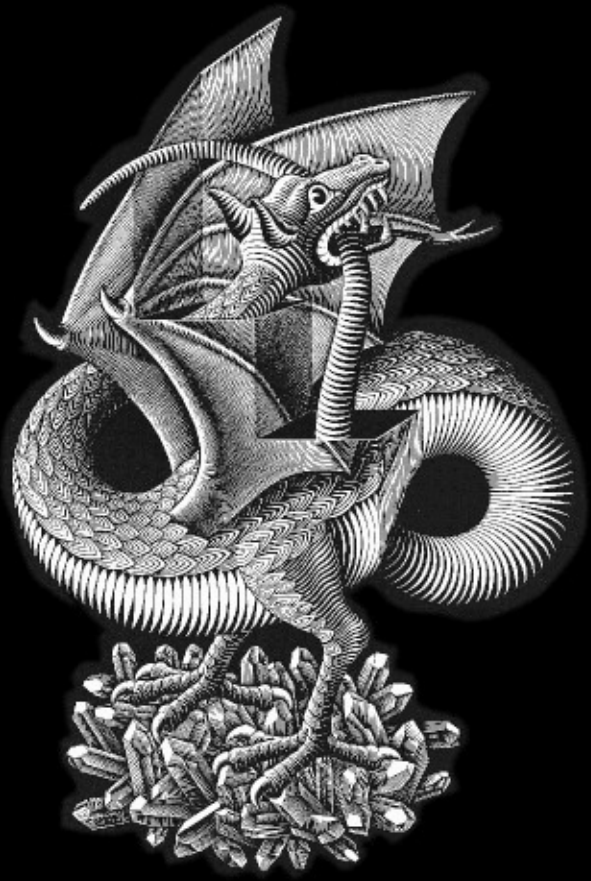

Knowledge and Indifference in English Romantic Prose

TIM MILNES

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KNOWLEDGE AND INDIFFERENCE IN ENGLISH ROMANTIC PROSE

This ambitious study sheds new light on the way in which the English Romantics dealt with the basic problems of knowledge, particularly as they inherited them from the philosopher David Hume. Kant complained that the failure of philosophy in the eighteenth century to answer empirical scepticism had produced a culture of 'indifferentism'. Tim Milnes explores the way in which Romantic writers extended this epistemic indifference through their resistance to argumentation, and finds that it exists in a perpetual state of tension with a compulsion to know. This tension is most clearly evident in the prose writing of the period, in works such as Wordsworth's *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, Hazlitt's *Essay on the Principles of Human Action* and Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*. Milnes argues that it is in their oscillation between knowledge and indifference that the Romantics prefigure the ambivalent negotiations of modern post-analytic philosophy.

TIM MILNES is Lecturer in English at the University of Edinburgh. He has published articles in the *Journal of the History of Ideas*, *Comparative Literature*, *Studies in Romanticism* and *European Romantic Review*.

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For my parents, Les and Audrey Milnes

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Introduction: Romanticism's knowing ways

> Philosophy inspires much unhappy love.
>
> Stanley Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?*[1]

ROMANTIC INDIFFERENTISM

The principal argument of this book is that English Romantic writing has a deep investment in the problem of knowledge, even as it attempts to conceal that involvement, and that it represents the first major attempt in Britain to retrieve philosophical thought from its confinement, first by Hume, then by Reid and the Scottish philosophers of common sense, to the margins of experience. The manner in which this retrieval is carried through, moreover, establishes a pattern for the treatment of knowledge which has been broadly followed by English-language philosophy to the present day. Paradoxically, part of that pattern is a denial of interest in epistemological questions, a cultivated indifference which is itself parasitic upon an urgent engagement with the twin questions of what, and how one knows.

Kant complained in his Preface to the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781 that, caught between a despotic rationalism and an anarchic scepticism, the predominant attitude of late eighteenth-century thought towards the problem of knowledge had become what he called, using an English term, one of 'indifferentism'.[2] English Romanticism internalizes and continues this indifference to knowing. Lamb admitted in a 1810 letter to Thomas Manning that '[n]othing puzzles me more than time and space, and yet nothing puzzles me less, for I never think about them'.[3] Yet the ambivalence of the English Romantics to the question of knowledge is attested to by the very term 'Romantic philosophy' – or, more precisely, 'Romantic epistemology' – which can sound at one moment like an oxymoron, and the next a tautology. On one hand, it is generally acknowledged that within the loose assemblage of family

resemblances which characterize English Romantic writing, a preoccupation with knowledge – or rather, to signal its preference for active over static paradigms, *knowing* – is one of the most widely shared. Indeed, at least since the publication of M. H. Abrams' *The Mirror and the Lamp* almost half a century ago, it has been a commonplace that the restructuring of knowing constitutes Romanticism's primary movement.[4] On the other hand, also recognised (though perhaps not as widely) is the way in which, at the same time, it places *theory* of knowledge under erasure, replacing it with discourses of emotional engagement, the exertion of power, or the striving of the will. Yet the uncertain manner in which this transposition is effected raises problems. In particular, one question which has occupied commentators for the past thirty years is whether the Romantic refashioning of cognition represents a break with western foundationalism and logocentrism, or merely a continuance of it by other means. Paul de Man and Kathleen Wheeler, for instance, see Romantic irony as inherently subversive and self-deconstructing. For them, the Romantic consciousness 'consists of the presence of nothingness [...].'[5] Alternatively, Tilottama Rajan and Richard Rorty detect, despite this, a positivist nostalgia for knowing; countering that, in Rajan's words, Romantic writers 'almost never [...] reach that zero degree of self-mystification envisaged by de Man [...]'.[6]

The peculiarity of the problem which Romanticism simultaneously faces and effaces is that it is one which, having developed within epistemology, rebounds upon the discipline itself. At root, it is the direct consequence of Hume's separation of truth and value. In *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Hume had reduced all statements which were capable of being true or false to an exhaustive dual grid of logical and empirical propositions: 'Truth or falsehood,' he asserts, 'consists in an agreement or disagreement either to the *real* relations of ideas, or to *real* existence and matter of fact. Whatever, therefore, is not susceptible of this agreement or disagreement, is incapable of being true or false [...].'[7] This division of knowledge forms the basis for the *Enquiries*' notorious incendiary injunction regarding those works of 'sophistry and illusion' which would exceed this grid, as well as for later attempts by logical positivists to map the conditions of meaning.[8] The important consequence for Hume, however, was that among those statements which clearly fell outside the twofold epistemic cell of matters of fact and the relations of ideas were those concerning *value*. Value judgements, he concluded, were non-epistemic. They expressed attitudes about how the world 'ought' to be, rather than assertions regarding how the world 'is', and therefore could

be neither true nor false. Having being led by his first dichotomy into this second, far more worrying one, Hume found himself advocating the relegation of philosophy, in the form of inquiry into the foundations of knowledge, from the kind of everyday lived experience which was inherently value-rich. Thus, for Hume and his successors such as Reid and Beattie, epistemological attempts to justify values gave way to *naturalistic* accounts of values. In this light, Hume's declaration that the threat of '*total* scepticism' was a 'superfluous' question, since 'Nature, by an absolute and uncontroulable necessity has determin'd us to judge as well as to breathe and feel [...]' was tantamount to an admission that traditional philosophy had marginalized itself from the mainstream of human concerns, or 'common sense'.[9] At the same time, two questions nigglingly remained: first, regarding whether human beings were (naturalistically speaking) necessarily determined to philosophize in a non-naturalistic way; and second, whether scepticism was, in turn, as inevitable to that kind of philosophical thinking as breathing and feeling were to everyday life.

By reacting against Hume's notion of the divided life and endeavouring to heal the rift between knowledge and value, or between philosophical doubt and an acceptance of the unreflective certainties of ordinary experience, English Romanticism accepts the challenge of the philosophical sceptic. But rather than meeting this challenge on the sceptic's own grounds within philosophy, or reverting to a Scottish naturalism which rejects the attempt to put knowledge (and, by extension, the subject) 'first', Romantic discourse develops an alternating pattern of engagement with, and abstention from philosophical argument. Michael Cooke expressed this condition – which, following Morse Peckham, he saw as resulting from the 'explanatory collapse' of Romanticism – as its 'philosophy of inclusion', whereby argument and consensus are fused in a process which involves 'an argument *with*, using the double force of the preposition to suggest at once resistance and sharing'.[10] My argument, however, while itself sharing a field of concern with Cooke's, stresses the agonistic nature of Romantic ambivalence. It is the conflict of its commitment *and* indifference to justification which manifests Romanticism's rebellious dependency upon the foundations of knowledge, and upon the Cartesian tradition of the science of knowledge as foundational to all others.

Since the term 'foundationalism' and its corollaries are central to what proceeds, some initial clarification of usage is called for. Roughly speaking, there are two senses of the term: a technical one used by

modern philosophers working within the Anglophone tradition, and a more general one, which the same philosophers are apt to deplore. The first application, which might be called 'justificatory' foundationalism, confines itself to giving an ostensibly factual account of the structure of any individual's system of *justified beliefs*. At its plainest, it claims that all inferential reasoning ends in a noninferential ground; in other words, that all *mediately* justified beliefs (beliefs justified by other beliefs) are ultimately justified by *immediately* justified beliefs (beliefs which require no other beliefs for their justification). What exercises foundationalists of this sort, and provides much of the force behind their argument, is the twin-spectre of circularity or infinite regress in human reasoning. Without some kind of foundational structure, it is argued, epistemic deliberation looks like pointless tail-chasing, a search for an endlessly deferred justification. Consequently, the language of foundationalism is coloured by metaphors of stability, linearity and closure. Terms such as 'grounds', 'ends', 'first principles' or 'sense-datum' are not uncommon.

Beyond the specialized discourse of Anglo-American epistemology, however, other commentators have noted that such fears and figures also infect broader traditions within western philosophy, dating back to Aristotle and Plato. From Descartes until the middle of the twentieth century the dominant view of philosophy itself has rested upon the epistemological search for certainty in self-evident foundations, whether in the intuitive deduction of the Cartesian *cogito*, Kant's transcendental conditions of experience, or logical positivism's notion of incorrigible sense-data. At the heart of this search is the conviction, not just that justified belief is foundational in structure, but that *true* justified belief or (leaving aside Gettier-type problems[11]) knowledge itself is foundational. This kind of 'epistemic' foundationalism forms the second sense of the term, one which, despite having been forced onto its back foot for much of the twentieth century, English-language philosophy has been rather more reluctant to question. Even foundationalism's classic opponent, coherentism, which against the 'bricks-and-mortar' model proposes a holistic, 'spider's web' structure of mutually supporting beliefs, is more commonly advocated within a justificatory than within an epistemic context.[12] Those who have sought to roll back the influence of foundationalism in other disciplines, meanwhile, have been reluctant to reject it outright. Kuhn, for instance, having accounted for scientific progress as a process of immanent paradigm-shift, nonetheless found the foundationalist presumption that scientific theories are 'simply man-made interpretations of given data [. . .] impossible to relinquish

entirely [. . .]'.[13] Similarly, in ethics, Bernard Williams' attack on the foundationalist 'linear search for reasons' which can itself only end with 'an unrationalized principle'[14] is limited to ethical theory, and not extended to the natural sciences, which in his view remain 'capable of objective truth'.[15]

The reasons for this cautiousness are not difficult to understand. For unlike the first, the fate of this second, more general kind of foundationalism is tightly bound with that of philosophy itself. Without the Cartesian notion that knowledge can ground itself in the apprehension of a truth simple and transparent, together with the Kantian ruling that the mode of this knowledge sets limits on all empiricial deliberation, the priority of 'knowledge' itself in human life is open to challenge. If foundational metaphors for truth and knowledge come to be seen as optional, then, as Rorty points out, 'so is epistemology, and so is philosophy as it has understood itself since the middle of the last century'.[16] In this way, the reasons behind why the interrogation of this 'epistemic' sense of foundationalism attracts the hostility of many Anglo-American philosophers are the same as those which make this sense, rather than the first, the object of the present enquiry. For it is often claimed that Hegel is the first seriously to challenge Descartes' elevation of knowledge on an escalating process of doubt, countering in the Introduction to the *Phenomenology* that 'it is hard to see why we should not turn round and mistrust this very mistrust'.[17] In their own way, however, the Scottish naturalists had already made a comparable move, while in Germany Jacobi had long maintained his anti-philosophical conviction that '[e]very avenue of demonstration ends up in fatalism', albeit not without discomfort, given his own addiction to argumentation.[18] I want to argue that in a similar way, by seeking at once to refute and ignore Hume, oscillating uneasily between 'fact' and 'value', 'philosophy' and 'life', the English Romantics, almost without realizing it (and afterwards with some ambivalence), challenged the boundaries of foundationalism.

English Romanticism thus contains the same knot of concerns which have unwound into an ongoing ambivalence in Anglophone philosophy about the value of 'first philosophy'; an equivocation, however, which remains distinct from the more comprehensive rejection of epistemology urged by Franco-German thought since Heidegger. Moreover, in its fluctuating course between seeking and resisting knowledge, Romanticism formulates the first but enduring creed for non-foundationalists generally from Nietzsche to Rorty: the dictum that, in Nietzsche's phrase, Truth is not 'something there', but something 'created'.[19]

SERPENT AND LOGOS: CREATION VS. FOUNDATION

At the centre of this issue, and so far somewhat neglected, are two related developments in England at the end of the eighteenth century. The first is the rise of the poet as a philosophical innovator following the subduing of conventional epistemology by scepticism. Mid and late eighteenth-century British philosophy was burdened with a barely voiced view that there may indeed be no response to Hume, and thus no answer to the 'problem' of knowledge. Monboddo gravely surmised in 1779 that to agree with Hume was to accept that 'there can be no science nor knowledge of any kind'.[20] This was, in many respects, a tacit acceptance that on his own ground the sceptic was unanswerable; in Jacobi's words, 'that there is no arguing against' or 'no defeating the *upper or full blown idealist à la Hume* [...]'.[21] For Monboddo, the obvious remedy for this, and indeed the only recourse for theism, was to return to the metaphysical systems of ancient Greece, yet even he was forced to concede, ruefully, that 'Metaphysics [...] are, at present, in great disrepute among men of sense [...].'[22] There was no high-road back to Platonic idealism for those who felt that the weight of the arguments of Bacon and Locke pressed them towards the uncanny conclusions of Berkeley and Hume.

Yet just as Hume's influence effectively paralysed conventional philosophy of knowledge in the late eighteenth century, it also gave rise to a philosophically intense Romantic movement in poetry and aesthetics. Deeply troubled by scepticism, but unable to dissolve it, the Romantics made a virtue of abstaining from argument altogether. This represented not a refutation of Hume, but an escape from scepticism by fleeing philosophy. While Monboddo had felt it was his duty to engage with 'the absurdities of his philosophy', among the Romantics Hume was sidelined or ignored.[23] Even Coleridge, who virtually alone attacked Hume's arguments directly, rarely did so, preferring to demonize the relatively conservative Locke. Typical of this is his warning in *Biographia Literaria* that if one accepts without qualification the Lockean principle, *nihil in intellectu quod non prius in sensu*, then 'what Hume had demonstratively deduced from this concession concerning cause and effect', would apply 'with equal and crushing force' to all knowledge.[24] The implication, as so often, is that Locke's is the original and greater philosophical error.

Certainly Hume had a radical appeal for some. Hazlitt found his nominalism useful for his own theory of abstraction, and Shelley used the same for more overtly political ends. Nonetheless, and despite the fact

that Hume pioneered the notion of the associative imagination a full ten years before Hartley's 1749 *Observations on Man*, elsewhere the mood was dismissive. More typical is Lamb's complaint to Manning in 1800 of that 'Damned Philosophical Humeian indifference, so cold & unnatural & inhuman',[25] and Wordsworth's sour aside in his 1815 'Essay' to the effect that Adam Smith was 'the worst critic, David Hume not excepted, that Scotland, a soil to which this sort of weed seems natural, has produced'.[26] The anti-Caledonian bent of these remarks, like Lamb's fulminations against the systematizing Scottish intellect in his essay 'Imperfect Sympathies', reveals the extent to which, for the English mind in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a specific philosophical position, viz. Humean scepticism, became identified with the general *practice* of philosophy, and that, in turn, with the culture of the Scottish universities. There is, indeed, an ambivalence to these remarks. Lamb's punning identification of the 'inhuman' in the 'Humeian' obsession with philosophy – on the grounds of the latter's 'indifference' to life – is logically, but not tonally consonant with his own professed indifference to questions of time and space. His rhetoric of attachment involves a stance of ironic detachment and indifference to philosophy's own commitment to knowledge which Hume, for all his ironizing over his sceptical predicament, would have found 'cold and unnatural'. The point here is that despite Lamb's own posture, his attack on philosophy's indifference with an indifference to philosophy is originally targeted not towards 'Damned *Philosophical* Humeian indifference', but 'Damned Philosophical *Humeian* indifference' – in other words, not the activity of philosophizing as such, but specifically the outcome of that activity in Hume's hands, namely an alienating Hobson's choice of scepticism or naturalism. In the same way, the motivating force behind Wordsworth's condemnation of Smith and Hume is their belief, as Wordsworth puts it, 'that there are no fixed principles in human nature [...]'.[27] The anti-philosophical turn in English Romanticism, then, is itself sustained by a deep epistemological anxiety, just as its conviction that scepticism is merely a symptom of philosophy is tainted by the fear that philosophy is not a formal discipline but is itself a form of life, no more optional as an activity than thinking.

A second, related development determining Romanticism's outlook on knowledge is the emergence of a radical theory of creation. Isaiah Berlin identifies this as the Romantic belief 'that truth is not an objective structure, independent of those who seek it, the hidden treasure waiting to be found but is itself in all its guises created by the seeker'.[28] It was a commonplace of eighteenth-century aesthetics and epistemology that in

exceptional cases original genius, like Shaftesbury's 'just PROMETHEUS', might create a kind of beauty which excelled that of the faithful imitator of nature.[29] But only within Romanticism does one find the idea that aesthetic creativeness might be paradigmatic for human knowledge, and only with Romanticism, as Rorty notes, does one encounter the notion 'that truth is made rather than found'.[30] The difference between these views, to use a well-known analogy of the time, is comparable to that between Greek and Hebraic mythologies of divine creation. On the Platonic model, knowledge was prior to actual creation. In Plato's mythology of creation in *Timaeus*, the Demiurge proceeded like a craftsman, manipulating and combining materials which came to hand in order to fashion a new whole. But such elements, like the plan to which he worked, were themselves already discovered or present for him.[31] Similarly, neoclassical conceptions of creation in eighteenth-century Britain generally insisted upon a prior foundation of empirical truth to which new creations were either subject or (more rarely) miraculous exceptions. Alexander Gerard's *Essay on Genius*, for instance, though outwardly an apology for the creative imagination, insists 'that a man can scarce be said to have invented till he has exercised his judgement'.[32] Even Shaftesbury's non-empirical and potentially subversive notion of '*Poetical* [. . .] *Truth*' is mandated by '*natural Knowledge*, *fundamental Reason*, and *common Sense*'.[33] With the Romantics, however, this order is reversed: knowledge, and epistemic warrant, it was suggested, was *itself* a creative enterprise. After the manner of the Christian God of Genesis who creates *ex nihilo*, the Romantics viewed creation as healing its own difference with truth, thereby annihilating the division between act and thought, means and predetermined end. Predictably, it is in Coleridge's work that the linkage between divine and human creation is most pronounced; the unity of law and spontaneity being expressed by the logos, the original creative word, or 'infinite I AM', of which the human mind was an echo.[34] Elsewhere, however, this new promotion of creation is observable on many levels in Romantic writing. It can be seen in Hazlitt's argument in *An Essay on the Principles of Human Action* that the agent '*creates* the object'[35] which determines his moral judgement, no less than in Wordsworth's assertion that poetic genius is responsible for 'the introduction of a new element into the intellectual universe [. . .]'.[36]

That which liberated knowing, however, also made it risky. The self-ordering and regulative power of the logos is always in peril of being undermined by its playful, satanic alter-ego: '[t]he serpent', as Geoffrey Hartman puts it, 'is the first deconstructor of the logos'.[37] Coleridge

himself was at first pleased to liken the active process of reading in *Biographia Literaria* to 'the motion of a serpent, which the Egyptians made the emblem of intellectual power [...]'.[38] But by the time of the publication of *Aids to Reflection* it had become 'the Symbol of the Understanding', or:

> the *sophistic* Principle, the wily Tempter to Evil by counterfeit Good [...] ever in league with, and always first applying to, the *Desire*, as the inferior nature in Man, the *Woman* in our Humanity; and through the DESIRE prevailing on the WILL (the *Man*hood, *Vir*tus) against the command of the Universal Reason, and against the Light of Reason in the WILL itself.[39]

The danger inherent in a theory which sees knowledge as an ongoing process of creation is that the price of thus emulating God is to be cast out of an Eden of certainty. What is gained is a sense of freedom and of truth as self-created, but also, and consequently, of truth as fallible, indeterminate, and groundless. M. H. Abrams has charted the way in which the Romantic figuration of knowledge typically 'fuses the idea of the circular return with the idea of linear progress', yet the relationship was more one of torsion than of fusion.[40] Coleridge himself, as will be seen, deployed various metaphysical strategies to secure the creative spiral to firm foundations. But among contemporaries still working within a culture of empiricism, commitment was edgy. As Mark Kipperman puts it, the Romantic mind 'hovers' between 'the word as symbol needing to be understood and the mind as freedom, asserting itself in creation'.[41] Yet what might be better understood is the way in which English Romanticism comes to define itself by this oscillation and indecision, prizing indifference and 'negative capability' above argument to the point where the literal articulation of its ideal is itself superseded by its metaphoric presentation, its enactment in poetry. Again, essential to such an understanding is the recognition that in this respect Romanticism in England is a way of rejecting scepticism which comes to refuse the activity of philosophizing as such, insofar as that discipline represents the search for knowledge as a quest for certainty.

Yet by elevating metaphor and poetic figuration to a new level of epistemic autonomy, Romanticism simultaneously proposes two very different alternatives: first, that the notion of created truth might rescue philosophy (and knowledge) from scepticism; and, second, that poetic creation might obviate the need for epistemic certainty, and thus for 'philosophy' altogether. Unlike the American pragmatists a century later, the English Romantics did not always use the notion of creation to sever

ties with empirical foundationalism. Indeed, more frequently they attempted instead to make a foundation *of it*. James was able to assert with confidence that '[i]n our cognitive as well as in our active life we are creative. We *add*, both to the subject and to the predicate part of reality. The world stands really malleable [...]. Man *engenders* truths upon it'.[42] But this was only because he had adopted the '*attitude of looking away from first things, principles, "categories", supposed necessities; and of looking towards last things, fruits, consequences, facts*'.[43] It is difficult to find such thoroughgoing pragmatism in Romantic texts – leading Dewey to complain that the Romantics merely glorified the flux of creation for its own sake.[44] But this is only half the story. Dewey's charge may, for instance, be true of Keats's notion of negative capability or Lamb's avowed preference for suggestion over comprehension. But when one considers Wordsworth's claim in the 1800 Preface that 'Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge', one finds an enduring desire for epistemic security; for stability or verifiability, or for what is 'first and last' in knowledge: in short, for foundations.[45]

This Romantic ambivalence is characteristically displayed in one of its most celebrated attacks on knowledge, namely De Quincey's definition of literature, which, as Jonathan Bate notes, alternates between the two distinctive positions represented respectively in his 1823 *Letters to a Young Man* and his 1848 essay, 'The Poetry of Pope'.[46] In the first, literature is boldly marked as value-rich and non-epistemic, the domain not of fact, but of power: 'All that is literature seeks to communicate power', De Quincey asserts, 'all that is not literature, to communicate knowledge'.[47] Two and a half decades later, however, De Quincey's position is more subtle, which is to say, uneasy:

> There is, first, the literature of *knowledge*; and, secondly, the literature of *power*. The function of the first is – to *teach*; the function of the second is – to *move* [...]. The first speaks to the *mere* discursive understanding; the second speaks ultimately, it may happen, to the higher understanding or reason, but always *through* affections of pleasure and sympathy.[48]

Literature now internalizes the distinction between epistemic and non-epistemic which originally defined it, and 'power' itself is reinvested with a 'higher' epistemic status, a status which – supported by a sequence of qualifying clauses which threatens to regress ever further – is all the more insecure for being 'higher'. But De Quincey's change of heart is by no means unusual; indeed, in Romantic prose such ambivalence is the norm, and similar patterns can be found in the very writers, Coleridge

and Wordsworth among them, whose ideas De Quincey is developing here. In this respect, within Wordsworth's 'poetic truth' and Lamb's indifferentism as much as De Quincey's 'literature', one can see the same post-Humean dilemma at work; namely, and respectively, between making creation (or power, or life) the ground of knowing, or celebrating the spiral of creative activity regardless of truth; or again, between finding a secure 'end' or terminus for thought, and bringing thought's linear pursuit of certainty itself to an end.

DISFIGURING ARGUMENT

One of the major legacies, then, of Hume's uncoupling of statements of value from statements of fact is a dilation of the margin between language and the world to which it refers or corresponds. Though Hume himself did not go so far as to claim that value-statements were meaningless (just incapable of being known to be true or false) his scepticism led to an intensification of the question of the relation between truth and language – or to put it another way, between literal meaning, referentially grounded in the world, and figurative meaning, creating its own world. This intensification of the question, rather than its resolution, leads to Romanticism. The Romantics energize the field of meaning with poetic value, almost to the extent of collapsing the distinction between reference and figure, declaring with Shelley that 'language itself is poetry'.[49] At such moments, the centrifugal tendency in Romantic writing, its indifference to traditional philosophy's task of binding a reified language and world in knowledge is so pronounced that it seems possible, with Rajan, to read in it 'a deconstruction that is postorganicist rather than poststructuralist'.[50] Yet once again, indifference always carries with it the tincture of commitment, and it is also possible to see the very repression of philosophy's discourse of knowledge as its perpetuation by other means. From this perspective, the elevation of 'life' over reflection is itself carried through in the service of reflection. Knowledge, in other words, is rescued from its tired search for 'truth' and guided, whether by poetry or a poetic quasi-philosophy, towards the ineffable 'Truth' of figuration in which fact and value are once again reunited. Language itself is poetry, but as Shelley continues, 'to be a poet is to apprehend the true and the beautiful, in a word the good which exists in the relation, subsisting, first between existence and perception, and secondly between perception and expression'.[51] In Hume's post-lapserian dispensation, the condition of figuration is one of hopeless yet incorrigible nostalgic hunger

for knowledge. Even Shelley's visionary cycles of metaphor do not extend to deconstructing philosophy's version of truth as resting on a division of word and object, expression and existence.

To note this is, in a sense, to rehearse what Stanley Cavell has observed, namely that the Romantics are engaged in a process of 'attacking philosophy in the name of redeeming it', seeking at once to revitalize fact with poetry and cement poetic value with philosophical knowledge. This in turn produces the peculiarly 'Romantic perception of human doubleness', a simultaneous craving for the comforts of philosophical limitation and for an escape from such comforts through poetry, a perception in turn shared by philosophers such as Wittgenstein and Heidegger.[52] More questionable, however, is Cavell's further claim that this condition can be rendered primarily as the story of how the Romantics monitor the stability of the Kantian bargain for knowledge. For the English Romantics (putting Coleridge to one side for a moment), the most pressing concern was not dissatisfaction with the security of Kant's pact between understanding and reason, but the question of whether a certain kind of empiricism – a kind that seemed constitutionally prone to slip into scepticism – was worth saving from itself, or whether, in the absence of transcendental safety-nets, the quest for knowledge (for causes, grounds, first principles) should be abandoned wholesale. From this vantage point, the shadow of Hume looms larger than that of Kant. Moreover, at this point the difference between the German and the English responses to this issue becomes crucial, for though both turn to poetry and figuration as a recuperation of value and life from depleted knowledge, the latter do so without the post-Kantian assurance that their troping and irony embody the reflexional relationship between the real and the ideal, thereby expressing a deep symbiosis between philosophy and poetry which, Schlegel felt bold enough to predict, 'ends as idyll with the absolute identity of the two'.[53] One important consequence of this is that, far more than their German counterparts, the faith of the English Romantics in the redemptive power of the rhetoric of 'literature' was severely tested by demands for literalness and facticity in formal prose composition.

Wordsworth's rejection of a metrical for an epistemic definition of poetry in the 1800 Preface is a good example of how much more edgy are the reflexive or performative investments of English Romantic prose when compared with either its poetry or the confident ironizing of its German counterpart. In the Preface, Wordsworth justifies his opposition of poetry to 'Matter of Fact, or Science' rather than to prose, on the grounds that it is 'more philosophical'.[54] It is, of course, entirely in

keeping with the expectations that arise through having chosen to express his views in the form of a formal preface, written in prose, that a writer should prefer a distinction for being 'more philosophical'. Yet what makes the preference so interesting is that at the same time Wordsworth is in the process of developing an *alternative* voice to philosophy's; one which expresses the whole of lived experience, rather than conveying only what can be verified in knowledge. Hence Wordsworth's discomfort with, and professed reluctance to write a prose preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* for the reader, lest he be suspected of the 'foolish hope of *reasoning* him into an approbation of these particular Poems'.[55] Poetry's voice is not to analyse or dissect, but to renew and enrich experience. Articulating that purpose is precisely what makes Wordsworth feel ill at ease, yet he feels compelled to do so.

The ambivalence cuts both ways. In 'On the Prose-Style of Poets' (1826), Hazlitt, a prose-writer politically suspicious of the hedonism of the poetic voice, stresses the virtue of well-written prose's engagement with 'dry matters of fact and close reasoning'. In Burke's writing, for instance, '[t]he principle which guides his pen is truth, not beauty – not pleasure, but power'.[56] Leaving aside the fact that the epistemic status of 'power' was to cause him at least as much trouble as it did De Quincey, even Hazlitt was not prepared fully to grasp the horn of fact in Hume's dichotomy. As Tom Paulin notes, Hazlitt's apologia for an argumentative and Whiggish prose to a great extent betrays his own 'sense of inferiority as a prose-writer' living in an age of poets.[57] And indeed, towards the end of the essay one finds Hazlitt adding that some of the old English prose writers 'are the best, and at the same time, the most *poetical* in the favourable sense'. In so doing he aligns himself with the various attempts made by Coleridge, De Quincey, Shelley and Wordsworth to refashion the poetic as a supra-cognitive sphere – a sphere, it turned out, which transcended truth as facticity but in its will to value threatened to overreach truth itself.[58]

It is, then, chiefly in discursive prose, where they attempt to tackle questions of knowledge, reality, and morality discursively and in abstract terms, that one finds the pressure-points of the English Romantics' challenge to philosophy, and the primary sites of their dilemma between foundationalist philosophy and figurative subversion. Once again, it is quite true, as Richard Elridge points out, that Romantic writers attempt to cope with this tension through the resources of figuration. As he puts it, 'Romantic texts depict – often dramatically in their self-revising, self-questioning swerves in and out of doctrine and commitment – an effort

to live with expressive freedom as both an enduring aspiration and an insuperable problem.'[59] But this Romantic reflexivity, this indifference to commitment is itself just as much a repression of the dilemma as is ratiocination or argument. In epic poetic works such as *The Prelude* and ironic fragments like 'Kubla Khan' alike, Romantic writers sought to enact an aesthetic reconciliation of created meaning and objective truth by metaphoric means, resisting the reduction of imaginative possibility to literal certainty. But in non-fictional prose works – in prefaces, essays, reviews, criticism, as well as more conventionally theoretical and philosophical writing – diminished scope for self-conscious figuration restricted the opportunities for any performative or symbolic display of the irreducibility of creative practice to (and yet its unity with) theory. In particular, the demands of polemical prose composition stretch Romanticism's resistance to argument to its limit. Consequently, when, as evidence of his opposition to traditional metaphysics, Kathleen Wheeler cites the 'double-texture' in Coleridge's prose whereby 'both theory and practice are fused in the text' (that is, through the simultaneous enactment and exposition of his ironic mode) she confirms a Romantic ideal of unified style and substance and elides the tension between argument and indifference which produces such a strategy in the first place.[60] It is then, in such writings as Hazlitt's *Essay on the Principles of Human Action*, Wordsworth's prefaces and Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection*, that the English Romantic anxiety of knowing reaches its highest pitch.

THE NEW FOUNDATIONALISM

The phrase 'first response' is used advisedly. For there are two major chapters to this story, and with Coleridge one comes to the second. Coleridge shares with other English Romantic writers conflicting allegiances to indifferentism and foundationalism. Convinced as to the creative capacities of human intelligence, he still, as he recounts in *Biographia Literaria*, 'laboured at a solid foundation, on which permanently to ground my opinions [...]'.[61] The language of foundationalism is important, though often overlooked by modern commentators keen to integrate Coleridge into a western tradition of anti-metaphysical thought. Rather than, like Nietzsche, making non-logocentric play of the notion of creativity as endless becoming, Coleridge is more likely, like Wordsworth and Hazlitt, to turn groundlessness itself into a foundational trope, as with his Schellingian claim in *Biographia Literaria* that 'freedom must be assumed as a *ground* of philosophy, and can never be deduced from it [...]'.[62]

Like Schelling (at this point at least), Coleridge's strategy is ambivalent, attacking philosophy's concept of knowledge as foundational in order to establish new and rehabilitated philosophical 'grounds' through a discourse of *un*knowing.

What sets Coleridge apart from his contemporaries in England, however – indeed, what makes him unique is not his contact with German idealism in general, but specifically his embracement of Kant's new programme for philosophy. Where writers like Wordsworth and Hazlitt developed what might be called strategies *against* argument, or non-epistemic paradigms of emotion and power with which to critique an empirical philosophy to which they remained tied, Coleridge initially found in Kant a reply to Hume on his own terms, a positivist *argument* which appeared to allow philosophy, and knowledge, to cure itself. Generally in English Romantic writing resistance to epistemology fought the compulsion to philosophize against the background of the threat of scepticism. In Coleridge's work, however, the same conflict is worked out within a context which includes the possibility that *transcendental* argument might prove effective against Hume, rendering scepticism incoherent and obviating the Scottish scramble for a naturalistic escape-hatch. Thus, while the general Romantic strategy of attacking philosophy in the name of redeeming it remains the same, in Coleridge this is the product of his endeavour to make positivist foundational philosophy of a particularly Kantian and *a priori* mould amenable to his own idea of human creative potential.

In this way Coleridge perpetuates the serpentine movement of English Romantic theoretical prose, which, by perpetually striving to ground the ungroundable, bites its own tail. In Coleridge's writing a non-logocentric, creative ideal (itself encouraged by, but contrary to Kant's teachings) undermines synthetic *a priori* grounds just as it had pressurized empirical foundations in the work of Wordsworth and Hazlitt. The resulting oscillation between knowing and creation or figuration, though more explicit, is the same. Thus, after the *Biographia*'s failed attempt to prepare 'a total and undivided philosophy', which incorporated the dynamic powers of art and religion, Coleridge turned to ever more baroque means of squaring the circle of creative knowing.[63] Dialectic and voluntarism replaced the aesthetic/poetic in the struggle with foundational thought in the *Philosophical Lectures* and later in *Aids to Reflection*, as religious faith and moral freedom competed for space with grounding epistemology and 'first principles'. Coleridge was thus drawn into a web of post-Kantian disputes concerning the fate of philosophy and of knowledge, aspects of

which he shared not only with Jacobi, Fichte and Schelling, but also with Hegel and Schopenhauer.

A KNOWING NOT-KNOWING

Andrew Bowie has written compellingly of how 'major concerns of literary theory and the contemporary philosophy of language, both analytical and European [...] converge in space first opened up by Romantic literary theory [...]'.[64] This is a line of argument familiar to students of Romanticism, and my present study does not dissent from it. But where Bowie sets out from the observation that 'the significance of "literature" and art for the thought of Kant's period relates precisely to the awareness that epistemology cannot complete the job it is intended for', in this instance 'epistemology', is not necessarily construed as something already Kantian.[65] Rather, the purpose here is to explore how, both before and concurrently with Coleridge's engagement with German thought, the English Romantics developed a strategy comparable to German Romanticism's creation of the domain of the aesthetic as 'literary absolute' – comparable, that is, in that it is every bit as ambivalent and hesitant as its German cousin in its displacement of apparently intractable epistemological problems. Subsequent discussion of the work of Wordsworth (chapter 2), Hazlitt (chapter 3) and Coleridge (chapters 4 and 5) will have more scope to expand on the central claim that in their ambivalent response to scepticism, the Romantics established a pattern of behaviour which alternated between abstention from and engagement with the conventional – which is to say, Cartesian or foundational – discourse of philosophy. In particular, I wish to show how in England this ambivalence grew in a post-Humean, post-empirical climate as well as in an imported 'Germano-Coleridgean' one. Furthermore, given that much of modern Anglophone philosophy continues to see itself as inhabiting such a climate, this investigation will involve an examination of the nature of what Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy characterize as a 'repetitive compulsion' in Romanticism to question knowing which continues today.[66]

Nor do I exempt my own enquiry from this compulsion. I would merely add that even as it resists knowledge, it simultaneously involves the compulsion to affirm it. Rorty, closing *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, proclaims the death of the Cartesian tradition of philosophizing which based itself on the search for foundational 'first principles' of knowledge, adding that 'we should not try to have a successor subject

to epistemology [. . .]'. Instead, 'cultural anthropology (in a large sense which includes intellectual history) is all we need'.[67] On this issue, as on so many others, he is at one with his pragmatist forebear Dewey, who sixty years previously had suggested that reconstructing thought would far more successfully be carried out by telling stories and developing new narratives about philosophy than by analytical argument. 'It seems to me', he wrote, 'that this genetic method of approach is a more effective way of undermining this type of philosophical theorizing than any attempt at logical refutation could be'.[68] Moves over the past two decades to decentre intellectual history are likely to have satisfied Rorty, on the whole. However, that his decried 'tradition' of philosophical theorizing has proved more durable than he and Dewey hoped, especially within English-language philosophy, is something that any narrative of intellectual history ignores to the detriment not just of its content, but also its methodology.

Indeed, of all the lessons one learns from Romantic prose, one of the most salient is that the line of knowledge will always tease the circle of being out of itself, even as that circle prevents the line from touching its desired ground. To put this more baldly: there is no way back to the prelapsarian innocence of irrationality (or the 'naive' or the 'mirror-stage') or what I have here chosen to call indifference. Cavell makes a similar point when he maintains that, once out of the bag (if indeed it was ever in the bag), philosophy becomes 'inescapable' simply because the very 'ambivalence about the relevance or importance of philosophy [. . .] is also one of philosophy's characteristic features'.[69] Knowledge and indifference have a relationship of mutual dependence and antagonism. Consequently, though Cavell opts for a method of coping with scepticism rather than attempting to resolve it – insisting that, rather than being demonstrated, '[t]he world is to be *accepted*; as the presentness of other minds is not to be known, but acknowledged' – he does not believe that this obviates philosophical engagement: 'For the point of forgoing knowledge is, of course, to know'.[70]

The Romantics were wearily familiar with this irresistible but impossible dichotomy. Perhaps most tellingly, Jacobi repeatedly came up against it in his career-long attempt to circumvent what he saw as the incipient nihilism of Kantian rationalism by turning philosophy against itself. In the 1815 Preface to *David Hume on Faith* (which became the Introduction to his *Collected Philosophical Works*) he summed up his entire philosophy as founded 'upon the firm *faith* that immediately emerges from a knowing not-knowing and is in truth *identical* with it'.[71] The difficulty Jacobi faced,

however, was with articulating and justifying the notion of 'a knowing not-knowing'; or rather, with his inability to *resist* articulating and justifying it. Jacobi exhibits with quintessential Romantic doubleness the desire for a justification of his *salto mortale*; for the philosophical grounding of a faith which itself precedes justification. As his translator, George di Giovanni, observes: 'Jacobi's faith is that of a philosopher – the kind of faith that Jacobi requires because he has unwittingly been in collusion all along with the philosophy that he set out to criticize.'[72] Just as importantly, Jacobi also *pre*figures the Cavellian figure of an agonistically bound knowledge and indifference which I am claiming describes both his condition and mine.

What I wish to avoid, however, is the impression that by acknowledging that continuity or reciprocity I am myself reaching for either the categorical ground of traditional philosophy or the numinous realm of indifference sought by much modern hermeneutics. What I mean by the latter is the kind of condition to which Marjorie Levinson aspires by refusing what she calls the false dilemma of a subject-or-object centred critique whereby empathy is pitted against contemplation. In her method, she claims, '[b]y construing our critical acts as the effect of a Romantic cause which is immanent in that effect and *only* there – or rather, *here* – we develop something which is as much difference as it is identity'. This form of criticism, she continues, 'restores the doubleness that Lacan has named the Imaginary. Through such a discourse, we settle for a moment on the surface of the mirroring past.' But it is significant that pressing the dialectic of a self-reflexive hermeneutic to the point where it renders its own 'transformative, subject-site undecidable', leads Levinson to a moment of genuine contact with truth, an epiphanic moment on the surface of the mirror. In other words, by setting out to reach a state of imaginary 'doubleness', of indifference, she arrives at uncanny knowledge, a knowing not-knowing.[73]

This is the tendency, as Alan Lui has indicated, of 'methodologies [which are] as much *against* as of knowledge', namely that they harbour the danger of 'an incipient method or meta-way [. . .] of alternative knowledge'. The problem, he suggests, is one of how to trace a thought in culture 'without being too knowing even in the way of antiknowing'. Liu's own preferred method involves reading and writing 'under the sign of [. . .] rhetoric'.[74] Rhetoric, however, is no less guilty of provoking the figure of knowledge which it attempts to repress. Instead, the first step towards coping with this problem (rather than resolving it), is simply for literary criticism to give up its quest for indifference, just as philosophy

is gradually giving up its quest for certainty. This in turn means, among other things, relinquishing the obsession with perfect critical hygiene which presents itself as a self-aware and cheerful celebration of contamination. It also, for that matter, involves abandoning the drive to demystification which exhausts itself in postmodernism's sublime 'horizon' of particularity.[75] The acceptance of our double-mindedness between knowledge and indifference requires that the *commitment* to knowing itself is acknowledged, not repressed. Interpretation is not, as some have suggested, a machine of perpetual motion, forever undoing its own end. It repeatedly comes to rest on some 'truth' or other without which it cannot be sustained. In this way, it is possible to accept Rorty's claim that the collapse of foundationalism need not leave only a discourse of suspicion in its wake (indeed that it *must* not, if suspicion is itself not to become a new foundation), and that ' "pragmatized thought" might cease to be blind and become clear-sighted'.[76] At the same time, any such acceptance must be tagged with the important proviso that the clarity at stake is not that of Rorty's ironist, dividing private belief and public function, but that of the Romantic, committed to the inevitability of knowing in the face of its impossibility, because, with Cavell, she realises that 'knowing not-knowing' will always in the end amount to knowing.

This brings us back to Jacobi. By both observing that Jacobi encountered this very same predicament, and adding that he did so in a slightly different form, then, I do not see myself as engaged in a dialectic whereby the indeterminability of cause and effect between historian and historical 'object' produces an undecidable subject-site. Nor am I merely indulging in the activity of which David Simpson has complained that '[t]here is no more depressing tactic of academic reification', namely, making 'the claim that everything happening now has already happened'.[77] Instead, I am acknowledging (with the emphasis on *know*) the close relation of past paradigms of thought to those of the present, and their claims upon it, in a similar way to how I acknowledge the claims of other persons upon me: that is, as something which exceeds any possible meta-justification. As Cavell puts it, acknowledgement 'is what a historian has to face in knowing the past: the epistemology of other minds is the same as the metaphysics of other times and places'.[78]

THE RIVER-BED OF THOUGHT

With this in mind, it is possible (rather, it is imperative) to explore consonance and difference between Romantic and modern paradigms of

knowledge without that project necessarily being overtaken by an overriding concern with the full character of the dialectical determination of past, present and future. Indeed, one of the themes common to the Romantics and a more recent thinker like Wittgenstein, for example, is that of philosophy's need, in the wake of Hume, to separate itself from 'life', and yet its irrelevance without 'life'. Both translate this into terms of the extent to which philosophy and knowledge are *grounded* or *groundless*, and both express this condition through the figure of the river or stream. For Wittgenstein, empirical knowledge, determined by language-games learnt practically rather than logically or according to rules, is foundationless, and in varying degrees of constant change. In *On Certainty*, he likens these degrees to the rocks, sand and water on a river-bed. Though the most certain propositions, now hardened into rocks, seem more secure than the sandy bed, and that again more stable than the flowing water, 'there is not a sharp division of the one from the other'. Fluid propositions harden, and hardened ones may break off and become more fluid, such as the flat-earth theory or the axioms of Euclidian geometry. With time then, 'the river-bed of thoughts may shift'.[79] What is crucial to this account is that, for Wittgenstein, certainty is not something permanent at which one arrives, or even something stable from which one departs, any more than the river-bed of thoughts can be said to 'arrive' at or 'depart' from itself. It is not something which can be considered separately from human social activity, or treated abstractly and apart from life, but is itself to be viewed as 'a form of life'.[80]

Wittgenstein's mythology of knowledge provides a fitting illustration of the manner by which Romanticism itself stirs up the river-bed of thought. Using similar language, Coleridge claimed that Christianity was 'not a Theory, or a Speculation; but a *Life*. Not a *Philosophy* of Life, but a Life and a living Process'.[81] By suggesting, against Hume, that philosophy was to be lived and not just thought, so that, as Keats insisted to Reynolds in 1818, 'axioms in philosophy are not axioms until they are proved upon our pulses', Romanticism dislodged the bedrock of foundationalism.[82] Rather than contesting a specific philosophical theory, the very need for 'knowledge', and by extension philosophy itself, was placed in doubt. Such questioning reshaped the major channels of thought for the following two centuries. As Romanticism fashioned itself as an extra-philosophical solution to philosophy's ills, so modern thought has internalized the ambivalent Romantic strategy of philosophical indifference. And by calling for new discourses to replace foundational epistemology, whether they be linguistic therapy, natural science, or cultural

anthropology, it re-enacts not only that strategy, but also its inherent dilemmas.

In this light, Wittgenstein's metaphor compares revealingly with Coleridge's own and equally famous 'emblem of the mind's self-experience in the act of thinking', namely, the 'small water-insect on the surface of rivulets, which [...] *wins* its way up against the stream, by alternate pulses of active and passive motion [...]'.[83] Both Wittgenstein and Coleridge use the stream as a trope for their idea of the pragmatic, creative element in knowledge, connecting relative stability with playful indeterminacy. For Wittgenstein, certainty of a limited kind is provided by the rocks in the banks and bed of the water (whether they remain in place or not depends on the language-game chosen); for Coleridge, his foundationalist instincts for the moment in abeyance, by the alternately active and passive motion of imagination. Yet both images agree inasmuch as they connote the end of a way of seeing knowledge, and indeed truth, as stable and secured by 'grounds' accessible by the kind of pure thought for which the philosophical attitude alone is adequate.

Again, however, this is only half of the story. Coleridge's suggestive simile of the water-insect itself appears uneasy when considered against the background of *Biographia Literaria*'s foundationalist search for the 'absolute principium cognoscendi'.[84] Coleridge returned to the image of the stream as a metaphor for knowledge in the 'Essays on the Principles of Method' in the 1818 *Friend*. In the figure of 'that life-ebullient stream which breaks though every momentary embankment, again, indeed, and evermore to embank itself, but within no banks to stagnate or be imprisoned', before finally returning, renewed, into itself, he sought to express the symbiotic relationship between the restraining limits of philosophy or rational knowledge on one hand, and the creative surge of faith or will on the other.[85] The lesson of this passage, however, is crucially different from that of Wittgenstein's 'river-bed' trope. The moral of the latter's narrative was that of the need to dispense once and for all with talk of foundations and 'grounds' of knowledge, despite the fact that, as Elridge observes, Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* frequently seems Romantic in its fragmentariness, and its self-dramatizing 'self-revising, self-questioning swerves in and out of doctrine and commitment'. For Coleridge, however, the fact that will created its own certainty, that the stream of life was fated 'evermore to embank itself' represented not the non-existence, but the *incomprehensibility* of grounds which were set by the mind, for the mind.[86] It counselled that 'every faculty [...] owes its whole reality and comprehensibility to an existence incomprehensible and groundless, because the

ground of all comprehension [. . .]'.[87] Once again, Coleridge enacts the characteristic English Romantic strategy of attempting to evade scepticism by making a ground of creation, and by founding knowledge itself in a reified foundationlessness.

On a more general level then, while Coleridge was convinced that the contemplative life needed to be reconciled with the active, he remained undecided as to whether this demanded the intercession of the creative powers of poetry or religion, or whether philosophy could redeem itself. Similarly, English Romanticism's lasting importance to modern philosophy does not consist in any *commitment* to ending philosophy, nor even to limiting its jurisdiction. The feeling that Hume's fact/value distinction might be overwritten did not remove the consoling hope for a kind of knowing which still had an 'end'; which remained free of the relativistic cognates of psychological creation. This is why, as will be seen, Wordsworth's 'poetic truth', alike with Hazlitt's 'common sense' and Coleridge's 'total and undivided philosophy' pose such problems for the theoretically trained reader today, as each are simultaneously connoted with foundational and anti-foundational figures of knowledge. Indeed, it is in this ambivalence between indifference and a fidelity to knowledge that Romanticism reveals itself as a *process* of change; specifically, the emergence of the very shifts in the 'river-bed of thought' which have made such alternative perspectives possible.

The narrative offered here of English Romanticism as already containing English-language philosophy's double-mindedness in its painful nascency is attested to by the ambivalence of post-analytic philosophy to Romanticism itself. Rorty, for instance, adumbrating a vocabulary which 'revolves around notions of metaphor and self-creation rather than around notions of truth, rationality, and moral obligation', sees himself as siding with Romanticism in the 'quarrel between poetry and philosophy, the tension between an effort to achieve self-creation by the recognition of contingency and an effort to achieve universality by the transcendence of contingency'. Elsewhere however, he unfavourably contrasts the Romantic view of metaphors as end-driven, or as reified 'mysterious tokens or symbols of some higher reality' with Donald Davidson's theory of language as evolving 'blindly'.[88] Rorty adds that the tension between 'poetic' contingency and philosophic foundationalism has pervaded philosophy since Hegel, yet he might have more accurately argued that the modern form of this ancient contest is itself a Romantic creation. For the Hegelian attempt to place poetry in a reflexive relationship with philosophy in absolute knowing is just one side of a contest between the two which elsewhere remains unresolved, as in Jacobi and Coleridge. In this

light, Romanticism is not a particular *response* to a problem. Rather, this problem is itself a form of Romanticism; the simultaneous cleaving and healing of founded knowledge and figurative creation.

Viewed thus, Kathleen Wheeler's claim (to take one example) that the thrust of Coleridge's work is 'compatible in the main with pragmatic and deconstructionist theories and practices' misleads in that it reads the discourse of Romanticism as primarily one of commitment rather than one of stress.[89] Similarly, Michael Fischer's otherwise accurate Cavellian observation that the Romantics move away from knowledge as they come to believe that 'the epistemological problem of knowing the world sidetracks us from the real problem of accepting it [...]' is made at the expense of overlooking the considerable *resistance* in Romanticism to such a move.[90] Romanticism's importance to modern theory and post-analytic philosophy takes the form not of a point of view or a belief, but a dilemma which, put crudely, becomes the question: must knowledge come first? Moreover, it is a dilemma specifically located in the context of Hume's challenge to philosophy to justify its aspirations to objectivity and thus to situate itself appropriately within the complex network of concerns which make up human existence.

In this way, Lamb's punning attack on Hume and 'inhuman' philosophy has lingered to haunt modern thought, caught as it is between knowledge and what Elridge calls 'living a human life'. W. V. Quine, for instance, inverts the quibble when he urges that, as a matter of 'doctrine' or theory of truth, '[t]he Humean predicament is the human predicament'. For Quine, the only task left to epistemology is to study the formation of meaning.[91] Consequently, the tradition of philosophy as a quest for epistemological certainty must be set aside in order to make room for something else (in Quine's case, as, arguably, in Hume's, a 'naturalized' epistemology of empirical psychology). Many have found even this too radical, however, and some have questioned whether it is one which Quine himself has satisfied. The temptation to find a neutral ground for knowing, an objective base, has persisted, even if it is to be constructed on non-objective or non-scientific lines. 'It is so difficult to find the *beginning*', as Wittgenstein complained: 'Or, better: it is difficult to begin at the beginning. And not try to go further back'.[92] Avoiding the temptation to go 'further back', whether to empirical or synthetic *a priori* foundations, is the very challenge which English Romanticism first raises, and having raised attempts, unsuccessfully, to erase.

Dewey, indeed, was sensitive to this thought when he wrote that 'Nature is characterized by a constant mixture of the precarious and the stable. This mixture gives poignancy to existence. If existence were

either completely necessary or completely contingent, there would be neither comedy nor tragedy in life, nor need of the will to live'.[93] Just as Wittgenstein's story of the shifting river-bed makes no sense without the (implied) stability of the land through which the river runs, so indifference is impossible without knowledge. Replacing power for knowing, as Hazlitt found, merely results in knowledge rising again as a competitive function of power, and so in power biting its own tail. Since the Romantics then, knowledge, construed as epistemic security and certainty, has perpetually and compulsively recurred, despite attempts to bring it to an end. Rorty himself notes that a completely ironic culture is 'probably' impossible, since 'no project of self-creation through imposition of one's own idiosyncratic metaphoric, can avoid being marginal and parasitic'.[94] Necessity and contingency, positivism and ironism, knowledge and indifference, foundation and creation may play against each other indefinitely, but in that play there is a relationship of both dependence and incompatibility. Coping with this relationship is a challenge, and one which, struggling between the human and the Humean, the Romantics were the first to give a recognizably modern cast. This challenge, moreover, is confronted on two levels, representing in turn two major forms of foundationalism. As Coleridge negotiated a Kantian foundationalism which was *a priori* and propositional in mould, Wordsworth and Hazlitt, among others, grappled with the causal theory of perception which had formed the basis of British empirical thought throughout the eighteenth century.

1

From artistic to epistemic creation: the eighteenth century

> If we take in our hand any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, *Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number?* No. *Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence?* No. Commit it then to the flames: for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.
>
> David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*[1]

The roots of Romantic discourse in eighteenth-century philosophy and psychology have been charted extensively elsewhere, to the extent that this provenance is now generally accepted in English literary history.[2] My present claim that there is a divergence between certain tendencies in Wordsworth and Hazlitt – some impelling these writers towards a new, radical theory of creation; others drawing them back to an empirical, foundationalist conception of 'knowledge' – is quite compatible with this. Again, I wish neither to essentialize 'Romanticism', nor oppose it in some binary way to a preceding tradition. Yet an appreciation of inheritance and continuity in literary theory at the turn of the century should remain alert to ripples in the current, or sudden shifts in the riverbed; in other words, of simultaneous, more dramatic change. It should not elide the possibility that incompatible premises and assumptions, knitted together for a time by consensus and habit, should finally, through changing literary and social conditions, prove impossible to reconcile, and that as a result, certain theoretical problems which had hitherto merely been a source of difficulty may suddenly become unbearable.

Such is the English Romantics' relation to empiricism. Examples of their outward hostility to empiricism abound. In the 1810–12 fragment 'The Sublime and the Beautiful' (later the third Appendix of *A Guide Through the District of the Lakes in the North of England* [1835]), Wordsworth asserts that '[t]he true province of the philosopher is not to grope about in the external world [. . .] but to look into his own mind & determine the law by which he is affected'.[3] Hazlitt's opposition to traditional empiricism,

meanwhile, is more or less constant throughout his career: in his 1809 *Prospectus of a History of English Philosophy*, one of the touchstones for his criticism of Locke is his conviction that 'reason is a distinct source of knowledge or inlet of truth, over and above *experience*'.[4] Yet Hazlitt's description of reason as another *inlet* of truth, suggests an equivocation which is matched by Wordsworth's view of the mind as passive and affective. Despite their anti-empiricist leanings, Wordsworth and Hazlitt are noteworthy among the major Romantic writers for their reluctance to jettison the language of empiricism outright, preferring instead to amend or reform it according to new paradigms. One of those paradigms was the concept of creation. The problem that faced both writers, however, was that in their own hands this idea had itself undergone a seismic shift in meaning and significance, signalling a move away from the notion of creation-as-discovery to something closer to that of creation *ex nihilo*, the assertion of the mind's final autonomy and freedom from matter. Unlike the former, however, this more radical sense was incompatible with the still-powerful Lockean view, internalized by Wordsworth and Hazlitt, that knowledge was fundamentally causal and representational in nature. The articulation of the new concept of creation as an epistemic feature of human nature, then, particularly as constructed in the figure of original genius, becomes for Wordsworth and Hazlitt the test case for the possibility of a reformed empiricism which, in the absence of Coleridgean transcendental schemes (for the most part), might manage to satisfy their demand for an adequate account of the mind's freedom and activity, and particularly its *autonomy* in the processes of moral judgement and artistic production.

With such views, Hazlitt and Wordsworth had every reason to reject many of the assumptions of eighteenth-century poetics, as well as resist those which were being sponsored by empiricism in their own time. Utilitarian theories in particular accorded no special status to poetry or the poet, quite the reverse. In the same year that Coleridge completed *Biographia Literaria*, Bentham was writing of poetry that 'it can apply itself to no subject but at the expense of utility and truth. Misrepresentation [is] its work, misconception its truth'.[5] By 1816 the debate between a largely British utility-based reduction of art and a novel theory of aesthetic autonomy which had just received its mandate from German thought had already polarized. By 1820 Hume's severance of fact from value had cut so deeply that Peacock felt able to proclaim, with some glee, that the inevitable issue of the advance of knowledge throughout history was that 'the empire of thought is withdrawn from poetry'.[6] The

prose works of Wordsworth and Hazlitt display the hairline cracks which initiate this rift, leading them to challenge the foundations of representational 'knowledge' with a theory of creation, a challenge to epistemology which finally loops back to the same desideratum of epistemic certainty from which it seeks to escape. Nor did this division itself spring from nowhere. Before examining the complex epistemological and counter-epistemological manoeuvrings of English Romantic Prose, then, it is important to understand how a discourse of psychological creation which was long-lived but previously marginal in British philosophy came, by the late eighteenth century, to be in a position to shake the foundations, it seemed, of philosophy itself.

