agreement, at least on this very general point: in the aesthetical context, the normal, discursively oriented relationship between Imagination and Understanding is suspended, and Imagination is in some sense engaged in free, creative activity. In

nature," since only the Productive Imagination is free from external law and therefore capable of the free "conformity to law without a law" which characterizes the aesthetic order. This does not, as Coleridge and Wordsworth both rightly insist, preclude the possibility that fanciful imagery may be pressed into the service of art; the principle merely insists that the Fancy itself cannot ensure the objectivity of art.

⁷⁷Compare Schiller, for whom Fancy (the "free association of images") belongs "merely to [man's] animal life, and simply affords evidence of his liberation from all external physical compulsion, without as yet warranting the inference that there is any autonomous shaping power [selbständige bildende Kraft] within him." The former power is "of a wholly material kind," and can be "explained by purely natural laws." But in the aesthetical realm, Imagination "makes the leap into aesthetic play." "A leap it must be called, since a completely new power now goes into action; for here, for the first time, mind takes a hand as lawgiver in the operations of blind instinct, subjects the arbitrary activity of the imagination to its own immutable and eternal unity, introduces its own autonomy into the transient, and its own infinity into the life of sense. But as long as brute nature still has too much power, knowing no other law but restless hastening from change to change, it will oppose to that necessity of the spirit its own unstable caprice, to that stability its own unrest, to that autonomy its own subservience, to that sublime self-sufficiency its own insatiable discontent" (Aesthetic Letters, 209, 211).

this capacity, says Kant, Imagination is "very powerful in creating another nature . . . out of the material that actual nature [the realm of 'inanimate cold objects'] gives it"; a fact which allows us to "feel our freedom from the law of association (which attaches to the empirical employment of imagination), so that the material supplied to us by nature in accordance with this law can be worked up into something which surpasses nature" (C of J, 157).

Now that idea that the Aesthetic Imagination achieves expression (through genius) by (in some sense) transforming or altering the stuff of primary sensation is, of course, contained in Coleridge's famous description of the "secondary Imagination" as a process which "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate" (BL, I, 202), and in his reference to the "modifying" and "shaping" power of Imagination (*ibid.*, II, 5; "Ode: to Dejection," 86): all of which is in keeping with the rudimentary thesis that aesthetic forms are "different" from natural objects; that art "makes familiar objects be as if they were not familiar" (Shelley, D of P, 117).

But here, we approach one of the most central, and critical moments, not just of Romantic aesthetics, but of all aesthetic theories generally. Few philosophers have denied that Imagination was capable of producing forms (by whatever process--transforming, shaping, modifying, etc.) which are not present to the perceptual field; that the poet especially is possessed of a "peculiar faculty" which "fits him to perceive / Objects unseen before" (Wordsworth, Prelude, XIII, 303-5). But in not a few cases, this very fact has earned the suspicion and even disrespect for poets amongst philosophers--especially those who accept the

"Correspondence Theory"⁷⁸ of truth. Now if this school of thought is not to be dismissed summarily, then we must ask by what right, on what Transcendental grounds may Kant speak of purely Imaginative forms as "surpassing nature," or may Wordsworth say (since it amounts to the same thing) that poetry is "the first and last of all knowledge" (P to LB, 62); or Shelley that it is "the center and circumference of knowledge" and "that to which all science must be referred" (D of P, 135)?

To answer this question, it is necessary to remember that Kant, not content with merely making human intelligence self-legislating in all realms of experience both theoretical and moral, also found it possible--and in fact necessary, as the only condition under which nature and freedom could be considered compatible--to represent the mind as capable of producing and responding to aesthetical representations to which "no concept can be fully adequate," and which represent "a completeness of which there is no example in nature" (C of J, 157-58). In other words, not only did Kant regard man as capable of generating the principles by which nature becomes experience and by which experience becomes accountable action, but also as able, "by means of imagination," to "remould experience . . . in accordance with principles which occupy

⁷⁸The "Correspondence Theory" of truth, usually supported by Empiricists, holds that truth is a property only of those propositions about the world to which there corresponds a certain set of "facts." Obviously, since Kant and the Romantics hold that all knowledge is made up, partly, of "what our own faculty of knowledge . . . supplies from itself" (C of PR, 42), neither the poets nor the philosopher could accept this theory. Blake, in fact, completely reverses the premises of this theory when he says that "Every thing possible to be believ'd is an image of truth" (MHH, Pl. 8, 18). With this statement, we might compare the following from Kant's Critique of Pure Reason: "If the imagination is not simply to be visionary [schwärmen], but is to be inventive under the strict surveillance of reason [Vernunft], there must always be something that is completely certain . . . namely, the possibility of the object itself" ((613).

a higher place in reason [Vernunft] . . ." (ibid., 157). And since these "principles" underlie all rationale concerning virtuous conduct and the ultimate "destiny" of mankind, art, as a sensual representation of these principles, "surpasses nature" by humanizing it, by giving it a moral bearing. This is what Kant means when he speaks of how poetry "expands the mind by setting the imagination at liberty and by offering, within the limits of a given concept, amid the unbounded variety of possible forms accordant therewith, that which unites the presentment of this concept with a wealth of thought to which no verbal expression is completely adequate, and so rising aesthetically to [moral and theological] ideas" (ibid., 170-71).