INSPIRATION AND THE SUBLIME FROM PUTTENHAM TO BURKE

To give a comprehensive account of the development of the idea of artistic creation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries falls well beyond the scope of this chapter. However, it is possible to indicate those currents of thought which encouraged the idea (in either of its forms), and those whose natural tendency was to stifle or deny it. The tradition of thought which was most congenial to the notion of the artist as a creator sprang initially (though not exclusively, as will be seen) from two main sources, both classical. The first was Neoplatonic, and resulted from a fusion of an analogy of the artist with Plato's Demiurge, or divine craftsman, with an amended version of his account of the poet as one 'possessed', such that inspiration was now held to confer upon the artist a divine grace in execution and composition which was beyond the normal rules of art. Promoted by Sidney and Puttenham in the late sixteenth century, this tradition survived, albeit in a muted form, into the eighteenth, despite the fact that the Platonic philosophy upon which it rested, though it continued to find support with Cudworth, More and Shaftesbury, was by then anachronistic. The second was a theory of the sublime derived from Longinus, but transformed in such a way as to place ever greater stress on the spontaneous imaginative response which characterized the experience of the sublime object. Two of the most significant names attached to this trend – John Dennis, and later, Edmund Burke – developed it in different ways. To Dennis, the emotions associated with the sublime represented a possible bulwark against the kind of dogmatic Aristotelianism exemplified by the school of criticism associated with Thomas Rymer. To Burke, however, the passionate quality of the sublime experience linked it with the non-representational basis of poetry itself.

The complex relationship observed in the Introduction between the Platonic and Hebraic-Christian paradigms of creation begins to unravel in the literary theory of the Renaissance. Even here, however, it is still bound up (and often confused) with other questions: to what extent is the artist inspired by some other force? how can creation, properly so called, be explained within a mimetic theory of poetry? how far is it possible and proper to compare the artist's creativity to God's? These issues lie buried like seeds beneath different theoretical agendas, and are not always addressed directly. When they are, they are often answered in a manner which might surprise an observer habituated to the oppositions of post-Romantic theory.

George Puttenham, for example, seeks in *The Arte of English Poesie* to establish the credentials of poetry as an *art*: that is, an activity based upon 'a certaine order of rules prescribed by reason, and gathered by experience'.[7] Yet his defence of this position is built upon some peculiar foundations. Initially noting that the Greek root of English term 'poet' signifies 'maker', he proceeds to interpret this classical paradigm along Christian lines, rejecting the Platonic model of the demiurge, and embracing the divine analogy of artist as creator *ex nihilo*. As God, 'without any trauell of his diuine imagination, made all the world of nought', so 'the very Poet makes and contriues out of his owne braine both the verse and matter of his poeme, and not by any foreine copie or example, as doth the translator'. Despite this, it is clear that Puttenham holds the view that poetry, no less than other forms of art, is imitative. But the manner by which he links this position, together with what has been written already (while still on the first page of the essay) with a further thesis of inspirationism deserves to be quoted at length, insofar as it demonstrates the tight and complex knot of ideas which it was to be the task of the eighteenth century to unravel:

> And neuerthelesse without any repugnancie at all, a Poet may in some sort be said a follower or imitator, because he can expresse the true and liuely [image?] of euery thing [which?] is set before him [. . .] and so in that respect is both a maker and a counterfaitor: and Poesie an art not only of making, but also of imitation. And this science in his perfection, can not grow, but by some diuine instinct, the Platonicks call it *furor* [. . .].[8]

From this Puttenham draws a conclusion regarding the absolute autonomy of the poet which (in its opposition to his contention that poetry is an 'art', reducible to empirical rule) forms a thorny paradox which is the direct ancestor of the problem Wordsworth and Hazlitt faced, and would seek to overcome with epistemological indifference: namely, how

can genius's freely produced elements be verified by lawful experience?[9] The tension between an ego-grounded knowledge and the figurative, creative subjectivity expressed in poetry is already present. In this light, moreover, there would seem to be more than coincidence in the similarity between Puttenham's attempt at a compromise solution (attributing to imagination (or 'phantasie') a special kind of truth which he compares to the effect of a refracting mirror on light), and Hazlitt's attempt, over two hundred years later, to explain originality by comparing the mind to a prism, untwisting the rays of truth. But this is to anticipate later discussion.

Puttenham identifies creation with inspiration, but this does not always happen. Sidney's *An Apologie for Poetrie* of 1595, despite being more often cited as a Renaissance manifesto for imaginative artistic freedom, is in many ways a less fiery and more thoughtful attempt to reconcile Aristotelian and Platonic views of poetry. Though Sidney sees creation as the God-like part of man 'which in nothing hee sheweth so much as in Poetrie: when with the force of a diuine breath, he bringeth things forth far surpassing her [i.e. Nature's] dooings',[10] like Puttenham, he insists that poetry 'is an arte of imitation, for so *Aristotle* termeth it in his word *Mimesis*, that is to say, a representing, counterfetting, or figuring foorth: to speake metaphorically, a speaking picture: with this end, to teach and delight [...]'.[11] He further follows Aristotle in positioning poetry between history and philosophy according to its ability both to philosophize history's 'bare *Was*',[12] and aid moral instruction insofar as it 'coupleth the generall notion with the particular example', or 'yeeldeth to the powers of the minde, an image of that whereof the Philosopher bestoweth but a woordish description [...]'.[13]

Sidney is aware that he is in danger of collapsing poetry into rhetoric, and endeavours to escape this outcome by making creativity the distinguishing feature of the poet.[14] As he puts it: 'onely the Poet, disdayning to be tied to any [...] subiection, lifted vp with the vigor of his owne inuention, dooth growe in effect, another nature, in making things either better than Nature bringeth forth, or quite newe formes such as neuer were in Nature [...]'.[15] This echoes Puttenham's theory of radical *creatio ex nihilo*, but Sidney attempts to side-step Puttenham's problem over how the products of this process can be verified by adding the further requirement of learning. New products are valuable because of the operation of an extra factor (and thus a standard of truth) regulating individual spontaneity – not, as in Plato, the 'inspiring of a diuine force, farre aboue mans wit', but the tutelage of nature and experience.[16] He concludes:

'A Poet, no industrie can make, if his owne *Genius* bee not carried vnto it [. . .]. Yet confesse I alwayes, that as the firtilest grounde must bee manured, so must the highest flying wit, haue a *Dedalus* to guide him'; the 'three wings' of which are: 'Arte, Imitation, and Exercise'. These twin elements of genius[17] and skill cannot be separated in poetry, '[f]or, there being two principal parts, matter to be expressed by wordes, and words to expresse the matter, in neyther [alone], wee vse Arte, or Imitation, rightly'.[18]

Sidney's tempered Platonism and optimism about poetry, however, ran against the contemporary philosophical current. Bacon also accepted the common distinction between knowledge acquired by 'words' and that gained from 'matter', but was far more censorious about the former. It was 'the first distemper of learning, when men study words and not matter'.[19] His main target here is scholasticism, which with verbal distinctions 'brings forth indeed cobwebs of learning, admirable for the fineness of thread and work, but of no substance or profit [. . .]'.[20] Nonetheless, poesy remains open to a similar charge:

> Poesy is a part of learning in measure of words for the most part restrained, but in all other points extremely licensed, and doth truly refer to the Imagination; which, being not tied to the laws of matter, may at pleasure join that which nature hath severed, and sever that which nature hath joined, and so make unlawful matches and divorces of things [. . .].[21]

The key word here is 'unlawful'. The very creativity which Sidney found to distinguish and privilege poesy is, to Bacon's embryonic empiricism, deeply suspect. If history is recorded fact and the basis of all knowledge,[22] then poetry 'is nothing else but Feigned History, which may be styled as well in prose as in verse'. His attitude to the argument from inspiration is, in this context, unsurprising: poetry, he notes, 'was ever thought to have some participation of divineness, because it doth raise and erect the mind, by submitting the shews of things to the desires of the mind; whereas reason doth buckle and bow the mind unto the nature of things'.[23]

Bacon views poetry simultaneously with discomfort and tolerance. Nonetheless, having attributed the production of poetry to imagination, he seems to encounter difficulties when examining the nature of that faculty itself later in the *Advancement*. By establishing imagination as a connective faculty between the senses (including the will and appetite) on one hand and reason on the other, he comes to acknowledge that faith itself presumes a certain amount of imaginative freedom. He infers from

this that '*reason hath over the imagination that commandment which a magistrate hath over a free citizen*; who may come also to rule in his turn. For we see that in matters of Faith and Religion we raise our imagination above our Reason [...]'. Still, though Bacon seems to be embarrassed enough by this episode to reiterate his general position that there can be no science of imagination, together with his relegation of Poesy to 'a pleasure or play of imagination', there is no reason to interpret it as anything more than an incidental concession to religion which is superfluous to his general inductive epistemological argument. This in turn remains fundamentally incompatible with Sidney's notion of a distinctly 'poetic' truth, inspirational or otherwise.[24]

It is not until the early eighteenth century, in the work of Shaftesbury, that another concerted attempt is made to develop a theory of artistic creation on Neoplatonic lines – and here again, this is done against the tide of the prevailing philosophy, which by this time had moved into the channel opened up by Locke. Shaftesbury is a writer about whom it is notoriously difficult to generalize. Above all, he had no interest in system-building.[25] But certain impulses are evident in his thought: an opposition to Hobbes and to mechanistic or materialist accounts of human nature, as well as to the Lockean thesis that the mind has no knowledge other than what it constructs from simple ideas derived from sense-experience. Shaftesbury's positive theory of knowledge is linked with his Platonic theology: as reality is infinite and not atomistic, and spiritual rather than material, the mind which is the 'Universal-One' is that which gives particular existents their being. Consequently, it follows from the principle that the mind in general is alone formative (where matter is passive),[26] that the human mind has its own activity:

> I consider, That as there is *one* general Mass, *one* Body of the Whole; so to this Body there is *an Order*, to this *Order*, a MIND: That to this *general* MIND each *particular-one* must have relation; as being of like Substance [...] alike active upon Body [...] and more like still, if it co-operates with It to general Good, and strives *to will* according to that best of *Wills*.[27]

For the present purpose, the real significance of Shaftesbury's epistemology, however, is in the role it accords to beauty, which, rather than being a supervenient quality, is seen as operative; as identical with truth. It resides not in an object, but in the *act* of creation.[28] 'Will it not be found', Shaftesbury asks rhetorically, '[t]hat what is BEAUTIFUL is *Harmonious* and *Proportionable*: What is Harmonious and Proportionable, is TRUE; and what is at once both *Beautiful* and *True*, is, of consequence,

Agreeable and GOOD?'[29] It follows from this that in Shaftesbury the sense of beauty has gained unprecedented epistemological importance: 'Who, then, can possibly have A TASTE of this kind, without being beholden to PHILOSOPHY?'[30] The postulation of the identity of beauty and truth in an original, unified and creative being (whether divine or human) thus enables Shaftesbury to pass freely between questions of aesthetics, psychology, epistemology and moral philosophy, as when he declares that 'the most natural Beauty in the World is *Honesty*, and *Moral Truth*. For all *Beauty is* TRUTH [...]. In Poetry, which is all Fable, *Truth* still is the Perfection.'[31]

From this dynamic, aestheticized Platonism emerges Shaftesbury's idea of artistic genius as a power which, in the manner of the God of which it is itself a reflection, harmonizes, unifies, and creates anew:

> But for the Man, who truly and in a just sense deserves the Name of *Poet* [...]. Such a *Poet* is indeed a second *Maker*: a just PROMETHEUS, under JOVE. Like that Sovereign Artist or universal Plastick Nature, he forms *a Whole*, coherent and proportion'd in it-self, with due Subjection and Subordinacy of constituent Parts.[32]

Yet Shaftesbury's hypostasizing of beauty and truth in the sovereign form of God does little to solve the riddle of the nature of human creation. And as far as his own position on the matter is concerned, Shaftesbury is, in most respects, distinctly Neoclassical. For example, though he distinguishes '[t]he mere Face-Painter', who 'copies what he sees, and minutely traces every Feature', from 'the Men of Invention and Design', he defines the latter only according to their capacity to generalize, and execute works which conform to 'those natural Rules of Proportion, and *Truth*'.[33] There is no implication that the artist is a creator *ex nihilo*, or that he might produce the very rules by which his work is to be judged, and still less, as yet, to suggest the Romantics' troubled surmisal that he makes, rather than finds truth.

The concept of inspiration, moreover, seems to have had its day. Shaftesbury is highly critical of 'those first Poets who began this Pretence to *Inspiration*', and insists that 'the *inspiring* DIVINITY or MUSE having [...] submitted her Wit and Sense to the Mechanick Rules of *human arbitrary* Composition; she must [...] submit herself to *human Arbitration* [...]'.[34] Nor does he reserve any great esteem for imagination, which is invariably subordinated to reason. Continuing on the subject of inspiration, he claims that anyone who believes that they can 'recognize the Divine Spirit, and receive it in themselves, un-subject (as they imagine)

to any Rule [...] is building Castles in the Air [...] as the exercise of an aerial *Fancy*, or heated *Imagination*'.[35]

In a sense, Shaftesbury is acknowledging a point made earlier in this chapter: that the presumption of divine intervention in classical notions of poetic 'inspiration' sits uneasily with the premise of epistemic freedom necessary for a more subject-based notion of human creativity. But if, aside from this, the supernatural and un-Christian implications of the concept of inspiration made it simply distasteful even to such Platonically minded thinkers as Sidney and Shaftesbury, another ancient idea – that of the sublime – was to enjoy a far less troubled inception into the theory of the eighteenth century.

The concept of the sublime was a relative latecomer to English literary theory. Its germination can be dated to Nicolas Boileau's 1674 translation of Longinus, but it did not become an established part of the critical lexicon until the early mid-eighteenth century. In the work of John Dennis, the sublime is brought into close contact with a developed theory of artistic creation and genius. Dennis was already aware of the work of Longinus when, while crossing the Alps in 1688, in a curious precursor of Wordsworth's own experience, he felt at first hand emotions reminiscent of the Greek writer's account of the sublime. Moved to examine the concept further, it was natural that he should do so in terms of the philosophies of Hobbes and Locke. The result was an empirical and psychological theory of the poetic passions.

Dennis's early work bears this out. 'Poetical Genius', he argues in the 1696 *Remarks on a Book Entituled, Prince Arthur*, 'is it self a Passion. A Poet then is oblig'd always to speak to the Heart. And it is for this reason, that Point and Conceit, and all that they call Wit, is to be for ever banish'd from true Poetry; because he who uses it, speaks to the Head alone.'[36] In *The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry* (1701) he refines this into a definition which further distinguishes poetic enthusiasm from the more vulgar passions, and links it to the sublime:

> But one Thing we have omitted, That as Thoughts produce the Spirit, the Spirit produces and makes the Expression; which is known by Experience to all who are Poets: for never any one, while he was rapt with Enthusiasm, wanted either Words or Harmony [...] So from what we have said, we may venture to lay down this Definition of Poetical Genius: Poetical Genius, in a Poem, is the true Expression of Ordinary or Enthusiastick Passions proceeding from Ideas to which it naturally belongs; and Poetical Genius, in a Poet, is the Power of expressing such Passion worthily: And the Sublime is a great Thought, express'd with the Enthusiasm that belongs to it [...].[37]

Here, the language of inspiration is articulated by the new philosophy of ideas. While Dennis retains some of the old sense of the infallibility of the 'inspired' poetic genius, in his hands it is translated into an idea of the harmonious relationship between the enthusiastic passions and the ideas to which they 'naturally' belong. The sublime, in turn, becomes the loftiest utterance of poetic genius.[38]

Dennis's emphasis on genius, enthusiasm and the emotions of the sublime may seem to foreshadow Romanticism; not least when later in the same essay he claims that, of the 'Three Things which contribute to the Perfection of Poetry', 'The First is Nature, which is the Foundation and Basis of all. For Nature is the same Thing with Genius, and Genius and Passion are all one.' But this is not the whole picture, as the other two elements, no less essential, are 'Art, by which I mean, those Rules, and that Method, which capacitate us to manage every thing with the utmost Dexterity, that may contribute to the Raising of Passion', and third, 'The Instrument by which the Poet makes his Imitation, or the Language in which he writes.'[39] Though he would have had no truck with the concept of the artist as creator *ex nihilo*, the tensions in Dennis's theory are comparable to Puttenham's: the tendency of any assertion of free artistic genius is towards some kind of conception of aesthetic autonomy; of a writer or a painter or a musician who spontaneously generates new but nonetheless exemplary rules of composition. But the philosophical apparatus capable of sustaining such a conception was still a long way from being assembled. It is, perhaps, a paradoxical consequence of the advanced nature of Dennis's version of genius as both a sensitivity to, and an ability to express passionate thoughts, that more than critics like Addison, he felt the need for a secure foothold for poetry in the rules of art. There seems little reason, then, to dissent from Hooker's opinion that Dennis should be viewed more as 'a sensitive and intelligent classicist' than a precursor of Romanticism.[40] He was not the first to face difficulty in attempting to encompass an increasingly liberal theory of creative genius with an empiricist epistemology, and he was not to be the last.

By the time Burke came to add the 'Introduction on taste' to the second edition of his *Philosophical Enquiry*, however, the implications of an empirical point of view for aesthetic discussion were much more clearly defined. For instance, Burke notes that though 'the mind of man possesses a sort of creative power of its own', this consists 'either in representing at pleasure the images of [...] the senses, or in combining those images in a new manner, and according to a different order'.

Creativity of the *ex nihilo* order is impossible, as 'it must be observed, that this power of the imagination is incapable of producing any thing absolutely new; it can only vary the disposition of those ideas which it has received from the senses'.[41] Burke's ambivalent attitude to epistemic creation is not unusual of the mid-eighteenth century, but his persistent and unyielding commitment to empirical method, and his refusal to concede any territory whatsoever to the operation of formal or final causes, certainly is.[42] As a result, the *Enquiry* becomes of immense interest, in that it effectively takes the empiricist defence of Neoclassical aesthetics to its limits; to the point indeed where the tension between the two, particularly regarding the complex emotions of the sublime, and the nature of poetic imitation, becomes so pronounced as to question many of the assumptions of Neoclassicism itself.

Burke's dogged genetic and sensationist approach to his subject leads him quickly to the conclusion, not only that the sublime originates from objects 'fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain', and that these 'ideas of pain are much more powerful than those which enter on the part of pleasure', but further, that 'at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are delightful [...]'.[43] This disrupts the traditional correlation of taste and pleasure by describing an aesthetic experience which is not so easily quantifiable due to the infinity connoted by its objects and the inscrutibility of its emotional content.[44] There is, then, in the *Enquiry*'s discussion of the sublime, the suggestion of an aesthetic of freedom.

The sublime is not alone in its association with the infinite. Burke's sensationism draws his investigation to a certain feature of language: 'words [...] seem to me to affect us in a manner very different from that in which we are affected by natural objects, or by painting or architecture [...]'.[45] The reason for this, he surmises, is that the most general effect of words 'does not arise from their forming pictures of the several things they would represent in the imagination [...]'.[46] If it is possible, as Burke believes, for words to affect us before a clear idea or meaning can be assigned to them, the implications for poetry are radical: 'we may observe that poetry, taken in its most general sense, cannot with strict propriety be called an art of imitation'.[47] And yet the fact that words can operate in the absence of clear ideas (and therefore knowledge), lends poetry a peculiar affinity with the sublime in the context what might be called Burke's aesthetics of privation. Just as the feeling of a lack of power is a condition of the sublime, so the want of a clear *image* of a thing is a feature of poetry. This privation, however, is effectively a release from the burden

of verisimilitude. It gives poetry scope not only to give expression to those elements of existence which are beyond pictorial representation, such as human sympathy and passion, but also to explore or even create new elements. In Burke's own words, 'by words we have it in our power to make such *combinations* as we cannot possibly do otherwise', and thereby 'to give a new life and force to the simple object'.[48]

Yet despite the innovation behind Burke's theory of poetic creativity, it remained in tension with his epistemology. To that extent he is very much a product of his age. The Lockean epistemology, though modified, is still in place, together with its insistence upon the necessity of an empirical principle for verifying truth, and for a corresponding clarity, exactness, and even austerity in language. Notions of poetic inspiration or expressions of feelings of sublimity could not be woven into this – at least, not seamlessly. Poetry might be tolerated for a number of reasons – it might even, as with Addison, Dennis and Burke, be granted a certain creative licence – but it was not to be permitted to impeach knowledge. Inspiration in particular, in its classical form at least, had a bleak future in this context, as not only was it impossible to explain empirically, but, unlike the notions of the sublime and genius, it had only a slight relation to the issues of subjectivity which would grow out of the discourse of late eighteenth-century psychology in Britain.

The problem for theories of artistic creation after Locke was fundamentally bound up with their epistemological implications: unsettling 'knowledge' yet seeming all the while to be complicit with knowing. In other words, the question was one of how to allow the products of genius and the experience of the sublime a non-trivial, cognitive role in human life without reducing them to any other mode of knowledge; of how simultaneously to maintain poetry's seriousness and distinctness from science in the face of the erosion of a Neoclassical confidence in poetry's access to reason. It was empiricism that was responsible for this erosion, but empiricism was slow, painfully slow, at producing an alternative theory of literary value which satisfied both the requirements of aesthetic freedom and epistemology. In fact, empiricism was itself the stumbling block. Such a theory, as Francis Ferguson has indicated, would require a profound overhaul of Burke's empirical approach to the structure of the object, and particularly 'the Burkean inability or refusal to distinguish between our experience of objects and our experience of representations of objects'.[49] As it turned out, one form this would take was Kant's aesthetic merging of subject of object, which on one hand seemed merely to offer the subject sublime compensations for epistemic loss, but at the same

time had the potential to obviate the dualisms so beloved of empiricism which sustained epistemology itself.

ASPECTS OF EMPIRICISM

Crossing Hume's fork: the problem of value

Both inspirationism and the discourse of the sublime dissented from a philosophical culture which, by the first decades of the eighteenth century, was confronting and processing the principles laid out in John Locke's 1689 *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. The notion of mental creation itself leads a marginal half-life throughout the age of Pope and Johnson, potentially subversive and in a constant state of tension with many of the leading philosophical ideas of the period. The first of these – the theory of representative realism – lies at the heart of Locke's epistemology. Put simply, the claims made by this thesis are: first, the realist one that there is a world the existence of which does not depend upon experience; second, the argument that our perception of that world is dependent upon it affecting us (in a causal way); and third, the *representational* theory that we only have indirect apprehension of that world; that is, that we have no knowledge of reality which is unmediated by ideas.[50] Representative realism leaves its mark on practically all empiricist thought in the eighteenth century (Berkeley and Hume included), and even manages to survive (though in a modified form) Thomas Reid's sustained campaign against it.

More importantly, however, it is this doctrine which proves to be most vulnerable to the epistemic implications of a robust theory of artistic creation, effectively placing the mind in a relation of dependency to an object of perception to which it has only indirect access. In particular, Locke is quite categorical on the causality of perception: ideas of sensation, he asserts, 'are the *Impressions* that are made on our *Senses* by Outward Objects, that are extrinsical to the Mind [. . .]'.[51] Sensation and reflection, then, are 'the only Originals, from whence all our *Ideas* take their beginnings'.[52] The most important corollary of this principle is that in perception, 'the *Understanding* is meerly *passive*' and unable to produce new, simple ideas:

> These *simple Ideas*, when offered to the mind, *the Understanding can* no more refuse to have, or alter, when they are imprinted, nor blot them out, and make new ones in it self, than a mirror can refuse, alter, or obliterate the Images or *Ideas*, which, the Objects set before it, do therein produce.[53]

Locke, of course, recognizes that certain operations of the human mind prove the limitations of the 'blank sheet of paper' simile. 'Memory', for instance, 'signifies no more but this, that the Mind has a Power, in many cases, to revive Perceptions, which it has once had, with this additional Perception annexed to them, that it has had them before'.[54] It is important, however, to distinguish this (limited) psychological activity from an epistemic activity, in the sense that truth itself is something *made*. This is discounted by Locke in his consistent adherence to the principle that knowledge must correspond to objects as the effect to the cause. Locke equates his sense of psychological activity with '*Wit*', which 'lying most in the assemblage of *Ideas*, and putting them together with quickness and variety', is distinguished from '*Judgement*', which 'lies quite on the other side, in separating carefully, one from another, *Ideas* [...] thereby to avoid being misled by Similitude [...]'. Wit, though it 'strikes so lively on the Fancy', is not to be trusted, as 'there is required no labour of thought, to examine what Truth or Reason there is in it. The Mind without looking any farther, rests satisfied with the agreeableness of the Picture [...].'[55] Here we reach the nub of the problem: while Locke's empiricism is comfortable with, and even requires, a synthetic capability of the mind, it cannot permit that such syntheses might be independently true, much less produce truth. Consequently, Locke often struggles to articulate in just what the power of judgement consists.

By stressing the role of judgement Locke is trying to avoid a route notoriously taken by Hobbes. In *Leviathan*, Hobbes argued that, as sense-experience was nothing but the effect of material encounters between the sense-organs and the outside world, which set off a train of thoughts in the mind and became, when the stimulus was removed, '*decaying sense*' or imagination, then mental discourse or understanding itself could be nothing other than a kind of imagination, and reason the same transferred into verbal form.[56] Truth, in other words, is merely nominal: a matter of words.[57] To Hobbes, Locke's concern about association would have made no sense, as '[n]atural sense and imagination are not subject to absurdity. Nature itself cannot err' – only language leads us astray.[58]

If Hobbes provides a clearer illustration than Locke of the implications of nakedly causal theories of perception, he does so too with regard to representationalism. The first lines of the first chapter of *Leviathan* declare that, singly, the thoughts of man 'are every one a *representation* or *appearance*, of some quality or other accident, of a body without us [...]'.[59] The epistemological consequences of this for Hobbes are clear. With characteristic terseness, Hobbes maps out the fork that Hume was

later to wield with such devastating effect. There can only be two kinds of knowledge, he claims; empirical '*knowledge of fact*', or of 'sense and memory'; and '*knowledge of the consequence of one affirmation to another*', or 'science', such as geometrical truth.[60] Knowingly or not, in the *Essay*, Locke follows Hobbes in accepting that 'We can have *Knowledge* no farther than we have *Ideas*',[61] but cannot accept that truth itself is merely nominal. The 'conformity between our [simple] *Ideas* and the reality of Things', he claims, is guaranteed providentially, or 'by the Wisdom and Will of our Maker'.[62] Ultimately, truth is the gift of God.

At the same time, Locke gave powerful impetus to the discourse of creation in the eighteenth century. By dispensing with all talk of 'substances' and equating identity with consciousness, his own brand of idea- empiricism paved the way for the development of philosophical subjectivism.[63] However, it is equally certain that in attempting to rescue some notion of universal truth from the wreck of innatism by emphasizing the distinction between the mere 'play' of wit or imagination, and the authority of judgement, he contributed to a general climate of hostility towards imagination.[64] Yet again, by its tendency to give the testimony of sense more weight than that of judgement and reason, idea-empiricism (or representative realism) seemed to undermine certain concepts – principally that of the operation of necessary laws within the natural world, but also those of identity, and objectivity in judgements of morals and taste. This is precisely the observation made by Hume, who (particularly if one considers his influence upon Kant) becomes a pivotal figure for any consideration of the *agon* of knowledge and creation as it evolved through an ailing empirical tradition and into Romanticism.

In a sense, Hume takes representative realism to its logical conclusion. In *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–40), he sets out from the proposition '*[t]hat all our simple ideas in their first appearance are deriv'd from simple impressions, which are correspondent to them, and which they exactly represent*'.[65] Consequently, there can be no difference in kind between sensation and ideas: instead, '[t]he difference betwixt these consists in the degrees of force and liveliness, with which they strike upon the mind, and make their way into our thought or consciousness'– sensation generally being 'livelier' than its ideas.[66] This distinction is extended within the realm of ideas itself, where Hume observes that 'the ideas of the memory are much more lively and strong than those of the imagination', where 'the perception is faint and languid [...]'. However, the imagination has at least one redeeming feature: it is 'not restrain'd to the same order and form with the original impressions; while the memory is in a manner ty'd down in

that respect [...]'.[67] Upon this observation, Hume builds his theory of association: the principles by which ideas are connected cannot, he reasons, be radically different to those by which sensations are connected. Thus:

> This uniting principle among ideas is not to be consider'd as an inseparable connexion; for that has been already excluded from the imagination [...] we are only to regard it as a gentle force, which commonly prevails [...]. The qualities, from which this association arises, and by which the mind is after this manner convey'd from one idea to another, are [...] Resemblance, Contiguity in time or place, and CAUSE and EFFECT.[68]

That which to Locke was a kind of madness becomes, in Hume's hands, the basis of reason itself: as he later puts it, 'all probable reasoning is nothing but a species of sensation'. It follows from this that Locke's carefully drawn distinction between judgement and wit is collapsed: ''Tis not solely in poetry and music, we must follow our taste and sentiment, but likewise in philosophy. When I am convinc'd of any principle, 'tis only an idea, which strikes more strongly upon me.' This comes at a price, however. Hume concludes that '[o]bjects have no discoverable connexion together; nor is it from any other principle but custom operating upon the imagination, that we can draw any inference from the appearance of one to the existence of another.' In other words, '[f]rom the mere repetition of any past impression, even to infinity, *there will never arise any new original idea*, such as that of a necessary connexion [...].'[69] In his sustained pursuit of the logical implications of representative realism, Hume has finally arrived at a point where concepts of natural law seem to be little more than beguiling fictions – necessary fictions perhaps, but fictions nonetheless. Nor does Hume leave off there. If the law-like operation of the world as described by reason is illusory, then it follows that other notions licensed by reason are every bit as fictional. Once Locke's idea of judgement has been eroded by sensation-empiricism, for example, the integrity of consciousness appears to crumble, and identity itself is impeached. Hume concludes that man is incapable of knowing himself as a unified being. He is, indeed, the sum of 'nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement'.[70]

In this way, Hume's division, noted earlier, of all knowable phenomena into 'Matters of Fact' and 'Relations of Ideas' can now be seen to stem from his theory that every idea is derived either from a corresponding impression or from a composition of simpler ideas which are themselves

derived from corresponding impressions. Hume discusses this dualism in the opening passage of Section Four of the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*:

> All the objects of human reason or enquiry may naturally be divided into two kinds, to wit, *Relations of Ideas*, and *Matters of Fact*. Of the first kind are the sciences of Geometry, Algebra, and Arithmetic; and in short, every affirmation which is either intuitively or demonstratively certain. [...] Propositions of this kind are discoverable by the mere operation of thought, without dependence on what is anywhere existent in the universe. [...] Matters of fact, which are the second objects of human reason, are not ascertained in the same manner; nor is our evidence of their truth, however great, of a like nature with the foregoing. The contrary of every matter of fact is still possible; because it can never imply a contradiction, and is conceived by the mind with the same facility and distinctness, as if ever so conformable to reality.[71]

Consequently, for Hume all that is knowable must fall on one side or the other of the fork of non-existential and self-evident or demonstrable propositions (expressing the relations of ideas) and existential propositions which are neither self-evident nor demonstrable (expressing matters of fact). There is no crossing this fork. Any statement purporting to express a self-evident existential proposition, for instance, is for Hume quite groundless. The first sphere to fall foul of Hume's fork, then, is that of value judgements, and in particular the moral imperative disguised as statement of fact – or as Hume puts it, the 'ought' statement lurking among 'is' statements – which is often to be found in works of moral philosophy, and whose veracity, Hume argues in the *Treatise*, ought to be questioned:

> For as this *ought*, or *ought not*, expresses some new relation or affirmation, 'tis necessary that it shou'd be observ'd and explain'd; and at the same time that a reason should be given, for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it.[72]

Hume, of course, has his own answer to this puzzle, which is that 'when you pronounce any action or character to be vicious, you mean nothing, but that from the constitution of your nature you have a feeling or sentiment of blame from the contemplation of it'.[73] We shall return to this answer in a moment. As far as knowledge is concerned, however, the domain of value lies beyond reach. At the same time, the fork of 'fact' and 'relations of ideas' is an unequal one. Rationalist philosophy had traditionally attempted to resolve the former into the latter. Hume was aware, however, that philosophers such as Spinoza and Leibniz, despite

their claims to deductive thoroughness, ultimately grounded their deductions on self-evident propositions, or axioms, the truth of which could not be demonstrated merely in terms of the logical relations of the ideas involved, but which, if accepted as merely factual, could no longer function as the foundations of the system of necessary knowledge these philosophers envisaged. One such premise, and perhaps the most important, is what Leibniz calls the principle of sufficient reason, or the proposition that there is a reason or explanation for every event which occurs.[74] This is the kind of purportedly existential but necessary proposition that Kant was later to identify as synthetic *a priori* and in need of transcendental, rather than logical, deduction. To Hume, however, the related claim that 'every event has a cause' was either factual and therefore contingent or, by striving for necessity, fell between the fork of knowledge. Either way, any edifice of reasoning built upon it was doomed to collapse. In this way, he was able to maintain that since '*all our ideas are copy'd from our impressions*', by extension *all* reasoning is itself finally based on the inductive and factual.[75] With this, Hume linked the fates of epistemic and moral certainty by casting both as dubiously 'value-added' to experience. By so doing, he not only proscribed traditional metaphysics, but effectively alienated his own philosophy from the unreflective thought of ordinary life which implicitly traded upon synthetic *a priori* propositions as stable currency.

Hume himself was acutely aware of this, but there is continued disagreement in the immense literature on Hume as to what he chose to do about it. One of the twentieth century's most influential views was that of Norman Kemp Smith, who argued that Hume's intention in the *Treatise* was always to obviate epistemological scepticism concerning the possibility of *justification* of belief with a naturalistic *description* of human belief, according to which '*we retain a degree of belief, which is sufficient for our purpose, either in philosophy or common life*' – a line of thought extended by Reid.[76] More recent commentators, however, working in the wake of Quine's attack on the analytic/synthetic dichotomy (a modernized version of Hume's fork), have questioned whether scepticism can be so easily tamed without abnegating epistemology, perhaps even philosophy, altogether. Robert Fogelin, for example, argues that Hume's scepticism is so comprehensive that naturalism coheres with it only by postulating that philosophizing, and by extension philosophical scepticism, are themselves 'natural' human conditions. However, this means the suspension of epistemology as much as naturalism, and the holding of both in an uneasy alliance: 'The mitigated skepticism that Hume recommends is the

causal product of two competing influences: Pyrrhonian doubt on one side, natural instinct on the other. We do not argue for mitigated skepticism; we find ourselves in it.'[77] H. O. Mounce, meanwhile, agrees, claiming that Kemp Smith conflates two kinds of incompatible naturalism: one, that of Hume and eighteenth-century Scottish philosophy, which subordinated knowledge to belief, and another, that of scientific positivism, which presumes the possibility of a rational explanation of the world. In other words, he 'confuses *epistemological* naturalism, the view that our knowledge depends on what is given us by nature, with *metaphysical* naturalism, the view that there is no reality apart from the natural world'. Consequently, there is no positivist route around scepticism for Hume, just groundless belief, precipitating the passages of self-dramatizing despair and irony which always threaten to run out of contol and sink the author 'in the scepticism from which he seeks to deliver us'.[78]

Certainly one of Hume's responses to finding empiricism unequal to the task of sustaining knowledge was to divorce philosophical inquiry from ordinary lived experience – from dinner, backgammon and the company of friends. From the perspective of the 'common affairs of life', he observed, such speculations 'appear so cold, and strain'd, and ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to enter into them any farther'.[79] It is precisely this voice of the quotidian, of 'life', which the Romantics attempt to recover for a philosophical mode of thought which Hume wished to confine to the study or the academy. The pressing questions after Hume are: how might certainty be made a part of the totality of lived experience?; and can this reconciliation of fact and value be effected within philosophy, or must philosophy itself take its place within a more holistic context of knowing and being? English Romanticism comes to define itself by its sense of its own equivocal response to this problem of knowing, oscillating not between scepticism and naturalism, but between knowledge and an indifference to knowing which might encompass other (possibly *super*natural) modes of being or 'life'. In this manner it seeks both to argue with *and* transcend the stark injunction, with which Hume closes the *Enquiry* and I opened this chapter, to commit 'to the flames' any volume containing neither factual nor logical truths.

Hume's challenge still exercises philosophers today. For example, one way of reading the recent debate between coherentists such as Quine, Rorty and Davidson on one hand, and epistemological foundationalists like Roderick Chisholm and Ernest Sosa on the other is as between different ways of overcoming the alienation of fact and value created by Hume. The coherentist is apt to reject the division outright, arguing that

the traditional notion that the justification of belief rests upon a neutral non-epistemic ground which is somehow 'given' is a mistake. On the contrary, knowledge is, in an epistemic sense, always already evaluative, which is simply to say that there is no clear distinction between evaluative and non-evaluative propositions in the first place: for Davidson, meaning itself is 'contaminated by theory, by what is held to be true'.[80] Moreover, any philosophy which is indifferent to this distinction may well be led to call into question the need for an epistemology which purports to seek the 'ground' of knowledge. Knowing becomes a matter of what Rorty terms 'conversation' within a space of reasons rather than one of 'confrontation' with a value-neutral reality.[81] Foundationalists, meanwhile, continue to preserve Hume's distinction, and thus the traditional questions of epistemology as subsequently evolved by Kant, by insisting that the coherentist account ignores the irreducibly normative nature of justification. For these thinkers, the avoidance of a more vicious division within the value/fact dichotomy means accepting that in knowledge, just as in morals and aesthetics, value is grounded in fact by virtue of what Chisholm calls 'the *supervenient* character of epistemic justification'.[82] As Ernest Sosa puts it: 'All epistemic justification [. . .] derive[s] from what is not epistemically evaluative.'[83]

The conflict between these outlooks is already present in English Romantic prose. But what has broadened and hardened as a debate (or even a refusal of debate) between writers and between camps of philosophers is played out as a localized tension within the work of individual Romantic writers. Moreover, because one of the leading Romantic strategies for evading Hume's bifurcation is one of indifference to knowing, denying the value of certainty per se, close reading will have to be sensitive to how this peculiar gambit merely reproduces the same problem on new and different levels, as foundational 'knowledge' is repressed, only to reappear (to adapt an image of de Man's) like the Hydra's head, once more.[84]

In the meantime, it testifies either to the confidence or the anxiety of Hume's age and that of later eighteenth-century thought that many writers chose either to ignore Hume's findings or adopt and incorporate aspects of his language without acknowledging their implications. One quarter where this was not the case, however, was that of Hume's own country, Scotland, where Thomas Reid took his conclusions seriously enough to attempt to eradicate scepticism by destroying its roots, namely the 'idea' philosophy, or representative realism of Descartes and Locke, and installing naturalism in its stead. Before proceeding to a discussion

of the common sense school, however, one must step back for a moment to register the earlier work of Hutcheson, and the influence upon eighteenth-century thought, and ultimately the Romantics, exercised by his theory of 'inner sense'.

Inner sense: Hutcheson

Hutcheson's *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* has long since secured its place in intellectual history as the first attempt by a British writer to develop, as an independent intellectual exercise, a systematic theory of beauty. In it, Hutcheson seeks to modify Locke's epistemology by adapting his theory of secondary qualities to Shaftesbury's notion of aesthetic intuition. Where Locke and Hume see secondary qualities as epistemologically risky (depending upon a contingent relation between the perceiver and the perceived, rather than a property inhering in the object itself), Hutcheson, pursuing a line of argument which was to be followed by Reid, strengthens the veridicality of our perception of secondary qualities by explaining them in terms of our natural disposition to be determined in certain *law-like* ways – which are themselves intimately linked with our pleasure-responses. Observing initially that '[t]here is scarcely any Object which our Minds are employ'd about, which is not thus constituted *the necessary Occasion* of some Pleasure or Pain',[85] Hutcheson proposes that if those '*Determinations* to be pleas'd with any Forms, or Ideas which occur to our Observation' are what constitute sense in general, then the 'Power of perceiving the *Beauty* of *Regularity, Order, Harmony*' and so on, is 'INTERNAL SENSE'. In all of this, he expresses confidence '[t]hat there is some *Sense* of *Beauty natural* to Men'.[86] Unlike Locke's version, internal sense (of secondary qualities) is an immediate and veridical intuition, no less authentic than external sense, though quite distinct from it. It is this distinctness, moreover, which underlies Hutcheson's contrast of absolute or original beauty, as opposed to comparative or relative beauty:

> Only let it be observ'd, that by *Absolute* or *Original* Beauty, is not understood any Quality suppos'd to be in the Object, which should of itself be beautiful, without any relation to any Mind which perceives it: For Beauty, like other Names of sensible Ideas, properly denotes the *Perception* of some Mind; so *Cold, Hot, Sweet, Bitter*, denote the Sensations in our Minds, to which perhaps there is no Resemblance in the Objects, which excite these Ideas in us, however we generally imagine otherwise [...]. We therefore by *Absolute* Beauty understand only that Beauty, which we perceive in Objects without *Comparison* to any thing external, of which the Object is suppos'd an Imitation, or Picture [...].[87]

Again, like Shaftesbury, Hutcheson is at pains to deny that he is attempting to smuggle in a rehabilitated innatist theory by the back door: 'an *internal Sense* no more presupposes an *innate Idea*, or Principle of Knowledge, than the *external*'.[88] Unlike his mentor, however, he does not conflate the inner sense for beauty with moral sense,[89] though he does see them as linked: 'This *moral Sense*', he writes, 'has this in common with our other Senses, that however our Desire of *Virtue* may be counterbalanc'd by *Interest*, our Sentiment or Perception of its *Beauty* cannot [...].'[90] This takes on some significance in the course of his later discussion of poetry. In poetry, he claims, 'the most moving Beautys bear a Relation to our *moral Sense*, and affect us more vehemently, than the Representations of *natural Objects* in the liveliest Descriptions'. [91]

Ingenious as it was, Hutcheson's optimistic appropriation and refashioning of Locke's secondary qualities along the lines of Shaftesbury's inner sense was unsustainable if left without any other support than that of empiricist epistemology. In the absence of some gratuitous non-empirical principle of verification, secondary qualities would always appear compromised by their inherently subjective component. Worse, when unwound into a general epistemology, as in Hume, they seemed to give rise to an unacceptable scepticism. As a result, though of considerable influence, inner sense has an uneasy passage through later British philosophy, accepted by some, such as Kames and Blair (though with modifications), but rejected by associationists such as Gerard and Jeffrey.[92] As a weapon against scepticism, moreover, it was to be superseded by Thomas Reid's commonsensism.

Common sense: Reid

Before Kant had been roused from his 'dogmatic slumbers', Reid had marshalled an anti-sceptical response to Hume in his 1764 *An Inquiry into the Human Mind, on the Principles of Common Sense*, which was to be followed two decades later by the *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785) and the *Essays on the Active Powers of Man* (1788). In the *Inquiry*'s dedication (to the Chancellor of the 'University of Old Aberdeen', where Reid had been a lecturer since 1751) he claims 'that I never thought of calling in question the principles commonly received with regard to the human understanding, until the *Treatise of human nature* was published, in the year 1739'.[93] What follows is an attempted rebuttal, not just of Hume, but of the presumption in general that philosophical argument must always override the testimony of common sense, regardless of how powerful or compelling that may be. Reid mounts a naturalistic attack on the theory

of ideas and representative accounts of perception as they appear in thinkers from Descartes to Hume, and – significantly for the purpose here – in the course of so doing attempts to replace it with an account of the mind's *active* role in perception.

The phrase 'common sense' was far from being novel in 1764. Shaftesbury had advised that 'with respect to Morals; Honesty is like to gain little by Philosophy, or deep Speculations of any kind. In the main, 'tis best to stick to *Common Sense*, and go no further.'[94] In the eighteenth century, no less than today, the term carried more than a suggestion of impatience with speculative or philosophical thought. Reid's invocation of the notion, however, was no more a mere vulgar appeal to consensual opinion than Shaftesbury's. What was offensive about recent philosophy to Reid was that it was inherently self-destructive, undermining notions which were the very cornerstones of knowledge; in such a way, as Hume had found, as to question the premises and procedure of that philosophy itself. The first principle of commonsensism, then, was one which reversed the burden of proof, and stipulated that philosophical explanations must be adequate to everyday knowledge, or a reasonable network of beliefs. For something to count as 'everyday knowledge', Reid laid down certain criteria, the foremost of which were that it should receive universal assent; that it could not be open to contradiction without absurdity; that it should be morally or practically indispensable; and (something which he continually affirmed throughout his writing) that it must be embedded in ordinary language. As he puts it in *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, 'whatever we find common to all languages, must have a common cause; must be owing to some common notion or sentiment of the human mind'.[95]

Most tellingly, Reid's critique of recent philosophy takes the form of an assault on theories of perception as representation. In the Dedication of the *Inquiry*, he claims that he was led by Hume's conclusion to question its basic premises, and above all the 'ancient' one '[t]hat we do not really perceive things that are external, but only certain images and pictures of them imprinted upon the mind, which are called *impressions* and *ideas*', but from which 'I cannot [. . .] infer the existence of any thing else'. For this, ultimately damaging assumption, 'I could find no solid proof.'[96] In the *Essays*, he proposes instead that when 'in common language, we speak of having an idea of any thing, we mean no more by that expression, but thinking of it'.[97]

To this negative argument, however, Reid hitches a positive thesis about the nature of perception. Having denied that we gain our knowledge of such things as identity from comparing ideas passively received

from without, he suggests that knowledge is derived rather from 'judgements of nature'; which are 'immediately inspired by our constitution', and merely prompted or suggested by sensation.[98] He illustrates this point with an example of smelling a rose:

> [T]he smell of a rose signifies two things. *First*, A sensation, which can have no existence but when it is perceived, and can only be in a sentient being or mind. *Secondly*, It signifies some power, quality, or virtue, in the rose [. . .] which hath a permanent existence, independent of the mind [. . .] By the original constitution of our nature, we are both led to believe, that there is a permanent cause of the sensation [. . .] and experience determines us to place it in the rose.[99]

In this matter, he continues, the Aristotelians 'came nearer to the truth, in holding the mind to be in sensation partly passive and partly active, than the moderns, in affirming it to be purely passive'.[100] Basic conceptions of things, then, arise from original faculties, or innate powers of the mind, in response to external stimulus. However, the most important aspect of this for Reid is that intentional *acts* such as perceiving a rose are *about something*; in other words, they imply the existence of something other than the perceiver. He affirms this in the *Essays* (as usual, resting his case on language): 'The operations of our minds are denoted, in all languages, by active transitive verbs, which, from their constitution in grammar, require [. . .] an *object* of the operation.' Consequently, when divorced from the impressions of sensation, 'we may conceive or imagine what has no existence [. . .]. Every man knows that it is as easy to conceive a winged horse or a centaur, as it is to conceive a horse or a man.'[101] By asserting the activity of the mind in perception itself, Reid is clearing a way for Kant.

However, it was one thing to replace a worn-out epistemology of ideas with a naturalistic account of belief and common sense, but quite another to challenge philosophy's dualism of subject and object. Reid's account of the power of the mind to perceive objects without the mediation of ideas or representations should not be read as implying that *knowledge* is inherently subjective in the Kantian sense, viz. that for perception itself to be possible, objects must conform to our experience, rather than *vice versa*. Still less should it be seen as questioning the boundaries of subjectivity and objectivity. Indeed, Reid remains highly suspicious of imagination's capacity to interfere with the raw materials of knowledge. For example, he is opposed to all forms of reasoning by hypothesis, dismissing them as 'the reveries of vain and fanciful men, whose pride makes them conceive themselves able to unfold the mysteries of nature by the force of their

genius', adding that only what 'can fairly be deduced from facts duly observed, or sufficiently attested, is genuine and pure; it is the voice of God, and no fiction of human imagination'.[102] Yet even this pales beside the attack upon the creative imagination launched in the Introduction to the *Inquiry*:

> It is genius, and not the want of it, that adulterates philosophy, and fills it with error and false theory. A creative imagination disdains the mean offices of digging for a foundation [...] it plans a design, and raises a fabric. Invention supplies materials where they are wanting, and fancy adds colouring, and every befitting ornament. The work pleases the eye, and wants nothing but solidity and a good foundation. It seems even to vie with the works of nature, till some succeeding architect blows it into rubbish, and builds as goodly a fabric of his own in its place. Happily for the present age, the castle-builders employ themselves more in romance than in philosophy.[103]

What Reid demonstrates, above all, is that the profound uneasiness of eighteenth-century thought with the concept creativity associated with original genius – an idea which, more than any other era, it fostered and encouraged – was not solely attributable to the legacy of Locke's peculiar idea-empiricism, or representative realism, but to a self-undermining loop of logic within the empiricist discourse of genius in general. What this amounted to was that, while from Hobbes onwards philosophy in Britain fostered the development of faculty psychology, and thereby the notion of the active, synthetic roles of the imagination and understanding in building up the raw material of experience, it could not countenance the idea that the products of these faculties (and imagination, above all) might themselves return into the epistemic cycle, to be absorbed into the data of what was 'true'. Consequently, as the language of the passage above confirms, even a relatively radical, anti-epistemological theory of the mental powers such as Reid's – which attacks the representationalism of the philosophy of ideas – leaves empiricism's *foundationalism* untouched. Imagination may raise its buildings, and the poetic genius may be the most imaginative (and therefore creative) of people, but, unratified by experience, his constructions are follies which want 'solidity and a good foundation'.

Thus far three major facets of late seventeenth and eighteenth-century philosophy have been discussed: representative realism, inner sense theory, and naturalism or commonsensism. Though, for the sake of concision, the analysis of these trends has tended to focus upon their originators or chief exponents, it would not do to suggest that they were always articulated so distinctly; or that they were not altered, developed

or overlayed by these and subsequent theorists – for evidence of which one need only examine the work of an eclectic writer like Kames. Nor would it be accurate to imply that they enjoyed equally successful careers – and this despite the fact that each of the paradigms is still seen as sufficiently viable in some form or other by the end of the century for them to influence the Romantics. Inner sense theory, for instance, persists in an ennervated form in later eighteenth-century philosophy, before being transformed by Coleridge.[104] Reid, meanwhile, shares with the Romantics a post-Humean ambivalence regarding foundational philosophy's conception of 'knowledge', and in many ways strives towards the same goal of recovering the 'ordinary voice' for philosophy; of rehabilitating a by now thoroughly counter-intuitive empiricism with the accepted certainties of everyday experience. But his unwillingness to test the dualism of subject and object means that that philosophy, in the form of an uneasy naturalism, largely retains its appointed role as the master-discourse of the later Enlightenment. While Reid's own ideas certainly have a huge impact upon philosophy, particularly in Scotland, the austerity of his naturalistic method, his objectivism, and his rejection of all talk of 'ideas' was hardly designed to impress the Romantics. The unacceptable price of naturalism for the Romantics, as Elridge observes, is that we are forced to 'abandon our sense of ourselves as free subjectivities'.[105] Consequently, Locke's representative realism survives Reid's attack, ironically because it preserves a role for creative imagination (albeit a subordinate one) where commonsensism represses creativity. Nonetheless, though Reid's translation of that experience as common sense seems very distant from Coleridge's highly complex construction of 'feeling', there remains a story to be told about how, thanks to Coleridge, important lines of common sense philosophy find their way back into English thought having first been 'Germanized' through Kant's reading of Reid and his followers. But that is not a story which concerns us here.

Association: Hartley

National prejudice aside, the failure of Reid's commonsensism to gain any purchase on English Romantic thought is in part due to the impact upon Romanticism of associationism – or, more correctly, *theories* of the association of ideas; since, as Martin Kallich has indicated, there were many variants of this in circulation at the time. The present discussion of associationism has been delayed for two reasons: first, because of chronology (as Kallich notes, it was only in the wake of Hume that the

idea began to acquire legitimacy);[106] and second, and more importantly, because it is part of the present purpose to contest the notion, which has become something of a commonplace in intellectual history, that there was something natural or inevitable about how associationism both emerged from empirical thought and fed into Romanticism. In fact, associationism was a contentious issue in the mid and late eighteenth century, and in certain forms clashed with many other significant ideas such as inner sense or common sense.

As it is primarily concerned with the post-Humean fate of associationism, this study has little to add to Kallich's thorough analysis of the development of the idea prior to the seventeen forties. Following its initial, rather ambivalent treatment at the hands of Hobbes and Locke, associationism takes on a shadowy role in the first decades of the eighteenth century.[107] While quietly informing many of the period's key assumptions, it remains an uncomfortable notion which is rarely named or acknowledged directly. However, Hume's argument in the *Treatise* concerning the qualities resulting from his *principle* of association – namely, resemblance, contiguity and causality – seemed to many to suggest the possibility that association might be a natural and regular cognitive process. This was despite the fact that Hume had made it clear that his principle was itself the merely the product of observation, and that separately or jointly, the qualities of association were 'not to be consider'd as an inseparable connexion', but rather as 'a gentle force, which commonly prevails'.[108]

Nonetheless, the question as to whether association was a regular or random phenomenon was to divide thinkers after Hume. Most commentators found the second proposition too much to swallow, and opted for a hybrid theory of randomness sustained by an underlying regularity. Those who interpreted associationism as a theory of arbitrary connection alone – identified with Hume's principle of association according to contiguity in time – often did so in order to oppose it more effectively. Cutting across this debate is a second question, though it is seldom acknowledged as a distinct one by the parties concerned: is association a fundamental principle of knowledge, a condition (or even *the* condition) of reasoning, or is it a psychological activity which is simply liable to *affect* our knowledge, given certain conditions?[109] As a rule, 'random' associationists, such as Hartley, tend to adopt the stronger, epistemological thesis, while 'regularists' like Hutcheson and Kames, are generally psychological associationists only.

Despite the fact that, in terms of the spread of associationism in Scotland, Hume's impact is considerably greater than that of Hartley, the

latter deserves special consideration, not only because of his well-known influence upon the early development of Coleridge's thought, but because his version of the doctrine is one of the most uncompromising of the epistemological forms of associationism. His purpose in *Observations on Man* was, as Theodore Huguelet notes in his introduction to his facsimile edition, 'to yoke Newton's theory of vibrations and of the aether to the principle of association of ideas as adumbrated by Locke and the Reverend John Gay [. . .]'.[110] Hartley, like Locke, is a representationalist: he believes that ideas are representations of the causally effective objects of sensation.[111] However, whereas Locke sidesteps the issue of materiality, Hartley attempts to confront it. To bridge the mind-body gap, he posits the existence of a 'subtle elastic Fluid' through which infinitely small vibrations are communicated between the material organs of sense and the sensitive soul itself.[112] In this way, he hopes to avoid the charge that he is proposing a reductively materialist account of sensation.[113] Nonetheless, the early physiology of the *Observations* illustrates Hartley's materialism:

> If we suppose an infinitesimal elementary Body to be intermediate between the Soul and gross Body, which appears to be no improbable Supposition, then the Changes in our Sensations, Ideas, and Motions, may correspond to the Changes made in the medullary Substance, only as far as these correspond to the Changes made in the elementary Body.[114]

What distinguishes Hartleian associationism from Hume's own account, however, is not simply the former's concern with the physiology of sensation, but his reduction of all association to one of Hume's principles: that of contiguity.[115] Within this category, Hartley describes two sub-groups: the synchronous, and the successive: 'Thus the Sight of Part of a large Building suggests the Idea of the rest instantaneously; and the Sound of the Words which begin a familiar Sentence, brings the remaining Part to our Memories in Order, the Association of the Parts being synchronous in the first Case, and successive in the last.'[116] It is important to Hartley that association should depend upon contiguity, and not any identifiable qualities in ideas, as it is central to his argument that association is itself prior to the formation of ideas. It is this implication of association in the very process of perception which marks his form of associationism as epistemological, rather than merely psychological:

> Ideas, and miniature Vibrations, must first be generated [. . .] before they can be associated [. . .]. But then [. . .] this Power of forming Ideas, and their corresponding miniature Vibrations, *does equally presuppose the Power of Association*. For

since all Sensations and Vibrations are infinitely divisible, in respect of Time and Place, they could not leave any Traces or Images of themselves, *i.e.* any Ideas, or miniature Vibrations, unless their infinitesimal Parts did cohere together through joint Impression; *i.e.* Association.[117]

With these premises combined, Hartley is committed to a theory of human perception which is at once deterministic and radically associationist.[118] Human knowledge and experience can amount to nothing more than the associations of contiguous vibrations of the aether. For example, in his explanation of the nature of the 'Passions', he remarks that 'our Passions or Affections can be no more than Aggregates of simple Ideas united by Association [...]'.[119] Moreover, since 'all Desire and Aversion, are factitious, and generated by Association; *i.e.* mechanically; it follows that the Will is mechanical also'.[120] This has serious repercussions for his moral theory, and causes him some discomfort when treating the subject of freedom. Like Hobbes, Hartley opposes the philosophical notion of free *will* with a theory of freedom as consisting in free *action*. This 'popular and practical Sense', he claims, 'is not only consistent with the Doctrine of Mechanism, but even flows from it'; namely, 'if Free-will be defined the Power of doing what a Person desires or wills to do [...]'.[121]

With this unfortunate ability to appear both deterministic and randomizing, few philosophers were willing to embrace Hartley's theory that association was a condition of the formation of simple ideas, preferring instead to accept it as a more regular psychological phenomenon which affected perception. Locke himself had suggested something along these lines when he noted in the *Essay* 'how the Mind, *by degrees*, improves in these [simple ideas], and *advances* to the Exercise of those other faculties of *Enlarging*, *Compounding*, and *Abstracting* its *Ideas* [...]'.[122] Less regular forms of association, meanwhile, were cited as instances or causes of error. Hutcheson, for instance, deploys the notion to explain away the apparent vagaries of taste in the *Inquiry*: given that the laws by which simple ideas are raised in people by objects are the same, he argues that 'in the same Person, when his *Fancy* at one time differs from what it was at another [...] we shall generally find that there is some accidental *Conjunction* of a disagreeable Idea, which always recurs with the Object [...]'.[123]

The march of associationism, then, was far from being a steady one.[124] Nonetheless, Hume's influence in the later eighteenth century was such that, despite the dissenting voice of Reid, practically every theorist felt compelled to acknowledge the process, particularly with respect to how it

seemed to explain the synthetic, constructive capacity of the mind, and thereby the progress of knowledge. Some, such as Alexander Gerard, attempted to turn the doctrine into a full-blown account of original genius. Gerard was also the first to adapt Hume's connection of the emotions and the associative imagination to a theory of artistic creation; a connection which was to be extended by Archibald Alison to explain the nature of taste. By the time it enters into the discourse of English Romanticism, then, associationism is connoted both with physiological necessity and the implicit creativity of contingent connection.