Now although, as I have said, it would be misleading to draw a one-to-one relationship between Kant's Aesthetic Imagination, and the poetic Imagination as understood by the Romantics, it should be noted that almost every significant statement that the Romantics make regarding the preeminence of art or the artistic vision over nature or science, derives from a notion which is analogous to Kant's principle that the liberated Imagination is capable of conjoining fact and infinity, and presenting their union symbolically to sense by a process "which no science can teach and no industry can learn" (C of J, 160). This view of Imagination is contained, for example, in Blake's concept of a "four-fold vision," by which he means the capacity

To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour
("Auguries of Innocence," 1-4;
Writings, 431).

And it is this same capacity of the poetic Imagination to "idealize and unify" that which is given as merely empirically factual and disparate, to "incorporate the reason in images of the sense, and organize . . . the fluxes of the sense by the permanent and self-circling energies of the reason" (Coleridge, SM, 436), which establishes the uniqueness and preeminence of the poetic vision for Coleridge. As he said in a lecture on the drama, "The ideal of earnest poetry consists in the union and harmonious melting down, the fusion of the sensual into the spiritual, of the man as an animal into man as a power of reason and self-government . . ." (SC, II, 153). And it was Wordsworth's great "gift," he says, to spread "the depth and height of the ideal world around forms, incidents, and situations, of which, for the common view, custom had bedimmed all the lustre, had dried up the sparkle and the dew drops" (BL, I, 59). Similarly, in Shakespeare, Imaginative power is most fully realized in the production of "the ultimate end of human thought and human feeling, unity, and . . . the reduction of the spirit to its principle and fountain, who alone is truly One" (SC, I, 191-92).

In Wordsworth, this basically Kantian tendency to regard the Aesthetic Imagination as a power which discovers in natural objects "types and symbols of Eternity" (Prelude, VI, 639), a faculty whereby the poet "produces--that is, images--individual forms in which are embodied universal ideas or abstractions,"⁷⁹ is especially strong. In

⁷⁹Crabbe Robinson, quoting Wordsworth in his diary for Sept. 11, 1816; cited Havens, I, 243. In the same entry, Robinson traces this concept of Imagination to the "German philosophers," who held that "by the imagination the mere fact is exhibited as connected with that infinity without which there is no poetry" (cited op. cit., 240). Robinson often noted what he called a "German bent" in Wordsworth's mind. (Rader, op. cit., 66-67.)

the famous encomium upon Imagination in Book VI of the Prelude, for example, Wordsworth speaks of the capacity of this "awful Power," when isolated from the "light of sense," to reveal that "whether we be young or old,"

Our destiny, our being's heart and home,
Is with infinitude, and only there;
With hope it is, hope that can never die,
Effort, and expectation, and desire,
And something evermore about to be
(603-8).

And under the sway of this "power," the mountain, the stream, and "The unfettered clouds and region of the Heavens" all seemed

like workings of one mind, the features
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree;
Characters of the great Apocalypse,
The types and symbols of Eternity,
Of first, and last, and midst, and without end
(ibid., 636-40).

Similarly, the scene from Mount Snowden presented him with

the emblem of a mind
That feeds upon infinity, that broods
Over the dark abyss, intent to hear
Its voices issuing forth to silent light
In one continuous stream; a mind sustained
By recognitions of transcendent power,
In sense conducting to ideal form,
In soul of more than mortal privilege
(ibid., XIV, 70-77).

When the Imagination is thus "set at liberty," as Kant said, it is capable of "rising aesthetically to ideas" (C of J, 170-71). And so it is with Wordsworth: by means of the "glorious faculty / That higher minds bear with them," they are able to "build up greatest things / From least suggestions." And since they are "By sensible impressions not enthralled,"

they may

hold fit converse with the spiritual world,
And with the generations of mankind
Spread over time, past, present, and to come,
Age after age, till Time shall be no more
(XIV, 89-90, 101-2, 106-11).

And "all affections" of such "higher minds" are "by communion raised /
From earth to heaven, from human to divine . . ." (ibid., 117-18).

Less animated, but more specifically Kantian in tone and terminology is the passage from Book IV of the Excursion, where the Wanderer speaks of how the Imagination, when "not permitted . . . / To waste her powers . . . / On fickle pleasures, and superfluous cares" is

left free
And puissant to range the solemn walks
Of time and nature, girded by a zone
That, while it binds, invigorates and supports
(819-21; 822-25).