CREATION AT THE MARGINS: THEORIES OF ORIGINAL GENIUS

In a sketchy way, I have attempted to outline the manner in which seventeenth and eighteenth-century empiricism encouraged a view of the mind's creative power which itself came to threaten that philosophy's notion of truth as representation (or, in Reid's case, as direct apprehension). At the same time, its affinity with the older doctrine of poetic inspiration, as well as with a more voguish notion of the sublime, meant that the discourse of mental creation persisted, albeit in the margins of eighteenth-century philosophical thought. The point at which this notion most closely approaches the centre, however, remains to be considered, and that is through the cult of original genius. Here, once again, one finds that in Britain the earliest encouragement for this idea came from modifications to the notion of artistic imitation which were themselves wrought by increasingly empirical modes of thinking.

Imitation ancient and natural

In many ways empiricism encouraged a more libertarian view of the artist's craft. The traditional positive sense of 'imitation' as the emulation of ancient writers had never been entirely secure within the British literary tradition. In his 1650 preface to *Gondibert*, Davenant had complained that '[s]uch limits to the progress of every thing . . . doth Imitation give; for whilst we imitate others, we can no more excel them, then he that sailes by others Mapps can make a new discovery [. . .]'.[125] Moreover, inevitably any normative theory of classical imitation had always sooner or later to confront the problem of Shakespeare's excellence. In a letter to John Dennis, Dryden wrote that

I cannot but conclude with Mr. *Rym* – that our English Comedy is far beyond any thing of the Ancients. And notwithstanding our irregularities, so is our Tragedy. *Shakespear* had a Genius for it; and we know, in spite of Mr *R* – that Genius alone is a greater Virtue (if I may so call it) than all other Qualifications put together.[126]

By the middle of the eighteenth century, empiricism had all but erased the vestiges of the notion that classical precedent represented an objective standard of literary value, and that the vocation of the poet was to mimic the ancients or ancient rules. Gradually, this kind of activity began to be designated as 'copying', rather than imitation proper. Burke's contribution to this trend with regard to the language of poetry has already been registered. But even a relatively conservative voice such as that of Kames fulminates in the *Elements of Criticism* against the 'slavish' imitation of the 'arbitrary' dictates of the ancients, challenging the French critic Bossuet to explain 'if in writing they [the ancients] followed no rule, why should they be imitated?'[127] Adam Smith, meanwhile, has no hesitation in dismissing pure copy as valueless, noting that 'though a production of art seldom derives any merit from its resemblance to another object of the same kind, it frequently derives a great deal from its resemblance to an object of a different kind [...]'.[128] Of course the doctrine retained some adherents, the most notable of whom, famously, was Sir Joshua Reynolds. As late as 1774 Reynolds is lecturing to the Royal Academy 'that a painter must not only be of necessity an imitator of the works of nature [...] but he must as necessarily be an imitator of the works of other painters' – adding, 'I will go further; even genius, at least what generally is so called, is the child of imitation.'[129]

Moreover, the ancients aside, the presumption that the arts must conform to some kind of canon of rules was rather more difficult to dislodge. Thomas Rymer's criticism of Shakespeare on Aristotelian grounds is often portrayed as being something of a blind alley in the history of English criticism, but though by the turn of the century few would agree with his claim about 'how unhappy the greatest *English* Poets have been through their ignorance or negligence of these fundamental Rules and Laws of *Aristotle*',[130] his conviction that poetry should be subject to principled judgement, and therefore reducible to rules based on common sense or reason, retained a powerful hold upon theorists. It has already been shown that Dennis, for one, shared his concern that some kind of benchmark for poetic 'truth' was necessary. But as the authority of classic example receded, to be replaced by the testimony of experience, so the

theory of imitation shifted from being one which encouraged the artist to follow the ancients, to one which prescribed the imitation of nature. Dennis himself savaged Pope in *A True Character of Mr. Pope, and His Writings* (1716) for being 'emphatically a *Monkey*, in his awkward servile Imitations. For in all his Productions, he has been an *Imitator*, from his Imitation of VIRGILS *Bucolocks*, to his present Imitation of HORACE.' And yet he is quite consistent throughout his career in maintaining that poetry is the imitation of nature.[131]

In line with this is Addison's analysis of genius in *Spectator* No. 160. Addison admires such 'great Genius's [...] who by the meer Strength of natural Parts, and without any Assistance of Art or Learning, have produced Works that were the Delight of their own Times and the Wonder of Posterity'. Citing classical authors as examples, he adds that there is 'something nobly wild and extravagant in these great natural Genius's' which excels in beauty the accomplishment of merely learned writers (such as that of the moderns).[132] Nevertheless, even Addison hesitates to subordinate this second class of genius, or 'those that have formed themselves by Rules, and submitted the Greatness of their natural Talents to the Corrections and Restraints of Art', to the first. It is only when he comes to the question of imitation that his true allegiance emerges, for as he sees it, '[t]he great Danger in these latter kind of Genius's, is, lest they cramp their own Abilities too much by Imitation', insofar as '[a]n Imitation of the best Authors, is not to compare with a good Original [...]'.[133]

Addison and Dennis's writings on genius suggest a new paradigm of imitation which had nothing to do with aping ancient writers, and which can be seen as laying the groundwork for Edward Young's treatment of the matter in his *Conjectures on Original Composition* of 1759 (a significant year, which also saw the publication of Gerard's *Essay on Taste*, Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, and the second edition of Burke's *Inquiry*). To Young, '*Imitations* are of two kinds; one of Nature, one of Authors: The first we call *Originals*, and confine the term *Imitation* to the second.'[134] There are three major defects in the spirit of imitation: it denies art the possibility of progression and improvement; it thwarts Nature herself, who 'brings us into the world all *Originals*'; and, finally, it 'makes us think little, and write much'.[135] Where Young departs from Dennis, however, is in his rejection of rule-following per se. 'There is', he asserts, 'something in Poetry beyond Prose-reason; there are Mysteries in it not to be explained, but admired [...].' Moreover, 'Genius can set us right in Composition, without the Rules of the Learned; as Conscience

sets us right in Life, without the Laws of the Land [. . .].'[136] By being redefined as the emulation or representation of nature, imitation has come to be identified with originality as the chief characteristic of genius.[137]

There is some friction, however, between Young's fidelity to an imitative theory of art, and his description of true imitation (i.e. of nature) as that which has 'a *vegetable* nature' and 'rises spontaneously from the vital root of Genius [. . .]'. He is concerned that the representational demands made by even this sense of imitation imply a check to the activity of the artist. Yet without regulation of some kind, '[i]n the Fairyland of Fancy, Genius may wander wild; there it has a creative power, and may reign arbitrarily over its own empire of Chimeras'. As he struggles to articulate a notion of truth in imitative art without compromising the integrity of genius, he finds it difficult to resist the pull of innatism, for if '[l]earning is borrowed knowledge; Genius is knowledge innate, and quite our own [. . .]'.[138] Young was not alone in this respect: there was a general feeling at the time that if the products of Genius truly were instances of epistemic originality, and transcended empirical truth, then they must entail some kind of innatist principle which would bind such a power to truth. This was a problem which was to preoccupy theory until at least the end of the century.

Innatism: Sharpe vs Young

After Locke, the remaining advocates of innatist theories of knowledge were forced onto the defensive. Henry More's argument that the mind was '*not unfurnish'd of* Innate Truth' no longer seemed tenable.[139] Even opponents of empiricism such as Shaftesbury shied away from its dogmatical implications. Yet as the concept of genius developed and assumed new and more powerful qualities, the notion of an 'empirical genius' seemed ever more incongruous. It had for a long time been thought that if transcendent genius was truly unique and irreducible, then it could not simply be an acquired facility or quality derived from learning and experience; that it must be, at least in part, inborn, or innate. This in turn became entangled with a theory of language – systematized in the eighteenth century by Vico, but already familiar to writers of the Renaissance – which rendered primitive language as more natural (though less complex) than that of modern societies, because more spontaneous, and less affected by art or the sophistication of learning. The innate and 'primitive genius' thus came to embody ideas about the germination of language and intelligence which were crucial to the age's view of

itself, and of its artistic and scientific culture, as progressive. The problem in Britain, however, was that such a figure did not fit easily into the model which empirical science was constructing of human intellectual development.

One of the more curious products of this paradox is William Sharpe's *A Dissertation upon Genius*. Sharpe attempts to remove the innatist overtones from the idea of genius by redefining it according to Lockean paradigms. His purpose is 'to prove, that Genius, or Taste, is not the result of simple nature, not the effect of any cause exclusive of human assistance, and the vicissitudes of life; but the effect of acquisition in general'. He rests his case upon the authority of Locke's *Essay*, and above all upon the principle that our knowledge is grounded on ideas of sensation and reflection alone: if this principle is to be allowed, he argues, together with the assumption that prior to these operations the mind is a *tabula rasa*, then it follows that 'Genius can neither act, nor exhibit itself, till these powers have been at work [. . .].'[140] Sharpe does, however, advance a positive theory of genius:

> [Genius is] an aptness to receive the accession of some ideas, and to exclude that of others; or [. . .] an active power of revolving, examining, and conferring together the ideas thus severally and distinctly received; or [. . .] an activity, promptitude, or aptness to unite the ideas arising from this comparison, set them, as it were, in juxta-position, view them in their mutual habitudes and relations, and thus investigate their consequences and conclusions.[141]

Each of these qualities of genius corresponds more or less precisely to Locke's account of the principal acts of the mind in perception: namely, and respectively; sensation, reflection, and the operation of 'wit' under the supervision of judgement. Moreover, '[s]imple apprehension, or the reception of our primary ideas' is a business in which 'the mind itself is purely passive'. Again, as in Locke, any more radical notion of the mind's power, such as the creation of simple ideas, is precluded, as 'this power is no more a property of man than the power of working miracles': 'All that the intellect can do, is to sort its materials, not add new ones, nor essentially alter its originals [. . .].' In this, it is similar to a '*camera obscura*'[142] – an analogy which Locke had used to illustrate the operation of the understanding in the *Essay*.[143] In Sharpe, we have a graphic and practical illustration of the limitations of Lockean empiricism when extended into a theory of original genius.

Innatism was never going to be an adequate response either to empiricism's challenge to genius to account for the 'truth' of its products,

or to genius's intimation that truth itself is something made, not found. Since Descartes, the innatist doctine of ideas had enjoyed a limited life in Britain as an expedient conflation of two different theses; one psychological, the other epistemological. Accordingly, an explanation of the origin of ideas or concepts was run together with an argument regarding the grounds by which certain propositions were to be counted as necessarily true. Not only was this out of step with the prevailing philosophy of the early eighteenth century, then, but it was unequal to the task of coping with the deconstructive implications the idea of creative genius carried with regard to truth and knowledge. Theorists sympathetic to genius (and by the late eighteenth century there were many) were accordingly forced to make arguments mainly by metaphor and analogy, the most ingenious and influential of which was the paradigm of organic growth as a model for mental development and activity. Even a conservative like George Campbell, for example, adopts Young's language of vegetable growth in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* when he argues that '[i]mprovements [in art], unless in extraordinary instances of genius and sagacity, are not to be expected from those who have acquired all their dexterity from imitation and habit', and that '[i]t is from the seed [i.e. rules] only you can expect, with the aid of proper culture, to produce new varieties, and even to make improvements on the species'.[144]

Despite this, the debate as to whether genius was an innate capacity or an acquired ability ground on. In Scotland, some, such as Adam Ferguson, still clung to the notion that genius was a birthright, and that 'the person, who is born to this elevation, finds himself placed at once on the height to which so few can aspire'.[145] Others, like Dugald Stewart, sought to show 'to how great a degree invention depends on cultivation and habit, even in those sciences in which it is generally supposed, that every thing depends on natural genius'.[146] Most, however, tried to compromise between the two. For example, in his *Dissertations Moral and Critical*, James Beattie initially observes that 'to be a great poet [...] one must have not only that capacity which is common to all men of sense, but also a particular and distinguishing Genius, which learning may improve, but cannot bestow', but then adds of the nature of genius itself that 'it is owing partly to constitution, and partly to habit [...]'.[147] Indeed, as the century draws to a close, Isaac D'Israeli is noting ruefully in his *An Essay on the Manners and Genius of the Literary Character* that 'philosophers have not yet agreed of the nature of genius, for while some conceive it to be a gift; others think it an acquisition'.[148]

Invention

So long as that argument was couched in terms of a contest between Young's conception of genius and that of Sharpe; that is, between an innatist and an empiricist version of genius, agreement was an impossibility. In the meantime, a compromise had to be reached between the aesthetics of creation and the strictures of foundational empiricism. In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the idea of artistic creativity had safely been contained by the concept of invention, used in the sense of the discovery of something new and hitherto unknown, or the design of a new whole out of elements previously supplied. This is the 'discovery' theory of creation, discussed at the beginning of this chapter, which owes something to Plato's notion of the Demiurge. It does not challenge empirical principles, though it tests them by producing new candidates for verification. Bacon, for example, has this sense in mind in *The Advancement* when he claims that '[t]he invention of speech or argument is not properly an invention: for to invent is to discover that we know not, and not to recover or resummon that which we already know [...]'.[149] Similarly, Hobbes argues in *Leviathan* that 'the discourse of the mind, when it is governed by design, is nothing but *seeking*, or the faculty of invention [...]'.[150] Locke's own definition of invention as a liveliness of memory is rather more conservative, but comparable to these.[151]

This in turn encouraged in theorists and critics a certain licence. In the preface to his 1695 translation of Fresnoy's *De Arte Graphica*, Dryden writes of painting and poetry that '[i]nvention is the first part, and absolutely necessary to them both: yet no Rule ever was or ever can be given how to compass it'. Moreover, '[w]ithout Invention a Painter is but a Copier, and a Poet but a Plagiary of others'.[152] Even Rymer finds it a fault in Ariosto that he 'produces nothing of his own invention'.[153] There are limitations to this freedom, however. Dryden denies that genius or invention entails, for example, the ability to evolve 'new Rules' in drama, while Temple insists that '[b]esides the heat of Invention and liveliness of Wit, there must be the coldness of good Sense and soundness of Judgement', without which poetry is apt to be 'wild and extravagant'.[154]

Locke's own influence on the development of the concept of invention, however, exceeds that of his own definition of the term. His demand for science to use a plain and exact language suited to its investigative purpose produced conflicting demands upon poetry: on the one hand, to conform to this standard, and, on the other, to define a space for itself

outside scientific discourse. All the while, empiricism quietly undermined Neoclassical rules. As a consequence, the notion of 'invention' is forced to bear increasing weight in literary theory. In *The Spectator* No. 279, Addison's discussion of *Paradise Lost* uses the term in a way which signals a further departure:

> *Milton's* Characters, most of them, lie out of Nature, and were to be formed purely by his own Invention. It shews a greater Genius in *Shakespear* to have drawn his *Calyban*, than his *Hotspur* or *Julius Caesar*: The one was to be supplied out of his own Imagination, whereas the other might have been formed upon Tradition, History, and Observation [...]. The Loves of *Dido* and *Æneas* are only Copies of what has passed between other Persons. *Adam* and *Eve*, before the Fall, are a different Species from that of Mankind [...] and none but a Poet of the most unbounded Invention, and the most exquisite Judgement, cou'd have filled their Conversation and Behaviour with so many apt Circumstances during their State of Innocence.[155]

To an extent, what this passage signifies is a shift in tone and emphasis. In general, Addison is far less concerned than Rymer had been with concepts such as 'decorum', 'propriety', and 'correctness', and his reference to 'exquisite Judgement' here has the look of an afterthought: it might easily have been placed in parentheses. The greatest innovation, however, is in the idea that invention might create what lies 'out of Nature', or what exceeds the sum total or aggregate of the poet's accumulated experience of the world via 'Tradition, History, and Observation'. This, more radical notion of invention is echoed by the anonymous author of the *Two Dissertions concerning Sense and the Imagination, with an Essay on Consciousness* (1728) when he writes that

> *Imagination*, when under the Conduct and Direction of *Reason*, is the Instrument of that noble Faculty of the Mind, called *Invention*. For tho' we often give the name or title of *Invention* to a new Discovery, or the finding out something that was not known before [...] yet, I think, in strictness the Term *Invention* is most properly applicable to some rational Work or Performance, which is different from any thing we have perceived by our *Senses*.[156]

The reference to the 'Conduct and direction of *Reason*' is revealing, for the author is a rationalist who, in the main, is in reaction against Locke. Consequently, he is rather more generous in his estimate of the territory of reason than Addison. By contrast, it is as a consequence of the absence of any alternative principle of verification that the earlier writer's account of invention effectively stretches empiricism to breaking

point. This strain persists in the work of later advocates of original genius, such as Joseph Warton. In his *An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope*, Warton enthuses over 'the genuine poet, of a lively plastic imagination, the true MAKER or CREATOR', who is 'so uncommon a prodigy',[157] and numbers among the 'few transcendent geniuses'.[158] But so indebted is he to the Lockean account of perception, that he can give no grounds for distinguishing the poetical truth produced by genius from historical fact, other in that it provides a 'minute and particular enumeration of circumstances judiciously selected', and thereby approaches 'a more close and faithful representation of nature than the latter'.[159]

It was with good reason, then, that Samuel Johnson was so suspicious of the kind of imagination presented by contemporary psychology. As he wrote in *The Rambler* no. 125, it was 'a licentious and vagrant faculty, unsusceptible of limitations, and impatient of restraint', which frustrated the logician by producing 'some innovation, which, when invented and approved, subverts the rules which the practice of foregoing authors had established'.[160] This disapproving tone might sound jarring if viewed against his later declarations in *Lives of the English Poets* that '[t]he highest praise of genius is original invention' and '[t]he essence of poetry is invention',[161] but Johnson is scrupulous to confine his own sense of imagination to empirical duties of recovering and rearranging the mind's empirically given furniture.[162] As he puts it in *The Idler*, in a now-familiar formula, '[i]magination selects ideas from the treasures of remembrance, and produces novelty only by varied combinations'.[163] By denying imagination even the modest epistemic role of discovery, he presents an account that is in its essentials more conservative than that of Addison or earlier critics. Accordingly, when he praises Pope for having 'all the qualities that constitute genius', invention, being one of these, is given as that activity 'by which new trains of events are formed and new scenes of imagery displayed [...]'.[164] Johnson's ambivalence reveals how *two* imaginations were struggling for priority in the eighteenth century: one foundational, the synthetic under-labourer to epistemology; the other aesthetic, figurative, and indifferent to the claims of knowledge. This is not to say that the two were divided as cleanly as this distinction suggests: that theirs was as much a relationship of complicity as antagonism was, of course, precisely what worried Johnson. That said, his censorious intonings hardly represent the cutting edge of eighteenth-century theories of imagination. Instead, the major advances were taking place north of the border, and particularly in the work of Alexander Gerard and William Duff.

The Scottish 'Genius'

The most significant contribution of the Scottish school to the theory of genius is in its naturalistic (i.e. non-sceptical) appropriation of Hume's discussion of the epistemic function of association and its linking of this to the new sense of invention, encouraged by models of scientific progress, as a process of discovery. The genius was thus a person of unusual quickness, clarity, comprehensiveness, and plasticity of imaginative association, who, by the regular operations of this faculty, explored new regions for knowledge and 'invented' new truths.

Gerard had already moved some distance along these lines in his prize-winning *An Essay on Taste* (1759), when he had written that '[t]he first and leading quality of genius is *invention*, which consists in a great extent and comprehensiveness of imagination, in a readiness of associating the remotest ideas that are any way related'.[165] In the 1774 *An Essay on Genius* he expands these thoughts into a comprehensive theory which in its rigour and analysis is considerably in advance of Duff's earlier (though in many respects, similar) *An Essay on Original Genius* (1767). For both writers, the role of association is fundamental. To Gerard, invention 'can be accomplished only by assembling ideas in various positions and arrangements, that we may obtain uncommon views of them',[166] while Duff refers to the imagination's 'plastic power of inventing new associations of ideas, and of combining them with infinite variety', by which genius 'is enabled to present a creation of its own, and to exhibit scenes and objects which never existed in nature'.[167] Similarly, both are at pains to assert that this process is a regular one, though in this, as in so many other cases, it is Gerard who is the more penetrating. 'Genius', he writes, 'requires a peculiar vigour of association. In order to produce it, the imagination must be comprehensive, regular, and active.' It is the regularity of imagination which 'enables the associating principles, not only to introduce proper ideas, but also to connect the design of the whole with every idea that is introduced'.[168] Moreover, Gerard goes beyond Duff by introducing the model of ordered vegetative growth to illustrate the power imagination has to unite conception and association:

> This faculty bears a greater resemblance to *nature* in its operations, than to the less perfect energies of *art*. When a vegetable draws in moisture from the earth, nature, by the same action by which it draws it in, and at the same time, converts it to the nourishment of the plant: it at once circulates through its vessels, and is assimilated to its several parts. In like manner, genius arranges its ideas by the same operation, and almost at the same time, that it collects them.[169]

It might seem curious, given this model of possible organic unity, that Gerard is no more inclined to assert the epistemic autonomy of imagination than Duff. However, useful as it was, the vegetable principle was still an argument from analogy. It made up for some of the deficiencies of associationist psychology, but it did not have the required suitability of fit to combine with it completely: there was something intractably mechanistic about the eighteenth-century empirical view of the human mind. As it was, though Duff and Gerard affirm the *priority* of imagination, they both deny that it is a sufficient condition for genius. As Gerard himself puts it, though 'genius be properly a comprehensive, regular, and active imagination, yet it can never attain perfection [...] except it be united with a sound and piercing judgement'.[170]

Gerard, it must be noted, is not entirely consistent in giving imagination the lead in the activity of genius. There are times when judgement seems to be the ruling principle, as when he claims that it 'assists the imagination, by putting it in the track of invention, as well as by controling and regulating its operations'. Nonetheless, it is, he suggests, through this combination of an active imagination with a vigilant judgement that genius is able to anticipate the very principles by which its productions are to be assessed, for 'critics discovered the rules which they prescribe, only by remarking those laws by which true genius, though uninstructed, had actually governed itself'. At moments such as this in the *Essay on Genius*, as well as when he claims that imagination has a 'creative power' whereby it 'confers something original'[171] upon even simple ideas, he appears to be very close to Kant's definition of genius as that human talent through which nature gives the rule to art. There is at least one important difference, however, between Gerard's view of genius and that of Kant. This amounts to the difference between holding genius's transgression of the rules to be *permissible* on the grounds of its inventiveness, and believing that genius is itself the source, or creator of the very rules by which it is to be judged, or (in Kant's terms) that it is *exemplary* in its actions. Though both accounts of genius base themselves on foundationalist theories of knowledge, Gerard's implicit empiricism will not allow him to see imagination as transforming our real relations with nature.[172]

In other words, it is clear that Gerard, like Duff, holds a view of invention as discovery, rather than as rule-*creation*. Duff writes that original geniuses have an ability 'to conceive and present to their own minds, in one distinct view, all the numerous and most distant relations of the objects on which they employ it; by which means they are qualified to

make great improvements and discoveries in the arts and sciences'.[173] Likewise, Gerard defines genius as 'the faculty of *invention*; by means of which a man is qualified for making new discoveries in science, or for producing original works of art'. And it is because of the fact that 'in all the arts, invention has always been regarded as the only criterion of Genius', that 'we *allow* the artist who excels in it, the privilege of transgressing established rules [...]'.[174] Moreover, though the discovery thesis offers writers a means of articulating human creativity while retaining a certain fidelity to empiricism, it will not permit them to exceed certain key principles, such as the representational view of perception. Thus, even Gerard concedes that the 'brightest imagination can suggest no idea which is not originally derived from sense and memory'. Indeed, '[g]ive it a stock of simple ideas, and it will produce an endless variety of complex notions: but as we can create no new substance, so neither can we, except perhaps in a few very peculiar instances, imagine the idea of a simple quality which we have never had access to observe'.[175] In this respect, Gerard has not yet broken free from Locke's orbit: creation remains bound to foundations.

The closing decade of the eighteenth century saw a few innovations in Scottish theory which signalled further development in the concept of invention. Two factors contributed to this: the gradual (though not always consistent) absorption of Reid's commonsensism, and the widespread adoption of Burke's position that the language of poetry is non-imitative. In his 1792 *Principles*, for instance, Adam Ferguson supplements the Burkean stance with a metaphysical argument. For though he considers the self-assumed role of the writer to be a creator *ex nihilo* to be merely a poetic affectation, he does see language generally as 'the first and most wonderful production of human genius [...]'. In this, he continues, 'the created mind is itself a creator. Worlds [sic] in the language of Plato, have sprung from the ideas of Eternal Mind; and language is the emanation of idea in the mind of man.' Ferguson, however, fails to pursue this thought in the direction which it was to take Coleridge, and falls back on the old idea of the poet as a discoverer and 'maker'. Poetry, then, represents 'the attempt [...] rather to new model the forms of nature to our own purpose or taste, than to preserve them such as they actually are'.[176]

Dugald Stewart, meanwhile, being at one with Reid on the issue of abstraction, feels able to agree with Burke that the purpose of poetry is not simply to ' "raise ideas in the mind" '. Stewart's most provoking comment in the *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, however, is made during his discussion of invention itself, which, he claims, must

be distinguished from the notion of *discovery*: 'The object of the former [...] is to produce something which had no existence before; that of the latter, to bring to light something which did exist, but which was concealed from common observation.'[177] Invention is that activity whereby improvements are effected in the arts, and discovery that whereby we advance in knowledge. By defining artistic inventiveness in such a way, Stewart effectively blocks any cognitive theory of poetic value, thereby joining Ferguson in effectively confining the fine arts (poetry included) to the status of ornaments.[178] In effect, Reid's opposition to representationism has been extended by Stewart into a deep suspicion of any action of imagination upon the foundational data of perception. If perception provides a direct apprehension of the object, Stewart argues, then imagination's function must be 'to make a selection of qualities and of circumstances, from a variety of different objects, and by combining and disposing these to form a new creation of its own'. The poet's province, accordingly, 'is limited to combine and modify things which really exist, so as to produce new wholes of his own [...]'. However, that command which the inventor has over his ideas, he claims, is entirely the result of acquired habit and learned general rules. Consequently, Stewart is severely critical of the tradition which encouraged 'that blind admiration of original genius',[179] and concludes that, insofar as they are led by the associative imagination in the absence of judgement and taste, 'it is in the accuracy of their minute details, that men of warm Imaginations are chiefly to be distrusted [...]'.[180]

From another perspective, however, Stewart's insight is that the creative imagination will not brook the curbs of knowledge. It is not *like* creative advance in science, he suggests, because it does not involve the final squaring of the figurative cycle with the linear grid of validation. Ernest Tuveson thus overstates matters, to say the least, when he identifies Stewart as a 'spokesman for the faith of early romanticism'.[181] While Stewart's divorce of the epistemic and aesthetic finally frees poetry from the burden of verifying itself empirically, his foundationalism means that this results in the marginalization of creative activity from the 'trusted' grounds of knowledge. With this development we arrive at the full culmination of the legacy of Hume's division of fact and value: philosophy's final divorce of the aesthetic and the epistemic. It is this dichotomy which forms Romanticism's point of departure, not its 'faith'.

In the meantime, much of the debate within epistemology at the close of the eighteenth century centres on the friction between two different legacies: namely, Reid's commonsensism, and Hume's theory of

association. Two years before Stewart wrote against imagination in the first volume of his *Elements*, Archibald Alison had proposed a positive associationist theory of taste and the sublime in his *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste*. This advanced on Gerard's theory by making *emotion* an irreducible part of the imaginative act. For Alison, feelings of beauty or sublimity are complex, not simple, and the effect of association: 'The simple perception of the object, we frequently find, is insufficient to excite these emotions, unless [. . .] our imagination is seized, and our fancy busied in the pursuit of all those trains of thought, which are allied to this character or expression.' Consequently, judgements of taste are functions of imagination. In consequence, emotion becomes, in a manner of speaking, the glue which holds the aesthetic experience (seen by Stewart as dangerously unstable) together: not only are the ideas which make up the 'train of thought' produced by sublimity or beauty themselves 'Ideas of Emotion', but the unifying or 'general principle of connexion' of such trains is also an emotional one.[182]

From here it is a relatively easy step for Alison to take to deny that even the painter's business is wholly imitative: 'the language he employs is found not only to speak to the eye, but to affect the imagination and the heart'. It is through the emotional activity of the imagination that genius manifests itself:

> It is not the art, but the genius of the Painter, which now gives value to his compositions [. . .] It is not now a simple copy which we see, nor is our Emotion limited to the cold pleasure which arises from the perception of accurate Imitation. It is a creation of Fancy with which the artist presents us, in which only the greater expressions of Nature are retained [. . .].

Nevertheless, the power of painting is 'limited' when compared to poetry: 'The Painter can represent no other qualities of Nature, but those which we discern by the sense of sight. The Poet can blend with those, all the qualities which we perceive by means of our other senses.' The radicalism of Alison's work lies in the manner in which he adapts Hume's observation that in value-judgements reason is a slave to the passions, turning it into a positive associationist theory of beauty and sublimity. In doing so, he suggests a process by which reason's damning verdict upon emotion might be reprieved within the parameters of aesthetic experience. However, Alison is a passive associationist, more interested in the nature of the mind's *response* to certain objects, than its creation of them. Nor does he go so far as to extend his theory into emotional cognitivism, through which feelings of beauty or the sublime might be permitted some

limited constituency or function within human knowledge. With regard to genius, he is, moreover, something of a traditionalist; declaring, for example, that '[h]ad the taste of SHAKESPEARE been equal to his genius, or had his knowledge of the laws of the Drama corresponded to his knowledge of the human heart, the effect of his compositions would [. . .] have been greater than it now is [. . .]'.[183] Alison's final verdict on genius should come as no more of a surprise than that of Stewart or Ferguson: together, they are the natural verdicts of late eighteenth-century empiricism upon the theory of artistic creation as invention or discovery.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the eighteenth century, the dominant Lockean epistemology in Britain struggled to contain a creationist aesthetic to which its own synthetic foundations gave rise, an aesthetic which was further fostered by an ancient tradition of 'inspired' composition, as well as the more recent vogue of the sublime and of the primitive origins of 'natural' language and genius. Increasingly, poetry came to bear the responsibility for aspects of experience that philosophy now refused to carry, such as the sense of nature as a totality from which the individual could not be abstracted, and the feeling that experience was not merely something 'given' to consciousness as a pure commodity, but was the product of our minds, and even of our emotions. The significance of Hume's *Treatise* in this is that it confronts what is at risk in the empirical/representationalist point of view; namely, a division of labour between the discipline of philosophical thinking and ordinary life experience outside the study, in the world of backgammon and friends. Above all, it marks out epistemic certainty as something which is not already present in pure thought or 'fact', but which is normative or 'value-added', only through our lived intercourse with the world. In the face of this, attempts to regain certainty for philosophy through notions of inner sense or common sense, though enjoying some success, could too easily appear like arbitrarily sinking foundations for knowledge where Hume had shown (by a method, moreover, which was empirical through and through) that there could be none. In the meantime, such strategies would also have to vie with the increasingly influential philosophy of associationism, which from most angles seemed only to confirm Hume's findings. This is the stress-fracture within eighteenth-century foundationalism which Romanticism seeks to heal, but at the same time accentuates, for an essential part of its modus vivendi is the recovery of creation from the epistemic margins.

This recovery had another dimension. Throughout the later eighteenth century, the largely utilitarian Scottish presentation of genius was of a power which contributed to the public good. Subordinating artistic to scientific invention to an extent helped to mitigate the feeling that the age was witnessing a degeneration in the arts.[184] Ferguson notes that '[t]he progress of fine arts has generally made a part in the history of prosperous nations [...]'.[185] Beattie, meanwhile, links his idea of genius as a discovering and inventive power with the idea of progress: 'let us learn', he urges, 'to set a proper value on industry and manufacture. The meanest artificer in society, if honest and diligent, is worthy of honour' – worthy, that is, insofar as he represents one aspect of the 'boundless variety' of genius.[186]

In England, however, to many (the Romantics included) the taming of creative imagination into productive artisan represented an unacceptable Caledonian triumph of fact over value. The utilization of the creative meant that cultural production became vexed with the fear of commodification. Young adopts the language of the marketplace to complain of imitations that they 'are often a sort of *Manufacture* wrought up by those *Mechanics, Art*, and *Labour*, out of pre-existent materials not their own'. 'Thoughts', he continues, 'when become too common, should lose their Currency; and we should send new metal to the Mint [...].'[187] This anxiety extended to the proliferation of reading matter. Isaac D'Israeli registered regretfully in 1795 the manner in which 'since, with incessant industry, volumes have been multiplied, and their prices rendered them accessible to the lowest artisans, the Literary Character has gradually fallen into disrepute'.[188] In all of this the feeling that *knowledge* itself has suffered inflation, that facts have lost their value by becoming too 'common', crosses political divides and allies some unexpected voices. Shelley's diagnosis in the *Defence of Poetry* that '[w]e want the creative faculty to imagine that which we know' in this light has a kinship with Francis Jeffrey's acknowledgement in an 1812 review that both the increased discovery, and 'the general diffusion of knowledge tends [...] powerfully to repress all original and independent speculation in individuals [...]'.[189] Thus was born what Thomas Pfau terms '*the professionalization of leisure*', whereby the aesthetic was transformed by a culturally insurgent but politically disenfranchised middle class into the privileged commodity of superior subjectivity, a product that can only be experienced *productively*.[190] In this way, pure creativity is saved from the grinding mill of the utilitarian economy and rehabilitated by means of a self-reflexive social consciousness. As will be seen, however, the anxious tension with knowledge persists.

This finally brings us up to date with Wordsworth and Hazlitt, and how in their hands poetry or creative 'power' turns the tables upon knowledge by challenging epistemology itself. Yet at the same time they struggled to reconcile the numinous halo surrounding genius and poetic value with a concept of knowledge which remained anchored in foundationalism of a distinctly empirical cast. Kant's 1790 discussion of genius in the *Critique of Judgement* was not yet available in Britain. As Leslie Stephen points out, '[i]f Kant had never lived, or had lived in Pekin[g], English thinkers in the eighteenth century would not have been less conscious of his position'.[191] Indeed, though his work was to become more widely known in Britain in the first few decades of the next century, it was generally perceived as either sunk in mysticism or harking back to the exploded thesis of innatism. Stewart's biting remark in the belated second volume of his *Elements* (1814) that 'I can, without much vanity, say, that, with less expense of thought, I could have rivalled the obscurity of Kant' is not untypical.[192] Coleridge alone fully engaged with the implications of Kant's new deal: it was the task of writers such as Wordsworth and Hazlitt to mediate between creative indifference and foundational knowledge without the apparatus of transcendental method.

2

The charm of logic: Wordsworth's prose

> A tranquillizing spirit presses now
> On my corporeal frame, so wide appears
> The vacancy between me and those days,
> Which yet have such self-presence in my mind
> That sometimes when I think of them I seem
> Two consciousnesses – conscious of myself,
> And of some other being.
>
> William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*[1]

By the time Coleridge proclaimed that Wordsworth was capable of producing England's 'First Genuine Philosophic Poem', the state of philosophy itself in Britain was at a crossroads, caught between an empiricism sunk in scepticism and a descriptive naturalism which harboured, it seemed, a freedom-denying materialism.[2] As a result, Wordsworth's problems in living up to this accolade are as much to do with the fact that philosophy was beginning a long process of redefining itself as they are to do with the impossible expectations of Coleridge. The Romantic notion of 'philosophy' is inherently unstable, oscillating between an Enlightenment foundationalism collapsed by Hume, and some, as yet undefined, new way of knowledge which did not sever value from fact. The responsibility of 'knowing', taken as the detached perspective of the neutral spectator, continued to weigh heavily on Wordsworth's brave new poetics of engagement. Thus, as Kenneth Johnston observes, the obstacle facing Wordsworth in his attempts to compose *The Recluse* 'is rather too much philosophy than too little, giving rise to expectations that it cannot satisfy'.[3] By refashioning a model of *poetic* truth according to a creative paradigm of imagination more dynamic than the native logic could accommodate, Wordsworth mounted a challenge to conventional epistemology. Yet he never entirely overturned empiricism's principle of truth, namely, the doctrine that if an utterance is to be both true and informative, it is so only because its statement's

proposition corresponds to facts attested by sense experience. Consequently, Wordsworth struggled to reconcile a creationist poetics with a notion of truth as correspondence. There is a detectable edge of uncertainty, for instance, in his Coleridgean-sounding description of truth, recollected by Aubrey de Vere, according to whom 'truth in its largest sense, as a thing at once real and ideal, a truth including exact and accurate detail, and yet everywhere subordinating mere detail to the spirit of the whole this, he [Wordsworth] affirmed, was the soul and essence not only of descriptive poetry, but of all poetry'.[4]

Viewed epistemologically, the difficulty for Wordsworth is that without Coleridge's *a priori* schema, he faces the problem of *demonstrating* this relation of 'mere detail to the spirit of the whole'. So long as they remain unreconciled, the 'ideal' will always threaten to slip back into the merely 'real'. This tension between ideal and real is a well-travelled road in Wordsworth studies, particularly since Geoffrey Hartman's rendering of the poet's phenomenological *via naturaliter negativa*, or dialectical consciousness of consciousness, whereby 'apocalyptic' vision and the binding impulse or '*akedah*' of nature progressively supervene each other in a providential poetics of error, so producing in Wordsworth's poetry 'a web of transfers', or 'to-and-fros ("traffickings") between inner and outer, literal and figurative'.[5] The providentiality of this dialectic, however, is something the early Hartman, like Wordsworth, was apt to take on trust. As de Man observed, since the Victorian era Wordsworth has been appropriated by philosophers keen to test philosophical discourse in order to legitimate it, and who have transformed him from nineteenth-century 'moral' philosopher to twentieth-century phenomenologist en route. This conversion, de Man adds, is 'a move to which Wordsworth's texts respond with almost suspicious docility. The threat from which we were to be sheltered [i.e. temporality, mutability] and consoled is now identified as a condition of consciousness'.[6] Elridge makes a similar point from a positivist perspective when he reads in Wordsworth's poetry the 'simultaneous inevitability and impossibility of philosophy itself as a condition of human life'. With Johnston, he identifies Wordsworth's as a 'new condition of philosophy', an emergent *media res* between poetic creation (or postmodern images of unconstrained freedom), and the closures of foundational philosophy.[7]

Other commentators have adopted a more politically suspicious attitude to this ambivalence. For John Barrell, Wordsworth's flight from an inescapable empiricism manifests a conflict between 'two conflicting desires: to demonstrate how abstract words refer to the results of complex

operations performed on the objects of sense, and are in some way founded on these objects; but also to insist on that abstract language as entirely sundered from sense, so as to confirm a clear division between those who are, and who are not fully human [. . .]'.[8] Alternatively, some have been more sympathetic to Wordsworth's dilemma. Alan Bewell charts how Wordsworth's disillusionment with philosophy drew him towards an Enlightenment tradition of descriptive naturalism whose 'explicit avoidance and wholescale suppression of philosophical statement' belied its own status as philosophy gone 'underground'. Yet though Wordsworth 'occasionally succumbed to the temptation of writing moral philosophy through empirical figures', Bewell stresses the poet's 'attempt to write the Enlightenment discourse on marginality out of existence by seeking to undo its pleasure in producing marginals [. . .]'.[9] This thought is echoed by Rajan, who argues that Wordsworth's project 'is better understood as emergently self-critical than as an instance of either middle-class hybris or naïveté', forever moving 'between center and periphery, between authority and its displacement'.[10]

Generally, my own linkage of this dynamic to a post-Humean context of alienated fact and value is closest to Elridge and Johnston in its refusal to reduce its tension to a question of rhetoric, the discourse of political power or hermeneutic reflexivity. However, where Johnston and Elridge see in Wordsworth a latent dialectic between epistemic and non-epistemic voices which might be maintained (if not resolved) in what Cavell calls a process of 'acceptance' instead of 'knowledge', I represent the exchange between these perspectives as more fraught and unstable. I highlight the anxiety within Wordsworth's response to the post-Humean predicament, and stress how the standpoint of epistemic indifference itself harbours an ambivalence which the 'new condition' story is apt to gloss over, namely between, on one hand, the kind of therapeutic, non-apodeictic 'poetic' philosophy described by Hartman, and, on the other, the abandonment of knowledge (and thus philosophizing) in favour of other modes of 'being.' Foremost among these is the Romantic answer to Hume's philosophy-indifferent recreational pursuits of backgammon, wine and friends: poetic creation. In this light, Wordsworth's 'two consciousnesses' actually contain at least three major moments: the philosophic or knowing, and an indifference to knowledge which vacillates between dialectical para-philosophy and pure figuration, the outright denial of knowledge. None of these points is stable, and the slippage between them is constant: just as the foundational 'know' will not ground itself, so indifferentism always betrays its own knowingness. As a

consequence, the ideal of an equipoise in which a perfectly poetical philosophy is also a perfectly philosophical poetry, is lost. The Romantic medium of poetry is itself a troubled one: pure figuration offers no ultimate escape from knowing: contrary to Hartman, with Wordsworth, as with other Romantic writers, the prose determines the poetry as much as it is determined *by* poetry. Indeed, the medium of discursive prose is where the Romantic repression of argument and resistance to the categorical is most severely tested, and the site at which Wordsworth's *media res* of indifferent para-philosophy is at its most strained. For this reason, it is the evidence of the prose which is decisive.[11]

Wordsworth's poetics form just one chapter in the story of Anglophone philosophy's attempt to cope with Hume's division of fact and value, a story which has yet to end, and which may never come to an end. Johnston writes of how Wordsworth and Coleridge were 'seeking to become what Richard Rorty has recently defined as *edifying* philosophers, for whom knowledge is a field of force (in W. V. Quine's metaphor)'.[12] Indeed, despite their obvious differences, Wordsworth and Quine share two important traits. In the first place, both turn *against* the foundational empiricism of (in Wordsworth's case) eighteenth-century epistemology and (in Quine's) twentieth-century logical positivism, while simultaneously remaining within a broad tradition of empirical naturalism – the 'fact' prong, to put it crudely, of Hume's fork. As James Chandler has detailed, for Wordsworth this was a highly political move, representing a turn away from the foundationalist philosophy of the French *Ideologues* and Rousseau's nature, and towards the 'epistemological no-man's land' of Burke's 'second nature'; of the affections, prejudice and poetry. By attempting to have it both ways, Chandler claims, the notion of a human second nature involves a doubling of logic, intimating that 'there is a Nature and there is a second nature which is at once within Nature yet parallel to it'.[13] At the same time, I would maintain that this double-mindedness is itself the direct descendant of Hume's uneasy settlement between empiricism and a quasi-epistemic naturalism, or between knowledge and a *belief* which is justified but ultimately not demonstrable as 'true'. In other words, as he reached for the higher ground of value, Wordsworth attempted to keep his feet planted on the foundation of fact. Thus, while he sought to interrogate knowledge or 'science' with poetic 'sensation', Wordsworth maintained in the 1815 Preface that all the higher powers of poetic production were based on 'those of Observation and Description – *i.e.*, the ability to describe with accuracy things as they are in themselves [...] unmodified by any

passion or feeling [. . .]'.[14] Quine, meanwhile, abandons positivism's ideal of a logical lexicon for experience and embraces Mill's principle that '[w]hatever we are capable of knowing must belong [. . .] in the number of the primitive data [i.e., of sensation], or of the conclusions which can be drawn from these'.[15] Consequently, while attacking empirical knowledge in its foundational form, he happily admits that the basic principle of his 'naturalized' form of epistemology was 'simply the watchword of empiricism: *nihil in mente quod non prius in sensu*'.[16]

This leads both poet and philosopher to a common problem: that of the underdetermination, in Wordsworth, of the rich overflow of *poetic* truth by the meagre input of 'observation and description', and in Quine, of scientific theory by sensory stimulus. But what for Quine is a welcome outcome, the reformation of epistemology into the naturalized, non-foundational 'chapter of theoretical science [. . .] the technology of anticipating sensory stimulation',[17] for Wordsworth is a dilemma between the epistemic security of the language of observation and the risky business of affirming in poetry 'a life and spirit in knowledge' which exceeds the reach of empirical verification.[18] With this, one comes to the second trait shared by Wordsworth and Quine, namely the emphasis they place on the *creative* element in knowing. For Quine, this operates on two levels. First in a Wittgensteinian way, it determines the initial language-game chosen. For the science of naturalized epistemology, he admits, is just one among an infinite number of other 'good language games such as fiction and poetry'.[19] More importantly, however, science monitors the creative input of the human mind as it constructs a coherent conceptual scheme from its raw sensory data: 'Subtracting his cues from his world view', Quine claims, 'we get the man's net contribution as the difference. This difference marks the extent of man's conceptual sovereignty – the domain within which he can revise theory while saving the data.'[20] Similarly, and famously, the autonomy of poetic truth for Wordsworth is tied to its origin in an undetermined, spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.

It might be argued that this is a facile comparison. When considered apart from Hume's dichotomies, it will seem so. But when the post-empirical poet and post-analytic philosopher are read in the context of a *shared* predicament whereby knowledge and value have been estranged by scepticism, a common strategy can be perceived; one of marginalizing the ideal of epistemic certainty, either for a naturalistic account of the creative relation between conceptual scheme and sensation, or a naturalistic account of the creative relation between poetic value and sensation. Indeed, one might go further by noting that, at the same time, neither

writer is entirely comfortable with the complete elision of foundational knowledge. Wordsworth's outline in the 1800 Preface of a creative language of pure feeling and value plays leap-frog with tropes of empirical verification, as spontaneity is checked by veridical observation. Such is his assurance, for example, that he has 'at all times endeavoured to look steadily at my subject'.[21] Furthermore, like most writers of his generation, he was troubled by scepticism in art and morals as well as in epistemology. 'So strange indeed are the obliquities of admiration', he writes in the 'Essay' with evident disapproval, 'that they whose opinions are much influenced by authority will often be tempted to think that there are no fixed principles in human nature for this art [i.e. criticism] to rest upon [...]'. It is in a footnote to this remark that he singles out as an example of this tendency, 'Adam Smith, the worst critic, David Hume not excepted, that Scotland, a soil to which this sort of weed seems natural, has produced [...].'[22] Similarly, some critics have argued that Quine's holism sits ill with his perseverance with epistemology as an autonomous discipline. Henryk Skolimowski for one points to what he sees as a tension between Quine's earlier work, which emphasises the extent to which 'we are at liberty to choose among various conceptual frameworks that are available to us' and his later 'bias' toward the view that '[i]t is science [...] that determines our conceptual and philosophical destinies'.[23]

One of Wordsworth's greatest endeavours, then, was to create a space within discourse which was distinctly 'poetic', but at the same time socially 'grounded'. His concern with the current state of literature was twofold: impatient with the triviality of traditional poetic form, and the irrelevance of Neoclassical dogma, he also interpreted the tastes of the broadening reading 'public', fed by an ever more commodified literary culture, as symptomatic of social malaise. If the poet was to be *for* the 'people', then, and not merely *of* the people, he must take a leading role: he must be autonomous. The problem with this arrangement, however, concerned the conditions according to which the poet was entitled to institute the new discourse. What gave him this privilege? Wordsworth was, in effect, proposing that the poet might 'give the rule' to taste, and thereby to the people. This he supported by proposing that the poet was creative in a special, unique kind of way: an *exemplary* way. As he puts it in his 'Essay, Supplementary to the Preface' of 1815, poetic genius 'is the introduction of a new element into the intellectual universe'.[24] Yet this remained an idea which was fundamentally at odds with empirical thought; indeed, with foundationalism in general. Kant's

account of the autonomy of genius was certainly available to him (albeit with Coleridgean colouring) but Wordsworth had little understanding of, and still less interest in transcendental schema. Consequently, the main question confronting him was that of how he could make good his claim that his idea of the creative aesthetic was in some way exemplary or legislative in the concrete realm of human affairs, when the only philosophical language available to him proscribed the notion of (poetic) truth as something made. This remained a dispute, in Burkean terms, between ordinary nature and the poet's second nature or, in Humean terms, between fact and value.

CULTURAL PRODUCTION AND THE CREATIVE ARTIST

Wordsworth's poetic theory can be read as an attempt to cope with (but not always reply to) one of the most pressing problems in contemporary epistemology.[25] Following Hume's identification of the imagination as a significant factor in the formation of knowledge, one question which occupied philosophy more than most was: how can the creations of this faculty be candidates for knowledge? What occurs in the theoretical writing of Wordsworth is the reconfiguration of this problem as a poetic or aesthetic one. Impressed by the creative implications of the mind's associative capacities, but loath to rescind empiricism entirely, Wordsworth invests the poet with a peculiar insight:

> Aristotle, I have been told, has said, that Poetry is the most philosophic of all writing: it is so: its object is truth, not individual and local, but general, and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion; *truth which is its own testimony*, which gives competence and confidence to the tribunal to which it appeals, and receives them from the same tribunal.[26]

Wordsworth institutes the notion of a discrete and irreducible *poetic* truth; one which is exclusively the domain of the poet, by right of his creative powers. Here, the stress on aesthetic autonomy (and by implication the epistemic freedom of the poet) is evident: poetic truth 'is its own testimony'; it gives the rule to the 'tribunal' by which it is ratified. The formulation poses a striking challenge to foundationalist conceptions of truth. The poet himself *creates* the criteria of the validity, or 'truth' of his poetic products. This in turn endows him with the freedom to legislate for the conditions of the profounder feelings of his fellow man, without appearing either to condescend to him, or pander to his ruder impulses

and desires. In the *Prelude*, Wordsworth confesses to having harboured a vision of poets as a class of the spiritually elect, 'even as prophets, each with each / Connected in a mighty stream of truth', leading to the hope

> That unto me had also been vouchsafed
> An influx, that in some sort I possessed
> A privilege, and that a work of mine,
> Proceeding from the depth of untaught things,
> Enduring and creative, might become
> A power like one of Nature's.[27]

But the impulses and desires of the public were of considerable concern to Wordsworth. In late 1809 he wrote in *The Friend* that 'ours is, notwithstanding its manifold excellences, a degenerate Age [...]'.[28] What worried him in particular was the way in which changes in the habits of the reading public were affecting the nature and status of poetry itself. In the 1800 Preface, he complained of how 'a multitude of causes unknown to former times are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and unfitting it for all voluntary exertion to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor'; the most pernicious aspect of which is 'a craving for extraordinary incident which the rapid communication of intelligence hourly gratifies'.[29] Such conditions were being fuelled by a number of changes affecting the socio-economic location of the contemporary writer, foremost among which were the increasing efficiency and productivity of the mechanized printing press; the expansion of the metropolitan and provincial book trade following London's loss of copyright privileges in 1774 (in a House of Lords judgement which finally laid to rest the notion of perpetual common-law copyright); and the growing and diversifying appetite of the reading public, buoyed by an ever more literate artisan class.

The resulting 'literature' question, that of its status and social function, was born of a general cultural anxiety of which Wordsworth's 1800 Preface is only one of the more famous examples. With the rapid diffusion of knowledge it appeared to many, Wordsworth included, that the liberation of fact had been at the cost of value, of a sense of the 'depth of untaught things'. At the same time, as labour specialized, and the writer became at once more professionalized and isolated, the concept of 'literature' itself fragmented. While discussing the fate of the *Philanthropist* in a 1794 letter to William Matthews, Wordsworth can barely conceal his distaste for the business of professional writing: 'All the periodical miscellanies that I am acquainted with, except one or two of

the reviews, appear to be written to maintain the existence of prejudice and to disseminate error. To such purpose I have already said I will not prostitute my pen.'[30] Thus, the emergence of the idea of art as a specialized and privileged mode of production marked a change in the relationship between writer and reader, which in turn signalled a new attitude among writers towards the 'public'. Creating the taste by which it is to be measured, as Pfau puts it, 'Romantic pedagogy seeks to convert the individual's self-consciousness into its own disciplinary authority', whereby 'cognitive mobility is inevitably experienced as a form of social ascendancy'.[31]

The seeds of this change were already present in Edward Young's disparaging use of industrial metaphors to describe imitation, which in his view becomes 'a sort of *Manufacture* wrought up by those *Mechanics*, *Art*, and *Labour*, out of pre-existent materials not their own',[32] as well as Isaac D'Israeli's injunction to the writer to pay 'to himself that reverence, which will be refuted by the multitude'.[33] Both of these remarks betray a creeping sense of alarm at the manner in which commerce was altering the nature of the writer's vocation, and in particular, the way in which it was alienating him from his own productions by replacing the familiarity of private circulation with a mass market of anonymous readers. The culmination of this is Keats's defensive declaration to Reynolds in a letter of 1818 that 'I never wrote one single Line of Poetry with the least Shadow of public thought'.[34] At moments like this, Keats embodies the reactionary spirit of the aesthetic response to the commodification of art. Wordsworth himself drew a distinction between the 'public', about whom he usually writes with disdain, and a more idealized notion of the 'People'. In the earlier part of his career, his tone when writing about the public moved between resignation and resentment. In an 1807 letter to Lady Beaumont, less than a month after the publication of the *Poems, in Two Volumes*, he avers that '[i]t is impossible that any expectations can be lower than mine concerning the immediate effect of this little work upon what is called the Public'. They are, indeed, 'altogether incompetent judges' of poetry. 'These people', he continues, 'in the senseless hurry of their idle lives do not *read* books, they merely snatch a glance at them that they may talk about them.'[35] Writing to Sir George Beaumont a year later, he reports that he is 'in sorrow for the sickly taste of the Public in verse. The *People* would love the Poem of Peter Bell, but the *Public* (a very different Being) will never love it.'[36] Lamb, meanwhile, characterized the reading public as a 'reluctant monster' gorging on its unsavory diet of periodicals, and asked, '[i]s there no stopping the eternal wheels of the

Press for a half century or two, till the nation recover its senses?'[37] As a consequence, genuine poetry becomes for Wordsworth what Pfau calls the 'supreme anticommodity'.[38]

Since Jerome McGann's *The Romantic Ideology* first appeared in 1983, much has been written on the politics of the Romantic 'aesthetic', and there is no need to rehearse that work here.[39] My purpose is merely to note how Wordsworth's struggle with foundationalism had wider ramifications, in that the empiricism which he challenged underwrote a system of utilitarian values which seemed to reflect certain developments in contemporary culture, developments which many of the Romantics found, for varying reasons, deeply disturbing. Wordsworth's efforts to redefine the nature of poetry and the poet on epistemic grounds are of particular interest in that they are made within the same discourse of sensation, feeling, and public pleasure. Typically, he attempts to reform these ideas along qualitative lines, suggesting the possibility of intuitions which are not merely sensory; pleasure which is not simply a feeling of happiness; and a 'People' who are more than just an aggregate or sum of the 'public'. Where he encounters difficulty, however, is at the point at which empiricism will not permit these distinctions to be made, and where he is left grasping for a theoretical language that might. At this point, Wordsworth's language vacillates between the perspective of knowledge and an indifference to knowing which hesitates between the therapeutic dialectic of 'poetic truth' and a simple affirmation of the activity of creative writing.

THE HABIT OF KNOWLEDGE: IMAGINATION, ASSOCIATION AND PLEASURE

Philosophy in Britain after Hume had been struggling to accommodate the very ideas which it was raising, borrowing from the latter's associationism where it was convenient, while adopting the naturalistic perspective of Reid's commonsensism when scepticism threatened. But however reassuring such an arrangement may have seemed, this contract contained a clause which was troubling for Wordsworth in a way in which it had not been for predecessors like Alexander Gerard and Lord Kames. It is a corollary of the empiricist thesis that knowledge derives its mandate from observable objects, that empirical science, as the repository of such observations, must 'give the rule' to art. In epistemological terms, art – and with art, poetry – has no cognitive function if removed from this foundation.

Wordsworth, however, particularly after 1802, seeks to define the autonomy of poetic discourse according to epistemic criteria. In the revisions to the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* he argues that 'much confusion has been introduced into criticism by this contradistinction of Poetry and Prose, instead of the more philosophical one of Poetry and Matter of Fact, or Science'.[40] Insofar as he is committed to this position, Wordsworth identifies poetry in terms of its *content*; in terms of the knowledge it provides, rather than the manner or style in which it conveys this material. He also distinguishes such knowledge, in the most unambiguous terms possible, from Humean 'Matter of Fact'. Poetry has not so much cognitive, as supercognitive properties. As he unwraps his thesis, Wordsworth increasingly comes to rest the burden of this epistemic value upon the poet's *creativity*, as if he would have it alone be the ground of poetic validity. In the second 'Essay upon Epitaphs' of 1810, he claims that the demand for sincerity in the writing of an epitaph forbids 'all modes of fiction, *except those which the very strength of passion has created*'.[41]

Wordsworth remained divided about the political significance of these paradigms, however. Even as he began distancing himself from the fact-foundationalism of the *Ideologues*, he retained a distrust of creative imagination and unfettered genius, in a manner comparable to how some of his quieter political convictions tempered his commitment to radical theories of individual liberty. In the later versions of the Preface, Wordsworth insists that '[a]mong the qualities [...] principally conducing to form a Poet, is implied nothing differing in kind from other men, but only in degree'.[42] Yet he often seems concerned that this difference in mere degree might not be sufficient to prevent the poet's voice from being overwhelmed by that of the public, or that the masses might act on the implication that the freedom which is the privilege of the poet by virtue of his creativity is equally their right, treading too closely in his footsteps for comfort.[43] Wordsworth inherits the problem German philosophers identified with empiricist or 'negative' accounts of freedom in that any assertion of human freedom seems to amount only to a removal of restraint – just as, from the same perspective, any declaration of poetic creativity might appear to be the glorification of singularity. Consequently, his valorization of the imagination is subjected to constant qualification and caveat. Particularly in later life, Wordsworth would place ever greater emphasis on the role of 'workmanship' in poetic composition, even over that of natural genius or inspiration. For example, he criticizes some verses of William Hamilton for the want of 'what appears in itself of little moment, and yet is of incalculably great, that is, workmanship – the art

by which the thoughts are made to melt into each other and to fall into light and shadow regulated by distinct preconception of the best general effect they are capable of producing'.[44] By this time, 'craft' has taken on the task which had been allocated to 'feeling' in the first Preface: that of harmoniously reconciling spontaneous effusion and calculated effect. This is just one of the many different forms taken by a recurrent tension in Wordsworth's writing between sincerity and verity which in its turn is an aspect of the more general problem of how to reconcile an empirically given notion of truth with the poet's spontaneity, his fullest treatment of the dynamics of which appears in the 1815 Preface to *Poems, in Two Volumes*.

Here, Wordsworth articulates six powers of poetic production: first, accurate observation, which is passive; second, exquisite sensibility; third, reflection, which perceives the connection of feelings in sensibility; fourth, imagination and fancy, 'to modify, to create, and to associate'; fifth, invention, that is, of characters 'composed out of materials supplied by observation' (either of the poet's own mind, or of nature); and finally, judgement, which regulates each of these activities.[45] Two aspects of this scheme merit immediate attention. First, Wordsworth chooses to distinguish creation, as such, from the processes of modification and association. Second, he suggests that the peculiar function of imagination/fancy is *not* identical with invention, which relies more heavily upon observational data. Clearly, Wordsworth is extending his sense of 'creation' to denote something different from each of these functions.

But here a familiar pattern reappears. Even given the fact that he has already taken pains to deny that the power of imagination is sufficient for poetic production (that is, in the absence of accurate observation and reflection) Wordsworth remains uneasy about the extent of its jurisdiction. In the 1800 Preface, it was 'feeling' that had united imagination and reason. In lyrical poetry 'the feeling therein developed gives importance to the action and situation and not the action and situation to the feeling [...]'.[46] Poetic language itself should not be seen as forming the mere dress of thought, but its very essence and spirit. The same thought lay behind his complaint in the second 'Essay upon Epitaphs' about the neglect in modern poetry of 'those feelings which are the pure emanations of nature, those thoughts which have the infinitude of truth, and those expressions which are not what the garb is to the body but what the body is to the soul, themselves a *constituent part and power or function in the thought* [...]'.[47] In the 1815 Preface, however, though Wordsworth rejects at first the old definition of imagination as simply an image-making

faculty, he insists that it is 'a word of higher import, denoting operations of the mind [...] and processes of creation or of composition, governed by certain fixed laws'. The emphasis upon 'fixed laws' is significant, as nowhere does Wordsworth, unlike Coleridge, suggest that these laws might themselves be self-originated, i.e. made, not 'given'. Imagination effectively acts upon individual images, either by *endowing* them with properties or abstracting them, thus enabling them to 're-act upon the mind which hath performed the process, like a new existence [...]'. Further, it *changes* images by association, or by aligning them 'in a conjunction by which they modify each other [...]'. But above all:

> Imagination also shapes and *creates*; and how? By innumerable processes; and in none does it more delight than in that of consolidating numbers into unity, and dissolving and separating unity into number, alternations proceeding from, and governed by, a sublime consciousness of the soul in her own mighty and almost divine powers.[48]

The ministration of the 'sublime consciousness of the soul' is as close as Wordsworth comes to identifying a limiting principle for a process of creation which he conceives as at once unifying, diversifying and, in one of its modes at least, productive of something which is (in some way) 'like a new existence'. On the other hand, he is much more forthcoming on the question of the (empirical) principles which *circumscribe* this activity. Fearful of allowing imagination the freedom to produce, under rules of its own devising, an aesthetic product which is both ineffable *and* exemplary, Wordsworth argues, against Coleridge, that as a faculty it is no different in kind from fancy. He is, in fact, attempting to have it both ways: while his placing of imagination under the regulation of some (as yet unspecified) 'fixed laws' *suggests* a higher validity, his statement that '[t]o aggregate and to associate, to evoke and to combine, belong as well to the Imagination as to the Fancy' reins imagination back within the more familiar and reassuring ambit of faculty psychology and also, as a consequence, the domain of empirical rule.[49] By the end of this disquisition, then, Wordsworth has brought his account of the creative imagination back to a point where, though it is supposed to be a faculty given, in some vague way, 'to incite and to support the eternal';[50] in terms of epistemic value empirical science is still 'giving the rule' to the poet. The 'truth' in 'poetic truth' remains elusive.

Historically, as has been seen, the roots of this problem lay in the insistence of eighteenth-century theorists such as Addison and Gerard that poetic creation is definable as a process of discovery not distinct in

kind from that of scientific procedure, and that its products are invalid if unsupervised by judgement. This is the ancestor of the logical positivist's conviction that moral or aesthetic statements are meaningless. Yet a cardinal tenet of Wordsworth's poetics is that poetry should have an independent and productive; that is, a *legislative* function in terms of human knowledge; that it represents the 'introduction of a new element into the intellectual universe'.[51] Again, by so doing, it presumes a capacity for a kind of epistemic creation whereby the mind spontaneously 'gives the rule' to truth: it *makes* it.

Placed as it is, cheek by jowl with references to Lamb's view of the imagination, and pronouncements on the sublime creativity of the poetic consciousness, Wordsworth's insistence in the 1815 Preface that imagination and fancy share a common process of association bounded by judgement, demonstrates the breach between the impulses lying behind his emerging idea of a free aesthetic space, and the capabilities of contemporary British psychological thought. The story of Wordsworth's gradual withdrawal from associationism, under the influence of Coleridge, is too well known to need repeating here, but it is also true that Wordsworth never completely purged association from his theoretical work. There are a number of reasons for this, but among the foremost is the epistemic priority he grants to feeling, and the Humean way in which he conceived of the cultivation of finer feeling as a matter largely determined by mental *habit*.

An early example of this is the fragment of an essay on morals from 1798. In this, Wordsworth claims that even though 'all our actions are the result of our habits', he knows of 'no book or system of moral philosophy written with sufficient power to melt into our affection[?s], to incorporate itself with the blood & vital juices of our minds, & thence to have any influence worth our notice in forming those habits'.[52] The thought behind this, as he makes plain in the Preface two years later, is that where philosophy has failed to lead because of its lack of sympathetic power, poetry can succeed.[53] Again, it is an indication of Wordsworth's belief in the cognitive and moral seriousness of poetry that he describes the primary function of the lyrical ballad as the tracing of 'the primary laws of our nature'. It is, moreover, a measure of his fidelity to eighteenth-century psychology that this is to be carried out 'chiefly as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement'.[54] Indeed, it is association itself which regulates feeling, and endows the poet with the authority to give the rule to the sensibilities of society:

For our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings; and as by contemplating the relation of these general representatives to each other, we discover what is really important to men, so by the repetition and continuance of this act feelings connected with important subjects will be nourished, till at length, if we be originally possessed of much organic sensibility, *such habits of mind* will be produced that by obeying blindly and mechanically the impulses of those habits we shall describe objects and utter sentiments of such a nature and in such a connection with each other, that the understanding of the being to whom we address ourselves, if he be in a healthful state of association, *must necessarily be in some degree enlightened, his taste exalted, and his affections ameliorated*.[55]

Wordsworth is following the trend of late eighteenth-century naturalism by ignoring the sceptical consequences of extending the psychology of associationism and 'habit' into epistemology. The only philosopher to confront this problem directly had been Reid, but Reid's commonsensism was founded on an opposition to the representational theory of perception which engendered a general denigration of imaginative processes. The figure of the poet, then, stands on shaky ground. In one mood, that of normative epistemology, Wordsworth defines him in terms of a process of association fraught with sceptical sliproads; in another, that of naturalistic psychology, he is rendered in the language of natural (or 'second-natural') habit. It is perhaps due in part to an awareness of this tension that Wordsworth places greater emphasis upon the creativity of the poet's activity in subsequent versions of the Preface. But since this activity is still seen as an associative one, bearing with it the risk of arbitrariness, he remains caught between affirming the priority of this 'feeling', and restricting it within the compass of a process of selection. Jacobi was later to arrive at the same predicament when in the 1815 preface to *David Hume on Faith* he defended his vision of the final standoff between knowledge and faith: 'And so we admit without fear that our philosophy begins with feeling, but with a feeling that is *objective* and *pure* [...].'[56] Jacobi's defensive tone betrays an awkwardness which he shares with Wordsworth. For the latter, the binding of feeling implies, rather embarrassingly, that though studied and therefore more trustworthy, in one respect at least the poet's outpourings are somehow less genuine and 'real' than those of the men they seek to imitate. No words suggested by the poet's imagination or fancy can be compared to those of men in a real state of excitement; 'the emanations of reality and truth'.

It is this rather deflating conclusion which leads into the passage where Wordsworth attempts to recoup some ground for poetry by claiming for

it a truth which is 'not individual and local, but general and operative'. But the cognitive autonomy of the creative, aesthetic sphere in human experience has already been compromised. Poetry may have its own value and even its own 'tribunal', but as 'the *image* of man and nature' it will always be at one remove from truth, as truth is generally conceived by Wordsworth himself.[57] That this truth is defined by *empirical* criteria is disturbed, but not overturned by his negotiations with associationism or the language of 'habit'. Nor could it be: associationism, as an account of human psychological processes, was simply not the *kind* of theory which proposed an alternative to the notion (implied elswhere in Wordsworth's writing) of knowledge as true justified belief, where truth is grounded in fact.

The implications of this for broader questions of the relations between literature, truth and value are acute. Empiricism had developed a two-fold function for poetry which was at once didactic and utilitarian: by adding to the stock of knowledge, literature, including poetry, would also increase the sum total of human well-being or happiness. Neither of these operations was peculiar to poetry. It was itself simply a matter of fact that poetry was best fitted to execute them simultaneously. Though its content may have been unpalatable to Wordsworth, however, utilitarianism's consequentialist stress upon an extra-poetic end to poetry itself neatly overlaid the kind of Aristotelian, functional thinking about art which, despite philosophical developments and changes of emphasis, still revolved around Sidney's stipulation that the end of poetry was 'to teach and delight'.[58] Any attempt, then, to articulate a sense of poetic value which was irreducible to this pragmatic-hedonic calculus would have to confront such a tradition. Wordsworth's prose writings in particular display the stress of this undertaking, in that he develops a conception of a cognitively privileged poetic utterance, while at the same time deferring to the general empirical principle that all truthful propositions can be ratified only against the data of sense-experience. Moreover, by frequently writing of poetry in functional terms (that is, in terms of specified means working towards specified goals or ends), he was not immune to the legacy of previous literary theory, despite his railing against modern society's obsession with 'ends'.[59] When these discordant elements of empiricism, functionalism, and a new aestheticism (which rejects the preconceived 'end' of the functionalist view) come together, as they do in Wordsworth, the result is the famous hesitation which one witnesses in passages such as that in the 1800 Preface:

[Each poem] has a worthy *purpose*. Not that I mean to say, that I always began to write with a distinct purpose formally conceived; but I believe that my habits of meditation have so formed my feelings, as that my descriptions of such objects as strongly excite those feelings, will be found to carry along with them a *purpose*.[60]

Utilitarianism had grown in eighteenth-century thought as the notion of *a priori* moral truth, having been tarred with the brush of innatism, had declined. Just as sense experience now determined knowledge, so the aggregate total of the public pleasure or pain came to constitute the index of practical and moral reasoning. Before it had been codified by Bentham and Mill, however, the utilitarianism of Hume, Paley and Adam Smith had circulated in eighteenth-century thought as a more loosely connected series of convictions and beliefs which was never entirely free of the anxiety that a consequentialist moral theory which paid no attention to motive or intention might slip back into Hobbesian notions of self-interest. This fear is present in Wordsworth, but his more immediate difficulties with utilitarianism echo his ambiguous relation to empiricism. For just as empiricism denies poetry epistemic autonomy, so utilitarianism, particularly hedonistic act-utilitarianism, with its appeal to aggregate public pleasure, threatens to have a levelling effect upon poetic value.[61] Wordsworth appears to make a concession to the spirit of utilitarianism when he claims that it is his intention to reinvigorate poetic language by adopting 'the very language of men', that is to say, ordinary (rural) men in a state of excitement.[62] Accordingly, he initially casts the poet as 'a man speaking to men'.[63] This, however, brings Wordsworth's radical political stance into confrontation with his aesthetic theory, which reserves for the poet a unique voice in human affairs. Consequently, Wordsworth tags on the proviso that more than *just* being a man speaking to men, that is, one who imitates their passions and pleasures and reproduces their language, the poet must take a leading role in shaping those values. This presumes a creative power in the poet not found in other men, for 'he has acquired a greater readiness and power in expressing what he thinks and feels, and especially those thoughts and feelings which, by his own choice, or from the structure of his own mind, arise in him without immediate external excitement'.[64]

But this represents merely a deferral of Wordsworth's problem; that is, the paradox lying within the very idea of empirically valid epistemic creativity; or of the poet as a 'common' genius, who, though defined by his experience, transcends it by spontaneous poetic creation; and who,

despite taking the feelings of common men as his model, retains the authority to give the rule to their sensibilities. Everywhere the pull of empiricism and 'vulgar' utilitarianism is strong for Wordsworth, leading him into a pattern of vacillation whereby either of these perspectives may be rejected at one moment, and quietly embraced at the next. This is a worrying equivocation at the heart of Wordsworth's thinking about the function and status of poetry; one for which he was to be heavily criticized by Coleridge in *Biographia Literaria*. Without Coleridge's transcendental framework, Wordsworth's epistemology of creative, 'poetic truth' struggled to establish a space outside both the rule-following of Neoclassical dogma, and the reductiveness of the utilitarian values which empiricism threatened to install in their place. Similarly, Wordsworth's writing on the social location of the poet recognizes the need for a connection between the poetic voice and the common language of men, but is bothered by the possibility that that voice might disappear in the crowd. As Hazlitt was later to write, and Wordsworth was increasingly to realize, in this age it seemed that '[t]he principle of poetry is a very anti-levelling principle'.[65]

However, in his later additions to the Preface, Wordsworth does propose an alternative tack, based on a compromise by which he attempts to combine utilitarian precept with a sense of aesthetic freedom. After mounting his argument in defence of the internal 'tribunal' of poetic truth, he adds that '[t]he Poet writes under one restriction only, namely, 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 [...] or a natural philosopher, but as a Man.'[66] As it stands, this seems in danger of collapsing into a merely Epicurean theory of poetic value, but Wordsworth's innovation is to suggest that aesthetic pleasure might *itself* be a species of knowledge; a species which is uniquely the territory of the poet, and which, unlike the contingencies of scientific knowledge, 'cleaves to us as a necessary part of our existence, our natural and unalienable inheritance'. This territory is not only 'necessary', but political, for it is also the domain of the habitual affections, or human sympathy: '[w]e have no sympathy but what is propagated by pleasure [...]. We have no knowledge, that is, no general principles drawn from the contemplation of particular facts, but what has been built up by pleasure, and exists in us by pleasure alone.' It is this capacity of poetry to access the 'habitual and direct sympathy connecting us with our fellow beings' which entitles it to be described as 'the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge'.[67]

Such phrases are intriguing. At certain times Wordsworth seems to be arguing merely that knowledge such as the poet brings is always attended by a pleasure which enhances its apprehension: at other times, the more radical and interesting thesis that the pleasure of human sympathy *is* actually a form of knowledge itself, perhaps even the essence of knowledge; 'the first and last of all knowledge'. At first sight, this appears to be a striking move to set aside foundationalist conceptions of knowledge for a poetic pleasure principle altogether more holistic and less 'grounded'. Such, it seems clear, is certainly the inclination of one axis of Wordsworth's thinking. But curling round to enclose and subdue this is the continuing quest for certainty. Poetic pleasure may be ungrounded, but only because it itself forms 'the first and last' of knowledge. It marks the beginning and the end of knowledge, but does not signal the *ending* of knowledge as verifiable fact. Indeed, for Wordsworth this kind of pleasure has the authority of a necessary law. It is by working through it that the poet appreciates the veridicality of mental representation, in that he 'considers man and nature as essentially adapted to each other, and the mind of man as naturally the mirror of the fairest and most interesting properties of nature.'[68] The decentred 'breath and finer spirit' of knowledge in other hands might come to displace 'knowledge' itself, but in Wordsworth's it is meant to support it.

Moreover, for other, familiar reasons this settlement is a double-edged one for Wordsworth: put simply, there is nothing in the communication of sympathetic pleasure, as such, to mark the poet out as anyone special. Admittedly, there is his skill as a craftsman of words (as has been seen, Wordsworth was wont to stress the value of poetic 'workmanship'). But at other times, even in the 1800 Preface, there is a sense that this is insufficient to sustain the more elevated view of the poet's calling being harboured. At this stage the 1815 anatomy of the poetic imagination is some way off, by which time the 'cognitive theory' of pleasure had all but disappeared. There is at least one reason for this: namely, that within an empirical or naturalistic framework, pleasure is notoriously difficult to differentiate qualitatively. Bentham maintained that it was a basic notion which resisted further analysis.[69] The thought behind this proceeds along the lines that no sooner does one try to imagine different *kinds* of pleasure-value – as in, for instance, the difference between the pleasure taken in scratching an itch and reading a sonnet – than one finds oneself compelled to articulate the distinction in terms of something other than the pleasure itself, whether that 'something' is a sensation on the skin, or the compression of a complex conceit. These qualities may attend

pleasure or, according to some views, have a causal relationship with it, but they are not identical with it. There is not a pleasure-essence of which they all partake, therefore they are not instances of a *species* of it. Seen in this way, qualitatively, pleasure is a leveller: it is always undifferentiated, and varies only in degrees of quantity. In the first Preface, however, Wordsworth seeks not only to identify a discrete mode of pleasure-based value, but to *identify* this with empirical knowledge, taken in its broadest sense. His prose soon begins to exhibit the strains of such a position. For example, having already identified poetic pleasure with the profoundest and most fundamental kind of knowledge, he then envisages its role in composition as merely that of a bridle for poetic passion, tempering it with metrical regularity. The poet ought to take great care that the passions which he communicates

> should always be accompanied with an overbalance of pleasure. Now the music of harmonious metrical language, the sense of difficulty overcome, and the blind association of pleasure which has been previously received from works of rhyme or metre [. . .] make up a complex feeling of delight, which is of the most important use in tempering the painful feeling which will always be found intermingled with powerful descriptions of the deeper passions.[70]

Wordsworth's identification of pleasure with the quotidian wisdom of 'ordinary feeling', even as it supercedes knowledge, regrounds itself in knowledge. He continued to oscillate between the potentially subversive position whereby the poetic or creative act was seen as generative of a kind of value which put 'knowledge' in its place and affirmed a richer, more experiential relation between mind and nature than that envisaged by empiricism (expressed, possibly, by the term 'pleasure'), and a more conservative line which feared the anarchic implications of knowledge as merely another 'form of life', to adopt Wittgenstein's much-used phrase, without beginning or end. Despite his protests, on many levels Wordsworth's language accords with scientific utilitarianism's vaunting of 'ends' over means, demonstrating an ongoing if reluctant debt to empiricism. At the root of this problem lies his ambivalence about the nature of poetic spontaneity itself, and its relation to 'truth'.

POETIC TRUTH: SPONTANEITY, APPEARANCE AND POWER

Problems with the cognitive theory of pleasure propounded in later editions of the Preface betray the true direction of Wordsworth's theorizing about poetic truth. This gravitates towards a conception of the poet or

artist as a legislative figure; someone who *spontaneously* configures a new object of knowledge, the truth of which, though made, gives the rule to the understanding of his fellow man. Yet because of his foundationalist inheritance, Wordsworth continued to strive to articulate the 'grounds' or the *validity* of such a truth. In this, the notion of knowledge as representative of truth was bound with the idea of the poet as representative of humanity. He experimented with a number of alternatives, including notions of poetry as the truth of phenomenal experience (that is, of appearances alone) and later, by making knowledge itself a function of poetic power. The earliest manifestation of the tension between poetic value and grounded fact or knowledge, however, appears in the relationship between spontaneity and reflection in the Preface, or the question of how sincerity as such can have independent truth. The paradigm of sincere language is that of men in a state of healthy intercourse with nature, but the product of this is a language in which mere purposefulness (the pursuit of an end) is secretly guided by an instinctive awareness of 'what is really important to men'.[71] Thus is sown the dialectic of consciousness, whereby the 'purposeful' poet must reproduce this sincerity, while remaining conscious of his preconceived attempt to imitate ordinary language.

Wordsworth attempts to resolve this in two related ways. First, he admits that the poet is a *reflective* being: it is a condition of having a poetic purpose at all, that one should have 'thought long and deeply' about the object concerned; that one should not be held captive by it. Nonetheless, poetic reflection is insufficient if not carried out by a man 'possessed of more than usual *organic* sensibility'.[72] Yet the question arises: what could be meant by 'organic' in the context of sensibility? Some active epistemic function is hinted at in this formula. Once again, however, when Wordsworth comes to fill out this picture, his instinct is to do so in the manner of Gerard and the Scottish aestheticians, that is, in terms of a naturalistic explanation of the association of ideas – specifically, the blind and mechanical prompting of the form of habit which association manifests in its 'healthful state'. In a sense, Wordsworth is straining to recover humanity's 'second nature' through the poetic voice. Such poetry, it is envisaged, will recapture the truth in the ancient poets' 'original figurative language of passion' without merely mimicking that language; that is, without reassimilating the poetical register within a broader social voice which would efface what made it distinctly modern, namely its awareness of its status as a privileged mode of discourse.[73] The idea of a process of sincere expression subject to the reflection of

an organic sensibility is intended to harmonize these priorities, in that it promises a spontaneous means of production; an echo of that original figurative language which is self-regulating and self-adjudicating. Poetic reflexivity, through a subtle co-ordination of process and purposefulness, or means and ends, thus becomes productive:

> I have said that Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility: the emotion is contemplated till by a species of reaction the tranquility gradually disappears, and an emotion, similar to that which was before the subject of contemplation, *is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind*.[74]

The political contradiction this masks, however, between representation or reflection on one hand, and poetic spontaneity and privilege on the other, parallels the epistemological problem which affects both Wordsworth's argument and, since 'second nature' by definition resists articulation (this, after all, is the domain of poetry), the very *act* of his making it. By attempting to synthesize Rousseau and Burke, Wordsworth's exploration of the idea of a recovered figurative language which reconciles spontaneity and reflection or self-consciousness through an organic sensibility, reveals the instability of English Romantic indifference. First, Wordsworth suggests that poetic language can recover the unified experience lost by philosophy because it partly *creates* that experience through figuration. In this way, the boundary between literal and figurative meaning (between hard, confrontational fact and soft, created value) which led philosophy into both Terror and scepticism, is blurred, if not erased. Philosophy's ills thus demand a non-philosophical, aesthetic therapy: the healing power of the extraordinary yet ordinary, natural yet supernatural voice of the poet. Wordsworth's prose writing is itself overripe with metaphor. His description of poetry as the 'breath and finer spirit of all knowledge' attempts to practise what it preaches: the collapsing of form and content and the rehabilitation of knowing through figuration. This is noticeable elsewhere. In the 'Reply to "Mathetes",' for instance, he claims that '[t]here is a life and spirit in knowledge which we extract from truths scattered for the benefit of all, and which the mind, by its own activity, has appropriated to itself [. . .]'.[75] In both cases Wordsworth eschews argument, opting for a mode of expression which is studiedly non-philosophical. Unwilling to theorize the aesthetic, he aestheticizes theory.

Yet at the same time (and quite apart from the very fact of its existence) Wordsworth's prefatory prose writing teaches another lesson. Despite his

professed reluctance to write the Preface, he was not, in the end, about to allow his own poetry to uncoil its meanings without a frame of reflection; a frame intended to demonstrate, moreover, that his poems were not without a 'purpose' which was connected to all that was 'permanent' in human nature. To this predetermined end, Wordsworth constructs in discursive prose a theory of a philosophy-transcending 'poetic' truth, all the time deploying many of the terms and the assumptions of eighteenth-century British philosophy. The very term 'poetic truth' indeed, neatly expresses Wordsworth's ambivalence between indifference and epistemology, figuration and demonstration. Though I have maintained that this tension is at its most pronounced in his prose writing, this is not to say that it is undetectable in his poetry, where, as Elridge observes, 'narrative particularity not only situates and humanizes, but also continuously *competes with*, transcendental claims [...]'.[76] This is particularly true of *The Prelude*, which oscillates between two major rhetorical modes: one of ontological exploration (the Wordsworth of 'Oh there is a blessing in this gentle breeze'[77]), and one of demonstration and argumentation (the Wordsworth of 'Was it for this [...]?'[78]). As Michael Cooke puts it, *The Prelude* 'is not a thing of argument [...] but neither is it a thing innocent of argument'.[79] Some of the most telling passages in this respect are those which recount his bewitchment by Godwin and philosophy in the 1790s. This one is from Book Eleven:

> Thus strangely did I war against myself;
> A bigot to a new idolatry
> [.....]
> And, as by simple waving of a wand,
> The wizard instantaneously dissolves
> Palace or grove, even so did I unsoul
> As readily by syllogistic words
> (Some charm of logic, ever within reach)
> Those mysteries of passion which have made,
> And shall continue evermore to make –
> In spite of all that reason hath performed,
> And shall perform, to exalt and to refine –
> One brotherhood of all the human race,
> Through all the habitations of past years,
> And those to come: and hence an emptiness
> Fell on the historian's page, and even on that
> Of poets, pregnant with more absolute truth.[80]

At first sight, the dismissal of the synchronic foundationalism of the *Ideologues*, which 'instantaneously dissolves' the feudal wisdom of 'Palace

or grove' garnered '[t]hrough all the habitations of past years' seems complete. Yet Wordsworth remained dissatisfied with the passage, continuing to worry at it over the years, and even here there is much to suggest that his strange war with himself was far from over.[81] On one hand, he implies that when set against the second nature bestowed by cumulative historical experience, logic and ratiocination are facile processes, rushing towards the soulless truth of the philosophical conclusion and missing the 'more absolute truth' with which history and poetry are 'pregnant'. On the other, the notion of an 'absolute' truth which yet remains in a permanent state of gestation or becoming is a troubled one, and its pressures are echoed by Wordsworth's style, in which the cumulative significance of ever-pregnant clauses is stapled into place by his own favourite locutions of consecutive reasoning, 'Thus' and 'hence'.

Indeed, the passage itself makes an argument, one which is based upon a distinction between 'charm' and 'mystery'. This in turn, like Wordsworth's separation of 'public' and 'people', is fundamentally unstable, endeavouring to prevent the slippage between two terms which it only manages to underscore. Wordsworth attempts to turn the tables on philosophy by endowing it with the quality which poetry more often stands accused of harbouring: beguiling, facile charm. But this inversion threatens to highlight, by repressing, the more common feeling (which Hazlitt, for one, was given to voicing) that poetry is really the idolator's sanctuary, and that the poet's 'mysteries of passion' themselves amount to little more than Prospero-like wizardry, bardic smoke and mirrors.

To understand this, it helps to recall that the word 'charm' features in another notable moment of Wordsworthian edginess, when in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* he defends his decision to write in verse, protesting that 'why am I to be condemned if to [...] description I have endeavoured to superadd the *charm* which by the consent of all nations is acknowledged to exist in metrical language?'[82] Thus, the charm of words arranged in verse is innocent, that of words arranged in syllogism, malign. Yet Wordsworth's breezy take-it-or-leave-it attitude to versification is belied by his belief that song, or lyrical poetry, reflects the primal state of language, the 'original figurative language of passion' which he sometimes hears within the ordinary language of rural folk and children. Coleridge would later argue that the elevation of poetry on epistemic rather than metrical grounds presupposed the organic relationship of linguistic form and content, rendering poetic 'truth' irreducible to any scientific notion of truth as correspondence between conceptual scheme and world. But for Wordsworth, still married (albeit unhappily) to such

dualisms of empiricism, 'truth' always carries the deflating implication of facticity, just as figuration suggests the lawless activity of sheer creation. This meant that any notion of 'poetic truth' was always in peril of sliding, on one hand, into a factual but arid field of demonstrably true philosophic knowledge, or on the other, a domain of value and feeling bereft of grounds upon which it might raise its 'mystery' above mere 'charm'.

Wordsworth's dilemma over the limits and validity of poetic spontaneity are paralleled by an anxiety about the possibility of unconstrained political action. He makes this plain as early as 1794, in a letter to William Matthews, writing that 'I recoil from the bare idea of a revolution'; adding that the only guard against 'the miserable situation of the French' is 'the undaunted efforts of good men in propagating with unremitting activity those doctrines which long and severe meditation has taught them are essential to the welfare of mankind'. In this, the teachings of the reflective poet achieve their political potential as a counterweight to the dangerous agitation of an impressionable public by ill-conceived and 'inflammatory addresses'. As Wordsworth puts it, 'I know that the multitude walk in darkness. I would put into each man's hand a lantern to guide him and not have him to set out upon his journey depending for illumination on abortive flashes of lightning, or the coruscations of transitory meteors.'[83] The poetic genius must not be a rabble-rouser. 'Every great Poet is a Teacher', he writes to Sir George Beaumont in 1808; 'I wish either to be considered as a Teacher, or as nothing.'[84] But the question remained: what was it that the poet actually *taught*, which no other person could teach; which was founded upon necessary law, while compatible with the natural birthright of every human being; which maintained its own centre and circumference as knowledge, yet arose from creative mental activity? In other words, by what criteria was the poet to be distinguished both from the detached scientist, or observer, on one side, and the 'transitory meteor' or political agitator on the other?

By his frequent suggestions in the Preface that the truth of poetic language is of a lower order than the words of passionate men, 'the emanations of reality and truth',[85] which it seeks to emulate, Wordsworth compromises his effort to demarcate poetic truth from scientific fact. He is in a bind: if poetic language is to be rigidly factual and representative, its claim to a higher truth would seem to be a hollow one. On the other hand, if poetry is defined by its spontaneity, there needs to be some principle of containment or verification for its products. Without this, the notion of lawless creativity threatens to overthrow that of free expression, and

so undermine the foundations of knowledge with a promiscuous proliferation of meaning. Yet again, such a principle cannot be empirical, for that would be to succumb to the 'charm of logic' and reduce poetry's truth-value, once more, to the numerical values of science. One of Wordsworth's more innovative attempts to cut across this problem is outlined in the 'Essay, Supplementary to the Preface' of 1815. In this, he endeavours to make a virtue of poetry's representational inadequacy:

> The appropriate business of poetry, (which, nevertheless, if genuine, is as permanent as pure science,) her appropriate employment, her privilege and her *duty*, is to treat of things not as they *are*, but as they *appear*; not as they exist in themselves, but as they seem to exist to the *senses*, and to the *passions*.[86]

This signals a important departure for Wordsworth's theory. Whereas in the past he had striven to articulate a special, non-scientific way by which poetry might approach 'things as they are', here that project is relinquished completely. For the first time, Wordsworth suggests a model of poetic truth which does not strain to conform to the empirical stipulation that experience must correspond to a causally effective object. By designating the treatment of the realm of *appearances* as the proper business of poetry, and by further confining these appearances to those mediated by the passions, Wordsworth turns his back upon the Lockean inheritance which had proved such an encumbrance: the doctrine of representative realism. The poet is finally permitted to take his eye off the 'subject'.

Such apparent indifferentism, however, should not be taken at face value. Without a supplementary, positive thesis of poetic truth which proposed an alternative to the empirical standard, this concession itself represented little more than a surrender to empiricism; a desertion of poetry's claims to knowledge. This would effectively collapse the question of poetry's status back into the terms of the 'pleasure versus function' debate; leaving it exposed to appropriation by the Epicurean, who might seek to reduce it to a pleasurable pastime; the fanatic, who would merely capitalize upon its rhetorical effectiveness for the end of instilling religious or political dogma into his readers; or the utilitarian, who would buy into either of these persuasions where it promoted the general interest. Such a capitulation was unacceptable.

At this point in the 'Essay' Wordsworth deploys a provoking analogy, which itself bears the marks of Coleridgean influence. He remarks upon a similarity between poetry and religion, in which the 'commerce between Man and his Maker cannot be carried on but by a process where much

is represented in little, and the Infinite Being accommodates himself to a finite capacity'. He continues:

> In all this may be perceived the affinity between religion and poetry; between religion making up the deficiencies of reason by faith; and poetry passionate for the instruction of reason; between religion whose element is infinitude, and whose ultimate trust is the supreme of things, submitting herself to circumscription, and reconciled to substitutions; and poetry ethereal and transcendent, yet incapable to sustain her existence without sensuous incarnation.[87]

This analogy has its limits. Inasmuch as he saw the poet as a 'teacher', Wordsworth envisaged poetry's task as legislative, but not dogmatic in the manner of a religious teacher or a priest. The misuse of poetry for devotional proposes was, he maintained, the result of a 'kindred error'.[88] Nonetheless, the passage is significant in the way it highlights a change in emphasis in Wordsworth's conception of poetic truth, which here turns away from the language of association, reflection, and sympathetic pleasure; and moves towards notions of the 'ethereal and transcendent'; of a poetry which, 'passionate for the instruction of reason', might even serve as a surrogate religion in its own right. In this light, the apprehension of *appearances*, the incorporation of the infinite within the finite for the purpose of communication, becomes the sensuous embodiment of passionate truth, and tutor to scientific reason and philosophic system alike. At moments like this Wordsworth's professed indifference to knowing, his emphasis on faith as an antidote to philosophy, sounds remarkably Jacobian. Unlike Jacobi, Wordsworth has the advantage of writing not as a philosopher but as a poet. In this way, he is not the captive of the discourse which he is trying to overturn. On another level, however, Wordsworth is still engaged in a process of theoretical self-*justification*, and to this extent, his prose remains troubled by the possibility that by putting reason to one side his pronouncements concerning the relation of poetry to religion may be little more than a grand but unsupported declaration of the mystical autonomy of imaginative poetry.

Part of the reason why Wordsworth is not as concerned as one might expect in the 'Essay' about the relegation of poetry to the realm of appearances is his account of poetic 'power', a power which might compensate for loss of knowledge. Wordsworth's interest in the concept of power is already evident in 'The Sublime and the Beautiful', written a few years before the 'Essay'. While analyzing the impression of a mountain at close range, Wordsworth discerns three principal sensations: 'a sense of individual form or forms; a sense of duration; and a sense of

power [. . .]'. Though each of these is individually necessary, and none alone sufficient for an experience of the sublime, the sense of power is the most distinctive and important: 'works of Nature [. . .] must be combined [with] impressions of power, to a sympathy with & a participation of which the mind must be elevated or to a dread and awe of which, as existing out of itself, it must be subdued'.[89] Power, then, 'awakens the sublime either when it rouses us to a sympathetic energy & calls upon the mind to grasp at something towards which it can make approaches but which it is incapable of attaining yet so that it participates force which is acting upon it; or, 2dly, by producing a humiliation or prostration of the mind before some external agency [. . .]'. In both events, however, 'the head & the front of the sensation is intense unity' which is killed by any suggestion of immediate personal fear.[90] This sense of unity in the sublime is fundamentally a consolation for epistemic loss, a disempowerment which Wordsworth is keener to mitigate than Burke had been. Nonetheless, the direction of both accounts of the sublime is broadly similar: the aestheticization of the epistemological (and, by implication, political) disenfranchisement of the subject.

However, the stress which Wordsworth places upon the renovating quality of the sublime remains rooted in the same, familiar discourse of impression and sensation which places the subject in a position of acquiescence, answering to the effective causal object of perception. His sensation of 'intense unity', whether bound up with a 'sympathetic energy' or not, lacks Kant's transcendental securities.[91] There is an instability within the subject here which Wordsworth appears to believe can be counteracted by fixed laws of behaviour, or the 'grand constitutional laws under which it has been ordained that these objects should everlastingly affect the mind [. . .]'.[92] Wordsworth had no means of quantifying such laws, however, other than empirically. And Hume had devastatingly shown that no empirical rules, no matter how grand, were adequate to establish the kind of teleological principle which Wordsworth seeks to connect to the sublime. Wordsworth's thought pulls in two directions. It is hard to reconcile his insistence on the lawfulness and unity which characterizes the sublime with his statement that the thoughts connected with it 'are free, and tolerate neither limit nor circumscription [. . .]'.

At one point Wordsworth appears to propose that the action of the sublime is best understood dialectically. Using the image of a rock beneath a waterfall, he writes that 'objects will be found to have exalted the mind to the highest state of sublimity when they are thought of in that state of opposition & yet reconcilement, analogous to parallel lines in

mathematics [...]'.[93] This is similar in some respects to his claim in the first 'Essay Upon Epitaphs', written around the same time, of feelings of temporality and immortality, that 'though they seem opposite to each other, have another and a finer connection than that of contrast. – It is a connection formed through the subtle progress by which, both in the natural and the moral world, qualities pass insensibly into their contraries, and things resolve upon each other'.[94] Yet there is an important difference between the two images: in the first, the power in the objects is conceived as a polarity of irreducible difference in unity, an 'opposition & yet reconcilement'. Wordsworth's account of the relationship between temporality and immortality, on the other hand, seems more weighted towards the erasure of difference in favour of a 'subtle *progress*' towards dialectical synthesis or resolution, by which 'qualities pass insensibly into their contraries'. In both passages one can the detect the effect of the long evening talks with Coleridge, and in particular the influence of the latter's organicist models of unified difference, or distinction without division. Once again, however, Coleridge's treatment of the relationship between difference and identity is mediated through his transcendental construction of subjectivity and objectivity, a perspective not readily available to Wordsworth. In this light, passages such as the above, as well as Wordsworth's related claim that infinity is a 'modification' of unity, can be seen to be different in kind to Coleridge's metaphysical theses, and thus more obviously vulnerable to contingency.[95] This is not to claim that Coleridge's organicism is less troubled that Wordsworth's modified Burkeian sublime. Indeed, more important than their differences is a shared ambivalence between dialectic as 'resolution' and as the non-elimination of difference, which in this instance is played out by Wordsworth as a contest between knowledge and power.

In the 'Essay' Wordsworth was to extend his notion of power to the process of poetic production itself. Before doing so, he returns to the problem which had dogged his speculations on poetry since the 1800 Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*: namely, that of the nature of the cultural authority of the poet. Citing a remark made to him by Coleridge, 'the philosophical Friend', Wordsworth agrees 'that every author, as far as he is great and at the same time *original*, has had the task of *creating* the taste by which he is to be enjoyed [...]'. To put it another way, 'for what is peculiarly his own, he will be called upon to clear and often to shape his own road: he will be in the condition of Hannibal among the Alps'. The real difficulty of such an enterprise, he continues, will be 'in establishing that dominion over the spirits of readers by which they are

to be humbled and humanised [. . .]'. This is one of Wordsworth's most explicit statements on the pre-eminence of poetic genius, and the capacity it retains to give the rule, aesthetically, to men of feeling. Imaginative activity, he argues, is rightly prior to judgements of taste, and so bestows legitimacy upon the creative process of the artist; a process which is founded upon *power*. Consequently, '[i]f every great poet [. . .] has to call forth and to communicate *power*, this service, in a still greater degree, falls upon an original writer [. . .]'.[96]

Accordingly, the further Wordsworth's description of genius progresses in the 'Essay', the more it turns upon two qualities: the power of epistemic creation, and the authority that this confers upon the poet:

> Of genius the only proof is, the act of doing well what is worthy to be done, and what was never done before: Of genius, in the fine arts, the only infallible sign is the widening the sphere of human sensibility, for the delight, honour, and benefit of human nature. Genius is the introduction of a new element into the intellectual universe: or, if that be not allowed, it is the application of powers to objects on which they had not before been exercised, or the employment of them in such a manner as to produce effects hitherto unknown. What is all this but an advance, or a conquest, made by the soul of the poet?[97]

The last line effectively captures the uncompromising way in which Wordworth was now prepared to maintain the primacy of the poet. The role of the reader, on the other hand, was to be 'invigorated and inspirited by his leader'. To a great extent Wordsworth is here adopting a militaristic metaphor suggesting cultural colonization which was common to eighteenth-century discussions of the ascendant, appropriating genius.[98] The difference is that the discourse of power upon which it is based in this instance springs from an epistemological and political problem which did not present itself with such urgency even in late eighteenth-century British aesthetics. The solution proposed is no less radical than that of making poetic power itself a condition of knowledge, and thus of *ending* knowledge as construed by philosophy since Descartes. Human interaction with the world, Wordsworth suggests, need not begin with *knowing*, but with another kind of process, which might well be called creation: 'to create taste is to call forth and bestow power', he explains, 'of which knowledge is the effect; and *there* lies the true difficulty'.[99]

And yet the final clause is crucial, for his formulation does indeed present a *difficulty*; in other words, something to be argued over, resolved, overcome. The difficulty, as Wittgenstein put it, is to begin at the beginning. 'And not try to go further back.'[100] In English Romantic prose,

however, the epistemological imperative remains, as De Quincey, influenced by Wordsworth's notion of power, was himself to find. The discourse of power, with all its Nietzschean echoes for the modern reader, is never fully deployed against the foundationalist edifice of empirical knowledge. This in turn produces more localized tensions. For instance, if a criterion of 'knowledge' (or the conditions under which some mental entity is to be counted as true or not), is a function or effect of *power*, then the stipulation in Wordsworth's account of genius that it should extend human sensibility for the 'delight, honour, and benefit of human nature' is otiose, as the self-legitimizing power of genius will have already guaranteed such an outcome. Nonetheless, that he feels it necessary to include such a proviso suggests that he is not as comfortable with poetic power as might at first appear. This is most tellingly revealed in his hesitation over the possibility that genius might actually be responsible for 'the introduction of a new element into the intellectual universe'. At this point, Wordsworth has arrived at the conclusion that a condition of almost all of his most significant claims about the status of the poet is that he is capable of a kind of creation which goes *beyond* that explainable by the empirical-psychological mechanism, however complex. Instead, it embodies an element of the sheer contingency and freedom of *creatio ex nihilo*. Suddenly balking at this, however, he retreats into a scientific conception of creation-as-discovery; of power producing 'effects hitherto unknown'.

Part of what makes Wordsworth as a prose writer and theorist so challenging, but also difficult, is his habit of embroidering antifoundational lines of thought into the language of empiricism. He challenges knowledge with the notion that truth is made, not found, and having used creation as a ground for (poetic) truth, redresses truth with power. Once again, with no means of setting a boundary or limit on what power might produce, he is left sounding almost regretful for subordinating poetry's cognitive role to a principle of naked power about which, elsewhere, he shows a great deal of apprehension. Writing in opposition to the idea of a universal (male) franchise in an 1818 letter to Lord Lonsdale, for instance, he argues that '[t]he People are already powerful far beyond the increase of their information, or their improvement in morals'.[101] Wordsworth sees foundationalism as inevitably producing scepticism and cynical tyranny. At the same time, he fears that a culture of unbridled poetic self-creation might slip into anarchy. Indeed, he remained anxious about both an over-passive and an over-active public. At the root of this ambivalence is his attempt, as it were, to 'revalue'

knowledge through poetry, or aesthetic therapy. But remaining captive to the foundationalism which Hume crushed, Wordsworth's thought involutes, as epistemology vies endlessly with indifference, and truth and value remain unreconciled.

CONCLUSION

As it is represented in the works produced in his most theoretically concentrated period between 1800 and 1815, the pattern of Wordsworth's prefatory and prose writing is one whereby a problem of how the mind can be said to *create* forms of experience which surpass knowledge (itself echoed by a political paradox regarding the authority by which the people might become self-determining) is reformulated in terms of aesthetic production. Accordingly, the domain of poetic activity, with its capacity spontaneously to create 'new elements' in the intellectual universe, becomes a site at which otherwise lawless action is legitimized. The status of the poet had been undermined by the possibility that the value of his work might be determined by the public, or (worse) the marketplace. Now, however, 'creating the taste' by which he is to be judged, he becomes a teacher, or a legislative figure who spontaneously gives the rule both to the most general principles of scientific knowledge, and the higher political aspirations of the People. As a consequence, however, the difficulty which Wordsworth encounters repeatedly in trying to formulate this in *theoretical* terms is that he is compelled to do so in the very language which generated these dilemmas: that of empiricism.

Writing to William Hamilton in 1838, Wordsworth claimed that '[t]hough prevailed upon by Mr. Coleridge to write the first Preface to my poems which tempted, or rather forced, me to add a Supplement to it [...] I have never felt inclined to write criticism, tho' I have *talked*, and am daily talking, a great deal.'[102] What is most interesting about Wordsworth's prose is that, pulling against his reluctance to engage in an intellectual justification of his work, is the resistance of his empiricist instincts to the claims of creative imagination. Yet without the imagination, his ambition to capture an autonomous space for the poet is handicapped. Moreover, as the possibility of defining that space as a mediating ground between tradition and progress faded, his later, more conservative tones seem more comprehensible. Attempting to put knowledge in its place without letting creation off the leash, he considers a range of alternative strategies, running from the imitated real language of men in the 1800 Preface, to the notion of power in the 'Essay, Supplementary

to the Preface' of 1815. Yet each of these ideas either sailed too close to empiricism to be able to steer poetry in its new direction, or (as with his notion of spontaneity in the first Preface) having broken free of empirical rule, suffered from the damaging qualification and equivocation which resulted from Wordsworth's reluctance to see such principles completely rescinded.

In this light, a final comparison of two passages proves instructive. Their point of interest lies in the different meaning which they attach to the term 'subject', and what they imply about Wordsworth's developing attitude to the nature of poetic truth. In the 1800 Preface, much of his confidence in the 'truth' of the poems in *Lyrical Ballads* lies in the fact that while in the act of composition he has, as he puts it, 'at all times endeavoured to look steadily at my subject'.[103] Not unusually for Wordsworth at this point, this implies an empirical standard of truth: the verity or *objectivity* of the artistic product is given by its relation to a prior 'subject'. In her essay, 'Insight and Oversight: Reading "Tintern Abbey" ', Levinson undertakes to 'hold Wordsworth to his claim', only to find, in the case of 'Tintern Abbey' at least, that 'one learns that the narrator achieves his penetrating vision through the exercise of a selective blindness' – in other words, the suppression of the social for the personal. Yet, avoiding for a moment the assumption that the subject/object dichotomy is dispensable, it appears that there is at least something democratic in this epistemic arrangement: the poet's mandate to express himself is derived from his representational fidelity to the community of impressions which link him to the world.[104] The problem with this, however, is that his activity remains circumscribed within empirical boundaries, and certainly does not extend to the liberty of free creation. Indeed, already contained in the notion of 'subject', as used in this context, is a subordination of the perceived to the perceiver; a sense further suggested by the idea of the poet 'looking steadily' at that subject. To know one's subject is, in more than a merely metaphorical sense, to have command of it. It is but a short distance from this to the poetic objective of establishing a 'dominion over the spirits of readers'.[105]

Such, as has been seen, is the direction that Wordsworth's theory of poetic value was taking even at this early stage, a direction which empiricism could not sustain. Unable entirely to escape the Lockean conviction that knowledge lay in a relationship of correspondence between things (fundamentally, between mind and world) Wordsworth oscillates between the perspectives of epistemology and indifference, and then again between an indifference that would bring knowledge into a dialectic with

being, and an indifference that would *write* it out of existence. At times he suggests that the creativity of poetry might free humanity from a tyranny of knowing, replacing demonstration and linear argument with the sympathetic communication of pleasure. At more authoritarian moments, however, like Kant, he seeks to support the foundations of epistemology by preserving the dualism of the correspondence theory of perception, reversing empiricism's priority of world over mind. Thus, the underdetermination of total experience by the data of sense for Wordsworth meant not, as it would to Quine, the rejection of the very discourse of 'objectivity', but that the individual and, pre-eminently, the poet, must carry the grounds of objectivity within himself. In other words, the poet should become his own world, his own 'subject', as the 1800 Preface intends that term. But by this process, the subject is transformed into something quite different from itself. It becomes something which is closer to what Wordsworth has in mind when he writes in 'The Sublime and the Beautiful', that '[t]o talk of an object as being sublime or beautiful in itself, without references to *some subject* by whom that sublimity or beauty is perceived, is absurd [...]'.[106] As Althusser observed, the term 'subject' itself oscillates between two senses, namely 'a free subjectivity, a center of initiatives' and 'a subjected being who submits to a higher authority [...]'.[107] Finding that the policy of looking 'steadily at the subject' failed to remove that contradiction (that is, between the domination of the mass of contingent particulars by poetic perception, and the overdetermination of poetic perception by that same unruly mass), Wordsworth transforms the empirical, 'external' subject of the Preface into the poetic, 'internal' subject, one which, with its objectivity now self-inscribed, creates its own epistemic authority. But the nature of such authority remained uncertain, precariously balanced between a disengenuous knowing 'charm' and an unknowing 'mystery'.

3

The dry romance: Hazlitt's immanent idealism

> Metaphysics themselves are but a dry romance.
>
> William Hazlitt, *An Essay on the Principles of Human Action*[1]

The gradual renewal of interest in Hazlitt studies over the past few decades has recently intensified, and in doing so has taken a striking turn. Thanks to the earlier work of students such as W. P. Albrecht, Roy Park, John Mahoney, John Kinnaird and David Bromwich, Hazlitt's intellectual reputation has long since emerged from the shadow of Coleridge, to the extent that it is now unsustainable to characterize him simply as the latter's wayward disciple.[2] As this picture has faded, so too has the image of Hazlitt as the gifted but 'impressionistic' critic and prose stylist who might safely be studied with only cursory reference to his works in metaphysics and moral philosophy.[3] Lately, however, Hazlitt has drawn the attention of a number of commentators who have identified in his work a philosophical and theoretical outlook which is not just unique, but internally coherent and (some have claimed) quite ahead of its time.[4] Rather in the manner in which Coleridge's standing as a serious and consistent thinker was assembled over the years despite the dispersed and fragmentary nature of his writings, the fact that much of Hazlitt's philosophical thought (with the notable exception of the *Essay on the Principles of Human Action*) is scattered throughout a wide range of essays and reviews has not prevented scholars from measuring the telling regularity with which he deploys certain arguments concerning such questions as identity and moral agency, the limits of knowledge, or the nature of creative genius.

Yet this increased attention has also thrown into sharper relief some of the deeper paradoxes in Hazlitt's work; paradoxes which, despite the attempts of at least one critic to identify in them the journalistic writer's attempts to articulate subtle and difficult issues through single, arresting expressions, remain troubling to those who would take him

seriously as a thinker.[5] Foremost among these is his difficult relation to empiricism. Doubt has been cast over the standard view of Hazlitt as a 'Romantic empiricist', whose work provides a bridge between the ideals of his contemporaries and the philosophies of the previous era which they ostensibly rejected. Certainly, given that Hazlitt's outward opposition to empiricism was more or less constant throughout his career, it may seem remarkable that such a view has persisted. In his 1809 *Prospectus of a History of English Philosophy*, for example, one of the touchstones for his criticism of Locke is his conviction that 'reason is a distinct source of knowledge or inlet of truth, over and above *experience*.'[6] However, it can been seen that even this assertion harbours an equivocation. Hazlitt's description of reason as another *inlet* of truth itself suggests a concession to inductivism. In fact, despite his hostility to Locke, what makes Hazlitt noteworthy among theorists of the period is his reluctance to jettison the language of empiricism outright, preferring instead to amend or reform it according to new paradigms. One of those paradigms was the concept of creation, which, when given an epistemic function, drove his oft-repeated conviction that '[*t*]*he mind alone is formative*', and that '[i]deas [...] are the offspring of the understanding, not of the senses'.[7]

As with Wordsworth, however, the question remained as to just how susceptible the language of empiricism was to such radical reform. Hazlitt's statements to the effect that the mind alone is spontaneously formative often acknowledge Kant as their source or authority, but, unlike Coleridge, Hazlitt's access to the German philosopher was confined to Willich's questionable translation.[8] Consequently, he would not draw to the same extent upon Kant's work in his struggle with the problem which continually worries at the root of his thought, viz. *what are the grounds of the truth of the mind's creations?* Having found that even a revised version of the native epistemology was inadequate to the task at hand, Hazlitt, unwilling and unable to follow Coleridge on the high road to transcendentalism, proceeds in his later work to question the jurisdiction of 'knowledge' itself, and moves to replace it with a principle of pure power. Yet the principal tension in Hazlitt's theory – traceable throughout his writing – is the product of his reluctance completely to implement such a move. Revoking the epistemological perspective, yet tied by habit and tradition to empiricism's demand for a criterion of (factual) truth, Hazlitt's thought oscillates between the need for a foundation, and the attraction of a theory of human psychological activity based upon the paradigm of intellectual energy as a field of power.

Like the other writers examined here, Hazlitt's writing inhabits a twilight world which is neither 'in' knowledge nor entirely beyond it; often

indifferent to matters of truth, but not so insouciant as its ontological rhetoric would suggest. Hazlitt's notion of 'power' has been discussed extensively over the years.[9] Its epistemological import, however, remains ambiguous. In *Hazlitt and the Reach of Sense*, Uttara Natarajan argues that the traditional view of Hazlitt as an empiricist needs to be replaced by an account which does greater justice to his essentially idealist theories of power. In this, the 'continuity between the metaphysician and the essayist' consists in 'an understanding of power as epistemological: power is the mind's formative ability'. Natarajan has no doubt that power is deployed in the service of knowledge and truth-apprehension, even if, for Hazlitt, this can only be effected through powerful poetry, such as that of Milton, which 'shows the truth that rises above the material or matter-of-fact'.[10] The proposition that all truth amounts to matter of fact certainly troubles Hazlitt, no less than the other Romantics. Yet like Wordsworth, he found it impossible to shake. In 'On the Prose-Style of Poets', indeed, he elevates the prose-writer's dedication to 'dry matters of fact and close reasoning' over the poet's immersion in sensual appearances, citing Burke as an example of a writer guided by 'truth, not beauty – not pleasure, but power'.[11] Power's ambivalence between the ideal truth of poetry and the empirical truth of prose represents Hazlitt's own attempt to reunite the realms of fact and value. It is the impossibility of this (within an empirical method of verification: the only one available to Hazlitt) which provokes in Hazlitt a fundamental reassessment of the location of knowledge itself in human life, and a corresponding reaction *against* epistemology which already lurks in his weary aside towards the end of the *Essay* that 'Metaphysics themselves are but a dry romance'.[12] At this point, power emerges as an *anti*-epistemic principle which, through the agency of the 'exaggerating and exclusive faculty' of imagination, threatens to replace knowing as the primary mode of human engagement with the world.[13] In Hazlitt's writing, then, power is two-faced, on one side grounding an epistemology of 'ideal' truth, and on the other challenging epistemology's very conception of knowledge as something grounded *in* truth – and thereby 'knowledge' itself.

The roots of this ambivalence lie with Hazlitt's original philosophical interests in questions of personal identity and practical reason. He regarded with impatience the attempts of certain strands of contemporary moral philosophy, influenced by Hobbes, Hume and Priestley, to explain human action as fundamentally egoistic, self-interested, or determined by association and habit – or indeed, as in some way reducible to a combination of these principles. To Hazlitt, each of these theories (no matter how humanistic in spirit) explained the fundamental springs

of human action at the cost of excluding the possibility of moral, that is, *disinterested* deliberation. The reason for this, he came to decide, was that they took as their starting-point empirical psychology's causal and mechanistic explanation of perception: if the mind was to be free to make genuinely moral choices in its practical deliberations, then its knowledge of those opportunities could not be determined by passively received sensory input. In other words, it must be capable of some kind of independent epistemic construction: it must have a *creative* function. In the act of moral imagination, as Hazlitt puts it in the *Essay on the Principles of Human Action*, the agent '*creates* the object, he pushes his ideas beyond the bounds of his memory and senses [. . .]'.[14]

After the *Essay*, the notion of the 'formative' mind, and with it the concept of epistemic creation, or the thesis that truth is made and not found, became increasingly important to his thought on a more general level. Like many Romantic writers, however, Hazlitt was confronted with the problem of how to communicate this creativity. As a prose writer, he was intensely aware of how, just as logic represses rhetoric to the point of betraying its own metaphors, so self-conscious figuration can betray the desire for truth in its repression of argument. Thus, while Wordsworth attempted to reconcile these forces through a poetic para-philosophy of dialectical consciousness, in Hazlitt's work the middle way between a value- or fact-driven approach to life lies in the tension between the way in which his prose *figures* itself as factual (a medium of molten metal or liquid marble[15]) and its logocentric pursuit of philosophical argument.