Its deliverances, while they "excite the scorn / Or move the pity of unthinking minds" are in reality "outward ministers / Of inward conscience" which serve "to exalt / The forms of Nature, and enlarge her powers" (ibid., 834-37; 845-46).

Shelley's Defense of Poetry provides, of course, one of the classic statements of the idealizing power of creative Imagination in Romantic poetics. The product of Imagination, he says, is "the image of life expressed in its eternal truth," and the "creation of actions according to the unchangeable forms of human nature" (115). Consequently, poetry (and note the similarity both in wording and thought to Kant's description of the power of poetry quoted above, pp. 55 and 206)

enlarges the circumference of the imagination by replenishing it with thoughts of ever new delight, which have the power of attracting and assimilating to their own nature all other thoughts, and which form new intervals and interstices whose void forever craves fresh food. Poetry strengthens that faculty which is the organ of the moral nature of man [in Kant, *die Vernunft*], in the same manner as exercise strengthens a limb (118; my emphasis).

And again,

What were Virtue, Love, Patriotism, Friendship--what were the scenery of this beautiful Universe which we inhabit; what were our consolations on this side of the grave, and what were our aspirations beyond it,--if Poetry did not ascend to bring light and fire from those eternal regions where the owl-winged faculty of calculation dare not ever soar? (ibid., 135).⁸⁰

And Kant makes precisely the same point when he describes the "art of the poet" as the means by which our Ideals are rendered compatible with reality, either by "realizing to sense" such "rational ideas" as eternal life, freedom, or final purposes in creation; or conversely, as revealing the universal aspects of such concrete human experiences as (to choose Kant's examples) the fear of death, the pain of jealousy, or the ecstasy of love.

But of course, awareness that the Ideas of Reason are "compatible with reality" does not amount to theoretical knowledge of those Ideas: for Kant, at least, knowledge that we are not brute beasts is not knowledge that we are gods, and he always retained his belief that that which is "unconditioned" is patently unknowable. That is, his aesthetic in no way influences his basic conviction that the Ideas are merely

⁸⁰"The consciousness of virtue, if we substitute it in our thoughts for a virtuous man, diffuses in the mind a multitude of sublime and restful feelings, and a boundless prospect of a joyful future, to which no expression that is measured by a definite concept completely attains" (Kant, C of J, 159-60; my emphasis).

"regulative," or "useful fictions" to which we willingly subscribe in order to satisfy the quest of Reason for absolute totality in our experience. And for this reason, the poet never attains the status of "prophet" or "legislator of the world" in Kant, who was obliged to withhold even from the scope of genius that which for the Romantics was most urgently and immediately affirmed by visionary experience: direct contact with noumenal reality, or recognition that Imagination, in breaking from the "constraints" of discursive Understanding, becomes revelatory, and "penetrates through" to the "ground of the unity of the supersensible, which lies at the basis of nature, with that which the concept of freedom practically contains . . ." (C of J, 12).⁸¹

But as a system of philosophy, Kantian Idealism should not be considered incompatible with the spirit of Romanticism simply because it cannot be called upon to provide theoretical sanctions for the whole spectrum of feelings and thoughts which find expression in poetry, or in any of the arts for that matter, since to do so would cloud the very real and important differences both in goals and methods which distinguish two distinct modes of discourse. And in any case, considered as a

⁸¹Commenting on this point, Bosanquet wrote that "The history of thought can show no more dramatic spectacle than that of this great intellectual pioneer beating out his track for forty years in the wilderness of technical philosophy, and bringing his people at last to the entrance upon a new world of free and humanizing culture, which, so far as we can tell, he never thoroughly made his own" (A History of Aesthetic [London, 1932], 255).

It is not surprising that so many of Kant's "people" should count amongst our most prominent creative artists: like Coleridge and Schiller, Beethoven too was "seized and carried away" by Kant, and Goethe claimed to owe to the Critique of Judgment "one of the happiest moments of my life" (Ernst Cassirer, Rousseau, Kant and Goethe, trans. J. Gutmann, P. Kristeller and J. Randall, Jr. [New York, 1963], 98, 64).

measure of its relative compatibility with the premises and aims of the Romantic revolution in literature, what the Kantian philosophy does achieve is far more significant than what it does not. For in his discovery that the aesthetic order constitutes not merely a third dimension of the mind but must emerge, as Marcuse says, "as its center, the medium through which nature becomes susceptible to freedom, necessity to autonomy," (op. cit., 159), Kant's philosophy assigns to poetry the most significant philosophical and cultural role it had known since the Renaissance. And his regard for the role of the poet was soon fully justified by those developments in literature which acted on, and developed from the very revolutionary concepts of man, of nature, and of human life which he himself had initiated.

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