Of the latter, one of the most important instances is what might be called his argument from abstraction. This is a good example of how Hazlitt remained epistemologically empiricist while appearing to be metaphysically idealist (hence his consistent opposition to materialism: the life of the mind, Hazlitt declared, was just as much a constitutive part of *reality* as matter itself). More importantly, the constraints of empiricism meant that Hazlitt's idealism was never to escape the Lockean identification of justification with causation. Consequently, epistemic creation remained a problem and a paradox for Hazlitt because he thought of it as an event which occurred between things rather than within a conceptual space. The result was a kind of *immanent* idealism, an intensification of Hume's notion of the projective power of the mind which nonetheless struggled to 'ground' itself. His conviction that knowledge was at least in part creative was thus stymied by his own attempts to contain creation through epistemic theories of common sense, association, and the self-verifying faculty of reasoning imagination. His argument, against

Coleridge, that knowledge of the absolute was impossible was not, as some have suggested, a proto-Kantian position, but the product of an ambivalence within his own theory of knowledge.

This in turn led to a watershed in his thinking about knowledge. Hazlitt came to the conclusion that if empirical epistemology could not sanction the creative activities of the moral imagination, then there was something incomplete in *epistemology* itself. The conventional notion of knowledge was to be changed for one of power: it was power which, at the most fundamental level, guided our moral existence, and wrought the highest achievements of art and poetry. It is, then, the rebellious dependency upon empiricism of Hazlitt's immanent idealism which conditions much of his writing, and it is the resort to power and ambivalent retreat from 'knowledge' as such which distinguishes Hazlitt's theory most markedly from the absolute idealism of Coleridge. In 'On Novelty and Familiarity', he maintains that '[k]nowledge is power', and that '[w]e are happy not in the total amount of our knowledge, but in the [...] removal of some obstacle [...]'.[16] In this way, Hazlitt continues the Romantic negotiation of Hume's fact/value dichotomy, cultivating an indifference to knowledge which betrays a compulsive attachment to truth, as when he urges, in 'The Spirit of Philosophy', that 'common sense' be taken as 'the foundation of truest philosophy'.[17]

ACTION AND ABSTRACTION

By endeavouring to establish the autonomy of the creative mind while negotiating the boundaries of empiricism. Hazlitt tends to steer between two answers: one cognitive and epistemological, concerned with validating the mind's productions according to a given standard of knowledge, and the other, what I have chosen to term non-cognitive or 'indifferent,' resting upon an assertion of the priority of power. These often overlap and merge with each other, but it is important to bear in mind that they are very different responses to the problem. The first tack of argument can be traced to Hazlitt's response to the debate which had circulated between Locke, Berkeley and Hume about the nature of general or abstract ideas. This sprang from a perplexing question: namely, how does one form an idea of something for which there does not seem to be a corresponding particular object?

The origins of this difficulty lay in the corpuscularianism of Locke. If, as he claimed, the objective world consisted in an arrangement of atoms, or particles, our perception of that reality must also be particular. Yet we are

undeniably in possession of certain concepts – being, man, triangularity, and the like – which seem to resist reduction to such atomistic principles. Locke's explanation of this in the *Essay* is that an abstract idea is one 'wherein some parts of several different and inconsistent *Ideas* are put together'. The result of this, however, is that we are required to entertain the notion of a resulting idea which is both particular and general; one which retains the qualities of the members of the class it represents 'but all and none of these at once'. Thus, Locke concludes that we have a stock of abstract ideas which exceed what is actually 'out there' in the world: 'general *Ideas*', he admits, 'are Fictions and Contrivances of the Mind', which, though of some practical use as a kind of representational shorthand, 'are marks of our Imperfection'.[18]

To Berkeley, as well as to Hume after him, Locke's discomfort with the question of abstraction was symptomatic of a deeper inconsistency in his thought regarding human knowledge, and in particular his failure to take corpuscularianism to its logical conclusion: namely, that all our knowledge is confined to particulars. Abstract ideas, then, are not the result of words being made the signs of general ideas (since there are no such things as irreducibly general ideas). Instead, 'an idea, which considered in itself is particular, becomes general, by being made to represent or stand for all other particular ideas of the same sort'.[19] Abstraction is an entirely nominal affair. For Berkeley, it is impossible to conceive of something without the sensation of it: therefore, as all our sensations are representations, it is also quite impossible for us to frame a coherent notion of 'things-as-they-are' as *distinct* from 'things-as-appearances'. From this it follows, not that we are disconnected from the real world, as in Locke, but that the 'real world' just *is* a world of appearances. Objects are entirely phenomenal: 'Their *esse* is *percepi*, nor is it possible they should have any existence, out of the minds of thinking beings which perceive them.'[20] For Berkeley, then, the impossibility of abstracting single, general qualities from a qualitatively mixed objective world demonstrates the error of supposing that that world has a material foundation, and shows the dichotomy between Locke's so-called primary (inherent) and secondary (mind-dependent) qualities in objects to be a false one.

Berkeley's argument is underwritten by a providential epistemology whereby the veracity of perception is ultimately guaranteed by God, a '*spirit infinitely wise, good and powerful*'.[21] This, however, was insufficient for Hume, for whom the rejection of Lockean abstraction meant the forfeiture of important concepts such as those of identity, substance, and causation. In particular, this last idea, in the scientific form of 'necessary

connexion', is undermined by the principle – to which both Hume and Berkeley subscribe – '*that all ideas are copy'd from impressions*'.[22] There is no impression conveyed by the senses which can give rise to such an idea:

> It must, therefore, be deriv'd from some internal impression, or impression of reflexion [...]. This therefore is the essence of necessity. Upon the whole, necessity is something, that exists in the mind, not in objects; nor is it possible for us ever to form the most distant idea of it, consider'd as a quality in bodies. Either we have no idea of necessity, or necessity is nothing but that determination of the thought to pass from causes to effects and from effects to causes, according to their experienc'd union.[23]

For Hume, if all knowledge is confined to impressions, and the connection of these is a contingent affair of association, then the concept of necessity itself must be a creation of the imagination: the human mind, somehow, *projects* these qualities onto the object. As he notes soon after: ' 'Tis a common observation, that the mind has a great propensity to spread itself on external objects, and to conjoin with them any internal impressions, which they occasion', adding that 'the same propensity is the reason, why we suppose necessity and power to lie in the objects we consider, not in our mind, that considers them [...]'.[24] As a result, moreover, the concept of necessary obligation or absolute moral law, cognizable by reason, all but vanishes. Moral judgements are fundamentally judgements of utility, and moral approval or disapproval, just like aesthetic response, is an internal movement of sympathetic pleasure or displeasure based upon this principle. Even justice is 'a moral virtue, merely because it has that tendency to the good of mankind [...]'.[25]

It was against this background that the issue of abstraction came to Hazlitt's attention as informing some of the principal problems in moral philosophy, as well as epistemology. But while Berkeley and Hume had agreed, *contra* Locke, that this was a nominal matter, Hazlitt, in what he considered to be his great discovery, took another tack: *all* ideas were abstract. They had to be, he claimed, given that nature was infinitely divisible, and the mind was a finite entity. He accepted the corpuscularian view of nature, but denied that it applied to perception: all our perceptions were general or abstract by virtue of the fact that the particular object, as such, was forever beyond our reach.[26] At this point, Hume's view of the cognitive function of imagination takes on an immense importance for Hazlitt. As this story goes, the mind *projects* completion, or generality, onto a world of which it can never receive a full representation. But while this led Hume to make sceptical inferences about our

scientific and practical reasoning, to Hazlitt it betokened the mind's *power* to create a valid set of standards for knowledge and moral conduct.[27]

Hazlitt's argument, as laid out in the lecture 'On Abstract Ideas' (which appeared as part of the series of *Lectures on English Philosophy* delivered in the spring of 1812) proceeds on the following lines: since 'all our notions from first to last, are strictly speaking, general and abstract', and abstraction itself is 'a consequence of the limitation of the comprehensive faculty' when confronted with the world's infinite plurality of qualities, then notions themselves are radically incomplete. As Hazlitt puts it, '[e]very idea of an object is, therefore, in a strict sense an imperfect and general notion of an aggregate [...]'.[28] All knowledge, therefore, necessarily has a vagueness or haziness about it, resulting from this indeterminacy: 'the real foundation of all our knowledge', Hazlitt continues, is 'a mere confused impression or effect of feeling produced by a number of things [...]'.[29] The undermining of epistemic foundations will later lead to a reappraisal of the centrality of knowledge as such. At this stage, however, Hazlitt retains a confidence in the project of epistemology. For the epistemic deficit which he describes, though never recovered, itself testifies to the hidden activity of the mind in shaping knowledge as a whole. Every idea of a sensible quality 'implies the same power of generalisation'.[30]

It is for this reason that Hazlitt, in the Preface to his abridgement of Tucker's *Light of Nature Pursued*, describes the species of philosophy which 'endeavours to discover what the mind is, by looking into the mind itself', as 'the only philosophy that is fit for men of sense'. He designates this as the 'intellectual', as opposed to the 'material' philosophy.[31] His definition is not precise. Thus, the interests of the intellectual philosophy lie with what is attributable to feeling, rather than the mere understanding: it concerns itself with consciousness, not experiment. What encourages Hazlitt in this loose characterization is the fact that the psychological processes surrounding feeling, sympathy and consciousness itself, are vague and imprecise in a way similar to how he envisages that of abstraction. It therefore might seem to be a very short step from this to assert that man's emotional nature; his feelings and his sympathies, are implicated in the acquisition and verification of knowledge. Moreover, Hazlitt's use of consciousness to merge the separate questions of *truth* and *reality* tends to promote a form of immanent idealism which defines itself against a metaphysical adversary (materialism), rather than an epistemological one (empiricism), and which characterizes the mind in terms of *power*, rather than receptivity. This last point will be examined later.

Hazlitt's theory of abstraction is a revealing example of Romantic epistemological ambivalence. Viewed from a modern perspective, his critique of Locke and Hume's picture of a mind always passive to the 'givenness' of the raw particularity of sense-experience is quite consonant with more recent attacks mounted by Sellars and Davidson, among others, upon the empiricist's dualism of sense-data and conceptual scheme. By arguing that *all* ideas are general or abstract, he refuses empiricism's idea of knowledge as resting upon a *foundation*, that is, a correspondence between ideas in the mind and 'given' reality; or to put it in more modern terms, between conceptual scheme and bare, uninterpreted sense-content. Like Wordsworth's poetic truth, then, Hazlitt's abstract knowing is an attempt to cross Hume's Fork. By designating all knowledge as abstract, he erases 'fact' as foundational.[32] In this manner he moves towards a position not unlike Sellars' argument against the sense-datum theorist's scheme of raw sensation existing antecedently to rationalization or interpretation. For Sellars, 'in characterizing an episode or a state as that of *knowing*, we are not giving an empirical description of that episode or state; we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says'.[33] Accordingly, his contention that 'the idea that epistemic facts can be analyzed without remainder – even "in principle" – into non-epistemic facts [. . . is] a radical mistake [. . .].' is comparable in its general outlook to Hazlitt's claim for the irreducibility of abstract knowledge to particular sensations.[34]

Indeed, in his *New and Improved Grammar of the English Tongue* (1809), Hazlitt appears to go further still by severing linguistic categories from the world of things. Tooke, he maintains, failed to see that the corollary of his own observation that words do not univerally correspond to things was not his further argument that words, rather than ideas, were the signs of impressions.[35] This merely reverses the priority between language and psyche. Rather, Hazlitt, maintains, Tooke's original observation betokens the complete elision of word and object: 'the grammatical distinctions of words do not relate to the nature of the things or ideas spoken of, but to our manner of speaking of them, *i.e.* to the particular point of view in which we have occasion to consider them [. . .]'. Severing the causal relationship between signifier and signified allows Hazlitt to postulate that signification is not something 'given', but testifies to the mind's complex *activity* in the creation of meaning. As Natarajan observes, for Hazlitt '[s]yntactical structure [. . .] is a holistic expression of the mind; thus, it is also the index of its formative ability'.[36]

Crucially, however, the division between word and object, linguistic scheme and content, remained a *problem*, albeit one which the thesis of the 'formative mind' was designed to answer. Natarajan describes how '[i]n the best case [. . .] the dualism of factual and imaginative reality contains not a dichotomy, but a transformation, of sensory into imaginative perception; the former limited and passive, the latter empowered and constitutive'. But this remains only a 'best case', an exception, for only in poetry is 'the power of the speaking subject [. . .] so magnified that it bridges the gulf between word and thing, and so wipes out the arbitrariness of connection between signifier and signified'.[37] Viewed from this angle, Hazlitt's anti-foundational turn appears less radical, and his proximity to Locke more prominent. For Sellars and Davidson, rejection of the concept/content distinction fatally undermined the representational view of perception itself, and finally brought to an end the empiricist's story of knowledge as 'confrontation' of mind with a theory-neutral reality. Confrontationalism was what Davidson termed, extending Quine's labelling of verificationism and the analytic/synthetic divide, as 'the third dogma' of empiricism, adding: 'The third, and perhaps the last, for if we give it up it is not clear that there is anything distinctive left to call empiricism.'[38] Once the image of justified belief as scheme/reality correspondence was removed, the very notion of 'scheme' becomes indistinguishable from language itself. Consequently, Sellars and Davidson are agreed that, in Sellars' words, 'all awareness of abstract entities [. . .] is a linguistic affair'.[39] Beyond this there seems no need for empiricism, or indeed, for 'epistemology' as such.

Hazlitt, on the other hand, remains true to empiricism's notion of correspondence in a way which comes to defeat the radical force of his theory of abstraction. Crucially, he retained from Locke a reified view of knowing as consisting in a relation between persons and objects rather than between persons and sentences. Consequently, like most eighteenth-century empiricists, he construed 'knowledge of' as prior to 'knowledge that', or to put it in Bertrand Russell's terms, 'knowledge by acquaintance' as prior to 'knowledge by description'. Direct acquaintance with objects forms the foundation of thought for Hazlitt, and no less so because, just as with Locke and Hume, these objects – 'ideas' – are psychical rather than physical entities. Hazlitt's abstract idea, though always already evaluative, is not irreducibly linguistic. We consider ideas via language, he maintains, because language remains a *medium* for knowledge: it is not knowledge itself. Accordingly, he digs at Tooke for his wasted labour deconstructing abstract ideas according to their etymological roots, given

that 'he has brought 2,000 instances of the meaning of words to demonstrate that we have no abstract ideas, not one of which 2,000 meanings is any thing else but an abstract idea'. 'Logic and metaphysics', Hazlitt concludes, 'are the weak sides of his reasoning.'[40] Explanations of how knowledge is justified remain for Hazlitt equivalent to explanations of how knowledge is caused. It comes as no surprise, then, that so long as this dualism remains in place, its inversion, entailing the *reversal* of the empirical account of the causal process of perception through the Kantian notion of the 'formative mind', increasingly appears as the solution to its ills of scepticism and determinism.

Even here, however, the Kantian turn can be deceptive. Framing the 'Copernican revolution' with its transcendental idealism of noumenal and phenomenal realms in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is a transcendental argument which for the first time proposes that knowledge is grounded not in *things*, but in propositions; namely, those propositions which Kant sees as expressing the principles of the possibility of experience itself. There is, however, no such purely conceptual meta-framework in Hazlitt. His idealism remains immanent within empiricism's dualism of subject and object, and his potentially subversive theory of creative abstraction stymied by a foundationalism of fact over value. This facet of Hazlitt's thinking, an eighteenth-century inheritance which he shares with Wordsworth, cannot be stressed too much, for it is what precipitates the later estrangement of knowledge.

More immediately for Hazlitt, however, the motivation for pursuing the theory of abstraction lies in his determination to secure a viable theory of moral disinterestedness, one which, as Paulin notes, had its roots in a nonconformist upbringing. 'The whole weight of Unitarian culture', Paulin claims, 'as well as Francis Hutcheson's philosophy [...] shapes this rejection of Hobbesian selfishness'.[41] Hazlitt, however, is not concerned to prove that human beings have an innate sense of morality: merely that, the possibility of self-interested action being admitted, that of disinterested action must follow. His argument in the *Essay* to the effect that the self-interested impulse shares a common psychological basis with that of disinterestedness – that being, the creation of the idea (respectively, of a future state, or the well being of another) whose origination is irreducible to either memory or the mechanism of empirical perception – depends upon the notion of a projective, sympathetic imagination. Hazlitt has accepted Hume's argument that empiricism alone cannot sustain the notion of moral obligation, but turns this into a question of the adequacy of empiricism itself: as empirical cognitive processes are

insufficient for moral action (indeed, action in general), then *ipso facto* there must be some other process to account for it:

> For there is no faculty in the mind by which future impressions can excite in it a presentiment of themselves in the same way that past impressions act upon it by means of memory. When we say that future objects act upon the mind by means of the imagination, it is not meant that such objects exercise a real power over the imagination, but merely that it is by means of this faculty that we can forsee the probable or necessary consequences of things, and are interested in them.[42]

The philosopher A. C. Grayling suggests that the *Essay* presents a transcendental argument, that is, one which demonstrates the conditions for something to be possible. In effect, Grayling claims, Hazlitt's argument stipulates that in all practical reasoning any self-interested justification for action presupposes the equal validity of a disinterested justification, in that 'the capacity to think about one's future self requires that one be able to think about other selves in general'. This logical equivalence means that a key premise of Hazlitt's argument must be (as Grayling believes it is) 'that one's future self, is, literally as well as logically speaking, another self'.[43] Grayling thus characterizes the main thrust of the *Essay* as an analytic (or more specifically, a transcendental) demonstration of the incoherence of a system of practical reason which bases itself exclusively upon a principle of self-love. Just as Kant was to argue that scepticism was unsustainable on its own terms, so Hazlitt identifies within egoism a principle of selfhood which presumes the possibility of an interest in the happinesss of others.

But is it the case that Hazlitt supposes that the future self is *another* self? At certain times he suggests as much, as when he affirms that 'I can only abstract myself from my present being and take an interest in my future being in the same sense and manner, in which I can go out of myself entirely and enter into the minds and feelings of others [. . .].'[44] At such moments it can indeed be tempting to try to square Hazlitt's vocabulary with the post-Kantian grid of analytic philosophy. But for Hazlitt, Hume's sceptical evaporation of identity into a vapour of sense-impressions was not about to be contained by an *a priori* net of conceptual conditions. Indeed, the 'self' was already inherently unstable, an aggregate of impressions unified only by the necessary fiction of abstraction, without which 'I am not the same thing, but many different things.'[45] From this perspective, it is simply futile to talk of past, present, or future selves which ultimately recede into an infinitesimal particularity.

What made such a discourse inevitable according to Hazlitt was not a conceptual consideration, but the power behind abstraction, namely the faculty of imagination. Working behind the *Essay*'s philosophical argument for disinterested action is an epistemologically indifferent rhetoric of power. As Hazlitt maintains: 'The direct primary motive, or impulse which determines the mind to the volition of any thing must therefore in all cases depend on the *idea* of that thing as conceived of by the imagination, and on the idea solely. For the thing itself is a non-entity.' Hazlitt's concealed quarrel, ostensibly with the philosophical egoist, is with philosophical argument itself, whose discourse of 'knowledge first' the power of imagination impeaches. Yet that this process stops for the moment at arraignment rather than conviction is due to the fact that Hazlitt felt unable to challenge the dualisms (word/object; idea/thing; value/fact) upon which epistemological enquiry, and empiricism in particular, had traditionally rested. Consequently, the cause of scepticism, namely the foundationalist concern with the relation of the mind's representations of the world to the world itself, is not viewed as a worn-out metaphor, but remains a problem, a puzzle, as he admits in 'Remarks on the Systems of Hartley and Helvetius':

> I never could make much of the subject of real relations in nature [...] they cannot exist in nature after the same manner that they exist in the human mind. The forms of things in nature are manifold; they only become one by being united in the same common principle of thought. The relations of the things themselves as they exist separately and by themselves must therefore be very different from their relations as perceived by the mind where they have an immediate communication with each other.[46]

Hazlitt's position is neither that of the analytic or transcendental philosopher, confident that scepticism (and its ethical cousin, egoism) can be eliminated conceptually, nor that of the naturalist or deconstructionist, both of whom remain sceptical about scepticism's own foundationalist presumptions. At one point in the *Essay*, indeed, he dismisses Humean-naturalistic accounts of the 'habit' of moral reasoning with a telling appeal to grounds, claiming that '[w]hatever the force of habit may be, however subtle and universal its influence, it is not every thing, not even the principal thing. Before we plant, it is proper to know the nature of the soil [...]'.[47] Instead, Hazlitt's theory of abstraction and his account of practical reason adumbrated in the *Essay* resort to the notion of an imagination which itself comes to test the very status of the argument in which it figures, as epistemic (and by implication, moral) *justification* is pressurized by *power*. At the same time, the antifoundationalist potential

of this strategy undermined by Hazlitt's concurrent need to keep knowledge as correspondence, that is, as a relationship (even an inscrutable one) between 'real relations in nature' and 'relations as perceived by the mind', a centred concern. Unable to put 'truth' to rest once and for all, the question which remained, and was to worry Hazlitt in the future, was: given that we create the object, or the idea of the object, is *power* the only ground whereby we are entitled to affirm this object as *true*, or, with regard to moral judgement, as *binding* for all human subjects?

From an early stage Hazlitt's experience as a painter gave him a very individual perspective on this dilemma. Indeed, it has been argued that it is this which forms the immediate background for the theory of abstraction itself.[48] It is certainly clear that any examination of Hazlitt's attempt to make a philosophical example of painting should be alive to how it functions in his effort to steer his theory of abstraction between an epistemologically uneasy projectivism and an ontology of power indifferent to the claims of knowledge and truth. As will be seen below, in his more 'cognitive' moments Hazlitt often attempts to escape from this dilemma by experimenting with concepts such as moral or 'imaginative' truth, but many of his observations on painting themselves seem to suggest an alternative way of approaching the problem of how the mind's projections might be 'true' as well as powerful.

Among the most provoking of these is a comment made in the course of the continuing article of his review of 'Madame de Staël's Account of German Philosophy and Literature' for *The Morning Chronicle* in 1814. In this, he repeats his central claim that as '[a]ll particular things consist of, and even lead to, an infinite number of other things [...]. Abstraction is therefore a necessary consequence of the limitation of the comprehensive faculty [...].'[49] To support this claim, however, he then suggests a practical example: in effect, he argues that the bare fact that very few people are capable of rendering the likeness of a close friend in the form of a drawing or a painting does not mean that they do not *know* what that person looks like; merely that their knowledge of his or her appearance is necessarily confined to generalities, and not particular points:

> Let any one, who is not an artist, or let any one who is, attempt to give an outline from memory of the features of his most intimate friend, and he will feel the truth of this remark. Yet though he does not know the exact turn of any one feature, he will instantly, and without fail, recognise the person the moment he meets him in the street, and that often, merely from catching a glimpse of some part of his dress, or from peculiarity of motion, though he may be quite at a

loss to define in what this peculiarity consists, or to account for its impression on him.[50]

Even the successful sculptor or painter, Hazlitt believes, will never retain the perfect set of particulars which combine to form their subject – and this, indeed, is the direct consequence of the fact that, *qua* objects of perception, '[a]ll particulars are nothing but generals [. . .]'.[51]

In this analogy Hazlitt appears to be making a point about knowledge in general, along the lines that to have a full or complete representation of the appearance of an object is not a necessary condition of having *knowledge* of the appearance of that object. This is, in turn, quite in step with Hazlitt's general theory of abstraction. However, it also contains an equivocation, represented by the following positions: (a) that as a matter of psychological fact, all our knowledge is circumscribed by a process of abstraction, though it is quite conceivable that, in another world, or in elevated beings (such as artists, who *are* able to render likenesses) such limitation might not obtain; (b) that our very concept or understanding of what knowledge is, presupposes as its condition a limitation and generality of this very kind, and that without it, speculation about possible objects of 'knowledge' is meaningless. Hazlitt appears to discount the first possibility, inasmuch as he makes it clear that even painters and sculptors are not immune to the condition of abstraction. But to end the matter here would be to allow the metaphor to lead the argument too far: the equivocation still remains; an equivocation which lies between making a statement about '*all our* knowledge' and one about the concept of 'knowledge'. The first is an empirical, the second, a transcendental argument.

This is an important matter: at its heart lies the question, does it make *sense* to talk of having a full, empirically given representation of an object? To Kant, for example, the inconceivability of this meant that an element of the structure of the object itself must be a product of our consciousness. But Hazlitt does not disallow in *principle* that the human mind might receive a complete empirical representation of the object. Indeed, upon closer inspection his argument looks more like an empirical one. This is already suggested by his painting analogy: as a matter of fact, most of us cannot paint realistic or representational portraits – but this remains a matter of fact, as some of us can paint realistically. Consequently, the impossibility of an absolute representation is just a factual impossibility. Unlike Kant, Hazlitt does not consider it to be a necesary condition of the very possibility of knowledge that it be considered as bounded by

the conditions of abstraction: he merely thinks that abstraction forms the centre and circumference of *our* knowledge, which is different. The grounds of knowledge remain factual, not conceptual.

Consequently, when he sits down at his desk to write about knowledge, Hazlitt is prone to think as a representationalist and an empiricist, because he approaches the problem in terms of how the mind can *receive* the object; not of how objects might be suited to the mind, as Kant did, or of how power or language structure thought, as much modern thought does. If, as a matter of fact, the mind cannot receive the object as a unity, then (he infers) it must have a role in forming that knowledge itself. But the legislative process moves 'inwards', not 'outwards'. The mind has no *epistemic* authority in this: its role is that of forming the necessary fictions of abstraction. If one were finally to ask, where is reality located, in its simplest form?, Hazlitt, doubtless with some resistance, would have to answer: 'out there'; that is, in the object. The analogy from painting indeed demonstrates the *fact* of our cognitive reliance upon abstraction, but does not relieve Hazlitt's ongoing problem of how the mind can be said legitimately to 'ground' itself. This is fundamental to the tension in Hazlitt's thought: the object must be mastered, but there is no *a priori* basis for the veracity of the mind's projection. Unable exhaustively to dissolve the object/subject duality, the mind's power, even as it is exercised, is curtailed, and knowledge is marked as incomplete, vague, phenomenal: bordered not by the veil of logically possible sense-experience, but that of psychologically possible sense-experience.

REASONING IMAGINATION AND PRODUCTIVE UNDERSTANDING

In the absence of an alternative to empiricism's principle of truth, Hazlitt often postulates the existence of a faculty, the function of which is to act as a site of restitution. Such a faculty, it is imagined, will simultaneously satisfy the Unitarian in Hazlitt by carrying out the productive synthesis which makes moral reasoning and disinterested action possible, as well as the harrassed epistemologist in him who still retains a concern that such creativity might never be lawful; that the mind cannot be trusted to give the rule to itself in terms of either its knowledge or its practical decisions. It is notable that Hazlitt's opinions on the functions of the faculties, though not particularly stable to begin with, undergo a discernible change between his earlier, epistemologically preoccupied work, and his later, more indifferent positions. This alteration, moreover, roughly corresponds to the closure of the more ambitious philosophical projects of

his twenties, and the professional criticism and art theory of subsequent years.

Indeed, the only constant elements of Hazlitt's views on this subject are that reason is never *purely* logical in its operations, and imagination is never simply productive. Understanding is the most unstable of the faculties in this respect, and figures prominently in his early attempts to strike a balance between creation, or productive synthesis, and factual truth. Accordingly, as he becomes less concerned with this problem later (though it never leaves him), the understanding gradually drops from view to be replaced by a dichotomy of imagination and reason. Yet it was by twinning these very faculties that Hazlitt had set about resolving the problem in the *Essay*, in which he advises the reader that 'I do not use the word *imagination* as contradistinguished from or opposed to reason, or the faculty by which we reflect upon and compare our ideas, but as opposed to sensation, or memory.' It is thus the 'reasoning imagination' which is 'the immediate spring *and guide* of action'.[52] In other words, it is the harmony of imagination and reason, which, at this stage, guarantees the lawfulness of the mind's spontaneity in action. This, of course, explains everything rather too neatly; a fact which Hazlitt himself comes to realize. By placing imagination at such an extreme remove from sensation, and so close to reason, he makes the question of the mind's receptivity problematic.

Accordingly, in the 1809 'Prospectus of a History of English Philosophy,' and in the *Lectures on English Philosophy* three years later, understanding assumes a greater importance, replacing the rather clumsily assembled 'reasoning imagination.' It is at once productive, in that '[i]deas are the offspring of the understanding',[53] and regulative; a 'superintending faculty, which alone perceives the relations of things'.[54] The simultaneously synthetic and reflexive nature of understanding is the foundation upon which Hazlitt bases his declaration that the '*mind alone is formative*' – a phrase which he attributes to Kant, probably with the encouragement of A. F. M. Willich's rather ropy exposition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in his *Elements of the Critical Philosophy*.[55] This proposition, which Hazlitt first used in his Preface to Tucker, in turn becomes one of his favourite philosophical catchphrases, and a model premise for his attempts to articulate the mind's activity.[56] Reason, meanwhile, had increasingly become identified with judgement and pure logic. In the lecture on Locke, it is given as the 'property of the understanding, by which certain judgements naturally follow certain perceptions,' or 'nothing but the understanding acting by rule or necessity'.[57] However,

these accounts do not sit easily together. If *all* our ideas are abstract because of the self-affirming productivity of the understanding, then what is the origin of the putative 'rules' of reason – and most saliently, their 'necessity'? Is it the case that understanding guarantees knowledge by legislating for itself (which is the cornerstone of the theory of abstraction), or is understanding itself answerable to a set of supersensible laws cognizable only by reason? The fourth proposition of the Prospectus is '[t]hat reason is a distinct source of knowledge or inlet of truth, over and above *experience*.'[58] The implication of these remarks is that reason is receiving its validation from something other than itself.

Of course, Hazlitt did not intend to overturn empiricism simply to install a hegemony of reason in its place: it is rather that in struggling to free himself from the language of empiricism, he experimented with faculties which might not be directly answerable to sense-experience. From the perspective of his underlying correspondence theory of perception, however, such notions threatened to deprive knowledge of its foundations. As he began to relinquish the entire project of a foundational epistemology, and the vision of a reconciliation between a republican understanding and an aristocratic imagination receded, Hazlitt developed a more equanimous attitude to the possibility that there might actually be no solution to the problem of knowledge: that the unfortunate fact might be just that, as human beings, we were split between two natures; one driven by truth, the other by power. It is in this spirit that he was to write in *The Examiner* in 1815, in an article entitled 'Mind and Motive', that '[w]e are the creatures of imagination, passion and self-will, more than of reason or even of self-interest'.[59] It also forms the grounds for his criticism of Coleridge in the *Edinburgh Review* two years later:

> Reason and imagination are both excellent things; but perhaps their provinces ought to be kept more distinct than they have lately been. 'Poets have such seething brains,' that they are disposed to meddle with every thing, and mar all. Mr C., with great talents, has, by an ambition to be every thing, become nothing. His metaphysics have been a dead weight on the wings of his imagination – while his imagination has run away with his reason and common sense.[60]

Roy Park argues that this anti-rational turn represents Hazlitt's 'experiential' solution to a difficult contemporary epistemological problem.[61] However, though this aptly characterizes an aspect of Hazlitt's thought which becomes increasingly central in his later work, there is evidence that he was never entirely comfortable with this settlement. A deep tension between knowledge and indifference remained in his work to the end of his career. This is particularly notable in the way he

approaches the perennial question of the proper function and status of reason. In the 1830 article on 'Prejudice' for *The Atlas*, for instance, he is prepared to take a naturalistic, non-cognitive line, holding that there is not the gulf between reason and prejudice that has commonly been supposed, and that 'custom, passion, imagination, insinuate themselves into and influence almost every judgement we pass or sentiment we indulge, and are a necessary help (as well as a hindrance) to the human understanding [...].'[62] In the 1826 essay 'On Reason and Imagination', however, while maintaining as usual that '[p]assion [...] is the essence, the chief ingredient in moral truth,' he insists that 'logical reason and practical truth are *disparates* [...].'[63] Then again, in 1821, in 'On Genius and Common Sense', he had achieved something approaching a compromise, granting reason a limited but non-legislative jurisdiction over experience, or 'common sense', rather like a dignified but disempowered upper chamber: for though '[b]y ingrafting reason on feeling, we "make assurance double sure",' he argues, 'reason, not employed to interpret nature, and to improve and perfect common sense and experience, is, for the most part, a building without a foundation [...].'[64] What one witnesses in all this intensive negotiation between the faculties is Hazlitt's attempt to shore up the very hierarchies and epistemologically reassuring dualisms presupposed by an empirical philosophy which his own radical theory of abstraction, by challenging the boundaries between particularity and generalization, imagination and reason, undermines.

Before his doubt about the epistemological enterprise had deepened, Hazlitt's main objective had been to demonstrate how the key to truth lay in the intimacy of the faculties, and their subordination to one 'elastic power'. 'The mind', he declared, 'is not so loosely constructed, as that the different parts can disengage themselves at will from the rest of the system, and follow their own separate impulses. It is governed by many different springs united together, and acting in subordination to the same conscious power.'[65] Yet his hope of elucidating this faded as it became evident that his ambitions in this respect outstripped, not so much his abilities as a thinker, but the capabilities of the philosophical instruments which were at his disposal. Nonetheless, one of these tools – the appeal to common sense – he used frequently enough to merit further attention.

PERCEPTION AND COMMON SENSE

In many ways, Hazlitt's defence of commonsensism might seem something of a paradox. Reid had indeed argued that the mind played an active role in knowledge, but it was for him a necessary condition of it

doing so that our knowledge of objects was immediate, given partly by an affective power in the object, and partly by corresponding 'simple and original, and therefore inexplicable acts of the mind', which were in turn governed by unalterable dispositions in human nature.[66] He accordingly dismisses '*the ideal system*' as it runs from Descartes to Hume, for misguidedly assuming from the outset that all our knowledge is confined to representations of reality, or ideas. This premise has an 'original defect; that [...] scepticism is inlaid in it [...].'[67] With this in mind, it seems plain that the meaning which Hazlitt attaches to 'common sense' is not that of Reid. Indeed, though his aims are broadly similar – in particular, the defeat of scepticism – the route he takes in pursuit of their fulfilment, through the theory of abstract ideas, could not be more divergent from Reid's. While for Reid the postulation of a 'common' sense negates the necessity (and therefore the existence) of ideas, Hazlitt founds all knowledge upon ideas of the most general kind.

Given this, the question arises as to what conception of common sense Hazlitt does entertain, and how he imagines it might reinforce the argument from abstraction. A relatively early indicator is provided by the Preface to Tucker. Here, common sense signifies the inarticulate feeling for that field of objects; the range of 'minute differences and perplexing irregularities', which lies beyond abstraction and the 'moulds of the understanding'. A failure to treat knowledge as circumscribed by this 'defect of comprehension' – that is, by accepting abstraction as the limit of reality itself, rather than just of knowledge – is, then, to be lacking in common sense. It is to be 'like a person who should deprive himself of the use of his eye-sight, in order that he might be able to grope his way better in the dark!'[68] This defence of common sense, however, harbours a familiar ambiguity, namely, between a psychological and a transcendental mode of argument. Hazlitt's epistemological problem is to account for those noumenal 'minute differences' within a purely descriptive psychological method in which such the drawing of such a boundary might seem an unwarranted *a priori* hypothesis. Kant notoriously ran into similar problems by running a psychological argument concerning the nature of the faculties into a transcendental argument about the conceptual conditions of experience, thereby translating an account of what is conceivable into one of what kind of things *exist*. This in turn provoked Jacobi's celebrated attack on the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*'s postulation of noumenal entities.[69] Hazlitt's position, however, is at once more invidious and more advanced. For the very absence of any prospect of a transcendental third way in his thought

draws him towards the more radical discourse of a kind of knowing not-knowing comparable to Jacobian faith, which somehow communicates with the dark presence of being. As ineffable, common sense provides a feeling for that which is beyond the reach of sense; but as a 'sense', it has, it is suggested, at least a quasi-cognitive status. However, Hazlitt's simile – whereby the operation of common sense and over-abstraction are compared, respectively, to that of normal human sight and blindness when under identical conditions of utter darkness – is an ambivalent one. For though the blind man is certainly lacking *something*, it is still true that he has no less *knowledge* of what is around him than the man who has sight. It is this 'something' towards which Hazlitt gestures, but for which he does not account.

It is noticeable that in this later work the creative processes which Hazlitt had previously identified as responsible for abstraction seem to have slipped from the picture. Instead, abstraction in this instance is chained to reason, and not the idea-producing understanding of the 1807 'Prospectus'. Indeed, its current function seems more one of limitation than projection, and while there is nothing inconsistent in this, strictly speaking (for Hazlitt's projectivism implies epistemic boundaries), the shift of emphasis is striking. There are important reasons for this modification, and the emergence of the concept of common sense, as used by Hazlitt, can be seen to be a product of underlying points of stress in his position. In Hazlitt's early account, it will be recalled, abstraction is the mind's projection of finitude upon an infinite, plural world. There could, he argued, be no knowledge without this mental activity. From this, he inferred that because the resulting knowledge was necessarily general, or vague, it must be connected with, or even determined by *feeling*. The particular, meanwhile, was not cognizable. But because particular things existed in the same world which formed the object of our perceptions, there was nothing about the nature of experience *per se* which rendered them imperceptible: it was just a matter of fact that, as limited human beings, they were beyond our grasp. Thus, there is always the suggestion in Hazlitt's work that common sense might compensate the abstracting mind for its loss of knowledge: it comes to represent, in a sense, the direct voice of Jacobian 'feeling' which grounds abstraction itself. This in turn opens up opportunities for accounting for the operations of artistic genius.

The roots of Hazlitt's recourse to common sense lie in the bluntness of his theory of abstraction, a theory, it has been noted, which leads him to reject the notion of perception as a relation between conceptual scheme

and 'given' raw data. Its comprehensiveness is such that Hazlitt does not feel it necessary to make qualitative distinctions within knowledge itself; most significantly, between what is projected, and what is 'given', or (as Kant would have put it) between concepts and sensations. The result of this is that the object itself seems to vanish, as the boundaries between what is projected and what is received are blurred. To this extent, Hazlitt rejects the foundationalist version of 'knowledge' as he had inherited it from British eighteenth-century epistemology. In this light, indeed, the mind seems in principle to have no limits to what it can create.

However, the epistemologist in Hazlitt remained concerned that abstraction fails to justify its own limitation of knowledge on anything other than factual grounds. Unlike Coleridge, who, thanks to Kant, felt able to rest knowledge on grounds which were transcendental in nature, Hazlitt, having challenged the 'givenness' of perception, is left with a knowledge that can never rest. Restless, aggressive, always moving out of itself, Hazlitt's immanent idealism is naturally impatient of transcendental or conceptual curbs, and his dilemma is always one of how much of the territory it gains he is prepared to count as knowledge, given his underlying fidelity to the fundamental precept that, regardless of what consciousness works up for itself, truth *sui generis* is determined by the correspondence of (or even the confrontation between) mental phenomena and actual states of affairs in the world. In this delicate and often precarious balancing act, common sense increasingly takes on the role of arbiter between the demands of empirical knowledge and the mind's sheer power. Common sense is, as he puts it in his *Atlas* essay of 1829, 'a kind of mental instinct, that feels the air of truth and propriety as the fingers feel objects of touch', the province of which is 'that mass of knowledge [...] which lies between the extremes of positive proof or demonstration and downright ignorance [...]'.[70] Even common sense, however, was not always sufficient to prevent Hazlitt's theory of power from eclipsing his epistemological concerns. One of the main factors which ensured this was his difficult relationship with the theory of association.

ASSOCIATION AND INSTINCTIVE PERCEPTION

In 'On Genius and Common Sense', Hazlitt states that as common sense underlies genius and taste, 'all that is meant by feeling or common sense' by turn 'is nothing but the different cases of the association of ideas [...]'. Thus, artistic expression itself 'is got at solely by *feeling*, that is, on the principle of the association of ideas [...]'.[71] Hazlitt thereby

grounds genius in a principle of psychology which allows for a degree of liberty in its operations without either making it answerable to the demands of knowledge, or (which he saw as the same thing) reducing it to abstract rules. However, if Hazlitt appears happy to place association at the centre of his indifferentist theory of art and genius, he had in his earlier work been far less comfortable with its implications for his theory of knowledge. The problem which confronted him, as so often, was one which he inherited from Hume: if (as Hazlitt claims) all knowledge is abstract, that is, based upon ideas, and (as Hume claims) the association of ideas is a fact, then how can one be sure that the connections between ideas in, for example, judgements about relation and causality, are not merely arbitrary matters of psychological coincidence? Hume's problem is a very immediate one for Hazlitt, for it has already been seen that his own theory of abstraction prevents him from taking Reid's common sense route around it.

Consequently, Hazlitt's early epistemological position on association is one of firm opposition. In the 'Prospectus', he asserts that 'the principle of association does not account for all our ideas, feelings, and actions [...]'.[72] However, though he attacks associationism, more often than not the target of his arguments is Hartley. This is significant, as Hartley's theory, though the most extreme, was only one among a number of versions of associationism in circulation at the time. Crucially, Hartley's theory is epistemological, and not merely psychological. In other words, it argues that association is logically prior, and not subsequent to, perception itself. This position is in turn best read as a modification of Hume, who had declared in the *Treatise* that the 'uniting principle among ideas is not to be consider'd as an inseparable connexion'; but only as 'a gentle force, which commonly prevails' among ideas, adding that 'the qualities, from which this association arises, and by which the mind is after this manner convey'd from one idea to another, are three, *viz*. Resemblance, Contiguity in time or place, and Cause and Effect'.[73] Hartley, however, claims that the principle of contiguity is primary, distinguishing within this quality two further categories: namely, synchronous, and successive association.[74] By making the principle of association primarily a temporal one, Hartley both negates any notion of the mind's own activity being integral to knowledge, and increases the element of randomness in association itself. Additionally, he hitches his theory to a thoroughgoing materialism which, despite his protests, renders it even more deterministic than it might have been otherwise. Given this, when examining Hazlitt's assaults upon Hartleian associationism, it should

be borne in mind that the theory of association in its broadest form is not necessarily sceptical, materialistic, or deterministic. Nonetheless, it is these very attributes to which Hazlitt objects the most.

Hazlitt has five main criticisms of this kind of associationism. In the first place, association is contingent, or arbitrary: as he puts it in the 'Remarks', a matter of 'mere accident'[75] which cannot account for the strength which some ideas have over others. Consequently, Hartley's associationism seems to lead either to scepticism about the validity of the connection of ideas, or assumes some other, non-temporal principle of connection. This leads to the second objection; namely, that association is self-defeating, for it is 'an express contradiction to suppose that association is either the only mode of operation of the human mind, or that it is the primary and most general principle of thought and action [. . .]'. The reason for this is that the very act of association of two individual ideas for Hazlitt already presupposes 'some common principle of thought, the same comparing power being exerted upon both [. . .]'.[76] Moreover, he argues in the *Essay* that it does not even explain those psychological phenomena which it is supposed to cover, such as the effects of habit. On the contrary, it is 'a gross mistake to consider all habit as necessarily depending on association of ideas [. . .]'.[77] The result of these limitations form Hazlitt's fourth charge: that association is completely inadequate to explain the nature of consciousness or relation; a task which only the 'intellectual philosophy' is equal to. He alleges in the 'Remarks', that the dictum '*to feel is to think*, *"sentir est penser"*' – an axiom with which he agrees – is unsustainable on an associationist scheme: 'the aggregate of many actual sensations is [. . .] a totally different thing, from the collective idea, comprehension, or *consciousness* of those sensations as many things, or of any of their relations to each other [. . .]'.[78] Finally, and in an important respect most damningly, Hazlitt sees Hartley as disempowering the mind at the expense of the object:

> [Upon reading Hartley] I am somehow wedged in between different rows of material objects, overpowering me by their throng, and from which I have no power to escape, but of which I neither know nor understand any thing. I constantly see objects multiplied upon me, not powers at work, I know no reason why one thing follows another [. . .] he always reasons from the concrete object, not from the abstract or essential properties of things [. . .].[79]

Importantly, Hazlitt continues to see knowledge as a struggle or confrontation between two entities called subject and object. Particularly noticeable in this passage is the emphasis upon the materiality of

Hartley's notion of the object: Hazlitt had complained earlier that he 'is always the physiologist rather than the metaphysician'.[80] Yet Hartley's real concession to the object is epistemological: it lies not in his undoubted materialism, but in his commitment to empiricism, and it is against this that Hazlitt is really reacting.

It was Tucker, however, who seemed to Hazlitt to hold out the possibility of redemption for the associative imagination. In *The Light of Nature Pursued*, Tucker had inflated the function of the imagination in order to support his thesis that it plays a role equal with understanding in the formation of knowledge; that the two 'go hand in hand co-operating in the same work'.[81] A 'receptacle of images', the imagination is the 'medium by whose ministry [... the will] obtains what it wants',[82] and is thus operative in the active, reflective process in which association consists: '[w]hatever knowledge we receive from sensation, or fall upon by experience, or grow into by habit and custom, may be counted the produce of imagination [...]'.[83] Most significantly, however, Tucker extended Hartley's notion of the *coalescence* of ideas in association. Though Hartley had designated this as 'the highest Kind of Induction', and as amounting to a perfect coincidence of ideas, he had claimed that it 'takes place only in Mathematics'.[84] Tucker extended the idea to denote the production of *new* ideas in perception generally, whereby 'a compound may have properties resulting from the composition [of ideas] which do not belong to the parts singly whereof it consists'.[85] This regulation of association encouraged Hazlitt to declare, in the essay 'On Reason and the Imagination', that because '[t]he imagination is an *associating* principle [... it] has an instinctive perception when a thing belongs to a system, or is only an exception to it'.[86] However, it is in this same essay that Hazlitt draws a very rigid distinction between 'logical reason and practical truth'.[87] Thus, while Tucker's commitment to imagination as a legitimate power in knowledge compels him to resort, rather apologetically, to the same and 'so much used distinction between absolute and moral certainty'[88] in his examination of judgement, Hazlitt's championing of 'moral truth' is much more aggressive. 'What does not touch the heart, or come home to the feelings', he asserts, 'goes comparatively for little or nothing.'[89]

Though at this point, the notion of the 'instinctive perception' of imagination seemed to Hazlitt to be an effective way of retaining the epistemic credibility of associative imagination, it harbours the same ambivalence as his notion of common sense. Even in non-epistemological theories of association such as Tucker's, the pull of idea-empiricism remains the

same: once you advance from the bare representation by association or any other agency of the subject, you move away from the object as it is in itself. Yet the central tenet of contemporary epistemology was that it was only through correspondence to an empirical object that an idea has any truth-status. In this light, both Tucker's reluctant, and Hazlitt's more enthusiastic resort to the notion of 'moral' certainty still signal a concession to the empiricist.

There are indeed times when Hazlitt seems on the verge of relinquishing entirely the epistemological endeavour to determine a demonstrable foundation for truth which neither collapsed into empiricism, nor rested upon the rather vague notions of feeling, common sense, or the instinctive perception of association. Instead, the indeterminacy built into these ideas became a virtue, as he came to see them as indicative of a dimension of human existence which was itself beyond knowing. This brings us to Hazlitt's later use of association to articulate his non-cognitive notion of artistic originality, in the 1830 *Atlas* essay 'Originality', as 'little more than the fertility of a teeming brain – that is, than the number and quantity of associations present to his mind [. . .].'[90] As his attention turned towards this field, questions of epistemology came to be marginalized by those concerning the production and criticism of art.

INNATISM AND THE POWER PRINCIPLE

Up to now, most of the discussion has concentrated upon the theory of abstraction and its adjuncts in Hazlitt's work – such as common sense and associationism – as the means by which he strove to solve the riddle of finding an alternative to empiricism's principle of truth compatible with his vision of the mind's creativity and human capacity for moral disinterestedness. Moreover, it has been noted how his advocacy of a new, immanent idealism whereby the mind was assumed to make its own truth gradually caused Hazlitt's speculations to take on an increasingly ontological turn, with increasing emphasis on the idea of unconditioned power. The function of this notion in Hazlitt's thought requires further examination. Hazlitt's ambivalence over whether power might prove to be of benefit to a theory of knowledge, or whether it should be installed at the core of an epistemically decentred metaphysics of the human mind, is a product of his struggle to escape empiricism when *epistemologically* he had nowhere else to go. In more general terms, then, Hazlitt's dilemma translates as the question: is the concept of power flexible enough to

ground knowledge without eclipsing it entirely, or must power remain as a distinct but dominant force which was needed to counteract the dessicating effects of excessive analysis? Could it even present a new way of approaching reality which might actually replace philosophy's notion of 'knowledge'?

Hazlitt often seems to be a positivist about the first question, apparently persuaded that through the notion of *power* he can achieve a number of epistemological objectives. The first of these is to free the mind from the determination of sensation and (thereby, he infers) matter. It has already been seen how one of his main objections to Hartley was that he disempowered the mind itself in favour of the object; or, to be precise, the empirical object, which Hazlitt classifies as 'material'. As a consequence of this, he concludes that the most effective way of opposing Hartley is through some kind of anti-materialist position. Metaphysical idealism and epistemological argument thus become allies: in the 'Prospectus', he argues that '[t]he mind has laws, powers, and principles of its own, and is not the mere puppet of matter'. Elsewhere, a separate argument of Hazlitt's is that it is the *power* of the understanding that produces ideas; that forms the moulds for knowledge. Again, in the 'Prospectus', abstraction itself is seen as a 'power', by virtue of the fact that '[i]deas are the offspring of the understanding, not of the senses [...].'[91] It is this same 'power of mind' by which, in the *Essay*, it had been proposed that the moral agent may engage sympathetically with the pain or pleasure of another.[92]

The question as to the *sense* in which imagination or understanding was to be considered as a kind of projecting power which is innate with the mind was one of which Hazlitt was acutely aware. He was very sensitive to the possible suspicion that by questioning empiricism, he was merely looking back wistfully to philosophy before Locke. Thus, in his lecture on Locke's *Essay*, though he complains that Locke's 'bad simile' of the mind as being like a blank sheet of paper distorts the true nature of understanding, he is careful to add nonetheless that it is 'true as far as relates to innate ideas [...]'.[93] The point, he argues, is that, though clearly not a reservoir of innate ideas, the understanding is an innate *power* of mind for producing ideas:

> the supposing the understanding to be a distinct faculty of the mind no more proves our ideas to be innate, than the allowing perception to be a distinct original faculty of the mind, which everybody does, proves that there must be innate sensations. These two positions have, however, been sometimes considered as convertible by the partisans on both sides of the question [...].[94]

Hazlitt is on firmer ground here. Later, he criticizes Locke for failing to distinguish adequately 'between two things which I cannot very well express otherwise than by a turn of words, namely, an innate knowledge of principles, and innate principles of knowledge. His arguments seem to me conclusive against the one, but not against the other [...].' He even appeals to the authority of Leibniz in this, assuming that the German philosopher's doctrine of 'pre-established harmony between its innate faculties and its acquired ideas, implied in the essence of the mind itself' supports his own thesis.[95] As a point scored against Locke, this is fair enough, but Hazlitt has yet to demonstrate how, without innate knowledge, we can know just what these principles are. Without such an account, we are returned to the position of the common sense man in the dark from the Preface to Tucker: in possession of perfect eyesight, he is yet no more able to avoid 'groping' around in the dark than his (physically) blind companion. Similarly, if Hazlitt is followed, we may suppose that we *have* sound principles of knowledge, but we are at a loss to discern their precise character. Ours is an unknowing knowing.

Hazlitt's various attempts to overcome this impasse – which include the use of a variant of common sense theory – have already been discussed. The tenth proposition of the 'Prospectus', however, makes a simpler suggestion: that we have an immediate perception of power, merely through the exercising of it: '[w]e do not get this idea [of power] from the outward changes which take place in matter, but from the exertion of it in ourselves. Whoever has stretched out his hand to an object must have had the feeling of power [...]'.[96] Hazlitt's framing of the notion of intuitive or unmediated knowledge of power by making it neither wholly mediate nor immediate, and attributing it instead to 'feeling', goes beyond foundationalism and opens up the possibility of a relationship of person and world which is not grounded in 'knowing'.[97] At the same time, it threatens to undermine the very theory of abstraction which power is supposed to ground, and which confines all knowledge to *ideas*. Hazlitt, however, thought that he could square this circle by appealing to Kant.

Hazlitt's view of the German philosopher was prone to change. In the Preface to Tucker, though with a little hesitation, he approves of Kant's position (as he sees it) in that it 'takes for granted the common notions prevalent among mankind, and then endeavours to explain them; or to shew their foundation in nature, and the universal relations of things', and thereby reverses the mechanical and sceptical trend initiated by Locke.[98] This rather loose characterization encourages him to miscast Tucker himself as a 'truant' from Lockeanism and a fellow-traveller with

Kant, insofar as 'he believed with professor Kant in the unity of consciousness, or "that the mind alone is formative", that fundamental article of the *transcendental* creed; in the immateriality of the soul, etc.'[99] Later, in the 1814 *Morning Chronicle* article on Madame de Staël, he claims that Kant's system is built upon ' "the *sublime* restriction (as Madame de Staël expresses it) added by Leibnitz to the well-known axiom *nihil in intellectu quod non prius in sensu* – NISI INTELLECTUS IPSE." ' With this understanding of Kant, and with Willich apparently by his elbow, it is not surprising that he finds 'Kant's notions *a priori*' a little puzzling, and 'little better than the innate ideas of the schools'. Moreover, he seems baffled by the German's method: 'Kant does not appear to trouble himself about the evidence of any particular proposition', with the result that 'logical proof is wanting' in his argument.[100]

In this light, one does not need to debate the dubious provenance of the notorious *Edinburgh Review* savaging of Kant's system, a few years subsequently, as 'the most wilful and monstrous absurdity that ever was invented' to see that Hazlitt's sympathy for the critical philosophy did not stretch much further than his understanding of it.[101] The point, however, is not that Hazlitt failed to grasp the originality and significance of transcendental method – it is doubtful whether anyone in Britain at the time did, including Coleridge – but that by mistaking Kant variously as a kindred spirit with Tucker, a neo-Leibnizian, and finally an innatist, it is evident that his idealistic posture is that of a rebellious empiricist. The most important objection to Kant in the *Morning Chronicle* article, it should be recalled, is that he does not allow that 'ideas are the result of the *action of objects* on such and such faculties of the mind [...]'.[102] To Hazlitt, Kant's suggestion that the foundations of knowledge were *a priori* and conceptual in character sounds too much like old-fashioned innatism. Human creation aside, knowledge is still bound by empirical laws, insofar as truth remains a function of the extent to which the mind's representations correspond to a given object.[103]

ART AND ORIGINALITY

As the contest between knowledge and indifference shapes Hazlitt's moral theory, so it lies behind the ambivalence of his writings on art and aesthetics. Here, however, Hazlitt, like Wordsworth and Coleridge, is more confident about challenging the jurisdiction of knowledge with art.[104] At the centre of this issue, as so often, is the relation between person and world implied by the English Romantic construction of human

creativity. As Roy Park observes, the state of philosophy in England at the time meant that '[f]ew were prepared to speculate at any length in epistemological terms on a theory of the creative nature of the human mind'.[105] The preceding discussions have offered an insight as to why this particular kind of indifference took root in England. It wasn't merely that in the absence of an emphatic and convincing refutation of Hume, philosophy had settled for a less ambitious naturalism. Instead, Romantic creation theory self-consciously resisted philosophical articulation. It did not make itself available to understanding. In fact, it stood for the curtailing, perhaps even the ending of a way of looking at the world as first and foremost something which needed to be 'understood', an object of knowledge – an outlook which had only produced scepticism. Creativity in art, and at the extreme, artistic genius, represented the possibility of an engagement with reality not in thrall to notions of 'truth' and representation. In effect, while for eighteenth-century Scots such as Alexander Gerard and William Duff original genius was simply another subject towards which empirical philosophy might turn its attention, to Hazlitt, creativity and genius questioned the need for 'philosophy' as such.

In significant respects, Hazlitt's notion of creative genius is already contained in the theory of practical reason outlined in the *Essay*: that is, in the idea of a projective power innate in all human beings which transcends empirical determination and empowers the agent to furnish the rule for his or her own conduct. Indeed, generally speaking Hazlitt does not accept that the artistic genius is an entirely different creature from most other people: merely that he possesses certain common characteristics to an unusual or exaggerated degree. There are exceptions to this, such as Shakespeare, but such instances represent a level of autonomy and elevated achievement so rare as almost to be beyond the account of theory entirely. As Natarajan argues, the anomaly of Shakespeare's self-negating, 'protean' genius within Hazlitt's broader theory of genius as the exertion of a powerful ego disappears if the latter is seen as 'the glorious exception to that theory, not its rule'.[106]

For Hazlitt, Genius's close affinity with common sense means that it has the kind of quasi-cognitive status which he also attributed to the moral imagination. In 'On Genius and Common Sense', having based common sense upon association, Hazlitt declares that both genius and taste 'depend upon much the same principle exercised on loftier ground and in more unusual combinations [...]'.[107] But whereas with the moral autonomy of mind outlined in the *Essay* Hazlitt had found it extremely

difficult to legitimize the mind's power, in aesthetics he is happy to characterize the products of artistic genius as manifestations of a preponderance of power over reason; a worthy bias of mind, which, expressing nature's own power, projects itself by force of passion upon the object it perceives. Typical of this attitude is his criticism of Pope in an 1818 *Edinburgh Magazine* essay. Pope was certainly not a *great* poet, Hazlitt maintains, in that he was too objective: the bent of his mind lay 'in representing things as they appear to the indifferent observer, stripped of prejudice and passion [...]'.[108] Thus construed, genius is free from conscious deliberation: a few years later, in 'The Indian Jugglers' Hazlitt distinguishes talent from genius 'as voluntary differs from involuntary power'.[109]

Yet there remained the persistent foundationalist worry: how is it possible for genius legitimately to set its own rules; that is, create the very values by which it is to be judged? Without this, genius appears either as a talent for achieving predetermined ends, or an ability to carry out any complex and difficult task without conscious effort – a facility which might be true of the expert egg-and-spoon racer as well as the juggler and the artist. Hazlitt, sensitive to this, is careful not to make gusto a sufficient condition of genius or artistic value. Genius does, indeed, have a privileged access to reality, but only inasmuch as it has its foundation in the same feeling or common sense as the process of abstraction. Thus, though art depends upon feeling, and is divorced from reason, it is no less valid in its own right: indeed, it has a more immediate connection to the power of nature which determines rational truth. 'Shall we say', he asks in 'On Genius and Common Sense', 'that these impressions (the immediate stamp of nature) do not operate in a given manner till they are classified and reduced to rules, or is not the rule itself grounded upon the truth and certainty of that natural operation?' Answering this, he claims that '[r]eason is the interpreter and critic of nature and genius, not their lawgiver and judge'.[110] Hazlitt's theory of genius goes beyond Kant's, then, in that he sees it as the innate faculty whereby nature gives the rule not only to art, but also to reason. By doing this, Hazlitt effects the characteristic English Romantic strategy of overcoming foundationalism by making creation itself foundational. In this he hopes to get the best of both worlds: epistemic security is preserved, but at the same time knowledge itself is tamed, becoming a secondary sphere in human experience.

This pattern repeats itself in Hazlitt's treatment of originality. Hazlitt is emphatic that this does not signify the creation out of nothing: 'Genius or originality is, for the most part, *some strong quality in the mind, answering to and*

bringing out some new and striking quality in nature [. . .].' It is the transference of deep feeling between associations according to a principle of 'sympathy, and not by rule [. . .]'.[111] As he puts it in the later essay 'Originality', upon being presented with the endless variety of nature, 'it is in seizing on this unexplored variety, and giving some one of these new but easily recognised features, in its characteristic essence, and according to the peculiar bent and force of the artist's genius, that true originality consists.'[112] Originality is therefore opposed to abstraction: where the latter aggregates, the former particularizes and intensifies. But this kind of genius (as distinct from the more universal, protean genius of Shakespeare) is receptive, and depends upon the input of nature:

> All that we meet with in the master-pieces of taste and genius is to be found in the previous capacity of nature; and man, instead of adding to the store, or *creating* any thing either as to matter or manner, can only draw out a feeble and imperfect transcript, bit by bit [. . .]. The mind resembles a prism, which untwists the various rays of truth, and displays them by different modes and in several parcels.[113]

The claims made on behalf of original genius here are notably moderate: the mind may only draw out a 'feeble and imperfect transcript' of nature. Yet this is tempered by the simile comparing the mind to a prism, which suddenly presents the possibility that the mind might refract what it receives, without distorting it. This picture follows similar lines to Hazlitt's account of the cognitive properties of poetry in the 1818 *Lectures on the English Poets*, in which he denies that poetry is 'a mere frivolous accomplishment', claiming, like Wordsworth, that it is 'graver' than history: 'its materials lie deeper, and are spread wider [. . .]'. Admitting that poetry imitates nature, he adds that 'the imagination and the passions are a part of man's nature': thus, the language of poetry 'is not the less true to nature, because it is false in point of fact; but so much the more true and natural, if it conveys the impression which the object under the influence of passion makes on the mind'.[114]

The phrase 'not less true to nature, because it is false in point of fact' is crucial. It indicates that Hazlitt's argument, in this lecture at least, is that there is more to truth than either sense-experience or 'distinctions of the understanding'; that 'the excess of the imagination beyond the actual or ordinary impression of any object or feeling' constitutes, in itself, a third form of *knowledge*.[115] Hazlitt is attacking Hume's fact/value division, but in doing so is walking a tightrope, as elsewhere he seeks to distance art and poetry from epistemic concerns. In this light, Hazlitt's uncertainty

over the cognitive status of the productions of genius is another instance of his dilemma of where to locate 'knowledge' with respect to 'power'. Elsewhere – for instance, in *The Examiner* article 'Mind and Motive' of 1815 – he dismisses reason and self-interest altogether as principles of human nature, subordinating them to the love of power, or 'strong excitement, both in thought and action.'[116]

Thus, the value of poetry for Hazlitt lies somewhere between knowledge and the exertion of power; and that of genius, somewhere between answering faithfully to nature and commanding it. Certainly, he does not claim to see any real difference between the two positions in either of these two cases, as he does not profess that, at bottom, there is any distinction to be drawn between knowledge and power. Indeed, as he claims in the lecture 'On Poetry in General', fundamentally, 'knowledge is conscious power [...]'.[117] The difference between the function of reason and the processes of imagination or poetic genius is merely one of direction: while reason (or understanding) abstracts, projecting the general *upon* the particular, genius distils the world into its particulars, and 'invents' by discovering new truths in the course of imitating the infinity of nature. As Hazlitt expresses it in *A View of the English Stage* in 1814, '[i]t is the business of poetry, and indeed of all works of imagination, to exhibit the species *through the individual*'.[118] But because it deals with the fluid and the limitless, genius cannot provide objects for knowledge. Nor can it give an account of itself or its operations; it emphatically is *not* 'conscious of its own powers' – yet it is precisely this ineffability which guarantees its sovereignty. Writing of the genius of acting in *The Examiner* in 1815, Hazlitt opines that 'the excellences of genius are not communicable [...] for the power with which great talent works, can only be regulated by its own suggestions and the force of nature'.[119]

In much of this Hazlitt was concerned to avoid what he saw as one of the main failings of Coleridge's work: namely, the domination of art by philosophy. In this respect, Hazlitt's is the more resolute assertion of a central Romantic theme: that of aesthetic autonomy. The freedom of the aesthetic was not something which could be reduced to any other discourse. This did not mean that one could not theorize about art: merely that one could not explain art's products or processes exhaustively. Its very nature was bound up with its ineffability. Nonetheless, Hazlitt has his own problems, and on two fronts. On one side, his immanent idealism had led him to a worship of undifferentiated power which undermined, not just empiricism, but the very notion of knowledge in general as something verifiable. Concepts such as 'common sense' and 'feeling',

seen in this context, are not deployed by Hazlitt as cognitive processes, but as ciphers for the kind of supernatural faculties which might ratify such exertions of power. On the other hand, however, the attempts he does make to plug an epistemological thesis into this are frustrated by the fact that the thesis in whose terms he is prone to think – empiricism – demands that mental events *correspond* to something. Power, however, is singular: it does not 'correspond' to anything but itself. With respect to Hazlitt's metaphor, it is more like a black hole than a prism; drawing everything, light included, into itself. It cannot be bounded by any epistemological principle, because such principles are themselves functions or aspects of power.

Consequently, Hazlitt struggles to express what kind of truth-value might be peculiar to poetry, and often indicates that it is rather one of compensation for loss of knowledge. Of tragic poetry, for instance, he writes in 'On Poetry in General' that its pleasure is grounded in the 'common love of strong excitement', or power. In this, given an object of terror, we 'grapple with it in thought, in action, to sharpen our intellect' – the energy therein depends upon the abyss between understanding and truth; upon an absence of one-to-one correspondence between mind and object. Poetry 'is the perfect coincidence of the image and the words with the feeling [of struggle] we have, and of which we cannot get rid in any other way, that gives an instant "satisfaction to the thought" '. The mind is thus permitted the liberty to be pleased with its own projections and fictions: 'We do not wish the thing to be so; but we wish it to appear such as it is.'[120]

Hand in hand with this went a deeply ingrained ambivalence about originality. In 'Originality', he describes how, as the original mind 'advances in the knowledge of nature, the horizon of art enlarges and the air refines. Then, in addition to an infinite variety of details [...] there is the [...] *I know not what* [...].' Imagination is as blind in this, however, as power necessarily is: its invention when in the refined air of the outer boundaries of knowledge is 'little more than the fertility of a teeming brain'. All the mind has to accompany it into the *terra incognita* is a power (if it can be called a power) of association. Yet these are the conditions of the originality 'which constitutes either the charm of works of fiction or the improvement to be derived from those of progressive information'.[121] Back in 1818, however, in the lecture on poetry, Hazlitt had been less persuaded as to the neatness of fit between originality and knowledge, for 'the progress of knowledge and refinement has a tendency

to circumscribe the limits of the imagination, and to clip the wings of poetry'.[122]

Most revealing of all, however, is Hazlitt's changing attitude to the idea of creation. Generally, Hazlitt's view seems compatible with what has been characterized as the Platonic or 'discovery' model of creation. Most importantly, the paradigm requires the existence of some object which is, as it were, waiting out there to be discovered and recombined in some way. Such a picture can be accommodated by epistemological foundationalism. Yet it is also clear that there are times when this model appears insufficient for Hazlitt's conception of imagination, as when, for example, he describes the process of creation in the essay 'On the Pleasure of Painting':

> One is never tired of painting, because you have to set down not what you knew already, but what you have just discovered. In the former case, you translate feeings into words; in the latter, names into things. There is a continual creation out of nothing going on. With every stroke of the brush, a new field of inquiry is laid open; new difficulties arise, and new triumphs are prepared over them.[123]

Despite his use of the term, Hazlitt suggests a process which is more than just the 'discovery' of an inert, passive reality, but a pragmatic, committed relationship with the world. In painting, what one discovers is itself a product of previous strokes of the brush, leading to new fields of inquiry which are not ready-made or 'given' to consciousness, but which are themselves *part* of the activity. Insofar as they have no existence separate from the activity of painting, then, such fields are, in a sense, created 'out of nothing'. Similarly, in 'On Genius and Common Sense', though Hazlitt insists that the 'test and triumph of originality, [is] not to shew us what has never been [. . .] but to point out to us what is before our eyes and under our feet, though we have had no suspicion of its existence', he nevertheless considers Wordsworth as 'the greatest, that is, the most original poet of the present day' on the grounds that 'like Rembrandt, [he] has a faculty of making something out of nothing, that is, out of himself [. . .]'.[124]

The ambivalence of these remarks reveals that in his aesthetic as well as in his philosophical writing, Hazlitt remained divided about the relation between knowledge and power, or an indifference to knowing. Just as he was nervous about abstraction, in art he only allows the mind to create *ex nihilo* (or at least, *as if* from nothing) on the grounds that its products are not possible objects for knowledge, representing only nascent knowledge,

or power which has yet to become conscious to itself. Pursued elsewhere by Nietzsche and Bloom, this line of thought would have damaging implications for epistemology.[125] But rather than fully embrace this challenge to 'knowledge', Hazlitt's concern that art and genius might thereby be alienated from truth draws him back to a more domesticated, epistemically secure Platonic or 'discovery' paradigm for creation. In the course of this, power is in its turn subdued by knowledge.

CONCLUSION: POWER AND PREJUDICE

The story of Hazlitt's early philosophical writing is one of power brought into the service of empirical knowledge through idealism, only to usurp it. The more convinced he became that reason is not translatable into 'moral' truth, the less he was persuaded that there was any *need* for moral truth to justify itself to reason; indeed, even to designate itself as a kind of 'truth' at all. Thus, Hazlitt withdrew altogether from a positivist or cognitivist position, asserting that to act morally or to experience the world as at once diverse and unified is to exercise a certain sympathetic power of mind, and nothing else. This goes beyond the proposition that moral truth is grounded in sympathy, or common sense, or feeling, and assumes that such considerations represent an aspect of human existence which is fundamental to our being. One way Hazlitt has of expressing this is in terms of the priority of 'prejudice'. In the *Atlas* article of the same name of 1830, he declares that in the balance between reason and prejudice, 'we are constantly [...] treading on the brink of a precipice; that custom, passion, imagination, insinuate themselves into and influence almost every judgement we pass or sentiment we indulge [...]'.[126] In 'Paragraphs on Prejudice', published in *The Monthly Magazine* a few months later, he extends this to logical reasoning in general, arguing that even the greatest philosopher cannot 'proceed a single step without taking something for granted'.[127]

Even here, however, Hazlitt is loath to abandon knowledge entirely: prejudice, he claims, is just a necessary fact of life imposed by 'all that mass of knowledge and perception which falls under the head of *common sense* and *natural feeling*, which is made up of the strong and urgent, but undefined impressions of things upon us, and lies between the two extremes of absolute proof and the grossest ignorance'.[128] This characterization of common sense is by now familiar, but why Hazlitt feels the need to go further and apply the word 'prejudice' to it is puzzling, unless it is to be taken that he does not mean it to constitute a kind of *knowledge* at all, but

rather a state of being. Yet as he inherited it from Burke, the term does indeed appear to have a cognitive import insofar as it signifies the mass of common wisdom which has built up over ages but which reason may not scrutinize.[129] 'Prejudice' appears in this light as yet another attempt to define an extra-empirical standard of truth in conformity with the notion of power. Yet this is merely to point out what has been a central theme of this chapter – that in Hazlitt's work indifference and epistemology simultaneously remain at odds and symbiotically co-dependent. In Hazlitt, this tension becomes self-conscious when he, like Keats and Lamb, simply vacates the field of speculation altogether. This rhetorical manoeuvre can be detected throughout Hazlitt's writing, from his acknowledgement in the 'Remarks' that his argument against Hartley is pursued 'without first ascertaining (if that were possible) the manner in which our ideas are produced, and the nature of consciousness, both of which I am utterly unable to comprehend'[130] to the supposition in the lecture 'On Abstract Ideas' that such facts of the mind are somehow 'equally evident and unaccountable'.[131]

I have mentioned that the apparent inconsistencies and puzzling ambiguities in Hazlitt's work are largely the product of his relationship to empiricism; a relationship which was neither one of conformity nor outright rejection, but ambivalence. Much as he tried to escape from it, the British empirical tradition was the mould which formed the cast for his attitudes towards the basic problems of knowledge. The most important aspect of this training was the ingrained presumption in contemporary empirical thought that truth was a measure of the extent to which the basic elements of our mental furniture corresponded to an object which was 'given' in perception. Hazlitt came to question this, however, as it became clear that both his theories of moral reasoning and abstraction exceeded such conditions. The central premise of the 1805 *Essay* that the mind has an active and legitimate legislative role to play in configuring possible candidates for moral knowledge, presumes a creative capacity in the mind which violates the conditions of empirical knowledge.

The problem Hazlitt faces, then, arises from the discrepancy between his positions on morality and art and the epistemological language he uses as a matter of habit. Initially, Hazlitt's efforts focused upon making empiricism more congenial to the outlook of his moral and aesthetic theories. The principal instrument of this endeavour is the argument from abstraction, but, as this comes to demand further reinforcement from a heavily revised notion of common sense, the 'instinctive perception' of coalescent association, analogies of perception taken from painting, and

increasingly exotic hypotheses about the nature of the faculties, it became clear that it challenged something more fundamental than empiricism, namely foundationalism. The consequences of the theory of abstraction are either an epistemic deficit which must be conceded to the sceptic and accepted with a shrug of the shoulders, or a profound questioning of philosophy's construction and elevation of 'knowledge'.

Through his theory of abstraction, Hazlitt is progressively inclined to a position less concerned with knowing as such, and more with the nature of being, or power. The opacity of power, and the absence of any calibration of knowledge, mean that it is always difficult to see where truth ends and power begins. The obscurity of the concept of common sense – part-knowledge, part feeling, part power – epitomizes this side of Hazlitt's thought. His ideas of abstraction and originality, though in one sense opposed as bilateral functions of power – one being the power of delimitation, and the other that of particularity – inevitably fold into each other. Hazlitt gives no account of how to differentiate between the *generalizing* power of mind he outlines in 'On Abstract Ideas', and the *particularizing* power he identifies in 'Originality'. To his mind, in the final analysis there can be no such distinction, for this would be to subordinate the principle of power to another which 'transcends' it.

Once again, however, the Hydra of truth raises its head at the point where it is crushed. Hazlitt's notion of common sense, from the perspective of epistemology, raises questions rather than dismissing them. Thus, when Hazlitt's perceiving subject believes he knows something to be the case by common sense, he is like the sighted man in perfect darkness: he *feels* that he can see in the dark, though what it is that he sees which his blind companion cannot, remains a mystery. And this represents the predicament of Hazlitt's epistemology in general: there is nothing to determine what degree of power counts as knowledge other than power itself.

To someone who had completely divested himself of epistemological foundationalism, this would merely be grist to the mill. For Hazlitt, however, it leads to some uneasy moments, as the fluidity of the knowledge–power equation returns to haunt him. In particular, he hesitates over the cognitive status of art and the type of creativity represented by the original genius. Wordsworth and Rembrandt, as he claims in 'On Genius and Common Sense', are typical of genius's power to give the rule to reason by virtue of their power of creation *ex nihilo*. It is, indeed, 'the power over those [ideas] which are not given, and for which no obvious or precise rule can be laid down'.[132] Yet Hazlitt often displays a suspicion

of creation as naked power, as in his criticism of Shelley's poetry for 'indulging its love of power and novelty at the expense of truth and nature [...].' 'Poetry,' he continues, in contrast to his own observations on painting, and his comments on Wordsworth and Rembrandt, 'we grant, creates a world of its own; but it creates it out of existing materials. Mr. Shelley is the maker of his own poetry – out of nothing.'[133] This fear of unfounded expression, of creation without foundations or 'existing materials', ensures that in Hazlitt's writing the cyclical play of indifference and epistemology, power and knowledge, continues ceaselessly.

4

Coleridge and the new foundationalism

> A chain without a staple, from which all the links derived their stability, or a series without a first, has been not inaptly allegorized, as a string of blind men, each holding the skirt of the man before him, reaching far out of sight, but all moving without the least deviation in one strait line. [. . .] Equally *inconceivable* is a cycle of equal truths without a common and central principle, which prescribes to each its proper sphere in the system of science.
>
> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*[1]

Romantic writing oscillates between knowledge and knowledge-indifference. It moves between philosophy's conception of knowledge and a more holistic perspective on 'life'; between a desire for foundational truth and an acceptance of being as something we are always already *in*. These are irreconcilable but incorrigible attitudes, the products of Hume's ultimatum to philosophy to justify its linkage of truth and value which more recently has become a challenge to justify its connection of truth and meaning. The Romantics express what it is to think and live in this condition of ambivalence, producing a mode of discourse which is tactical rather than strategic, oscillating between earnest epistemological quest and an indifference to knowledge which is sometimes playful and ironic, but involved with exploring reality in a way which avoids, as Andrew Bowie describes the German Romantics' bête noire, 'the separation of the everyday "life world" from the systematically determined spheres of science, technology and modern bureaucracy'.[2] Consequently, representations of Romantic thought as fundamentally indifferent, that is, as committed to a phenomenological *media res*, a new para-philosophy of decentred knowing – or, alternatively, as always destined to deconstruct its own figures of understanding – suppose a resolution (whether in 'being' or the 'abyss' of meaning) which the equal and opposite commitment to truth in Romantic writing contests.

This tension is at its most agonistic in non-fictional prose, and in particular the essay, wherein the essentially circular rhetoric of the Romantic 'high argument' struggles with a medium more fitted to the consequential reasoning of discursive argument.[3] So far, I have discussed the work of a poet professedly writing prose under protest (Wordsworth) and the work of a prose writer with a recurring inferiority complex about poetry (Hazlitt). I now want to turn to the case of a poet turned compulsive prose writer, namely Coleridge. In each of these writers the resistance and compulsion to found their experience upon knowledge is subtly different. What distinguishes Coleridge from his contemporaries is that his own vision of a 'new condition' for philosophy emerges against the background of his belief in the possibility of a rehabilitated *a priori* metaphysics. Crucially, this directs him to attempt what hitherto seemed impossible: the placing of Hume's 'value', the creative life of figuration and projection, not within the quasi-cognitive domains of 'poetic truth' or 'power', but back within philosophy's grid of reasoning – albeit a grid now reconstructed as unsystematic and intuitional.

What attracted Coleridge to this project was the entirely new direction opened up by Kant's suggestion that the foundations of knowledge lay in thought, rather than in objects. The possibility of a positive, philosophical refutation of empiricism (and thereby scepticism) through transcendental *argument* took hold of Coleridge 'with a giant's hand' while reading Kant in the opening years of the nineteenth century. He saw that in the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant had proposed a complete reorientation of philosophy, steering it between the Scylla and the Charybdis of sceptical empiricism and speculative metaphysics, towards an attempt to understand the *a priori* foundations of experience itself. It is the same project that lies behind Coleridge's excited claim to Poole in 1801 that, having perused his predecessors 'from Aristotle to Kant', he has 'overthrown the doctrine of Association [...] and with it all the irreligious metaphysics of modern Infidels'.[4] It is still evident in his thinking to the end of his career. In his *Logic* manuscript, unpublished at his death, he echoes Kant's dictum that though 'all our cognition commences *with* experience, yet it does not on that account all arise *from* experience', and supports this with an oft-used analogy of his own:[5]

> The term 'transcendental' means the same as 'sciental', but with an additional significance. All knowledge is excited or occasioned by experience, but all knowledge is not derived from experience, such, for instance, is the knowledge of the conditions that render experience itself possible, and which must therefore be supposed to exist previous to experience, in the same manner as the eyes must

pre-exist to the act of seeing, though without that act of seeing we never should have learnt that we possessed eyes.[6]

Here, with Kant's assistance, Coleridge outlines a template for the kind of transcendental argument towards which Hazlitt had been moving in the *Essay*. It was this new foundation of conceptual conditions which, Coleridge hoped, would 'staple' the 'circle of truths' into place, so avoiding the infinite sceptical regress of empirical conditions. Unlike Hazlitt, Coleridge was prepared to accept that such a staple would have to be *a priori* in nature. Yet his reception of transcendental argument was conditioned by a subsequent tradition of post-Kantian philosophy in Germany, much of which was in overt reaction *against* the foundationalist and knowledge-centred method of Kant's critique. Both Jacobi and Schelling, for example, saw Hume's division of knowledge and life as pernicious, and both suspected that the projective subject/inert object dualism which sponsored it was covertly reproduced in Kant's separation of phenomenal and noumenal realms. At the same time, Coleridge would have learned very different lessons from these figures with regard to whether this predicament was a problem for or a *symptom of* a philosophy construed as the quest to ground human life and experience upon certain knowledge. For Jacobi, such alienation was itself the product of too much philosophizing and too little faith. For Schelling, however, philosophy's groundlessness, though self-inflicted and irresolvable, remained inescapably a philosophical problem.

In this way the question which in Britain had hardened into a Hobson's choice between naturalism and a moribund empiricism, presented German thought with a number of possible new avenues for philosophy, the scope of which is too various to begin to cover here. One way of viewing this range, however, is as an unstable spectrum of positions stretching from Kant's neo-foundationalism through varying registers of epistemic indifference, neither of which escapes the inevitable backslide towards its antagonist. At one end of the scale Kant's attempt to extend his critique to practical reason and aesthetics itself encouraged, on one hand, a discourse of will in Fichte and the early Schelling, and, on the other, the cultivation of an ironic aesthetic in Schiller and the Schlegels which remained ambivalent between awareness and unknowingness. More positively, Fichte and Schelling (and later, of course, Hegel) moved to rescue dialectic from the futile paralogisms of Kant's critique and recast it as the methodology of a system in which epistemic indifference was brought back within the fold of a constructive, rather than

merely compensatory, para-philosophy of intellectual intuition. Meanwhile, at the extreme of indifference, in the work of Jacobi, Schopenhauer and the later Schelling, there remained the voice inhabiting the darker corner of the discourse of will, one which envisaged no compensation other than faith, resignation, or sheer activity, and which engaged with philosophy only to undermine it.

This is a necessarily brief thumbnail sketch of post-Kantian philosophy in Germany, but even here it is clear that Coleridge was diving into an intellectual milieu which was already pulling in radically different directions, a strain which was often if not usually replicated within the work of individual thinkers. Most of these trends enter into Coleridge's work in ways which are extremely difficult to trace, though admirable scholarly efforts in the past have managed to map this area in ways which it would be redundant for the present study to rehearse.[7] My principal object is to explore the play of knowledge and indifference in two of Coleridge's major prose works from his middle period, namely *Biographia Literaria* and the 1818 edition of *The Friend*, a play which is conditioned by a triangular contest between Kantian foundationalism, Schelling's para-philosophy of intuition and dialectic, and an ironism which resisted any philosophical appropriation of its numinous aesthetic. The key shift in Coleridge's thought occurs between the collapse of the *Biographia*'s transcendental method of enquiring into 'the knowledge of the conditions that render experience itself possible' and the emergence in *The Friend* of a discourse of dialectic which eschews any such attempt to 'ground' knowledge. Both methods, it will be seen, place Coleridge's early hopes for an autonomous domain of aesthetic freedom under pressure. Indeed, the tension between serpent and logos proves the undoing of the *Biographia Literaria*. Like his description of Shakespeare's poetry, in Coleridge's thought 'the creative power, and the intellectual energy wrestle as in a war embrace', despite – or more accurately, because of – his efforts to demonstrate their indifference.[8] As will be seen in the following chapter, this strain recurs in his later endeavour in the 1818–19 *Lectures* to harmonize apodeictic philosophy with a voluntaristic religious faith and acceptance, or 'the love of wisdom with the wisdom of love', and yet again in *Aids to Reflection*'s attempt to reconcile founded knowing with a metaphysics of absolute Will through a process of dialectic.[9]

In some respects the foregoing recapitulates a by now familiar debate between those, such as Thomas McFarland, who read Coleridge as a misunderstood metaphysical system-builder, and those such as Wheeler who see him as rejecting wholesale the values of positivist philosophy,

and foundational epistemology in particular, in favour of a rhetoric of decentred ironism. The truth, one may aver without excessive anxiety of Coleridgean influence, lies in an ungenial middle ground between these two positions.[10] It is true that Coleridge engages with the post-Kantian marginalization of knowledge, moreover, that he is present at the beginning of this process. With Wittgenstein, Heidegger and Cavell, he agrees that knowledge is not something about which one has opinions, much less a theory, but that it is a 'form of life', and even then only one form of life. From this perspective, it is a greater journey in time than in thought from Coleridge's 1816 claim 'that intelligence and being are reciprocally each other's Substrate',[11] to Heidegger's assertion in 1927 that '[w]e presuppose truth because "we", being in the kind of Being which Dasein possesses, *are* "in the truth" '.[12] But it is also true that he retained a nervousness that scepticism could not merely be set aside in this way, and that Hume's challenge demanded an answer. Consequently in his *Logic* manuscript, he strove to extend Kant's epistemology into the propaedeutic for a philosophy of the Will-grounded unity of 'reality in nature and the reality of reason'.[13] Philosophy is thus alternately attacked and recentred in Coleridge's writing as he seeks to moderate the centrifugal tendency of his belief that truth is made, not found, with the centripetal pull of synthetic *a priori* foundations. The first major attempt at this reconciliation is made in *Biographia Literaria*.

KANT AND THE FATE OF THE SYNTHETIC *A PRIORI*

Before turning to the *Biographia*, it is worth assessing how significant Coleridge's early intervention is, since Kant's new agenda for philosophy effectively tied the continuing autonomy and primacy of epistemology to the fate of the synthetic *a priori* for the next two centuries. In particular, Coleridge's oscillation between a transcendental defence of synthetic *a priori* foundations on one hand, and, on the other, para-philosophical and anti-philosophical modes of epistemic indifference based on the common paradigm of creativity, touches what have since been the principal points of the debate. Coleridge's confidence that Kant's theory of knowledge formed the necessary propaedeutic to a total philosophy which encompassed creative freedom indicates that, far from sensing any tension between these accounts, he saw them as co-dependent. In order to appreciate how this came about, it is necessary to take a moment to examine the peculiarities of Kant's own exposition in more detail.

In his Introduction to the first *Critique*, Kant draws three distinctions with regard to propositions: *a priori* vs. empirical, necessary vs. contingent, and analytic vs. synthetic. For Kant, the first, epistemological distinction runs perfectly parallel to the second, logical distinction. That is to say, all propositions which are known to be true *a priori* or regardless of experience are necessarily true (and vice versa), just as all propositions which are empirical or only verified by experience are contingently true (and vice versa). The third distinction, however, cuts across the other two. Where Leibniz had assumed that all analytic truths were necessary and *a priori*, and Hume that all synthetic truths were contingent and empirical, Kant argued that mathematics, geometry and, more contentiously, metaphysics, contained propositions which, if true, were true in a way which was both metaphysically synthetic *and* epistemologically *a priori* (therefore necessary).

Despite their powerful effect upon western philosophy, Kant's definitions have come in for a great deal of criticism. The surprisingly short account in the *Critique of Pure Reason* characterizes analytic and synthetic propositions as '*judgements of clarification*' and '*judgements of amplification*' respectively, according to the way in which they either explicate what was already 'contained' within a concept, or add new information to it.[14] Thus, 'all bachelors are unmarried' is analytic because it merely unpacks or explicates 'bachelor'. On the other hand, 'all bachelors are happy' (whether true or not) is synthetic, as it adds something new to the concept. This is all rather vague, and since Frege philosophers have generally agreed that among other things Kant fails to free himself completely from the Lockean equation of psychological causation with justification. For example, in *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics* he argues that the proposition '[a]ll bodies are extended' is analytically true because the predicate concept is already *thought of* as contained in the subject concept. Yet he also claims that it is analytically true because one cannot deny the proposition without self-contradiction: 'For since the predicate of an affirmative analytic judgement is already thought beforehand in the concept of the subject, it cannot be denied of that subject without contradiction [...]'.[15] These are two different kinds of explanation; one being psychological, the other logical. As Frege cautioned a century later, '[a] proposition may be thought, and again it may be true; let us never confuse these two things'.[16] Crucially, however, it was Kant's psychologistic framing of synthetic *a priori* propositions that encouraged Coleridge in the belief that their possibility underwrote his radical ideas about human creativity.

The point of defending synthetic *a priori* knowledge in the first *Critique* was, in part, to resolve Hume's fork in knowledge between necessary relations of ideas and contingent matters of fact. If it could be demonstrated that certain facts (synthetic propositions) were cognizable *a priori*, then Hume's sceptical regress might be halted by foundational, *necessary facts* about human nature. Uncovering such truths in order to defeat the sceptic would be the business of transcendental argument, demonstrating that 'the entire final aim of our speculative *a priori* cognition rests on such synthetic, i.e., ampliative principles [...].'[17] At this point, however, Kant's psychologistic account of the foundations of knowledge assumes a new significance. His introspective defence of synthesis *a priori* gave rise to a thesis of transcendental psychology whereby the mind became *creative*; or rather, a co-author, with nature, of phenomenal reality.

This came about in the following way. First, by treating the difference between synthetic and analytic as a matter of what seemed to occur in the process of thinking, Kant became convinced that what distinguished synthetic propositions was that they could only connect two concepts through the mediation of an *intuition*. For example, in geometry, the proposition that a straight line between two points is the shortest possible is synthetic by virtue of the fact that no amount of analysis of the concepts 'straight line' and 'point' could produce it. Nor could one determine its truth by empirical investigation of observable instances in nature: this would only permit a contingent rule, not the necessary law required by geometry. Instead, Kant argues, one must construct an image or spatial intuition. Thus, 'it is manifest that the predicate certainly adheres to those concepts necessarily, though not as thought in the concept itself, but by means of an intuition that must be added to the concept'.[18] But how could a made-up intuition ground a necessary proposition? For Kant, this could only be explained by the fact that our knowledge was, at least in part, self-created. The question, how is nature itself possible? thus becomes subject to the basic principle of Kant's 'Copernican revolution', namely, that '*understanding does not draw its (a priori) laws from nature, but prescribes them to it*'.[19]

Notoriously however, Kant's price for a transcendental psychology of creative knowing is transcendental idealism, or his thesis that we only have knowledge of 'phenomena', or reality-as-appearance. The object as it is in itself, the 'noumenon', is inaccessible to us precisely because what is 'given' to the senses as the raw material of sensation cannot become experience without the mediation of the *a priori* forms of intuition and concepts of understanding. Kant's theory of epistemic creation, then, is

also one of epistemic limitation, supported by his view of knowledge as correspondence. It is at this point that the disjunction between Kant's epistemological Copernicanism and Coleridge's anti-foundational creationism becomes apparent. There is a tone of puzzled disappointment to Coleridge's claim in *Biographia* that he could 'never believe, it was possible for him [i.e. Kant] to have meant no more by his *Noumenon*, or THING IN ITSELF, than his mere words express [...]'.[20] Ultimately, this dissatisfaction reflects the fact that while Kant remained, at heart, a representationalist about knowledge, Coleridge was divided between his attraction to Kant's transcendentalism as a bulwark against scepticism, and his aspiration towards a way of thinking about experience and reality which bypassed the very discourse within which scepticism arose. Throughout the three *Critiques*, Kant's objectives are epistemological and foundational, seeking to establish an end *for* knowledge. Many of the ideas which Coleridge shared with other Romantics, meanwhile, such as the notion that in all spheres of life man was '*his own creator*', connoted no less than the end *of* knowledge.[21]

In many ways, the struggle which takes place within Coleridge's thought prefigures a major faultline within recent Anglo-American philosophy. For the story of English-language philosophy over the last century in particular can be narrated as a contest between, on one hand, the undoing of the Kantian scheme for foundational knowledge by the progressive dismantling of the synthetic *a priori* cell, and on the other, the continued defence of both. This process began in the nineteenth century with Frege's elision of Kant's psychologistic concept-containment version of the analytic/synthetic distinction, and his recasting of mathematical truth as fundamentally analytic, leaving the domain of synthetic *a priori* propositions to geometry and metaphysics alone. His account of analyticity as based solely 'on general logical laws and definitions',[22] in turn brought about the 'linguistic turn' in philosophy by which logical positivists like Carnap, Schlick and Ayer collapsed the synthetic *a priori*, which they perceived to be sponsoring the 'meaningless' claims of metaphysics and Phenomenology, into an exhaustive analytic/synthetic division of truth, thereby refashioning philosophy as 'a department of logic'.[23] However, the ambitious attempt, by the aggressive application of Hume's fork to questions of meaning, to resuscitate epistemology as concerned only with that branch of knowledge containing the necessary relations of ideas, fell foul of certain relations, including analyticity, which seemed to resist reduction to logical rule. Most notably Wittgenstein, initially troubled by the problem of how 'atomic' propositions such as

'x is red' and 'x is green' could be incompatible without being logically contradictory, was led to the conclusion that meaning is produced by words or language-games, not logic.

The logical positivists' idea of a foundation of intensional, necessary propositions, that is, of propositions which were true simply by virtue of their meaning, was further undermined by Quine's attack on the analytic/synthetic distinction. Carnap had proposed that the exhaustive conversion of analytical but non-logical statements such as 'all bachelors are unmarried' into logical formulae could be achieved by the process of substituting the original terms for logical synonyms guided by 'meaning postulates'.[24] Quine, however, argued that far from explaining the notion of truth by virtue of meaning, synonymy itself presupposed the idea of analyticity. In reality, he claimed, any substitution of terms or translation of language was infected by a systematic indeterminacy. The logical positivist's project of translating all natural language into a formalized, logical 'sub-basement of conceptualization'[25] Quine saw as the last failed quest for a foundational Holy Grail, driven by 'a metaphysical article of faith'; namely the distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions.[26]

Between them, Wittgenstein and Quine pared epistemology down into, respectively, a form of philosophical therapy and a branch of natural science or empirical psychology.[27] Despite their differences then, both alternatives represent a turn towards pragmatism and naturalism and a corresponding rejection of the foundationalism of Kant's successors. What has been suggested here, moreover, is that insofar as these strategies are ways of coping with Hume's fork by deciding *not* to cope with it – that is, by setting aside the division of analytic and synthetic, conceptual and factual truths, and indeed, of fact and value – they effect a similar shift in thought to that which the Romantics enacted through their indifference to epistemology and their emphasis on creation rather than knowledge. And just as, despite this, the Romantic pursuit of Truth persisted in recursive tropes of empirical verification – or in Coleridge's case, within the Kantian grid of the synthetic *a priori* – so recent trends in epistemology suggest that what Hazlitt termed philosophy's 'dry romance' with the metaphysics of certainty is far from over. Michael Williams for one has noted the rise of '"New Scepticism"', a reaction against neo-pragmatist and post-Wittgensteinian attempts to dismiss scepticism as a muddled consequence of language gone astray. Philosophers such as Barry Stroud and Peter Strawson see scepticism as intuitive, and foundationalism and other theories as '*reactions to* the threat of scepticism, not the *sources from which* the threat arises'.[28] Foundationalism itself continues

to receive support in various forms from philosophers such as Chisholm and Sosa, and even those who are confirmed coherentists about justification such as Lawrence Bonjour and Donald Davidson still maintain, albeit in carefully hedged ways, that ultimately 'there is no real alternative to the standard and commonsensical conception of truth as, roughly, correspondence or agreement with independent reality [...]'.[29] Epistemological realists such as Jerrold Katz, meanwhile, have called for the rolling back of naturalism and the rehabilitation of Kant's synthetic *a priori* principles in order to reinstall epistemology, together with a realist ontology, as 'a foundational discipline of foundational disciplines [...]'.[30] In this light, the struggles within Coleridge's prose appear less like antique philosophical puzzles, and more as obstinate questionings which compulsively recur. The Romantics themselves had an insight into this phenomenon. As Friedrich Schlegel observed, '[m]any of the complex disputed questions of modern philosophy are like the tales and the Gods of ancient literature. They return in every system, but always transformed.'[31]

PHILOSOPHY'S RUINED TOWER: *BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA*

Biographia Literaria, indeed, often seems to parade its self-conscious ambivalence between knowledge and epistemic indifference, even as it attempts to open up a para-philosophical third way for reflective thought. In the self-addressed 'letter' which brings to an abrupt end the thirteenth chapter (and with it, the first volume) of *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge likens his argument to '*the fragments of the winding steps of an old ruined tower*'.[32] The suggestion of intellectual ascent in this is revealing, and echoed a few years later by his explanation of the pedagogical function of the 'Landing-Places' between the essays in the 1818 *Friend*.[33] The underlying idea, as so often with Coleridge, is akin to that of an exercise in intellectual and spiritual mountaineering, by which the thinker, having established a safe base camp in fixed first principles, gradually ascends to higher truths. These truths are at the same time taken to be *foundational*; that is, truths which form the ground of the whole process. The logical return here is what Coleridge elsewhere explains as the 'seeming argumentum in circulo, incident to all spiritual Truths'.[34] But is this argumentum in circulo merely an appearance? Coleridge suggests that it is an unavoidable one in human knowledge, but his work remains caught between two paradigms of thought: the circular and the foundational or linear, or between the self-consuming serpent and

the ascending steps to Truth. In *Biographia*'s image of the ruined spiral staircase, the process of simultaneous rotation and ascension remains notoriously incomplete, deferred for the projected but never completed '*great book on the* CONSTRUCTIVE PHILOSOPHY'.[35] Thus, the procedure initiated in the philosophical theses of chapter 12 having been arrested, the project of chapter 13, 'in which the results [of the theses] will be applied to the deduction of the imagination, and with it the principles of production and genial criticism in the fine arts' is left as a fragmentary exposition in the hugely influential but attenuated and gnomic sequence of distinctions between primary and secondary imagination, and fancy.[36]

As a consequence, students of Coleridge have been left to puzzle over the 'missing' argument for themselves and explain why Coleridge seems to give up at this point. At least since Thomas McFarland's *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition*, it has been accepted that a significant part of the problem lies with the 'counter-pull' exerted upon Coleridge's thought at this point in time between Kant and Schelling (or, as McFarland sees it, between Kant and Schelling/Spinoza); in other words, between a system in which free will is preserved at the price of being declared noumenal, and one in which free will is imperilled, but set against the goal of a system of total and undivided philosophy at ease with the infinite.[37] The difference between the methodologies of Kant and Schelling in this, Gian Orsini claims, is the product of their contrasting first postulates, or philosophical starting-points: for while Kant sets out from the epistemological problem of to what extent objects can be said to conform to human knowledge, Schelling asks: 'do we deduce Mind from Nature or Nature from Mind?'[38] In a broader sense, however, the contest between these positions is one which concerns the status of argument itself, and the possibility of a philosophy based upon any kind of 'deduction'.

Biographia's problems have provoked a diverse range of critical responses over the years.[39] Among these, however, there is a more or less settled opinion that Coleridge's failure at this stage to come to terms with the Kant/Schelling debate merely added to the difficulty of a work which, having begun its life as a reply to and a rebuttal of Wordsworth's empirical and associative definition of imagination as set out in the Preface to his 1815 *Poems*, had already far exceeded its initial plan, both in scope and size. As the statement of his poetic principles and critique of Wordsworth had turned into a literary life, and this into a broader exploration of his developing views on epistemology, religion, and the history of language, the Preface to the *Sibylline Leaves* (as it had originally been conceived) now

dwarfed that work. The printer's decision to produce *Biographia* in two volumes only served to emphasize the break between its 'philosophical' and literary-critical planes, and underscore the failure of Coleridge's declared intention to apply the rules of art, '*deduced from philosophical principles*, to poetry and criticism'.[40]

Yet there was always something rather curious about this deductive project. This might be expressed as the query: why, if the question 'What is poetry? is so nearly the same question with, what is a poet?' was there any *need* to establish rules of art, outside those which genius creatively legislated for itself?[41] More crucially, why need such rules be dictated by, or 'deduced from' a first philosophy, when, as Coleridge himself elsewhere claims, they are themselves just another form of life?:

> Could a rule be given from *without*, poetry would cease to be poetry, and sink into mechanical art. It would be μόρφωσις, not ποίησις [a fashioning, not a creation]. The *rules* of the IMAGINATION are themselves the very powers of growth and production. The *words*, to which they are reducible, present only the outlines and external appearance of the fruit.[42]

What is evident here, in fact, is the tension between three positions which Coleridge attempted, unsuccessfully, to reconcile in *Biographia Literaria*. In general terms, these were, on one hand, a conception of art as an autonomous domain which might communicate, through the creative power of genius, a *feeling* for an ineffable Absolute; the notion of a 'total and undivided philosophy' which might present this Absolute in intellectual intuition; and a Kantian, foundational epistemology which would ground the former and proscribe the latter.[43] The main ambivalence lurking within Coleridge's main deductive effort in *Biographia*, then, becomes clearer if one considers that work as an attempt to use first principles of philosophy in order to *deduce* a conception of art whose principal guiding thought was that it escaped such principles. Thomas Pfau touches on the same paradox when he writes that any account of the *Biographia*'s overdetermination by German idealism would need to explain 'how a tangential, fleeting, and sharply demarcated moment of intellectual contact' with Schelling would enable Coleridge to 'reinvest the principal debt – i.e., a metaphysical "grounding" of the imagination – in a highly detailed and materially sensitive analysis of the finite verbal art of Wordsworth's early Romanticism'.[44]

Coleridge's position in the *Biographia*, nonetheless, is famously close to that of Schelling in the 1800 *System*, with one crucial exception. The difference is that Coleridge is more, not less inclined to ground the aesthetic

(here, Wordsworth's 'finite verbal art') in philosophical principle. One of the main objectives of the *Biographia* was to rescue foundational philosophy from French disrepute, and to rebut Humean/Burkean scepticism regarding the role of 'fixed principles' in ordinary human life. Indeed, whereas Schelling was moving to a position in the *System* whereby art alone 'achieves the impossible, namely to resolve an infinite opposition in a finite product', Coleridge remained wedded to the Kantian belief that without a foundational staple in the chain, aesthetic figuration remained exiled from knowledge as such.[45]

But the nature of knowledge was itself changing. Coleridge's reluctance to install art as an autonomous mode of *knowing* the world, and the way in which the notions of will and dialectic in the *Biographia* vacillate between the epistemically therapeutic and the outright non-epistemic, testify to this. The Schelling of the Positive Philosophy would later reflect upon the inevitable alienation brought on – alike in Jacobi's anti-philosophy, his own earlier philosophy of identity, and of course Hegel's 'negative philosophy' – by the casting of knowledge as a neutral and stable ground. In this way, he observes, Jacobi's *salto mortale*, 'instead of really attacking the knowledge which displeases it, *completely* gives way to it, by withdrawing into not-knowing, with the assurance that only in not-knowing does salvation lie. From this it follows, then, that it considers that merely substantial knowledge which [...] dominates in rationalism, itself to be the only possible real (*echt*) and true knowledge [...].'[46] From this perspective, Coleridge's attempt to bridge Hume's duality of fact and value (or as he puts it, knowing and being) in *Biographia* is constantly stymied by the fact that his sense of knowing is that of Kant rather than that of the later Schelling or Nietzsche; in other words, that which inheres in *a priori* conditions demonstrable by transcendental argument. While Coleridge's voluntarism drew him closer to Schelling's later view of philosophy as a *symptom* of fact/value alienation, his foundationalism continued to see grounded knowledge as *salvation* from this alienation.[47]

Thus, Coleridge's thought perpetuates the Romantic oscillation between knowledge and indifference. To refute the sceptic on his own territory, he needed the synthetic *a priori* foundationalism of Kant's epistemology. At the same time, he feared the march of the unfettered intellect or French 'understanding' sufficiently to cultivate the aesthetic as an autonomous and decentred sphere of human experience. As these desiderata came into conflict, he gradually developed both a form of dialectic which, while putting knowledge in its place, threatened to end

rather than preserve difference within a system in which reality was logically contained, together with a countervailing voluntaristic praxis which stressed the importance of faith and will but which imperilled the very notion of knowledge he sought to ground.

This, however, is to anticipate the subject of the next chapter. My present purpose is to show how Coleridge perpetuates English Romanticism's equivocation over knowledge by attempting to carry Kant's 'transcendental method' into his explorations of art and religion. It is the conflict between the foundationalist direction of Kant's method and the epistemically decentred objectives which Coleridge seeks to fulfill with regard to the roles of imagination and will, art and faith, which eventually break the back of the *Biographia*'s forecast 'deductions'. By 1815, encouraged by Kant's own introspective and psychologistic account of synthetic *a priori* knowledge, Coleridge was full of optimism that the transcendental method would usher in a new foundationalism, one which would confer epistemic legitimacy upon the creative activity of mind and of free expression in the arts. Even more so than Kant, he saw the problem of the *justification* of synthetic *a priori* propositions as a problem about *causation*, as a question concerning the relationship between a 'subject' and 'object'. But while for Kant epistemic creation, the transfer of legislative power from object to subject meant the surrender of 'transcendent' grounds of knowledge for *transcendental* surety, Coleridge believed that the German philosopher's linking of transcendental method with creativity offered the prospect of an unprecedented alliance whereby the status of art and religious or revealed truth could be elevated on the back of epistemology.

By the time *Biographia* appeared in print in 1816, however, it was clear that its transcendental deductions had failed to produce this outcome, leaving Coleridge a great deal more sceptical about the ability of foundational philosophy or 'first principle' to achieve all his aims. In this respect, *Biographia* is a pivotal text in Coleridge's career, for in it one witnesses a collapse of confidence in the logocentric paradigm of foundational thought, and the first emergence of an interest in dialectical method which was to precipitate the abiding struggle of his later career: namely, his attempt to reconcile the demands of apodeictic philosophy with the ineffability of creation in art and religion. What went wrong? To understand this, we need to be clearer about terminology, and in particular the different meanings assigned by Kant and Coleridge to the notion of a 'transcendental deduction'.

ARGUING 'TRANSCENDENTALLY' IN *BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA*

After empiricism, transcendental method is the primary mechanism of foundationalist Romantic justification. Yet it also represents the first tentative step away from foundationalism. Schelling argued with some accuracy that, as used in Kant's critique, transcendental argument first requires the *desire* to escape scepticism. In this sense, Kant 'was in no way *hostile* towards the positive. Whilst he demolishes the whole edifice of the metaphysics, he always makes his view clear that in the last analysis one must *want* what it wanted [...].'[48] Elridge agrees, noting that to the extent that it requires that the thinker 'begin *in media res*, in our conceptual consciousness and schemes and practices as we happen to have them', Kant's transcendental method is an 'antifoundationalist reply to the demand for a metaphysical critique of critique'.[49] Meanwhile, the story of how transcendentalism itself metamorphoses in German thought into a more epistemically indifferent dialectic is a familiar one.

This lineage, however, should not detract from the real differences between the two methods. Thomas McFarland has complained that literary history is often apt to allow certain terms 'to be thrown about mightily by almost anyone able to string sentences together [...]. Indeed, it sometimes seems as though complete understandings of "pantheism", of "Platonism", and of "transcendentalism" are, like freedom of speech and the franchise, the born rights of every citizen of a democracy.'[50] Without wishing to share McFarland's censorious tone, it might yet be admitted that, though it is often claimed that Coleridge's business in *Biographia* is 'transcendental', there has been little investigation in Coleridge studies as to just what transcendental *method* meant, either to Coleridge or Kant. This is important, as it is tempting, but often misleading, to label almost any argument which concerns itself with the dialectic of consciousness as 'transcendental'.[51] To begin with, unlike dialectic, transcendental argument does not participate in the transformation of its own content. On the contrary, by inquiring after the *conceptual conditions* of thought or experience, it aspires to perfect formality, maintaining a rigorous separation of method and conclusion, a division which marks it out as distinctly foundational. That Coleridge's rehearsal in the *Logic* of Kant's deduction of the categories and Hazlitt's account of practical reasoning in the *Essay on the Principles of Human Action* both deploy a transcendental structure of argument demonstrates its content-neutrality in this respect: ideally, it does not oblige one to assume any specific kind of philosophical position.[52]

Coleridge, nonetheless, while keen to maintain the epistemological foundation that transcendental argument provided, oscillates between preserving the form/content distinction on which it depends and testing it in the manner of Schelling. This ambivalence is made clear when he comes to distinguish 'transcendental' and 'transcendent' in *Biographia*:

> As the elder Romans distinguished their northern provinces into Cis-Alpine and Trans-Alpine, so may we divide all the objects of human knowledge into those on this side, and those on the other side of the spontaneous consciousness; circa et trans conscientiam communem. The latter is exclusively the domain of PURE philosophy, which is therefore properly entitled *transcendental*, in order to discriminate it at once, both from mere reflection and *re*-presentation on the one hand, and on the other 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*. The first range of hills, that encircles the scanty vale of human life, is the horizon for the majority of its inhabitants.[53]

In an editorial note to this passage, James Engell describes Coleridge's account as 'basically Kantian'.[54] However, though this may be true of its tone, in outlook it is basically un-Kantian, and the two features which identify it as such are its hostility to 'mere reflection and *re*-presentation'; and the description of the 'transcendent' as merely 'transgressing the bounds and purposes of our intellectual faculties' – rather than, as in Kant, the limits of possible *experience* (which limits appear here to be symbolized instead by '[t]he first range of hills').[55] With this in mind, Coleridge's supposed recantation of this 'Kantian' passage later in *Biographia* is no such thing, as he had never adopted a Kantian attitude to begin with. He is thus being quite consistent when he admits that, though sympathetic to Kant's reasons for defining intuition in such a way as to preclude the existence of *intellectual* intuition, he has 'reverted to its wider signification authorized by our elder theologians and metaphysicians, according to whom the term comprehends all truths known to us without a medium'.[56] Remarks like this belie Coleridge's methodological programme in *Biographia* as being faithfully *transcendental*.

This becomes clearer once we examine the form of a transcendental argument, which proposes that there must be something Y if there is something X of which Y is a necessary condition. Arranged schematically, this becomes an argument to the effect that: (1) X cannot be the case unless Y is the case; (2) X is the case; (3) therefore Y is the case. Kant's own interest is in the persuasive power of transcendental argument insofar as it tests the coherence of scepticism. In the *Critique of Pure*

Reason, in a brief but important introduction to the full deduction of the categories of understanding entitled 'The Principles of Any Transcendental Deduction', Kant makes it clear how, just as in the Transcendental Aesthetic his object was to demonstrate that 'space and time are pure intuitions which contain *a priori* the condition of the possibility of objects as appearances, and the synthesis which takes place in them has objective validity',[57] so the aim of the forecasted transcendental arguments in this instance concerns the 'exploration of the manner in which concepts can [...] relate *a priori* to objects'.[58] To this end, it must be shown that the categories 'must be recognised as *a priori* conditions of the possibility of experience [...]'.[59] It never occurred to Hume, the arch-sceptic, 'that the understanding might itself, perhaps, through these concepts, be the author of the experience in which its objects are found [...]'.[60]

Coleridge, however, is not alone in his ambivalence over the implications of a foundational argument which used purely logical means to overturn scepticism. Kant, too, found that the ideal of a pristine transcendental argument which functioned purely by an analysis of conceptual conditions was apt to slip into argument about reality itself. The *Critique of Pure Reason*, indeed, entertains not one, but two transcendental arguments, which not only propound different theses but which operate in quite different ways. As commentators such as Robert Wolff and Paul Guyer have noted, Kant carried the analytic method of the *Prolegomena* into the synthetic method of the first *Critique*, thereby stymying the objectives of the later work. In the *Prolegomena*, Kant had set himself the task of discovering the conditions of knowledge. His argument was regressive and analytical: in other words, it ascended from an assumed position (that we are in possession of synthetic *a priori* knowledge) to the conditions or premises which made such a proposition possible. One key premise, for example, states that synthetic *a priori* knowledge, or science, is possible if its concepts are necessary conditions of consciousness. Having established the sufficient conditions of knowledge in this way, the object of the first *Critique* was then to demonstrate that such concepts were indeed necessary conditions of consciousness.

However, by introducing the regressive mode of argument into the introduction to the second edition of the *Critique*, Kant runs the *Prolegomena*'s question, 'is synthetic *a priori* knowledge possible?' together with the *Critique*'s original question, 'is synthetic *a priori* knowledge actual?'[61] This is an important conflation, as Wolff argues, because the first question implies only a regressive inquiry which merely demonstrates the sufficient conditions or premises for a proposition: by itself it 'lends no weight

whatsoever to the premises to which it ascends. In Kant's language, it merely shows them to be "possible".'[62] Another product of this conflation is Kant's metaphysical thesis of transcendental idealism which states that our own knowledge of the world (phenomena) can never be adequate to the way the world is in itself (noumena), and which Jacobi found so objectionable. For when Kant argues synthetically in the *Critique*, he demonstrates the principles necessary to confirm contingent empirical judgements – judgements which he has no reason to suppose do not correspond to reality. However, when he argues analytically or regressively, he seeks to establish the sufficient conditions of knowledge of truths which are *necessary*. Assuming such knowledge, Guyer notes, Kant 'then argues that such claims to knowledge of necessary truth can be explained only by our antecedent possession of certain conceptions and capacities which we must, in turn, be able to impose upon a reality which does not itself, even contingently, conform to these conditions [...]'.[63]

The upshot of this is that even in Kant the purely logical foundationalism of the transcendental mode of argument is already tainted with a given world-view. In this light Kant's transcendental idealism is no accident: it is the direct product of one mode of his transcendental argumentation, that which was still haunted by rationalist dreams of perfect knowledge but sufficiently sobered by Hume's psychological scepticism to find that a sufficient condition of such knowledge was an unbridgeable gap between our representations and the world. It is the unhappy product of this, phenomenalism, which Kant attempts to forestall in the *Critique*'s 'Refutation of Idealism', countering what he identifies as 'the *dogmatic* idealism of Berkeley', with a supplementary transcendental argument to the effect that consciousness of oneself existing, i.e., as determined in time, 'is possible only through the existence of actual things which I perceive outside me'.[64] Consequently, as Guyer puts it, 'the method and the metaphysics of Kant's Copernican revolution are not two separate puzzles but are intimately connected'.[65]

The relationship between method and metaphysics, the form and content of thought, was one which exercised Coleridge throughout his life. Kant strove to separate the two, but the same theology of perfect knowledge which had frustrated his efforts maintained such a grip over Coleridge that he was prepared to erase the boundary between them in order to bring thought back into contact with existence. At the same time, however, he hoped that the anti-sceptical force of the transcendental argument, the argument of conceptual condition by which we know that 'the eyes must pre-exist to the act of seeing, though without that act of

seeing we never should have learnt that we possessed eyes', might be preserved in a new para-philosophy of indifference between knowing and being. Thus, where Kant became caught between two kinds of transcendental argument, Coleridge vacillates between transcendental method and an indifference to knowledge which would obviate any argument, as Kant intended the term, collapsing the distinction between method and metaphysics. In this, the foundational staple in the chain should be at the same time indistinguishable from that chain, the line from the circle. In any philosophical system, then, '[t]he connection of the parts and their logical dependencies may be seen and remembered; but the whole is groundless and hollow, unsustained by living contact, unaccompanied with any realizing intuition which exists by and in the act that affirms its existence, which is known, because it is, and is, because it is known'.[66]

In this way the remnant of transcendental argument in *Biographia* is constantly contested by the metaphysical thesis that subject and object are identical. In the theses of chapter 12, Coleridge's demand that philosophy must have a ground or first principle leads him to the conclusion that '[s]uch a principle cannot be any THING or OBJECT [...]. But neither can the principle be found in a subject as a subject, contradistinguished from an object [... therefore] it must be found in that which is neither subject nor object exclusively, but which is the identity of both.' Moreover, '[t]his principle [...] manifests itself in the SUM or I AM; which I shall hereafter indiscriminately express by the words spirit, self, and self-consciousness',[67] and this, by its turn, 'as subsisting in a WILL, or primary ACT of self-duplication [...] is the immediate and direct principle of one science alone, i.e. of transcendental philosophy alone'.[68]

This conflict between the cultivation of the aesthetic domain as a form of value and life in which the dualisms of philosophy are annulled, and the *deduction* of the principles of criticism and art from philosophical grounds lies at the source of *Biographia*'s divided objectives. It is often assumed that the deduction Coleridge had in mind was already partly practical or phenomenological, in the manner of Fichte or the early Schelling. Yet there are a number of statements in *Biographia* which suggest that it was transcendental, in the Kantian sense of arguing *a priori* for Y simply on the grounds that it is a condition of a given proposition, X.[69] The argument for sight is just one example of this. In one passage, while arguing against associationism as a logical principle of knowledge, he declares that the faults of associationism

may be all reduced to one sophism as their common genus; the mistaking of the *conditions* of a thing for its *causes* and *essence*; and the process by which we arrive at the knowledge of a faculty, for the faculty itself. The air I breathe, is the *condition* of my life, not its cause. We could never have learnt that we had eyes but by the process of seeing; yet having seen we know that the eyes must have pre-existed in order to render the process of sight possible.[70]

In other words, though associationism may be a physical, or psychological condition of cognition (a '*condition*'), it is not a logical condition of knowledge (a 'cause' or '*essence*'). Despite the fact that Coleridge chooses to call logical conditions 'causes', the use of the analogy of sight to demonstrate how our knowledge is derived from, but not grounded upon experience, suggests a Kantian argument. The same analogy, cited at the beginning of this chapter, is used by Coleridge to illustrate 'transcendental' knowledge. In passages such as these Coleridge aligns himself with Kant's new foundationalism, and above all the argument that the grounds of knowledge are conceptual, not causal in nature. It also neatly reverses the empiricist's 'despotism of the eye', and reinforces Coleridge's favourite amendment to Locke:

> Assume in its full extent the position, *nihil in intellectu quod non prius in sensu*, without Leibnitz's qualifying *præter ipsum intellectum*, [...] 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 [...] 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.[71]

This is a standard transcendental argument. It is the emphasis on what 'must be pre-supposed in order to render experience itself possible' that signals Coleridge's support for Kant's foundationist enterprise. Yet the pairing of Leibnizian and Kantian positions in this passage alerts one to the possibility that all is not as it initially seems. Coleridge confines himself to the conceptual conditions of 'experience' at this moment in *Biographia* only because he is challenging the empiricists on their own ground. But even as he joined Kant in his argument with Hume, Coleridge sought to move beyond that debate, setting aside philosophy as the foundational discipline (and epistemology as the foundational discipline of philosophy). The moment Coleridge ceases to view securing certainty in knowledge as of paramount importance, he parts company with transcendental enquiry. His task then becomes one of showing how epistemological principle demonstrated by transcendental method supports

but does not exhaust truths about being, truths which can only be apprehended through intellectual intuition. Later, in *Logic*, he was to write that

> Transcendental knowledge is that by which we endeavour to climb above our experience into its sources by an analysis of our intellectual faculties, still, however, standing as it were on the shoulders of our experience in order to reach at truths which are above experience, while transcendent philosophy would consist in the attempt to master a knowledge that is beyond our faculties [...] of objects therefore the existence of which, if they did exist, the human mind has no means of ascertaining, and therefore has not even the power of imagining or conceiving [...].'[72]

On first inspection, there is little here that would trouble Kant. However, Coleridge does not imagine that this exercise exhausts the task of the philosopher. The title of the work is, after all, *Logic*, and not *Logosophia*: and this reflects Coleridge's attitude to Kant's epistemology as a necessary propaedeutic to the total philosophy, or theosophy, but insufficient in itself as a *system*. In a far less critical moment, he claims that to discover and explain 'any higher form of knowledge than that which results from these very processes of the understanding [...] is the express object of transcendental research', and indeed, that 'the distinction between analytic and synthetic judgements [...] is of small importance except in the investigations of transcendental logic [...]'.[73] Further, though 'considered as *logic* it [Kantianism] is irrefragable; as philosophy it will be exempt from opposition and cease to be questionable only when the soul of Aristotle shall have become one with the soul of Plato, when the men of *talent* shall have all passed into men of *genius*, or the men of genius have all sunk into men of talent. That is, *Graecis calendis*, or when two Fridays meet.'[74]

These strains are already evident in *Biographia*'s attempt to ground aesthetics in philosophy. Setting out the methodology for the Theses of chapter 12, Coleridge claims that '[t]he science of arithmetic furnishes instances, that a rule may be useful in practical application, and for the particular purpose may be sufficiently authenticated by the result, before it has itself been fully demonstrated'.[75] This is the familiar Kantian account of how mathematical reasoning is able to exceed experience for the purpose of verification, according to which, the affirmation of Y being the case is 'sufficiently authenticated by the result' of it being demonstrated as a condition of X, which we know *a priori* to be true.[76] Such a method, Coleridge maintains, 'will be applied to the deduction of the imagination, and with it the principles of production and of genial

criticism in the fine arts'. In the wake of the collapsed deduction, however, Coleridge's definition of art and poetry in *Biographia* is more florid than lucid. A clearer account is provided in the near-contemporary essay 'On Poesy or Art', in which he designates 'that species of poesy which is not *muta poesis* by its usual name "poetry" '; giving art or poesy generically

> as of a middle quality between a thought and a thing, or, as I said before, the union and reconciliation of that which is nature with that which is exclusively human. It is the figured language of thought, and is distinguished from nature by the unity of all the parts in one thought or idea. Hence nature itself would give us the impression of a work of art, if we could see the thought which is present at once in the whole and in every part [...].[77]

Lecture 13 of Coleridge's 1818 course of *Lectures on the Principles of Judgement, Culture, and European Literature* to the London Philosophical Society, is associated with this essay. In Coleridge's notes for this talk, he writes that '*Art* (I use the word collectively for Music, Painting, Statuary and Architecture) is the Mediatress, the reconciliator of Man and Nature'. Indeed, 'Art itself might be defined, as of a middle nature between a Thought and a Thing [...].'[78] By organic figuration of the dynamic unity of man's consciousness and nature's unconscious being, then, art imitates the beautiful in nature. 'What is beauty?' Coleridge asks, answering: '[i]t is, in the abstract, the unity of the manifold, the coalescence of the diverse; in the concrete, it is the union of the shapely (*formosum*) with the vital'.[79] Coleridge's idea here that art can reveal to us a hidden, creative side of reality which consciousness could not otherwise grasp in intellectual intuition recalls the early Schelling, as when he writes that '[t]he artist must imitate that which is within the thing, that which is active through form and figure, and discourses to us by symbols – the *Natur-geist*, or spirit of nature, as we unconsciously imitate those whom we love [...]'.[80] In *Biographia*, however, poetry is rendered at once more memorably and vaguely in terms as a 'spirit of unity'; a 'synthetic and magical power', equated with 'imagination [...] first put in action by the will and understanding', which 'reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities', yet which 'still subordinates art to nature [...]'.[81] The evasiveness of this effusion, its equivocation between 'subordination' and 'reconciliation', is the direct product of the *Biographia*'s tension between epistemological foundationalism and indifference, between transcendental method and the merger of method and metaphysics.

As with the 'principles of production', so we find that the prospective deduction of the principles of 'genial criticism' is placed under intolerable strain. Indeed, rather than being 'deduced', the principles of criticism which Coleridge expounds in the second volume of *Biographia* are inferred from psychological observation and generalisation. As Pfau notes, on one level Coleridge had a 'fundamentally different intellectual sensibility' from Kant and Schelling, 'one far more inclined to start out deductively, beginning with the micromanagement of empirical phenomena, rather than descending from those remote and uncertain "stars and nebulae" of transcendent ideas'.[82] On the principle of poetic metre, Coleridge writes: 'This I would trace to the balance in the mind effected by that spontaneous effort which strives to hold in check the workings of passion [...] and how this balance of antagonists became organized into *metre* (in the usual acceptation of that term) by a supervening act of the will and judgement, consciously and for the foreseen purpose of pleasure.'[83]

In fact, one needs to look beyond *Biographia* itself to find Coleridge's clearest near-contemporary statement of critical principles; to the 1814 'Essays on the Principles of Genial Criticism'. Here, he had offered a slightly different definition of poetry from that of the 1818 'On Poesy or Art'. 'All the Fine Arts', he writes, 'are different species of Poetry [...]. The common essence of all consists in the excitement of emotion for the immediate purpose of pleasure thro' the medium of beauty; herein contra-distinguishing poetry from science, the immediate object and primary purpose of which is truth and possible utility.'[84] Coleridge's main purpose in these essays is to connect a Kantian thesis of the disinterestedness of aesthetic judgement of beauty, with a more substantive Neoplatonic thesis (which Kant would have rejected) that beauty in art is an intellectual apprehension of organic form. The third and most complete of his principles, then, is that

> [t]he safest definition then of BEAUTY, as well as the oldest, is that of Pythagoras: THE REDUCTION OF THE MANY TO ONE [...]. *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 intervenience therefore of any interest sensual or intellectual*. The BEAUTIFUL is thus at once distinguished both from the AGREEABLE, which is beneath it, and from the GOOD, which is above it: for both these have an interest necessarily attached to them [...].[85]

This attempt to reconcile a Kantian, formalist aesthetic of disinterestedness with a metaphysical organicism which inevitably undermines the division of form and content, disinterestedness and engagement, points up the curious way in which Coleridge's instincts are at once more and

less foundationalist than those of his mentor. Kant's response to Hume's claim to find no empirical grounds for setting a standard of taste other than psychological aptitude in the critic is to empty aesthetic judgement of content.[86] His broader purpose, as in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, is to bypass Hume's division of truth and value (in this case, aesthetic value) by making the foundation for both purely conceptual, or formal. Once again, the principal weapon in his arsenal is transcendental argument.

The value of fine art for Kant rests upon it being a transmitter of aesthetic ideas, or 'that representation of the imagination that occasions much thinking though without it being possible for any determinate thought, i.e., **concept**, to be adequate to it [...]'.[87] The aesthetic idea is ineffable precisely because it is the product of the ability of the artistic genius to give the rule to itself in producing works which are exemplary, yet not reducible to known rules, either empirical or *a priori*.[88] It is an unexplainable product of imagination, the counterpart of the idea of reason for which no representation can be found. And without concepts, Kant claims, there can be no demonstrable rules of evaluation. Nonetheless, as a matter of linguistic form the act of aesthetic judgement makes a claim to universal validity; that is, to a necessity based upon some kind of rule, or principle. The only recourse left, then, is to investigate the transcendental conditions of aesthetic judgement. Accordingly, Kant makes a general transcendental argument for the form of aesthetic judgement as a necessary condition of knowledge; an argument which he bases on the intimate connection between knowledge and empirical *communication*. Aesthetic pleasure rightly claims assent, for the ground of this pleasure is 'that judgement whose predicate can never be cognition (concept of an object) (although it may contain the subjective conditions for a cognition in general)'.[89]

Kant's allowance for aesthetic creativity (the free but lawful play of imagination and understanding) is thus itself grounded in an epistemological and foundationalist argument concerning the possibility of empirical knowledge. For this very reason, however, any deep insight into the *principles* of artistic production is withheld from the mere intellect. In this way, Kant hopes, a circumscribed and formalized epistemological foundationalism can underwrite a cognitively enriching aesthetic experience which is nevertheless relieved of the burden of justifying its content according to principle. In Coleridge, however, the subordination of aesthetics to epistemology competes with a metaphysical psychology in which conceptual argument breaks down. To Coleridge in this mood, there is no *fundamental* difference between statements concerned with ontology; those which make a transcendental argument as such, and

those which express facts concerning the faculties or the powers of the mind. Thus, having already criticized associationism for confusing psychology with epistemology, his own argument – which might have been the 'deduction' of imagination – appeals directly and exclusively to introspective acquaintance with the process of individual consciousness, a process which is now imbued with metaphysical significance:

> Now let a man watch his mind while he is composing [. . .]. There are evidently two powers at work, which relatively to each other are active and passive; and this is not possible without an intermediate faculty, which is at once both active and passive. (In philosophical language, we must denominate this intermediate faculty in all its degrees and determinations, the IMAGINATION [. . .].)[90]

It is generally thought, with some justification, that in *Biographia* Coleridge moves beyond Kant's purely conceptual, transcendental argument in order to develop an idea of poetry which, lying somewhere between thought and being, tests the foundationalist boundaries on which this method depends. However, at the same time his compulsion to *ground* his enquiries is in many ways stronger than that of Kant. In one mood at least he believed that *a priori* transcendental logic could be enlisted as a new foundation not only for a metaphysics of imagination which erased the distinction between *a priori* and empirical thought, but also for his projected but ultimately unsuccessful aesthetic deduction in *Biographia*: of rules of art, '*deduced from philosophical principles*, to poetry and criticism'. In this light Coleridge's optimism regarding the ability of transcendental argument to provide the foundation for a deduction of an epistemically decentred aesthetic theory seems fundamentally misguided. As has been seen, this kind of argument, in its analytical, regressive mode, draws out the sufficient conditions of a proposition but does not support that proposition. Moreover, when applied to knowledge of necessary truths, as in Kant, it leads to a transcendental idealism barely more attractive than Hume's scepticism. At the same time, in its synthetic, progressive form, while grounding empirical knowledge by stipulating its necessary conditions, it leaves unsatisfied the hunger for absolute truth which still lingered, albeit in repressed form, in Kant's noumena and in Coleridge's quest for intellectual or rational intuition.

ECLIPSING ART: DIALECTICS IN *THE FRIEND (1818)*

Coleridge's search for philosophical closure and fixed principle is allied with his political concerns. With Wordsworth, Coleridge shared the

conviction that the 'despotism of the eye' was allied to an emerging hegemony of 'means' over 'ends' in society. Put another way, though empiricism supported capitalism's notion of 'progress' through its model of the cumulative, acquisitive mind, it could not, as Kant observed, accommodate the idea of *purposive* progress; and thus, of teleological principle.[91] Benthamite utilitarianism reduced all matters of human conduct and morality to the 'hedonic calculus' of whether they caused a preponderance of pain or pleasure in a greater or lesser number of people.[92] Such a view naturally precluded a notion of practical reasoning as proceeding from a conception of individuals as rational ends in themselves. Coleridge, with Kant and Hegel, however, looked towards a teleological view of human nature which included a purposive role for artistic production.

Art's position in this equation, however, is a precarious one, besieged on one side by the utilitarianism which cuts it free from epistemic concerns at the price of relegating it to a status no higher than that of push-pin, and on the other by an all-encompassing metaphysics of consciousness which, by subsumption under the concept of a universal end, threatens to erase its autonomy. It is a precariousness to which Kant was acutely sensitive. Moving to preserve the freedom and singularity of the judgement of natural beauty, his notion of reflective judgement in the 'Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgement' does not place particulars or objects under a general rule or concept, but postulates a rule, or end, for the object, and moves towards this *from* the particulars themselves. The reflective judgement, common to both aesthetic and teleological thought, gives the end to the object by attributing to it what Kant calls the finality or 'the **purposiveness** of its form'. Thus, 'nature is represented through this concept as if an understanding contained the ground of the unity of the manifold of its empirical laws'.[93] Art, however, as a man-made entity, or an artefact, would seem to have quite clearly defined (and conceptualizable) ends, and thus be a candidate for *determinant* (non-aesthetic) judgement. Kant attempts to solve to this paradox by arguing that in judging works of art, the reflective judgement considers them as transmitting aesthetic ideas; that is, as works through which the ineffable law of nature's purposiveness is expressed through the medium of original genius.[94] In this way, Kant seeks to maintain both the possibility of a *kind* of objectivity in aesthetic judgement, and the autonomy of art.

Guyer observes that Kant remains ambivalent in the third *Critique* between explaining aesthetic judgement logically (in his analysis of

judgement) and psychologically (in his depiction of the harmony of the faculties). This means that his formalism swings between affirming, on one hand, that aesthetic judgement consists in the *pleasure* of apprehending the finality of form in an object, and on the other, in the *reflection* upon the form of finality expressed by the pleasurable response itself.[95] Kant himself distinguishes these two kinds of judgement:

> In the aesthetic judgement of sense it is that sensation [of pleasure] which is immediately produced by the empirical intuition of the object, in the aesthetic judgement of reflection, however, it is that sensation which the harmonious play of the two faculties of cognition in the power of judgement, imagination and understanding, produces in the subject [...].[96]

The former position might imply (as it occasionally does in Kant) that finality of form is a substantive rational standard of taste, rather than that the purely formal finality in the object of aesthetic judgement attests to the impossibility of such a standard.

This ambiguity notwithstanding, the main thrust of the third *Critique*'s discussion of aesthetic judgement is directed towards replacing a paradigm of aesthetic judgement whereby the justification of such judgement is made upon the content of a set of given foundational rules (a course which only produces scepticism) with a paradigm whereby such judgement is made according to formal properties of judgement which have been established by transcendental deduction to be foundational to knowledge. As has been seen, when applied to knowledge of necessary truths, this same transcendental method in Kant's hands produces a partition of phenomenal and noumenal, or knowable and unknowable realities, a cleavage for which the aesthetic experience, or reflective judgement, is intended to compensate. Poetry, for instance, 'strengthens the mind by letting it feel its capacity to consider and judge of nature, as appearance, freely, self-actively, and independently of determination by nature', using 'points of view that nature does not present by itself in experience [...] as the schema of the supersensible'.[97]

For many philosophers, however, Kant's attempt to introduce an aesthetic consolation merely emphasized the flaws of a transcendental method which precipitated such an unwelcome and, as they saw it, unnecessary division of knowing and being. Consequently, the attempt to overcome this division involves changing the basic question which philosophy is asking, namely, from one of the formal, conceptual possibility of consciousness to that of how the form and content of consciousness interact in the process of world-construction. Once the contradiction between subject and object is rescinded, what remains is to demonstrate their

relation. For Fichte, and in the early work of Schelling, this is achieved practically, whereby the contradiction between the self and not-self is resolved in the application of will. Fichte terms the method of finding opposition in equation, the '*antithetic* procedure; commonly described as the *analytical*', and the method of discovering in opposites the respect in which they are alike, the '*synthetic* procedure'. Each of these presupposes the other: 'we saw that the primordial act it expresses, that of combining opposites in a third thing, was impossible without the act of counterpositing; and that this also was impossible without the act of combination [. . .]'. This 'third thing' presupposed by the first analysis and synthesis is a 'thetic judgement', 'in which something is asserted, not to be like anything else or opposed to anything else, but simply to be identical with itself [. . .]'. This antithetical process was inherited by Schelling and Hegel, and feeds into the philosophical passages of *Biographia*.[98]

With the final merging of method and metaphysics comes the replacement of foundational deduction by dialectic. On one hand, the loosening of the boundaries between form and content represented for Coleridge a welcome move towards a therapeutic para-philosophy which surpassed the Understanding-centred limitations of Kant's epistemology. On the other hand, it signalled not only the worrying overthrow of foundational *justification* by description (or at least a process in which the distinction between description and justification was dangerously blurred), but also the compression of the theory of aesthetic autonomy which he was pursuing in *Biographia* – a theory which depended upon the dualisms of Kant's transcendental method.[99] From this perspective, Coleridge's idea of a supra-cognitive aesthetic sphere in human experience which is irreducible not just to knowledge, but to philosophical articulation as such, is placed under stress. This time, however, the stress is exerted not by Kantian foundation, but by the pressure of dialectic. This is not to say that the two are incompatible. Indeed, dialectic has its roots partly in the Romantic 'play' of the aesthetic experience. For Schiller, the play of man's sensuous and formal (rational) drives in the aesthetic presented the only possible way of healing Kant's bifurcated 'I'. Thus, though the harmonization of the two principles came to signify to the subject 'the Idea of his Human Nature, hence something Infinite', an intellectual intuition of this fundamental 'Nature' was something 'to which in the course of time he can approximate ever more closely, but without ever being able to reach it'.[100] For Friedrich Schlegel, meanwhile, irony supasses philosophical argument because it 'contains and arouses a feeling of indissoluble antagonism between the absolute and the relative, between the impossibility and the necessity of complete communication', and is

'the freest of all licences, for by its means one transcends oneself; and yet it is also the most lawful, for it is absolutely necessary'.[101] As Andrew Bowie puts it, '[t]he semantic contents of [...] forms of language which are not reducible to any other type of discourse are precisely what is at issue in the Romantic conception of art'.[102] As a *philosophy*, however, emerging in the work of Hegel and the early Schelling, dialectic's logic of self-cancelling difference increasingly contests the notion that art has something to express which cannot be articulated by philosophy, or absolute knowing.

If we are clear, then, about what is at stake in the delicate relationship between method and metaphysics, aesthetic and dialectic, it may serve to shed light on the tensions within Coleridge's exposition of method in the 1818 *Friend*; which, in their turn, may elucidate the deductive difficulties of *Biographia*. The fundamental story that they help to illuminate is the (by now familiar) one of a struggle within Coleridge's thought between, on one hand, the epistemic compulsion which drives the *Biographia*'s failed transcendental deductions, and on the other, an indifference to knowing as such which oscillates uneasily between a non-foundational para-philosophy of dialectic and a notion of aesthetic freedom which is itself ultimately released by the limitations of Kantian argument. Most importantly, this three-way dynamic lurking behind Coleridge's own dialectic of knowledge and indifference means that each of these positions is always ready to slip into one of the others.

In *The Friend* Coleridge makes it clear that method is concerned with relations, not things, and that it can be approached both materially and formally. With respect to its 'matter', the key idea for Coleridge is 'initiative'.[103] This initiative, or first principle, contains within itself a principle of '*progressive transition*', which Coleridge conceives according to a paradigm of organic growth.[104] Of the relations of reasoning themselves there are two kinds: Laws (which are absolute, conveyed by Ideas, and which, as the ties which bind philosophy and religion, have a supersensible basis)[105] and Theories (or the empirical understanding of the sciences, based upon observation of cause and effect).[106] Between these two varieties of relation, though, Coleridge places the fine arts, as partaking of both and reducible to neither:

> Between these two lies the Method in the FINE ARTS, which belongs indeed to this second or external relation, because the effect and position of the parts is always more or less influenced by the knowledge and experience of their previous qualities; but which nevertheless constitute a link connecting the second form of relation with the first. For in all, that truly merits the name of *Poetry* in

its most comprehensive sense, there is a necessary predominance of the Ideas (i.e. of what originates in the artist himself), and a comparative indifference of the materials.[107]

The vagueness betrays Coleridge's difficulty with art's status. In a footnote of his own to an earlier draft of the paragraph, he claimed that genius is that which embodies the ends *in* the means:

> It were perhaps to be wished, that we should desynonymize the two words, Poetry and Poesy, by using the latter, as the generic name of all the fine Arts: for every work of Genius, containing the End in the Means, is a ποιησις, as distinguished from a <mere> συνταζις, or collocation for an external and conventional End.[108]

Insofar as it embodies an organic interpenetration of means and ends, art partakes of the Lawful progressiveness of method. But the method of Law, as has been seen, is the self-development of an organic intelligential principle from 'within', in that 'all Method supposes A PRINCIPLE OF UNITY WITH PROGRESSION; in other words, progressive transition without breach of continuity'. As such, it is 'constitutive', while science is merely 'representative' of reality.[109] Hence, Ideas are *living* principles,[110] which presuppose intellectual intuition of the nature of reality as the organic unity of consciousness;[111] and man's telos is evolved outwardly from the principle of the unity of knowing and being within him, which is determined by the Will.[112]

It is symptomatic of a deeper tension in Coleridge's account of reasoning that Theory, strictly speaking, is no Method at all, as it does not begin with an 'initiative', but observation: '[t]he term, Method, cannot [...] otherwise than by abuse, be applied to a mere dead arrangement, containing in itself no principle of progression'.[113] However, it does not serve Coleridge's holistic purposes to configure Theory and Method as irreconcilable poles of human knowledge: there must be some point of coincidence. The problem with this, though, is that there is all the difference in the world between setting out an inquiry empirically and setting one out *a priori*. One may do both interchangeably; that is, one at one moment, the other at the next, but not at once. Coleridge would have it that art occupies this 'middle-ground' of method, but instead of this, it seems itself to be eclipsed by a method which is already logically determined. Put simply, there is nothing that poetry can tell us about reality that philosophy, pursued according to the true Method, cannot disclose more clearly or completely. The progress of Method, whereby the creativeness of the initiative idea is contained and *realized* by the mind

even as it is produced, closes down any notion of artistic creation which is beyond such knowledge. The only alternative to this – to invest art with a significance and meaning which transcends mere method – would be to defeat the very purpose of the 'Essays on Method'. It is worth noting in this respect what a small fraction of Coleridge's discussion (compared with the effort exerted on its behalf in *Biographia* only a few years previously) is taken up by the subject of the status of art in these essays in the 1818 *Friend*. At this point in the evolution of Coleridge's thought, dialectic has superseded and incorporated aesthetic truth as the means whereby the common ground of Theory and Law is communicated to humanity. Philosophy, it seems, may redeem itself after all, but only by recreating itself as non-foundational, and thereby as something other than philosophy.

The method outlined above, indeed, is clearly dialectical: that is, based upon the principle of the unified progress of an initial, seed-like Idea from within self-consciousness, transparent to itself and retaining identity through levels of differentiation (or undergoing a process of distinction without division). Only in Coleridge, this stems from a pre-established *transcendent* ground. His later attempts, in the absence of a Fichtean or Hegelian principle of immanent becoming, to cement the unity of the process through the notion of the absoluteness of the Will, will be examined in the next chapter. It is sufficient here to note that the method outlined in the 1818 *Friend*, a method which was embryonic in the *Biographia*, moves to eclipse both Kantian argument and aesthetic.

This brings us back to the original point: for Coleridge the foundationalist, the 'Method' of Coleridge the Friend is validated at the cost of being indistinguishable from, because constitutive of, metaphysical content. The direction of one branch of Coleridge's thought was towards a foundationalism which could replace empiricism. But as he was drawn towards the Absolute of German idealism, he found it increasingly difficult to reconcile such a notion with his ideal of human creativity and epistemic freedom. The limitations of transcendental argument in the *Biographia* compelled him to relinquish this procedure in favour of a dialectic which healed the rift between knowing and being but which in turn meant sacrificing his ideal of the kind of autonomous, self-legislating art which is *created* spontaneously. It is in this light that Coleridge's relationship to Romantic aesthetics on one hand, and the methodology of later German idealism must be carefully weighed. For while the first prized art as the creative surrogate of an unobtainable philosophical finality, the second worked towards conceptual closure which effectively

eclipsed art's claim to a distinct value of its own. It is the former tendency which one may observe persisting in German thought, through the unidentifiable ground of Schelling's 'Positive' philosophy and the double-life of Schopenhauer's endlessly striving Will, into the work of Nietzsche.[114] The latter, on the other hand, in Hegel finally becomes the concrete property of philosophy. In this light the significance of *Biographia* lies with how, despite itself, it finally draws apart the paths of poetry and philosophy, after a brief moment during which their convergence appeared a real possibility.

It is curious that the central text of English Romantic theory should have as its stated prime goal such a typically Enlightenment enterprise as the philosophical deduction of principles of criticism. Even Hume had finally shied away from the task of demonstrating objective principles or rules of taste. Aesthetic judgement, it was recognized, is singular: it is based upon an immediate response to an object. It can now be seen, however, that this peculiarity in Coleridge's thinking is the direct product of his ambivalent response to the challenge posed by Hume. One side of his thought would simply set aside the flawed discourse of Enlightenment, and bid farewell to the Cartesian search for epistemological foundations, to replace it with creative aesthetic exploration or religious experience. *Biographia Literaria*'s very title, in this respect, signals its opposition to Hume's division of fact and value, or the polarization of philosophy and 'life'. The other side, however, harbours a fear that without epistemic structures, without transcendental foundations, unity or first principle, scepticism's power to undermine confidence in notions of truth and knowledge is dangerously increased. From this perspective, the ambitious aesthetic deduction of *Biographia Literaria* can be seen as an attempt to harmonize these two approaches and effectively out-Enlightenment the Enlightenment; that is, by designating a creative imagination, which is indifferent to subject and object, as itself foundational for knowledge. The point at which Coleridge attempts to frame this strategy within the limits of a foundational 'transcendental' deduction, however, is the point at which the *Biographia* accedes to epistemology, and so bites its own 'experiential' tail. The winding steps of the theses of chapter 12 remain the fragments of a process which, caught between circular and vertical movements, achieves neither foundational stability nor a horizontal coherence in dialectic. Yet in the course of this the 'ruined tower' of *Biographia*'s argument becomes the example par excellence of English Romanticism's Janiform attitude towards knowledge.

5

The end of knowledge: Coleridge and theosophy

> (Now how shall I get out of this sentence? – The Tail is too big to be taken up into the Coiler's Mouth –)
>
> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, letter to John Kenyon[1]

Following the failure of *Biographia Literaria*'s deductions, Coleridge moved to place knowledge, and philosophy, within a broader context of human value. Unlike the other English Romantics, however, Coleridge retained system-building ambitions, whereby the perspective of 'understanding' and philosophy was to be harmonized within a theocracy of higher reason which combined both the dialectical and voluntaristic moments of an absolutist metaphysics. Coleridge's subsequent work, particularly in *The Friend* (1818), *Philosophical Lectures* (1819) and *Aids to Reflection* (1825) places him within a network of post-Kantian concerns which he shares with Fichte, Schelling, Hegel and Schopenhauer. Moreover, by agreeing with Kant in his *Logic* that the fate of knowledge after Hume depended upon the possibility of grounding synthetic *a priori* principles, while at the same time cultivating a non-foundational notion of 'wisdom' which incorporated volitional, affective and practical elements, Coleridge's thought maps out much of the territory for succeeding philosophy for the next two centuries. By doing so, however, it remains ambivalent in a peculiarly English Romantic way; that is, caught between finding an end for knowledge, and declaring the end *of* 'knowledge'.

Such ambivalence is well expressed by a comment made to Henry Nelson Coleridge in 1831, when he offered the following assessment of his philosophical achievements:

> My system is the only attempt that I know of ever made to reduce all knowledges into harmony; it opposes no other system, but shows what was true in each, and how that which was true in the particular in each of them became error because it was only half the truth. I have endeavoured to unite the insulated fragments of truth and frame a perfect mirror.[2]

This is a revealing statement, and not the least so because of its diverging implications. The general picture – of Coleridge having harmonized all systems of knowledge in a grand synthesis by bringing out what was 'half' true in each – is strikingly Hegelian in appearance. This is offset, however, by the image of the philosopher framing a 'perfect mirror', suggesting an underlying notion of truth as a matter of correspondence between the mind and something other than itself, rather than the coherentist theory defended by Hegel. A similar tension is evident between Coleridge's conviction that he has succeeded in assembling a unified 'system', and his awareness of the fragmentary, incomplete nature of the 'knowledges' which have gone into its construction. Elsewhere, indeed, he cites the very limitations of consciousness as evidence of the constitutive role of conscience in knowledge. Without the involvement of a free act of will (or faith), the self was merely, as he noted in 1825, 'a Proteus, modifiable into a thousand forms', each of which was 'a representation, of a somewhat that is *not* myself', or a kind of endlessly deferred, 'self-conscious self-sentient looking-glass'.[3]

Remarks such as these bear witness to the delicate balance which Coleridge's later thought attempted to maintain between two major themes in post-Kantian German philosophy; namely, the methodology of dialectic, and the ontology of will. That this is remarkable in an English poet of the period is only intensified by the fact that Coleridge's acquaintance with the philosophical figures most closely associated with these currents – Hegel and Schopenhauer – was fleeting in the first instance, and non-existent in the second. Yet, while in Germany the role of the professional philosopher had been energized with the task of working through the implications of Kant's 'Copernican revolution', in England the withering of the philosophical appetite after Hume's dismantling of knowledge meant that the task of reconstruction fell largely to poets, essayists and journalists. Associated with this trend was the emergence, in the work of Wordsworth and Coleridge, of a self-consciously philosophical poetry. Coleridge's contact with German thought at the end of the eighteenth century complicates matters, however, for he was encouraged at first by what he read there to theorize this new development in English poetry along Schillerian lines. And it was the collapse of his attempt in *Biographia Literaria* to emulate Schelling's project to reconcile notions of aesthetic freedom with the pantheistic principles of *Naturphilosophie* which marks the beginning of his intensified interest in dialectic and will; both of which elements were already present in that work.

After the *Biographia*, Coleridge gave up the project to frame all truth within a philosophical system of the kind constructed by Schelling,[4] and, sensing that spiritual being occupied a ground inaccessible to philosophy, set out on what was to be the central endeavour of his later thought; that being, by habituating philosophy to religion, and by making religion amenable to philosophy, to establish a new doctrine of theosophy; a para-philosophy based not upon aesthetic, but upon religious experience. It was vital to this undertaking that neither religion nor philosophy should assume the role of master-discourse. In the *Philosophical Lectures* of 1818–19, his principal criticism of Plotinus and the 'Eclectic' philosophers (who had been so influential in *Biographia*) is that they 'attempted to make religion philosophy', just as the Schoolmen's fault 'was to convert philosophy into religion'.[5] Indeed, it was one of the central aims of the *Lectures* to show 'that as religion never can be philosophy, because the only true philosophy proposes religion as its end and supplement, so on the other hand there can be no true religion without philosophy [...]'.[6] The marriage of the two disciplines, then, should be a harmonization, not a hypostasis. In particular, Coleridge was aware that it was one thing to say that religion should not be reducible to philosophy, and quite another to say that philosophy could say nothing about religion. On the contrary, he believed that it was part of philosophy's task to establish the proper location of religion in human life.[7] By achieving this, he hoped finally to defeat the philosophies of mechanism, and complete the logical propaedeutic of Kant.

However, viewed from another perspective, what Coleridge is attempting in his work post-*Biographia* is to maintain a realm of feeling inaccessable to philosophy as originally established by Kant's transcendental idealism, a domain which was to be subsumed by Hegel's concrete universal. Coleridge's journey down the absolutist path in *Biographia* had brought him to the point of erasing the autonomy of art entirely. But he came to believe that absolute idealism was just as jealous of religion's domain as it was of art's. The question, as so often, concerned the status of knowledge: could philosophy encompass religious and aesthetic truth, even if only in principle? By answering in the negative, Coleridge retreated from his earlier attachment to the kind of universal organon exemplified by systematic thinkers such as Spinoza, Leibniz and more recently, Hegel, in which all truth, whether about experience, mathematics, or God, could be brought within the comprehension of exhaustive philosophical investigation.

Seamus Perry has noted how the 'syntactic turn, "and yet" [...] is a hallmark grammar that articulates Coleridge's divided vision [...]'.[8] It also passes by contagion to his commentators, together with the synonymic 'however' and 'nonetheless'. For even as he resisted it, Coleridge's felt need of a system in which the unity of the scattered fragments of particular truths might be *demonstrated*, reflected the extent to which he had inherited the priorities of the Enlightenment, and in particular the demand that knowledge be defended against scepticism. There must, he believed, be at least the possibility of *a priori* verification of truth if the mind is to have some kind of anchor in reality. As he insisted to Henry Nelson Coleridge in 1830: '[y]ou must have a Lantern in your hand to give light; otherwise all the materials in the world are useless, for you can neither find them, and if you could, you could not arrange them'.[9] At the same time, like his German contemporaries Coleridge struggled with questions of history and teleology thrown up by a culture still coming to terms with political revolution. In the work of the Anglican Coleridge, this took its root in the soil of an established national religion, growing into a Christian theodicy of providence and redemption. Linked with this was his desire to give an account of humanity as progressive, and possessed *a priori* of an absolute and more purposive freedom than Rousseau's idea of the collective will would allow. In general, as Nigel Leask has noted, the politics of Coleridge's later thought are represented by the replacement of a model of a democratic imagination by one of a theocracy of higher reason, in which the intuition of reality is reserved for a select group of initiates.[10] The cost of maintaining such a system, however, was high indeed, and Coleridge struggled to develop an entirely new account of reason which would mediate between foundational epistemology, absolute philosophy and religious faith, or between the competing claims of Kant's synthetic *a priori*, an organic, absolute idealism and a non-conceptual field of experience traditionally preserved by Christian dualism. These difficult relations condense into the three-way tension between the foundational, dialectical and voluntaristic axes in his later work.

The first two of these have already been examined. At the same time, at least since John Muirhead's defence in 1930 of Coleridge's cultivation of a 'voluntaristic form of idealism' the central role of will in Coleridge's thought has also been widely accepted.[11] Particularly important is the uneasy position it assumed in his work, his attempts to contain it dialectically, and the question of precisely where such strategies situate Coleridge

in terms of the broader development of post-Kantian philosophy in the early decades of the nineteenth century. For though S. V. Pradhan rightly points out that his combination of faith and logic has an ancient pedigree and is typical of 'Christian polemics', any consideration of Coleridge's voluntarism has to take into account his reading of Kant's theory of practical reason as presented in the second *Critique*.[12] It was to this that Coleridge returned in his attempt to undo the pantheistic implications of *Biographia Literaria*. By treating the Kantian notion of a creative will – a will which was capable of giving the moral law to itself – in metaphysical terms, Coleridge sought to recast Schelling's absolute as progressive, but also as open-textured. The highest point of reality, God himself, became absolute will, of which the human was an echo; an 'Intelligent Will', creative, free, and with an intimate, personal connection with its creator.[13] But the very feature which attracted Coleridge the Christian (as well as Coleridge the poet) to Kant's idea of the object of pure practical reason – namely, free will's noumenality; its inaccessibility to knowledge and its availability only as a matter of *practice*, through moral, devotional or aesthetic activity – disappointed Coleridge the philosopher.[14] His consequent readiness to collapse practical and theoretical reason led him into the dilemma of how will, as infinite becoming, could be contained by being *known*.

Coleridge's strategy for overcoming such apparent paradoxes encouraged him to pursue further a dialectical method which he had encountered in Fichte and Schelling. It is here that many commentators have noticed shared characteristics with Hegel. Among them, Kathleen Wheeler has made a compelling argument in defence of a view of Coleridge's thought as part of a general tide in philosophy which included Hegelianism. His opposition to dualism; his concern with the organic growth and progress of 'unified knowing and being' over and above exhaustive explanations of the world *qua* object; his rejection of noumenal reality, and thus any notion of a metaphysical 'given'; and his pioneering use of the immanent logic of dialectical method, it is claimed, all mark out Coleridge as a fellow-traveller with Hegel.[15] With Coleridge, however, the 'and yet' is always hovering in the background, and it is generally recognized elsewhere that the unfolding of dialectical processes in his thought is itself tempered by a Christian principle of love, or a voluntarist emphasis on will.[16] Moreover, German dialectic was increasingly tilted towards the removal of all difference, including that implied in the mysteries of religion and creation, finally making it the property of philosophy. Long after Coleridge had quit the field, Schelling continued to

rail against Hegel's dialectic, which 'presented God, whom it reached at the end, as the merely *logical* result of its earlier mediations [...]'.[17] It was precisely from this kind of conceptual closure that Coleridge was attempting, at different times, to preserve artistic and spiritual truth. In such a form, dialecticism presented a kind of global logic and 'knowledge' more aggressive and aquisitive than Kantian foundationalism.

Any general re-evaluation of Coleridge's later work, then, must address the central problem of how his theosophy adjudicated the relationship between philosophy and religion; a relationship which became so uncomfortable because, as was seen in the previous chapter, by 'philosophy' Coleridge usually meant something foundational and certainly apodeictic; a 'total and undivided philosophy' combining diversity in unity.[18] This question leads immediately to his attempted reconciliation of a dialectical methodology with an ontology of absolute will; his struggle to harmonize something like Hegel's 'concrete universal' with Jacobi's 'faith of reason'. Such a reassessment must at some point redress the very partial views of Coleridge which have in the past fifteen years or so attempted to recast his work as prefiguring, or as continuous with, aspects of modern theory, such as deconstruction and the much-trumpeted 'death' of epistemology. This will involve questioning both Hegelian and indeterminist readings of Coleridge, and suggesting that what lies behind the apparent ability of Coleridge to act as a 'perfect mirror' for so many of the varied and even conflicting concerns of modern theory is an unresolved dilemma between knowledge and indifference which places him at a crossroads in the development of philosophy after Kant. Yet before any further discussion, it is necessary to examine why the idea of a global logic, or universal organon, held such an appeal for Coleridge.

RATIONALISM AND GLOBAL LOGIC

Coleridge's hunger for unity dates back to his childhood. As he recounts in a letter to Thomas Poole in October 1797, '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'. Having come, he explains, to regulate his beliefs by conception rather than sensation, he adds that 'I know no other way of giving the mind a love of "the Great", & "the Whole".' It was this resistance to any inclination to regard the universe empirically, or as merely 'a mass of *little things*', which lay behind his current interest in Spinoza.[19] Nonetheless, though he was reading the Dutch philosopher's work by 1799, it is likely

that he was simultaneously reading the very philosophers – among them Leibniz, Kant and in particular Jacobi – who would have sensitized him to the dangers and pitfalls of his system. Thus, while in his letter to Southey of September 1799 he is able to report that, despite the domestic chaos around him, he, 'sunk in Spinoza' remained 'as undisturbed as a Toad in a Rock',[20] he was already noting his dissatisfaction with the Spinozan account of unity, arguing that 'yet there must be a *one*ness, not an intense Union but an Absolute Unity [...]'.[21] This distinction is typical of the outlook of post-Kantian German idealism, and despite that fact that by 1810 Coleridge had decided that there were '[o]nly two *Systems* of Philosophy [...] possible 1. Spinoza 2. Kant, i.e. the absolute & the relative',[22] he was already doubting whether that particular kind of absolutism could withstand Kantian critique. As this doubt hardened into conviction, Schelling's philosophy also became implicated.[23]

At the core of Coleridge's problems is his ambivalence about Spinoza's monism. Spinoza's zeal for healing the breach of Cartesian dualism had resulted in a thoroughgoing logical absolutism which called into question the very identity of particulars in reality *qua* particulars; or, in Coleridge's own terms, of the reality of *multeity* within unity. Writing in 1820, Coleridge complains of 'all the odious consequences of Spinosism' and in particular 'leaving the main problem unsolved & unsolvable, viz. the ground of the existence of Multeity, or the passage from the Infinite to the Finite [...]'.[24] There were a number of reasons why he found this arrangement disturbing. Above all, it seemed to erase the presence of God as a distinguishable personality in the world, replacing the biblical, transcendent divinity with an absolute substance fully identical with the sum of its attributes and modes. Moreover, it removed all human freedom with a necessitarianism even more binding than any devised by Hartley or Priestley, because based upon logical, and not causal conditions. In this light, Coleridge's demand for multeity is in agreement with Schelling's demand that an adequate account be given of the possibility of *contingency* in the world. Indeed, Schelling was to acknowledge that for all its shortcomings, empiricism 'founds that agreeable *free* relationship to God which rationalism negates', and to that extent 'allows a higher way of looking at things'.[25] Spinoza's global logic, however, will not allow that knowledge of any event might be irreducibly contingent. The twenty-ninth proposition of Part 1 of *The Ethics* states that '[*i*]*n nature there is nothing contingent, but all things have been determined from the necessity of the divine nature to exist and produce in a certain way*'.[26] Contingency and particularity, then, are illusions brought on by a lack of understanding

of more fundamental, eternal necessity. There are no holes in nature. Spinoza makes this clear when he claims that the apparent transience of things stems from the fact that 'we can have no adequate knowledge of their duration [...]'. Indeed, such an inadequacy 'is what we must understand by the contingency of things', for 'beyond that there is no contingency'.[27] This position comes as no surprise: it must, indeed, be a presupposition of any system which seeks to explain reality by purely *a priori* deductive means.

On one level, Coleridge was as little inclined as Spinoza to accept contingency as a brute fact, as Hume and Jacobi (and, at unsteady moments, Kant) had. Such an admission seemed to him to open the door once again to scepticism and the detested empirical philosophy. On the other hand, he saw that Spinozism failed to account for the kind of *change* and growth of knowledge that Bacon had been able to outline in *The Advancement of Learning*. For Spinoza, one may say that our reasoned beliefs are true, even necessarily true, but our knowledge is not 'with' us; we may not discover anything new, much less add to current knowledge from our own stores, as it has nothing to do with any creative capacity in us. The problem for Coleridge concerned how one might account for epistemic creation, and thus for the progress of knowledge, without conceding to the empiricist that the price of synthesis is contingency. Spinoza's own attempt to account for the limitations of human intelligence which gave rise to the illusion of contingency had resulted, paradoxically, in a dualism of nature viewed as active ('*Natura naturans*'), and nature viewed as passive ('*Natura naturata*') – or, respectively, 'what is in itself and is conceived through itself', i.e. God, and 'whatever flows from the necessity of God's nature [...]'.[28] Human intellect, he claimed, must fall into the second category. But it was this kind of static and superficial dualism, acting as a veil for a more oppressive monism, to which the post-*Biographia* Coleridge objected, and later perceived as perpetuated by the Identity Philosophy of Schelling's work of the early 1800s. Rejecting the notion of polar being as prior to divine Will, he countered in a notebook entry of 1820 that '[i]n our Absolute (i.e. the ineffable Godhead) there is no Dualism, no antithesis, consequently *no* "Identity" in the sense [...] affixed to the term by the New *Decorators* of Spinosism [i.e. Schelling]'.[29] Instead, Coleridge proposed to remove the dilemmas of unity versus freedom, and necessity versus creation and growth, with a new form of *grounded* dialectic. This will be discussed below.

Spinoza's own theory of knowledge, meanwhile, is unambiguous. As human knowledge is identified with the reality which it perceives, insofar

as it is a mere passive mode of the absolute substance, truth, no less than divinity, becomes immanent; that is, a matter of coherence rather than correspondence of a mental product to the 'outside' world.[30] False ideas are simply ideas which the finite mind is not able to resolve into original principles. From this it follows that there can be no *completely* false belief, and that, as Spinoza puts it, '[*f*]*alsity consists in the privation of knowledge which inadequate*, or *mutilated and confused*, *ideas involve*'. On one level, this position must have been attractive to Coleridge, who shared with Spinoza the desire to heal the breach of Cartesian dualism. Spinoza's coherentism attempted to solve this by dispensing with Descartes' account of knowledge as representation. However, the logical constraints of Spinoza's coherentism are much more rigid than those of his modern, predominately empirical, successors, who are as concerned to explain how knowledge *changes* as how it sticks together.[31] From Spinoza's perspective, truth, rather than just belief, took the form of coherence. Thus, there is no room in his scheme for any of the broader or more affective features of human experience. The implications of Spinoza's views, for example, are as fatal for any voluntaristic philosophy as his metaphysical monism is generally for the concept of free will. Indeed, to illustrate his notion of a 'false' or inadequate idea, Spinoza cites the example of the common belief in individual liberty: 'men are deceived in that they think themselves free, an opinion which consists only in this, that they are conscious of their actions and ignorant of the causes by which they are determined'.[32] The idea of knowledge as emotional or affective would have made no sense at all to Spinoza. Imagination, indeed, is the sole source of error in human knowledge, causing a confusion in ideas which is only soluble in the highest form of knowledge, or the intuitive beholding of logical essences.[33] Spinoza's theory of knowledge, then, as far as Coleridge is concerned, fails because it offers no possibility that truth might be something that is created, rather than deduced, thereby negating any sense of human reason as *progressive*, and capable of real improvement.

That man is fundamentally a creative, and thus a progressive being was one of Coleridge's unshakeable convictions. It is a corollary of his views on original sin and the possibility of redemption, as well as his conception of artistic genius.[34] It feeds into his contention in the three-volume *Friend* of 1818 that all true philosophical method is genuinely creative, in that it 'supposes A PRINCIPLE OF UNITY WITH PROGRESSION; in other words, progressive transition without breach of continuity'.[35] Indeed, in the third appendix to *The Statesman's Manual* he compares the vocation of the intellect to that of a colonial conqueror:

But whatever of good and intellectual Nature worketh *in* us, it is our appointed task to render gradually our own work. For all things that surround us, and all things that happen unto us, have [. . .] all one final cause: namely, the increase of Consciousness, in such wise, that whatever part of the terra incognita of our nature the increased consciousness discovers, our will may conquer and bring into subjection to itself under the sovereignty of reason.[36]

Inevitably, the voluntaristic ingredient is important to Coleridge here, and will be discussed below. It was, however, the notion of consciousness striking out into the 'terra incognita of our nature' and discovering *new* domains for reason which sets Coleridge's account of knowledge apart from the story typically told by rationalism. Moreover, it is evident that, at least by the time he was composing the *Logic*, he was able to agree with Kant that the deficiencies of rationalist thought in this respect stemmed from its overreaching logic; its exhaustively analytical approach to the problems of philosophy. 'There are', he averred to Henry Nelson Coleridge, 'three ways of treating any subject. 1. Analytically. 2. Historically. 3. Constructively or Synthetically. Of these the only one complete and unerring is the last.' Proceeding analytically, 'you may set out like Spinoza with all but the Truth, and end with a conclusion which is altogether monstrous [. . .]'.[37] It goes almost without saying that by 'synthetic' method Coleridge does not mean to recommend the additive and abstracting procedure of empirical science, that 'anti-philosophy',[38] as he terms it in the *Philosophical Lectures*, which sets out 'arbitrarily and most groundlessly' from a mere hypothesis of understanding.[39] Kant had demonstrated to Coleridge's satisfaction the necessity for *a priori* synthetic foundations in knowledge. But even following the collapse of the absolutist project in *Biographia*, Coleridge could not accept the transcendental conditions which Kant attached to his argument; and principally among these, his stipulation that things as they are 'in themselves' are unknowable. This seemed too high a price to pay, even for such coveted goals as foundational security in knowledge and an explanation of the purposefulness of existence as determined by a structure of human ends. Repeatedly, then, Coleridge attacks Kant's idea of noumenal reality as unknowable being, particularly with regard to the nature and existence of God. In the fly-leaves of J. H. Green's copy of Kant, for example, he scribbled an objection to the latter's 1796 essay 'On a Newly Arisen Superior Tone in Philosophy':

I do not clearly see by what right Kant *forbids* us to attribute to God Intelligence and Will, because we know by experience no Intelligence or Will but the human Understanding (?), the human Volition (?) [. . .] while yet he allows us to attribute <to him> the notion of a *Ground* [. . .].

The phenomenal/noumenal distinction, he concludes, is one that 'no religious man could retain'.[40] This is the same kind of bewilderment evident in *Biographia* when Coleridge expresses disbelief that 'it was possible for him [Kant] to have meant no more by his *Noumenon*, or THING IN ITSELF, than his mere words express [...]'.[41] By the 1820s, however, Coleridge had formulated his own definition of the self-identical object in such a way as to make it cognizable, writing in a fragment that 'I use the word Noumen as the abridgement of the Greek, Noumenon, for whatever is *understood*, and can be known only by being *understood*: [...] by antithesis to Phænomen (from the Greek, phainomenon) [...] viz, [...] Appearance, or impression of the Senses.'[42]

Aside from his equivocations over epistemological foundationalism, Coleridge's ambivalent attitude to Kant is further complicated by his failure adequately to distinguish between the philosophical outlook of the three *Critiques* and that of Kant's pre-critical writings. In particular, his reading of *On the Form and Principles of the Sensible and the Intelligible World*, the 'Inaugural Dissertation' of 1770 – which he praised as 'an invaluable Essay containing the *Germs* of all the great works published by him forty years afterwards'[43] – led Coleridge into confusion about the aims of the first *Critique*.[44] Although the 'Dissertation' was the earliest work among his pre-critical writings that the critical Kant was prepared to consider for publication, and despite the fact that its anti-Wolffian stance is, arguably, preparing the ground for his later work, it faces in a completely different direction. Coleridge, however, mistook it as somehow germinal.

The basic thrust of the 'Dissertation' is a critique of what Kant sees as Wolff's conflation of 'things which are thought sensitively', or 'representations of things *as they appear*', and 'things which are intellectual', or 'representations of things *as they are*'.[45] As a consequence, Kant claims, Wolff loses sight of classical philosophy's distinction between '*phenomena and noumena*'.[46] Nonetheless, despite having removed space and time from the jurisdiction of reason, and therefore from metaphysical consideration, the 'Dissertation' has yet fully to emerge from the shadow of Kant's rationalist mentor, in that it does not place noumena beyond the reach of philosophy. On the contrary, the purpose of the division is not, at this point, to anchor metaphysical speculation within the bounds of sense, but to caution rationalist metaphysics against being misled by spatio-temporal intuitions, '*lest the principles which are native to sensitive cognition transgress their limits, and effect what belongs to the understanding* [...]'. This produces the '*fallacy of subreption*', which results in the illusion that '[t]he same sensitive condition, under which alone the *intuition* of an object is

possible, is a condition of the *possibility* itself of the *object*'.[47] It was only later that Kant would turn this reasoning on its head to insist that we could only *know* the object via sensible intuition. That Coleridge should quote approvingly from passages such as the above in *Biographia* in support of his general argument in defence of knowledge of unconditioned reality, then, is unsurprising, as is his famous uncertainty in that same work as to Kant's position on the possibility of intellectual intuition.[48] Just as notoriously, it seems quite possible that it is Kant's elimination of space and time from considerations of pure intellect in the 'Dissertation' that Coleridge had in mind when he wrote his great declaration to Poole, claiming to have 'completely extricated the notions of Time, and Space' and overthrown 'all the irreligious metaphysics of modern Infidels'.[49] Coleridge's Kant hovers uncertainly between the 'Dissertation' and the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

The critical Kant, however, while providing a much-needed antidote to the excesses of Sinoza's global logic, and an account of the conditions for a unified progressiveness in human knowledge in his defence of *a priori* synthesis, did so, as far as Coleridge was concerned, at the expense of knowledge itself, in its fullest sense. From this perspective, Coleridge's objection to Kant's noumena/phenomena division is the reverse of Jacobi's. True philosophy had to unify human knowledge and draw it towards the Absolute, and typically (though not exclusively) Coleridge thinks of this in terms of a *system*. The transcendental method, however, was not, and could not be the method of a system, as Coleridge points out to Hugh Rose in an 1818 letter. Noting the systems of, among others, Cicero, Spinoza, Schelling and Fichte, he asks 'can there be, any other systems? Kant's – No! for his proofs are *moral*', and demand 'only that we should act *as if* the proof were scientific'.[50] Despite his difficulties with Spinoza, the possibility of an apodeictic global logic, a universal organon which would 'reduce all knowledges into harmony', still exerted a powerful hold upon Coleridge's mind, and was to do so until the end of his life.

And yet the *kind* of explanation offered by rationalist philosophers remained unsatisfactory. Like Spinoza, Leibniz set out on the wrong foot, Coleridge argues, insofar as he assumed that questions of *existence* were open to exhaustive logical enquiry. In *Aids to Reflection*, he attacks the philosopher's speculations on the relation of body and soul, claiming that 'Leibnitz [...] erred in the attempt to demonstrate geometrically a problem not susceptible of geometric constuction'.[51] The School philosophy, he notes, had laboured under the same delusion, the resulting

contradictions leading many 'to doubt whether a logical truth was necessarily an existencial [sic] one, i.e. whether because a thing was logically consistent it must be necessarily existent [...]'.[52] The object cannot be explained 'internally' in this way, from a God's-eye view, as if (as Leibniz would have it) there are no extrinsic denominations. As Coleridge insists in *Logic*, following Kant, space and time cannot be explained relationally, or eliminated by analysis: they are subjective, but no less real for that: 'Leibniz was so far in the right that he denied the subsistence of space independent of the mind; but he grievously erred in representing it as nothing more than a confused perception arising out of the indistinctness of all particular figures [...].'[53]

This rather abstruse debate between Leibniz and Kant over the structure of the object had a wider significance for Coleridge. Indeed, it had an immediate bearing on the relation between religion and philosophy. Coleridge saw that what drove Leibniz's philosophical logic, his belief that the fundamental 'reason for a truth consists in [... the principle] that the predicate is in the subject',[54] was the rationalist ideal of a universal organon, or 'alphabet of human thoughts', whereby all propositions might be traced, as far as possible, to their roots in necessary (tautological) propositions.[55] However, if a universal calculus of this kind was possible, then religion was in danger of becoming subordinated to philosophy, and Coleridge's own theosophy of becoming nothing more than a rather elevated form of the latter. In this light, Leibnizian logic was as dangerously reductive a tool in philosophy as Spinozan monism. Against such an idea, Coleridge was moved to protest in the *Philosophical lectures* that, rather than life being the result of a logical principle of organization, 'organisation is in some way or other dependent on life as its cause'.[56] Consequently, Coleridge's recommendation of Kant's 'Dissertation' to Pryce in 1818 is quite understandable, for he believed (again, mistakenly) that in that work

> Kant's merit consisted (mainly) in explaining the ground of the apodeixis in Mathematics: which neither Leibnitz nor Plato had attained to – and this he did by proving that Space and Time were 1. neither general terms, 2. nor abstractions from Things, 3. nor Things themselves; but, 4. the pure *a priori* forms of the intuitive faculty [...].[57]

Given the limitations of Kantian method, then, what Coleridge required was a means of completing philosophy's task of *demonstrating* the Absolute as a dynamic, creative essence – and man as partaking of that creativity – without at the same time rendering faith, and thus religion,

redundant. The means he chose, accordingly, were voluntaristic: *will* or practical reason had to have a constitutive role in knowledge. Rationalist thought tended to see will as an unruly power which unsettled knowledge. As Descartes put it, '[*t*]*he scope of the will is wider than that of the intellect, and this is the cause of error*'.[58] For Coleridge, however, in comprehending eternal truths not subject to conditions of space or time, the speculative reason has only a negative role to play: positive cognition must be attributable to 'the *Practical* Reason of Man, comprehending the Will, the Conscience, the Moral Being with its inseparable Interests and Affections – that Reason, namely, which is the Organ of *Wisdom*, and (as far as Man is concerned) the Source of living and actual Truths'.[59] This is one of the clearest statements of the later Coleridge's marginalization of conventional philosophy as a search for epistemological grounds and *a priori* certainty. In the notion of 'wisdom' Coleridge signals a decisive move away from what John Dewey would call the 'spectator conception of knowledge',[60] or the Cartesian and Lockean view of experience as the relation between a fixed subject and object, and enters in to a new stream of post-Kantian thinking in which epistemology's story of the purely knowing self is decentred in favour of a para-philosophy encompassing dialectic and will, culminating in James' assertion almost a century later that '[p]retend what we may, the whole man within us is at work when we form our philosophical opinions. Intellect, will, taste, and passion co-operate just as they do in practical affairs [...].'[61] At this point, however, such a headlong rush to life and 'value' could not simultaneously sustain a commitment to apodeictic philosophy: voluntarism would not sit easily any form of exhaustive global logic which sought to close down difference and contingency.

The tension, then, between Coleridge's attraction to global theorizing, and his firm belief in human progressiveness – or between his desire for a system which could demonstrate the necessary truths about the fundamental unity of reality, and his awareness that divine and human *creativity* alike depended upon the premise that existence was not susceptible of exhaustive logical explanation – is at its most most pronounced in his treatment of rationalist thinkers such as Spinoza and Leibniz (though it was later to affect the way he thought about Schelling). The lesson of Leibniz, in this light, was that reality cannot be accounted for within a system of relation and representation, no matter how logically complete that system. Without the intervention of an act of will (or faith), knowledge, like the Leibnizian monad, was merely 'a Proteus, modifiable into a thousand forms [...]'. The remaining problem, however, was a

Jacobian one: how knowingly to *un*-know the unity of knowing and faith, philosophy and self-creation.

'REVERENCING THE INVISIBLE': VOLUNTARISM

As has been seen, the principal effort behind Coleridge's later thought was to establish the common ground between philosophy and religion without reducing the two to a barren, unproductive identity. In this way, philosophy could be saved from its futile doubtful search for epistemic foundations, a search which only led the thinker into an infinite regress of conditioned propositions and away from value and 'life'. At the same time, religion might be considered as something which was, at least, not inconsistent with speculative reason. Religion, as he defines it in the 1818 *Friend*, 'signifies the act and habit of reverencing THE INVISIBLE, as the highest both in ourselves and in nature', and '[t]he same principle, which in its application to the whole of our being becomes religion, considered *speculatively* is the basis of *metaphysical* science, that, namely, which requires an evidence beyond that of sensible concretes [. . .]'.[62] Worthy of attention here is the fact that, though Coleridge denies that such reverence, when considered with reference to the 'whole of our being', can be subsumed under mere speculative metaphysics, he nonetheless refers to it as a 'principle'. This does not mean that the invisible itself can be known, but it does suggest that it can be considered in a way which is not like how we consider things rationally: we may, in other words, have a kind of non-cognitive *acquaintance* with it which is neither formulable in terms of rational speculation nor ordinary experience. What kind of acquaintance this might be is the question which Coleridge later asks himself when he wonders 'what is the ground of the coincidence between reason and experience?' He finds his answer in Plato:

> The only answer which Plato deemed the question capable of receiving, compels the reason to pass out of itself and seek the ground of this agreement in a supersensual essence [. . .]. Religion therefore is the ultimate aim of philosophy, in consequence of which philosophy itself becomes the supplement of the sciences, both as the convergence of all to the common end, namely, wisdom; and as supplying the copula, which modified in each in the comprehension of its parts to one whole, is in its principles common to all, as integral parts of one system. And this is METHOD, itself a distinct science, the immediate offspring of philosophy, and the link or *mordant* by which philosophy becomes scientific and the sciences philosophical.[63]

It is *wisdom*, then, which unites religion and philosophy, as well as furnishing the principles of the unity of method which bind philosophy

and the sciences together. Wisdom bounds that ineffable area of human and divine creativity into which reason cannot venture. It is analogous to artistic expression, which, lying somewhere between the lawfulness of method and the theoretical constructions based upon experience, is similarly irreducible to rational explanation, but no less 'true' for that.[64] Yet it is typical of Coleridge's ambivalence that he chooses to categorize such a pragmatic, non-logocentric notion as a 'ground', thereby once again invoking the foundationalist demand for epistemic security. Wisdom is the 'common end' of different forms of knowledge in the sense of being a common goal, not an end to a certain way of thinking about 'knowledge'. Coleridge is clear that philosophy must itself be grounded, even though he was to describe it to Henry Nelson Coleridge as merely 'the middle state between Science or Knowledge and Wisdom or Sophia'.[65]

The question arises, however, as to what quality in wisdom distinguishes it from mere reason sufficiently to establish theosophy as the 'copula' of philosophy and religion. This, he came to decide, could not be anything other than the will, for only in an *act* of will could the apparent contradiction between thinking and unknowable being be resolved without the annulment of one or the other. 'Credidi, ideóque intellexi' ('I believed and therefore I understood'), he declares towards the close of *Biographia*, 'appears to me the dictate equally of Philosophy and Religion' – a thought enthusiastically championed later by William James. Yet Coleridge was aware that philosophically, such a move had its risks. It entailed either that will had, on some level, an epistemic validity, the conditions of which, by definition, remained uncomprehended, or that the very notions of 'validity' and 'comprehension' needed to be re-examined in the light of will. The will to knowledge was, he admitted, a 'seeming argumentum in circulo, incident to all spiritual Truths', but which only remained 'as long as we attempt to master by the reflex acts of the Understanding what we can only *know* by the act of *becoming*'.[66] The stress on the word '*know*' betrays some uneasiness on Coleridge's part. The delicate balancing-act between 'reason' and 'will' continued to be a difficult one to maintain. Ironically, in trying to escape the limitations of Kantian foundationalism while avoiding the monolithic absolutes of German idealism, it was to Kant's theory of practical reason that Coleridge turned.

In an entry to his notebooks of 1803, Coleridge quotes Kant's assertion in the *Groundwork to the Metaphysics of Morals* that '[t]he Will is none other than the practical reason', countering that though '[m]y will & *I* seem perfect Synonimes [. . .] I do not feel this perfect synonimousness in Reason & the Wille [. . .] Again and again, he is a wretched Psychologist.'

A more accurate reflection upon this exchange, however, would be: again and again, Coleridge misunderstands Kant. For Kant did *not* think that will and reason were perfectly synonymous: if he had, there would have been little call to write a *Groundwork* or second *Critique*. Indeed, later in the same passage, he affirms that it is precisely because the will is not completely determined by the theoretical reason that *practical* reason is required to issue reason with unconditional commands to action.[67] But at this stage at least, Coleridge was either unaware of, or unwilling to accept such a distinction within reason, presuming, as it did, a corresponding distinction between noumenal and phenomenal realms. Nonetheless, his identification of the will with the spontaneity of the '*I*' led him to the further consideration that sometimes, such as in geometrical constructions, 'I seem to *will* the Truth, as well as to perceive it. Think of this! – '[68] It was this linkage of will with epistemic *creation* which he was later to pursue further. Accordingly, in a notebook entry which was to become a draft for a passage of Chapter 12 in *Biographia*, Coleridge finds that the absolute ground of knowledge must be 'A PRINCIPLE, *in which* BEING AND THOUGHT COINCIDE', and that the same principle must be based in an 'Act of Will' or 'the SUM or I AM,' which, making itself its own object, becomes self-consciousness, or 'the original and perpetual Epiphany'.[69]

The transparency of the self through the spontaneous will thus becomes the keystone of the *Biographia*. It supports, among other things, Coleridge's further endeavours to demonstrate human teleological reality, and reject 'that *subordination of final to efficient causes in the human being*, which flows of necessity from the assumption, that the will, and with the will all acts of thought and attention, are parts and products of this blind mechanism, instead of being distinct powers, whose function it is to controul, determine, and modify the phantasmal chaos of association'.[70] It is also identified with the fundamental freedom of the self-conscious spirit; a freedom which, again, 'must be assumed as a *ground* of philosophy, and can never be deduced from it'.[71] However, the idea of a will which was at once spontaneous or creative and perfectly transparent to itself was not a stable one.

In this, Coleridge was experiencing the mixed influence of Schelling. The text which *Biographia* leans on most heavily – the 1800 *System of Transcendental Idealism* – represents a pivotal point in Schelling's thought, a transitional stage when he was moving towards a more Spinoza-influenced view of the absolute identity of consciousness and being, but had not yet entirely freed himself from the Fichtean position that complete self-consciousness or reality could only be achieved via practical

philosophy, or by the exertion of will. As he puts it in the *System*, the unconditional ' "*I am*" ', which is the infinite proposition grounding the unity of knowledge and existence, 'cannot be sought in any kind of *thing*; for [. . .] that which is the *principle* of all knowledge can in no way become an object of knowledge originally, or in itself, but only *through a specific act of freedom*'.[72] This echoes Fichte's position. Though in his 'Second Introduction to the *Wissenshaftslehre*', Fichte maintains that, rather than Kant's experience of spatio-temporal reality, it is the possibility of intellectual intuition which is essential for philosophy, he adds that '[i]t is, however, an entirely different undertaking to confirm [. . .] the *belief* in the reality of this intellectual intuition [. . .]'. As he further explains, '[t]he only way in which this can be accomplished is by exhibiting the ethical law within us [. . .]'.[73] However, it was this practical resolution of the contradictions contained in his theory of reality as the act of self-construction through a process of self-positing that so dissatisfied Schelling and Coleridge.[74] What was more, it failed adequately to explain *being* as such, or how the 'I' could be *in* itself, rather than merely posited *for* itself.

The seeds of Schelling's rebellion are already evident in the 1800 *System*. He demonstrates his concern for that which lies beyond the bounds of consciousness in the inclusion, in the act of intellectual intuition, of the 'real' or unconscious world, together with Fichte's 'ideal' or conscious world.[75] Thus, though at this stage he agrees with Fichte that the two can only be united practically, in 'the *absolute act of will*', and not intellectually, as this is 'a thing utterly impossible through freedom', the resolution itself is not merely that of self with itself, but that of self with nature or the objective world. Furthermore, he suggests that art might present such an intuition of the absolute, thereby completing a progression 'from simple stuff to organization (whereby unconsciously productive nature reverts into itself), and from thence by reason and choice up to the supreme union of freedom and necessity in art (whereby consciously productive nature encloses and completes itself)'.[76] Thus, art becomes 'at once the only true and eternal organ and document of philosophy' in that it 'achieves the impossible, namely to resolve an infinite opposition in a finite product'.[77]

Schelling's preoccupation with the unconditioned as resting in the fundamental identity of unconscious productive nature or reality and a conscious, subjective ideality was to take him further away from Fichte in his revisions for the second, 1803 edition of his *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* (originally published in 1797). In this, Schelling's move towards a more neo-Platonic notion of the absolute resulted in the excision of

Fichte's dialectical method and its replacement with a view of nature as the emergence or emanation into difference of an original unity. The Identity Philosophy, as it came to be known, was driven by a hierarchy of 'potencies', or degrees of difference-in-unity, through which finite things evolve. As he puts it, '[t]he absolute, in the eternal cognitive act, expands itself into the particular, merely so that, in the absolute embodiment of its infinity into the finite itself, it may take back the latter into itself, and in it both are one act'.[78]

Immediately noticeable as absent from this picture, however, is any constitutive role for either will or art. The Identity Philosophy, indeed, has no room for them. Yet it is important to see how the priorities of the 1800 *System* have led into this, and how Coleridge never gave up the central project of that work insofar as he sought to demonstrate the origin of truth in an unconditioned Absolute – the alternative (to accept the existence of reality beyond consciousness which was altogether noumenal) being unacceptable. Herein, however, lay his most intractable problem. Schelling, the further he drew away from the practical philosophy of Fichte, found the business of explaining the *progressiveness* of consciousness, or how the absolute translated itself into finitude, evermore tasking. This, as has been seen, was one of the principal causes behind Coleridge's later disenchantment: the self-identical absolute threatened to revert back into an unwelcome Spinozism, a new kind of global logic. Consequently, Coleridge, unable to follow Schelling into dark identity, but having accepted (against Kant's advice) that philosophy must find the *unconditioned* as a foundation, and (against Fichte's advice) that this lay in the union of the self with a metaphysical other which was not just a postulation of the self, was left stranded. His metaphysical theory of Absolute Will should thus be seen as an attempt at a compromise between Fichtean freedom and Schellingian absolutism. But try as Coleridge might, volition and foundational *a priori* knowledge would not intersect.

It was in the end the leeway provided by his early Fichteanism which had permitted Schelling the space to assign crucial epistemic functions to will and art in the 1800 *System*, but this openness and lack of closure was also the root of his dissatisfaction with any philosophical system which attempted to retain Kant's distinction between the practical and the theoretical; an attitude he shared with Coleridge. Though later Schelling would recognize this tension as a fundamental heteronomy in human nature, and recast identity's absolute ground as itself a symptom of an inescapable but impossible philosophical *desire* for grounds, at this

point it produced in both writers the same pressure on such concepts as knowledge and freedom. Schelling realized that intellectual intuition 'must come about through a type of knowing utterly different from ordinary knowledge. This knowing must be [. . .] absolutely free [. . .].'[79] It rests upon a principle which 'borders on *practical* philosophy, since it is simply a *demand*, and on *theoretical*, since its demand is for a *purely theoretical construction*'.[80] Though not identical, this exotic 'knowing' is close to what has been identified above as Coleridge's idea of 'wisdom'; that is, as incorporating both a cognizing reason and an active, creative will; as being at once rational *and* voluntary, the solution to Jacobi's self-alienating *salto mortale*. It was the endeavour to reconcile this pragmatic, aesthetic sense of 'knowing', both with an epistemology of *a priori* foundations and an all-encompassing metaphysics, which tests much of Coleridge's later work. For dialectic and Kantian foundationalism both had a sting in the tail. The first offered an escape from knowledge as mere representation, and, followed ironically or teleologically, a holistic alternative to the rationalistic constraints of empiricism and transcendentalism alike. However, at the same time it had a tendency in Coleridge, like Hegel, to close down any notion of an open-textured, creative dimension to experience, making it the exclusive property of philosophy. The second, thanks to the psychologistic interpretation of synthetic *a priori* propositions shared by Kant and Coleridge, was associated with a theory of transcendental idealism which in turn opened up the aesthetic and practical reason as compensatory, ineffable fields of experience and feeling. Yet the price of this, infamously, was the alienation of these realms from knowledge.

This brings us back to Kant, and practical reason. For Kant, the epistemologically conservative result of the critique of reason had a positive value in that it allowed man's practical being the freedom to experience the absolute in a moral (non-cognitive) way. As he puts it in the *Critique of Pure Reason*:

> So far, therefore, as our Critique limits speculative reason, it is indeed *negative*; but since it thereby removes an obstacle which stands in the way of the employment of practical reason, nay threatens to destroy it, it has in reality a *positive* and very important use.[81]

Kant's idea is that free will, *qua* practical reason, is not compatible with a totalizing metaphysical system, or global logic, of the order that rationalist philosophy had undertaken in the past. At some point, theoretical reason had to know its own limits, and give way. The same non-conceptual space won back by the critical philosophy prevents

the reflective judgement of aesthetics and teleology from being overdetermined by logic, and permits genius the freedom to create ineffable aesthetic ideas. Kant's transcendental account of synthetic *a priori* knowledge permits a creativity in morals and art in a way which preserves the autonomy of these discourses by drawing a line beyond which philosophy's insight into them ceases. But Coleridge's metaphysical assertion of a creative yet complete 'Absolute Will' as the ground of all identity and true condition of Schelling's synthetic 'I Am' effectively closes down such a space. Yet Coleridge further believed that by marrying will and reason he could go a 'step higher' than Schelling, and retain the progressiveness and freedom of Kant's practical philosophy, while affirming the unconditional absolute as metaphysically demonstrable.[82] In this respect he saw himself as advancing on Schelling by accounting for the possibility of creation within a necessary order or unity.

Coleridge, however, needed Kant's conception of practical reason for his voluntaristic purposes. For example, in *Aids to Reflection* he saw it as a condition of redemption that the human will was *not* perfectly coincident with theoretical reason, as only unfallen beings could exist in such a state. Yet he was then left with the paradox of how will – a creative force which transcended nature and was itself supposedly beyond all comprehension – could voluntarily determine its *own* law. Was it, in the end, necessary that the will be guided by reason? Kant's separation of practical reason (will) and theoretical reason made sense within transcendental method. Coleridge's disjunction of the two, however, in view of his commitment to the identity of reason and will in Absolute Will, stems from a theology of human will as fallen. Philosophically, the distinction between the *spontaneity* of human spirit, or 'the essential character by which WILL is *opposed* to Nature, as *Spirit*, and raised *above* Nature as *self-determining* Spirit', in that 'it is a power of *originating* an act or state',[83] and the *rational* spirit, or the 'capacity of acknowledging the Moral Law', has already become blurred. Thus, Coleridge's claim that a perfectly rational will works in 'free obedience of the Law', appears as a tautology, and echoes Schelling's absolute identification of freedom and necessity.[84] The law *known* by reason is at once 'the Law of the Spirit, the Law of Freedom, [and] the Divine Will [...]'.[85]

This voluntaristic/logical friction in Coleridge's thought is echoed in his own view of his role as philosopher and teacher. Coleridge frequently expressed the Jacobian view that no one could come to a comprehension of the central truths of the theosophy without an *act* of faith born of will. In *Aids to Reflection*, though he insists that '[w]hatever is against right reason,

that no faith can oblige us to believe', the aphoristic structure – indeed, the title itself – tells of this voluntaristic outlook.[86] The author acts as guide, rather than instructor or interpreter. Similarly, in the 1818 *Friend*, he had protested that his wish was 'to convey not instruction merely, but fundamental instruction; not so much to shew my Reader this or that fact, as to kindle his own torch for him, and leave it to himself to chuse the particular objects, which he might wish to examine by its light'.[87] Nonetheless, Coleridge continues to display some uncertainty about the precise extent to which truth is to be reached by an effort of will, or a rational grasp of principle. For example, in the *Statesman's Manual*, he had argued that 'We (that is, the human race) LIVE BY FAITH', and that faith 'is scarcely less than identical with its own being. *Implicitè*, it is the COPULA – it contains the *possibility* – of every position, to which there exists any correspondence in reality. It is itself, therefore, the realizing principle, the spiritual substratum of the whole complex body of truths.'[88] In *The Friend*, however, he maintains that 'a man's principles, on which he grounds his Hope and his Faith, are the life of his life', and that 'faith without principles is but a flattering phrase for wilful positiveness, or fanatical bodily sensation [...]'.[89] Later, he attempts to resolve the problem by asking 'what is faith, but the personal realization of the reason by its union with the will?'[90]

The dilemma for Coleridge, then, is not whether reason might be assisted or 'aided' by will, or vice versa, but whether the two might be *unified* in a productive (that is, creative) way. Can faith know its own purpose completely and still be faith? In a fragment on first postulates in philosophy dated between 1818 and 1819, he wonders: 'Is Intelligence the *same* as the Will?', only to answer 'No – yet one with it, & involved in the Idea – .'[91] In an associated fragment on the will, however, he sees the possibility of a vicious circularity looming. If Will in general is defined, as Coleridge defines it, as '[t]hat which is essentially causative of reality', then the question arises that if the very definition of cause presupposes Will, how can the Will be defined as self-causing? For Coleridge, this means that 'the Will is neither abstracted from intelligence [but] nor can Intelligence be conceived of as not grounded and involved in the Will [...]'. Coleridge's discomfort at this point, however, is evident, as he realizes that a *demonstration* of such a distinction-within-indifference would be just as question-begging on behalf of reason as the strategy of referring the matter to faith would be on the part of Will. The result is a dualism of 'two kinds of reality'; namely, that level of being which has a symbiotic relationship with Will, in which the two are mutually implicated

(for example, God); and that level which is conditional upon Will, but which Will does not itself presuppose (for example, time). However, 'between these two there must needs be [...] a transitional state' and the possibility of 'a change or contingent alterity'. This transitional state or contingent alterity is in turn used by Coleridge to explain how human reason may share common ground with the Will, for given that 'whatever is a law of the adequate solution of a part must be an organ of invention for other parts', then reasoning itself becomes a witness to the principle of the indifference of knowledge and the creativity of human will in that 'there can be no invention without discovery[,] no discovery which does not contain the germ of an invention'[.][92] From another perspective, however, the notion of contingent alterity perfectly expresses Coleridge's dilemma at this point. Because he is trained to think of knowledge and reality foundationally, that is, in terms of 'grounds', he is forever struggling to reign back pure will within the bounds of knowledge, even when his commitment to faith demands that will should exceed it.[93]

Thus, in the 1818 *Friend*, and later in *Aids to Reflection*, reason is bifurcated in such a way as not only to establish its superiority to understanding, but to preserve the unity or indifference which was fundamental to its *distinctness* from Will. However, amidst all the conceptual acrobatics, reason begins to show the strain of the different demands being placed upon it. In *The Friend*, Coleridge concurs with Jacobi that reason must have 'the same relation to spiritual objects, the Universal, the Eternal, and the Necessary, as the eye bears to material and contingent phænomena' – adding that 'it is an organ identical with its appropriate [super-sensuous] objects [...]'.[94] In this sense, reason is completely at one with Will: it is, as he characterizes it in *Aids to Reflection*, 'the *practical* Reason'; 'the fountain of Ideas and the *Light* of the Conscience [...]'. Reason has an alternate application, however, and with that, different objects of attention. Thus Coleridge notes that '[c]ontemplated distinctively in reference to *formal* (or abstract) truth, it is the *speculative* Reason [...]'.[95] This appears to correspond to the second sense which Coleridge discusses in *The Friend* as 'arising out of the former [i.e. practical reason] indeed, but less definite, and more exposed to misconception'. What he intends by this is essentially the idea of the understanding working under logical rule, or 'the understanding considered as using the Reason, so far as by the organ of Reason only we possess the ideas of the Necessary and the Universal [...]'.[96] Accordingly, reason comes to re-enact the role of imagination in *Biographia* in that it faces in two directions at once: assuming a simultaneously practical and theoretical view on the world.

And like that faculty, it testifies to Coleridge's simultaneous indifference to, and intense preoccupation with knowledge.

The anxiety which Coleridge's carefully honed epistemological indifference attempts to settle is one which betrays a darker undercurrent in Coleridge's own thought, one which was later to disclose itself with less inhibition in Schopenhauer's philosophy. Relinquishing entirely the idealist's totem of a grounding for thought, a stable staple in the chain of knowledge, Schopenhauer affirmed, meant embracing the corollaries of a will which was nothing but pure activity. As such, just as it had no ground, will had no purpose or goal, other than its own movement. An invisible, universal force, it was not so much something to be revered, as that to which one must be resigned. In the post-Kantian concept of dynamic will Coleridge was swimming into a disturbing stream of Romantic thought; the idea of a power which was blind to morality and teleology and which would not, as Schopenhauer insisted, be settled into an easy partnership with reason. For Schopenhauer, accepting the contradictions in human life meant resigning oneself to the fact that 'only a blind, not a seeing, will could put itself in the position in which we find ourselves'.[97]

There are countless examples of Coleridge elevating reason or intelligence above will, only to reassert the primacy of will a few moments later, or vice versa. The paradoxes inherent in his attempt to reconcile foundational epistemology with an ontology of Absolute Will were, indeed, considerable, but this did not deter him. Here, as so often, his relationship to Kant is pivotal. In the Preface to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant had argued that 'even the *assumption* [...] of *God*, *freedom*, and *immortality* is not permissible unless at the same time speculative reason be deprived of its pretensions to transcendent insight [...]'. Thus, he claimed, he had 'found it necessary to deny *knowledge*, in order to make room for *faith*'.[98] Indeed, it has been observed that it is precisely this aspect of Kant's teaching; the argument for morality and the existence of God from the standpoint of practical reason, to which Coleridge returns in the post-*Biographia* philosophy. In the *Philosophical Lectures* of 1818–19, he asserts that what entitles Kant to the title of a philosopher is not his analysis of mind, but his claim in the first *Critique* that the will is a higher constituent of man's being, and the fact that 'from this he deduced a direct moral necessity for the belief, or the faith of reason' in God.[99] And yet despite this, Coleridge still does not seem to have understood the significance or conditions of Kant's sense of practical reason. Soon after that comment he is misattributing to the same

thinker a definition of philosophy which is entirely of his own making, and which is based upon a version of his own identification of will and reason in 'wisdom'. Knowledge, he explains,

> may be well comprized in two terms. The one <is> philology, that is to say all the pursuits in which the intellect of man is concerned, in which he has a desire of arriving at that which the Logos or intellectual power can communicate; the other is philosophy, or that which comprises the Logos, and including it, at the same time subordinates it to the Will, and thus combining <*with*> the other, is philosophy, the love of wisdom with the wisdom of love.[100]

This is Coleridge's, not Kant's, divided vision of knowledge, a knowledge which fears alienation from love, or the *lived* experience of human value, and yet needs the parental epistemic authority of the foundational logos, all the while subordinating this to a domesticated 'Will'. What is significant here is how despite all his efforts Coleridge invariably falls back on dualisms. Like English Romantic prose in general, Coleridge's writing insists on indifference (or as he might put it, distinction without division) at the very point where difference and division is most clearly betrayed, and at its deepest this division is between 'the love of wisdom and the wisdom of love', or the view of knowledge as foundational to existence, and that of knowledge as itself just another 'form of life'. Yet the two were not happy companions.

This ambivalence in Coleridge's position, even in the later writing, demonstrates how far from Kant he remained: the withdrawal of his support from Schelling in the face of what he perceived to be the Spinozan threat of the Identity Philosophy did not change this. In fact, what Coleridge was doing in the later part of the second decade was casting around for a means of justifying his own voluntaristic absolutism. In a notebook entry of 1825, reflecting upon the deficiencies of Schelling's account of polarity within original consciousness, he writes: 'How incomparably more simple to begin with the Will.'[101] Yet the question then became: begin what? and how? Certainly not a transcendental argument: Kant's practical reason, while it guaranteed the sovereignty of religious or spiritual experience, was the product of an unacceptable transcendental idealism. Coleridge came to believe instead that if voluntarism was to be philosophically but non-reductively explicable then some kind of dialectical procedure had to be invoked. Here the concept of 'alterity within indifference' reveals a further dimension to Coleridge's theosophy: one which complicates his thought still further, and draws him closer to Hegel.[102]

DIALECTICS AND THE 'INEFFABLE NAME'

In his effort to explain the nature of the progressiveness of reality and the creativeness of the Absolute within a conceptual framework supplied by philosophy, many commentators have noticed shared characteristics between Coleridge and Hegel. J. H. Muirhead argued that Coleridge's adoption of a new 'triadic logic', which attempted 'to carry the dialectic of Kant's thought a step farther and turn criticism against the Critic', meant that Hegel's system 'had far more points of agreement than of conflict with his own' – though Coleridge himself seems to have had little interest in the philosopher.[103] More recently, both Gerald McNiece and Mary Anne Perkins have made the same connection.[104] But it is Kathleen Wheeler who has argued most powerfully on behalf of the view of Coleridge's thought as part of a general tide in philosophy which allies him with Hegelianism. His opposition to dualisms of any kind; his concern with the organic growth and progress of 'unified knowing and being' over and above exhaustive explanations of the world *qua* object; his rejection of noumenal reality, and thus any notion of a metaphysical 'given'; and his pioneering use of the immanent logic of dialectical method, it is claimed, all mark out Coleridge as a fellow-traveller of Hegel.[105]

Others, however, have denied that Coleridge ever managed to break free from the Kantian orbit; or that, if he did, he consistently lapsed into muddle and contradiction. Most famously, René Wellek criticized Coleridge's failure to see 'that nothing of the Kantian epistemology can be preserved in a new system',[106] and claimed that as a consequence, Coleridge's dialectics amount to nothing more than 'an empty mysticism of numbers'.[107] Lovejoy, meanwhile, maintained that Coleridge's 'quasi-Hegelian' streak was 'hopelessly at variance with his doctrine of individual freedom [...]'.[108] Nonetheless, the tendency of Coleridge scholarship over the past thirty years or so has been to assume a more or less defensive posture in its analysis of the tensions in his thought.[109] However, the criticisms of those such as Wellek and Lovejoy can be seen as responding to a real ambivalence in Coleridge's thought, one which represents the contradictory legacy of Hume and post-Kantian philosophy. The dilemma which Kant left philosophy was whether, on one hand, to accept the transcendental critique, with its division of phenomena and noumena, and perhaps to enlist art to provide a symbolic, though negative and asymptotic representation of the creative Absolute, or, on the other, to erase the distinction and accept that philosophy as a

universal organon could encompass, either in intellectual intuition (as in, for example, the Schelling of the 1800 *System*), or through a conceptual process of dialectical analysis (as in Hegel), the absolute idea, or reality in its completeness.[110] At the same time, another strand of thought, running through Jacobi, Schopenhauer and the later, 'Positivist' Schelling, saw no getting round Hume's scepticism on epistemology's own terms, and sought instead to move the discussion on to questions of how life should be lived, of how we might deal with faith and desire and the impossibility of happiness in a way which was indifferent to the problem of the 'grounds of knowledge', treating it as a dead question. Coleridge's thought at different times occupies each of these perspectives in his ongoing endeavour to reconcile religion and philosophy non-reductively through the voluntaristic absolutism of the *Logos*, whereby creative will and human knowledge or reason were brought together under the authority of Absolute Will. Coleridge's complex philosophical (or rather, theosophical) method, then, is instructive with regard to the tensions he encountered between attempting to fit the 'faith of reason' into the 'concrete universal', and resisting the temptation to do so.

Even though the existence of the *Logic* alone demonstrates Coleridge's commitment to epistemological foundationalism and the need for 'grounds' to knowledge, he was always uncomfortable with the traditional picture of experience as a kind of confrontation between inert data and an active mind. From his very first reading of Kant, Coleridge expressed dissatisfaction with the manner in which (as he saw it) Kant proposed that the matter of perception was partly 'given' to experience by the manifold of sensation. In a marginal note on the first page of his copy of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he registers, among the '[s]truggles felt, not arguments objected', some doubt as to '[h]ow can that be called ein mannigfaltiges 'ὑλὴ' ["a confused manifold"[111]], which yet contains in itself the ground, why I apply one category to it rather than another? [. . .] The mind does not resemble an Eolian Harp [. . .] but rather, as far as Objects are concerned, a violin [. . .] played on by a musician of Genius'. In a note on the second page, apparently written some time later, he repeats the same point, which by this time has become much more of an objection of principle. Thus, he asks Kant:

> What do you mean by a *fact*, an empiric Reality, which alone can give solidity (Inhalt) to our Conceptions? – It seems from many passages, that this indispensable Test is itself previously manufactured by this very conceptive Power – and that the whole not of our own making is the mere sensation of a mere Manifold – in short, mere influx of motion, to use a physical metaphor. – I apply the Categorical forms to a Tree – well! but first *what* is this tree?[112]

Given Kant's own psychological rendering of his transcendental argument, Coleridge can scarcely be faulted for finding the causal paradoxes of his account rather difficult to swallow. Besides, Kant's discussion of the sensory manifold already made too great a concession to empiricism, and ran contrary to Coleridge's own remedy: that of demonstrating the unity of subject and object. As he puts it in his *Logic*, itself supposedly an exposition of the critical philosophy: 'it is, a demonstrable truth, that the human mind is the compass in which the laws of all outward things are revealed as the dips and declinations [. . .]'.[113]

The view of knowledge as a relation between things, shaped by 'physical metaphor', meant that the compulsion towards certainty became a search for a communicable Absolute. Thus, Coleridge's chief concern at this point, as has been seen, was to animate Schelling's indifferent or self-identical Absolute consciousness by uncovering within it a principle of growth and differentiation which remained prior to being itself, and thereby a transition from the Absolute Will to the communicative logos, or from divine to human knowing. Such a principle, however, demanded a corresponding method. One possibility in this respect, of which Coleridge would have been aware, was the procedure of Fichte, who, by endeavouring to explain the progress of the 'I' towards self-identity, had converted Kant's antinomies of reason into an alternating process which involved both the '*antithetic* procedure; commonly described as the *analytical*' (or the method of finding opposition in equation) and the '*synthetic* procedure' (or the discovery in opposites of the respect in which they are alike). These two procedures were, Fichte found, logically co-dependent, and led to a dialectical movement of discovering opposition by analysis, and synthesizing it, until irreconcilable opposites were reached, taking the enquiry beyond the realms of the theoretical and into the practical.[114] Though Coleridge remained unhappy with the separation of these realms, Fichte's description of the '*antithetic*' procedure coincided with his view of the manner in which reality developed from the self-differentiating, creative potential of the pre-dialectical Absolute. This became the structure of the logos, the initiative or beginning word, which, in turn, informed Coleridge's thesis of desynonymy: the theory that the natural growth and progression of language, and therefore knowledge, was determined by the discovery of difference in terms which were previously considered synonymous.[115]

However, though this provided Coleridge with a metaphysical apparatus for explaining the progress of the Absolute out of pre-existence and into particularity, it did not quite do the necessary work in terms of *accounting* for how the Absolute set being and knowledge into motion; a

task which at one point in his career had led Schelling to an uncomfortable view of the Absolute as at once unified, divided, *and* the indifference of unity and division.[116] And yet Coleridge needed a *justification* of his providential theology of of knowledge, and thus a broader metaphysical context for his claim in the 1818 *Friend* that knowledge grew, (and therefore changed) but in a law-like way, and that consequently 'all Method supposes A PRINCIPLE OF UNITY WITH PROGRESSION [...]'.[117] It was this problem which brings him to extend the *Biographia*'s nascent concern with polarity into a more comprehensive involvement with dialectical method.

In a notebook entry of 1819, for instance, Coleridge proposes that 'Receptivity [...] at one pole, and Agency [...] at the other, are the opposite states in which the *one* Activity [...] which is the Substance of both, and their identity, reveals itself.' These twin opposites he calls 'the Poles [...] in which THE ONE reveals its Being in two opposite yet correlative Modes of Existence [...]'. Meanwhile, the 'ONE' itself, 'which is the sole *reality* of Both, and in both is *pre*supposed, I call the *Prothesis* [...] or the *Identity*, or the *Radical* [...]'.[118] He makes the same point rather more lucidly three years later in an annotation to Kant's 1800 *Logic*, in which he argues that '[o]pposites must be one in a suppositum – or a Thesis = Antithesis in the Prothesis. Two terms, that have no equation in a common Root, cannot stand in opposition to each other.'[119] The 'Prothetic' philosophy could overcome the theoretical limitations of Fichte's practical, antithetical method, while resisting the collapse into Schelling's imponderable Identity. Yet despite his conviction that polar logic would enable him to escape from the Spinozism he saw lurking in the Schellingian system, it did not really constitute an advance on Schelling's own assertion of the different 'potences' of the Identical Absolute. What was required was an explanation of the logic of the progress of the indifferent diversity of the Absolute into contingent being.

One of Coleridge's most sophisticated attempts at presenting such a schema is outlined in *Aids to Reflection*, a work which holds in a kind of torsion the competing claims of his foundationalism and epistemological indifference, as well as the dialectical para-philosophy designed to overcome the gulf between these. As has been seen, in the 'Aphorisms on that which is indeed Spiritual Religion', Coleridge repeats his conviction that theoretical reason can only have a '*negative* voice' in truth, and that accordingly 'it must be the *Practical* Reason of Man, comprehending the Will, the Conscience, the Moral Being with its inseparable Interests and Affections – that Reason, namely, which is the Organ of *Wisdom*, and

(as far as Man is concerned) the Source of living and actual Truths' which constitutes the true theosophy.[120] At the same time, he constructs an elaborate schematism for the different moments of the Absolute, whereby, as well as the basic Prothesis/Thesis/Antithesis triad, the notion of the 'Mesothesis', or Idea, is included as the productive point between Thesis and Antithesis; and 'Synthesis', as the fifth element of actual creation in the world.[121] Together, these moments constitute the 'Noetic Pentad', the source of which – the '*Identity*' or Prothesis – he takes, after the Pythagorean geometry, as a point 'transcendent to all production, which it caused but did not partake in [...]. This was the Punctum invisibile, et presuppositum: and in this way the Pythagoreans guarded against the error of Pantheism [...].' 'Taken *absolutely*', he continues, 'this finds its application in the Supreme Being alone, the Pythagorean TETRACTYS; the INEFFABLE NAME, to which no Image dare be attached', but which might be generalized, in relative terms, under Thesis, Mesothesis, Antithesis and Synthesis.[122]

But the gulf between ineffability and dialectic was a difficult one for philosophy to bridge. In particular, it meant the absence of any logic or principle of *movement* between each metaphysical moment in the 'pentad'. In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel himself had stated (thus far, in agreement with Coleridge) that 'the *triadic form* must not be regarded as scientific when it is reduced to a lifeless schema', as it was in Kant.[123] Yet this of course meant that *all* postulated essences had to be overcome by dialectic:

> Science dare only organize itself by the life of the Notion itself. The determinateness, which is taken from the schema and externally attached to an existent thing, is, in Science, the self-moving soul of the realized content. The movement of a being that immediately is, consists partly in becoming an other than itself, and thus becoming its own immanent content; partly in taking back into itself this unfolding [of its content] or this existence of it, i.e. in making *itself* into a moment, and simplifying itself into something determinate. In the former movement, *negativity* is the differentiating and positing of *existence*; in this return into self, it is the becoming of the *determinate simplicity*.[124]

In consequence, existence just *is* 'self-identical determinateness'.[125] It is entirely relational, a product of the notion's estrangement, and return to itself. This is the method which Schelling saw as giving a merely negative account of the world, ignoring the irreducible positiveness of being. Coleridge's scheme, however, lacks even the negative dynamic of alienation and return of the Hegelian triad because of his postulation of an Absolute prior to articulated existence. Instead, it is organized according to his own idea of grammatical completeness, which itself

stems from his theory of the unity of language and being in the logos. Thus, the Prothesis corresponds to the infinite 'I am'; the Thesis to the 'thing', or object; the Antithesis to 'I act'; the Mesothesis to 'to act', and Synthesis to 'acting'.[126]

The reasons for this tension in Coleridge's logic stem directly from his attempt to harmonize a trinity of post-Kantian philosophical models: epistemological foundationalism, voluntaristic absolutism and dialectical idealism. This division of commitments has troubling consequences for his dialectical metaphysics. Like Schelling, Coleridge moves *from*, rather than, like Hegel, *towards* an Absolute ground, thereby immediately raising the question of how absoluteness can be creative (and therefore, simultaneously, non-absoluteness). Moreover, for Coleridge the Identity of the Prothesis is beyond conceptualization; it is '*transcendent* to all production' (emphasis added), or the 'Punctum invisibile, et presuppositum'. Consequently, it is 'INEFFABLE'. But this is precisely the kind of postulating of noumenal essences that Hegelian dialectic is designed to overcome. It was a central concern of Hegel's that the Absolute could be articulated: there was nothing worth knowing that could not be known rationally, *i.e.* in terms of a system within which knowledge of the Absolute was *immanent*. On his view, '[t]he True is the whole. But the whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development. Of the Absolute it must be said that it is essentially a *result*, that only in the *end* is it what it truly is [...] the spontaneous becoming of itself.'[127]

Coleridge, however, was never wholeheartedly a coherentist about knowledge, much less about truth. His commitment, amply demonstrated in the *Logic* as elsewhere, to foundational first principles of knowledge, principles which *grounded* cognition and experience, show that he held a fundamentally linear view of epistemic justification which jarred with both the dialectical and voluntaristic axes of his thought. He may have discarded the *empirical* 'given' of Kant's sensory manifold, but he could not easily reject the epistemological 'other', whether that was the synthetic *a priori* proposition, the transcendent divinity or the 'Trans-Alpine' provinces of *Biographia*.[128]

Coleridge's attachment to epistemological and metaphysical grounds paradoxically meant that his embryonic decentred 'para-philosophy' of dialectic, having fallen foul of these foundations, hardened into an 'anti-philosophy' of epistemic indifference. As with Jacobi, Schelling and Schopenhauer, the flight from foundations itself betrayed a repressed sentimental longing for knowledge lost. Thus, Coleridge's further attempt to pragmatize knowing by cultivating a central role for will and

the 'faith of reason' merely served to emphasize how bottomless these foundations were, so intensifying the sense of epistemic loss. Whereas the voluntaristic turn would lead Pierce, James and Dewey to abandon the traditional construct of 'knowledge' as certainty prior to action in favour of a result-orientated, open-ended and creative approach to experience, the Janiform nature of Coleridge's thought results in the very absence of foundation being marked as a foundational mystery, the 'ineffable' Prothesis. For Dewey, with foundationalism there was 'no place for genuine discovery, or creative novelty':

> As soon as and whenever it is assumed that the office of knowledge is to lay hold of existence which is prior to and apart from the operations of inquiry and their consequences, one or other of these errors or some combination of both of them is inevitable. Either logical characters belonging to the operations of effective inquiry are read into antecedent existence; or the world as known is reduced to a pulverized multiplicity of atomically isolated elements, a Kantian 'manifold'; or some machinery is devised, whether of an 'idealistic' or 'realistic' sort, to bring the two together. When, on the other hand, it is seen that the object of *knowledge* is prospective and eventual, being the result of inferential operations which redispose what was antecedently existent, the subject-matters called respectively sensible and conceptual are seen to be complementary in effective direction of inquiry to an intelligible conclusion.[129]

With Coleridge, however, creativity always hovers between being something which needs to be justified, and that which, as with Dewey, itself displaces linear explanation. Coleridge's thinking then, internalizes a number of divisions. On the most general level, this cleavage occurs between, on one hand, the imperatives of foundational epistemology and, on the other, para-philosophical and anti-philosophical forms of epistemological indifference. In this, at least, he shares his predicament with Wordsworth and Hazlitt.

CONCLUSION

Described this way, Coleridge's predicament is one which many philosophers today might acknowledge as more or less inevitable. In Coleridge's case, however, the foundationalist compulsion to ground our knowledge of the world vies with his Christian reverence for an 'invisible' nature, which in turn drove his Jacobian concern that the aspirations of knowledge, and thus of philosophy, be curtailed. Unlike Jacobi, however, in Coleridge knowledge and anti-knowledge are momentarily bound in a dialectical relationship whereby the communicative Logos emerges from

Absolute Will. Yet in the very process of articulating this relationship Coleridge's therapeutic, non-apodeictic para-philosophy becomes a *knowing* philosophy. Indeed, the problem of philosophical investigation for Coleridge is that it can not disclose new areas of experience and reality, but not without ceasing to *be* philosophy. Wherever he opens up the circle of being, the line of knowing is already present, waiting to close it down. In this way, the outcome of his attempt 'to reduce all knowledges into harmony', is knowledge itself.

Conclusion: life without knowledge

> While we are reasoning concerning life, life is gone [. . .].
> David Hume, 'The Sceptic'[1]

When he urged every enlightened reader to commit to the flames those volumes of 'sophistry and illusion' which contained neither abstract nor experimental reasoning, Hume was aware that such an injunction would precipitate the division of value from fact, of what mattered deeply to us from what could be known by us.[2] Henceforth, the choice confronting speculative minds would not so much concern the nature of the philosophy they followed, as whether philosophy itself was to be preferred over 'life', or the domain of experience which lay outwith Hume's forked epistemology. Indeed, it seemed to many that epistemology had only itself to blame for its predicament. Philosophy in general, as Lamb observed of the 'Humeian' in particular, had become inhuman.[3] If it was to overcome its own sceptical alienation from value, the question which philosophy faced was: must knowledge *know itself* completely in order to count as knowledge? Looked at from a slightly different perspective, this question becomes: would such absolute knowledge even be *knowledge*? This eighteenth and early nineteenth-century problem is the converse of that perennial paradox of late twentieth-century theory and historicism, much of which assumes an epistemic grounding through the very process of never permitting that ground to settle. While the modern critique silently attests to its unconditioned consciousness through its ceaseless examination of its own contingent conditions, the 'knowledge' of epistemology ultimately aspires to groundlessness; which is to say, a condition beyond itself, life, in which the dualism of knower and known, thought and being, is annulled.

Indeed, the two discourses face the same dilemma from opposite sides, in that both are finally forced to confront the figure of a ground which is impossible but inescapable. In the eighteenth century, naturalism, the

first sustained philosophical response to Hume, internalizes this ambivalence. In particular, Reid's defence of a pre-epistemic common sense slides between positing a naturalized but *un*knowing belief and a belief which itself grounds a rehabilitated knowledge. For the Romantics, such a settlement was poor compensation for the freedom lost by binding the mind to nature. The only other immediate route around the impasse of knowledge seemed to be the supernatural road, ascending to the apocalyptic triumph over nature by faith and will, the path suggested by Jacobi's declaration that '[t]here are instincts in man, and there is a law in him, that unceasingly commands him *to prove himself mightier than the nature that surrounds him and pervades him from all sides*'.[4] But as Schelling observed, by quitting the field supernatural unknowing merely submits to the rationalist conception of knowledge it is meant to transcend. Consequently, thought given over to will and faith, 'instead of really attacking the knowledge which displeases it, *completely* gives way to it, by withdrawing into not-knowing [...]'.[5] Could there be a middle way between knowledge and indifference?

This is the question which English Romanticism struggles to resolve. But since it is one which concerns the very pre-eminence of knowing, as well as philosophy's superintendence of knowledge, their response does not always take the form of an *answer*. Instead, argument competes with ways of coping with division as a condition of human life; through memory, contemplation, action, or religious devotion. For the same reason it is in Romantic prose, where the voice of discursive understanding was more difficult to repress, that this struggle between knowledge and creation is at its fiercest. Latent in the notions of inspiration and the sublime, the concept of creation had gradually emerged throughout the eighteenth century as a leading idea in aesthetics, culminating with Kant's treatment of the self-legislating genius in the *Critique of Judgement*. In Britain this development was actually encouraged by empiricism's preoccupation, since Locke, with psychology and the question of origins. However, having let the genie out of its bottle, empiricism immediately found itself in peril, as a paradigm hitherto confined to the arts appeared ever more applicable to knowledge itself. In particular, in Hume's hands, the association of ideas could provide a worryingly compelling picture of how the mind's tendency to project order onto the world operated alike in its aesthetic, moral and epistemic judgements. The figure of the circle threatened to enclose knowledge, art to subsume philosophy. From this perspective, then, the Romantics were not solely concerned to mount a general defence of poetry: they were every bit as exercised by the fate

of philosophy, a fate that would ultimately be decided not in the always already figurative domain of poetry, but philosophy's stubbornly literal home ground of prose. In this, one can see the obverse of Derrida's observation as to how philosophy of art is undone by its subject matter, whereby 'the philosophical encloses art in its circle but its discourse on art is at once, by the same token, caught in a circle'.[6] Indeed, just as philosophy is enclosed in art's circle, so art is already straining to know this enclosure discursively – in this case, in prose. In Romantic prose the figure never quite bites its own tail, but is tempted out of its circularity towards argument, conclusion and ultimately knowledge.

A telling example of this slippage between figure and argumentation occurs in Coleridge's discussion of synthetic *a priori* reasoning in *Logic*. Dismissing the claim (later to be defended by John Stuart Mill in his *System of Logic*) that mathematical and geometrical reasoning were synthetic but *a posteriori* – in Coleridge's words, like a mere 'rope of sand' – he suddenly ventures to 'elevate the subject' by recurring to a metaphor he had used earlier, likening knowledge to a palace. In the eyes of the empiricist, he continues, such a palace was merely 'a phantom in the desert, when on the contingences of some I know not what whirl blast',

> the desert sands rise up
> And shape themselves: from Earth to Heaven they stand,
> As though they were the pillars of a temple,
> Built by Omnipotence in its own honour!
> But the blast pauses, and their shaping spirit
> Is fled; the mighty columns were but sand,
> And sophist snakes trail o'er the level ruins!

To such an assertion, 'in short', Coleridge maintains, 'no answer can be given'. One might, indeed, suppose that the power of this passage, excerpted from a variant of his poem 'The Night-Scene' (77–83) itself obviates the need for any answer. For Coleridge, however, the closing image of 'sophist snakes' trailing over the ruins of empirical knowledge was a troubling and ambivalent one. The figure of the serpent, itself the trope of figuration and the 'shaping spirit' of creative activity (as Coleridge had approvingly noted of its ancient Egyptian signification in *Biographia*[7]) was also, as he later came to see it in *Aids to Reflection*, 'the Symbol of the Understanding,' or '*sophistic* Principle', tempting the mind into a barren knowing alienated from will.[8] The Ouroborous or self-devouring serpent in particular held a hypnotic fascination for Coleridge and Shelley, connoted at once with infinity, groundless creativity and

(in the case of the former) a decadent, satanic desire for knowledge.[9] It is significant, then, that in *Logic* Coleridge's trope of empirical knowledge as a phantom palace betrays some anxiety at the suggestion that its own status as figure is merely the serpent among the ruins, marking the spot where 'no answer can be given', and rendering his demonstration (as he labels the empiricist view of mathematics) '*monstratio de nihilo*' ('a showing from nothing'). This anxiety that his own philosophical edifice is itself merely built on foundations of sand, on poetry and metaphor, precipitates a reassertion of the language of philosophical logic, of 'geometrical demonstration', 'consequents' and 'antecedent'. As swiftly as he passed into metaphor, then, Coleridge shifts back into the 'short' argument and solid language of prose, by 'requesting the assertor to make or renew his acquaintance with the elements of geometry'. For he is, Coleridge concludes, either delusional or self-contradictory, speaking 'that which he himself knows to be false'.[10]

Caught between the irreconcilable imperatives of indifference and knowledge, life and philosophy, the English Romantics explored the possibility of a para-philosophy through which the contradiction between non-knowing and knowing might be obviated. The new philosophy, however, was always already slipping into figuration on one hand or, on the other, back to cold foundations. In Wordsworth, it took the form of a poetic dialectic of consciousness or phenomenological *via naturaliter negativa*, in which the foundationalist science of the French ideologues was corrected by the power of feeling, sensation and pleasure. Nature's law was moderated by a spontaneous second nature through which the poet asserted his epistemic autonomy. Yet the figurative nature of that authority failed to eliminate Wordsworth's fear of scepticism. His pleasure is always self-conscious, and poetic creation is at every turn checked by empirical verification, the human value of the 'people' by the inhuman fact of the 'public'.

Hazlitt too was attracted to a decentred view of knowledge as a field of force. But the epistemological paradigm of creation in his theories of practical reasoning and abstraction modelled a dynamic conception of truth that empiricism could not verify. As creation and truth failed to meld, knowledge itself began to dissolve. In Hazlitt's immanent idealism, the notion of power is only ever quasi-epistemological, inhabiting an ambivalent middle-ground between the numinous ideal truth of poetry and the factual real truth of prose. Hazlitt's new condition of philosophy, then, involves a reaction *against* epistemology, as an uncompromisingly non-cognitive, 'exaggerating and exclusive faculty' of imagination

threatens to replace knowing as the primary mode of human engagement with the world.[11] Like Wordsworth's consciousness, Hazlitt's power is Janus-faced, on one side forming the foundation for an 'ideal' truth, and on the other contesting knowledge itself as something grounded *in* truth.

Coleridge, meanwhile, came to see such manoeuvres as merely tinkering with an empirical machine that was already damaged beyond repair. His attempt to replace Locke's and Hume's flawed foundation of fact with Kant's ground of synthetic *a priori* proposition was encouraged by the latter's tendency to frame this question psychologically, implying a creative element to knowing. However, Kant's further attempt in the first *Critique* to run the deduction of sufficient conditions of knowledge of necessary truths together with that of the necessary conditions of empirical knowledge meant that transcendental method's pristine foundationalism of formal conditions was already implicated in a thesis of transcendental idealism which Coleridge rejected in *Biographia Literaria*. At the same time, rationalism's holy grail of perfect knowing continued to exert its influence over Coleridge, so that when he came to think about the problem of knowledge in dialectical terms, this pressurized not only his foundationalism but also its compensatory aesthetic theory. And yet, while Coleridgean dialectic curtailed the province of knowledge by erasing its border with being, it remained all the more securely within its boundaries by being based upon *a priori* principle. Thus, in his later work in particular, the therapeutic power of dialectic occupies an unstable middle ground between the synthetic *a priori* foundations of Kant's transcendental method and the ineffable prothetic divine Will. In this, the new foundationalism proved to be as slippery and beguiling as the old.

Simultaneously centrifugal and centripetal in their attitude to knowledge, the English Romantics reflect and resist the preoccupations of postmodern reading. In their ambivalence between confronting scepticism and evading it, the Romantics at once look back nostalgically to the certainty which Hume dissolved, and forward to ways of thinking about experience and reality that overcome 'knowing'. Rather than commit to one or the other, the typical movement of English Romantic prose is to waver between the vertical and the horizontal axes of experience, one moment ascending the steps to truth, the next biting the tail of argument. But indifference is not naivete, and the knowingness of this manoeuvre perpetually draws its line through the circle of being.

For the same reason, English Romantic prose represents a way of reading which, rather than secretly harbouring knowledge by outwardly

abjuring it, confronts the inevitability of knowing in the face of its impossibility: not because it merely loathes self-division, but, indeed, because it sees such a condition as unavoidable. This is not so much a question of abandoning knowing the world in order to 'accept' it, but, as Cavell suggests, recognizing that this acceptance will always be locked in a war-like embrace with the desire to know. Schelling's later philosophy of positivity in a sense represents the culmination of this facet of Romanticism, one which is not prepared to be played out either teleologically or endlessly through the relations of dialectic. For Schelling, such therapeutic attempts to overcome the divisions within epistemology merely repress the desire for certainty, for grounds, as much as Jacobi's precipitant flight from knowledge. It is too easy, he argues, for Jacobi to suddenly declare, in the face of philosophy, ' "*I* do not want this result, I find it revolting, it goes against my feeling" ':

> We cannot declare such an expression to be forbidden, for we ourselves allow a great importance, at least for the initial determination of concepts in philosophy, to *wanting*. The first declaration in philosophy (which even precedes philosophy) *can* in fact only be the expression of a wanting. To this extent it must be permitted, to say: 'I do not *like* it, I cannot bring it into accord with myself.' It is all very well to say, like Jacobi: 'I demand a personal God [. . .]' – it is praiseworthy to say this, but these expressions for themselves alone are fine words, to which no deeds correspond. If there is, in contradiction with our feeling and with what we would rather wish, a knowledge which can give itself the appearance of being necessary and inevitable, then we have no other reasonable alternative than to choose either to surrender ourselves to necessity, to command our feeling to be silent, or to overcome that knowledge by a *real* (*wirklich*) deed.[12]

Whether Schelling is justified in his own 'third way' belief that knowledge can be overcome by deed is a question for a different kind of study. But by drawing out the conflict between a feeling which is always already knowing, and a 'necessity' which is both alienating and paradoxical, he underlines the Romantic dilemma between indifference and knowledge. In this light, the knowingly unknowing ways of English Romantic prose resemble not so much the playful fragmentation of postmodernism, but the ambivalent remains of the foundationalism which postmodernism scorns, and which persists in the work of Wittgenstein, Kuhn, Cavell and Quine, to name but a few. This attitude has been reluctant to abandon foundationalism entirely, and remains wary of attempts to bypass scepticism as merely the product of philosophy's outworn metaphors. It is as impressed by the naturalness as by the 'inhumanity' of philosophy, and the way in which 'life' and value retain a symbiotic relationship with

the 'knowledge' from which they remain divided. It is certainly difficult, and perhaps impossible to determine the reflexivity behind the relationship of Romantic and modern knowing. But *being in* that relationship, I have maintained, must mean not only maintaining a vigilant suspicion of 'knowledge', but also owning up to it, assuming responsibility for it. If this at least is clear, then it might not seem dialectically naive to affirm that if the 'Humean predicament is the human predicament', then our divided way of coping with that predicament continues to be a Romantic one.[13]

Notes

INTRODUCTION: ROMANTICISM'S KNOWING WAYS

1 Stanley Cavell, foreword, *Must We Mean What We Say? A Book of Essays* (Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. xxii.
2 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 100.
3 Charles Lamb and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. Edwin W. Marrs, Jr, 3 vols. to date (Cornell University Press, 1975–), vol. III, p. 36.
4 M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 1953).
5 Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight* (Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 18. See also Kathleen Wheeler's *Romanticism, Pragmatism and Deconstruction* (Blackwell, 1993).
6 Tilottama Rajan, *Dark Interpreter* (Cornell University Press, 1980), p. 55.
7 David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 2nd edn, rev. P. H. Nidditch (Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 458.
8 David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 3rd edn, rev. P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 165.
9 Hume, *Treatise*, p. 183.
10 Michael G. Cooke, *Acts of Inclusion: Studies Bearing on an Elementary Theory of Romanticism* (Yale University Press, 1979), pp. xix–xx.
11 As raised in: E. L. Gettier, 'Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?' *Analysis* 23 (1963), 121–3.
12 See for instance Donald Davidson, 'A Coherence Theory of Truth and Representation', *Kant oder Hegel? Über Formen der Begründung in der Philosophie*, ed. Dieter Henrich (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1983), in which Davidson seeks to unite a coherence theory of justification with the foundationalist principle that 'truth is correspondence with the way things are' (p. 425).
13 Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* 1962, 3rd edn (University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 126.
14 Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Fontana/Collins, 1985), p. 113.

15 *Ibid*., p. 198.
16 Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 136.
17 George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 47.
18 Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Herr Moses Mendelssohn*, 1785, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel* Allwill, trans. George di Giovanni (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), p. 234.
19 See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, ed. Walter Kaufmann, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), p. 298: ' "Truth" is therefore not something there, that might be found or discovered – but something that must be created and that gives a name to a process, or rather to a will to overcome that has in itself no end [. . .].'
20 James Burnett, Lord Monboddo, *Antient Metaphysics*, 6 vols. (Edinburgh, 1779–99), vol. I, p. 415.
21 Jacobi, preface, *David Hume on Faith or Idealism and Realism: A Dialogue*, 1815, *Main Philosophical Writings*, p. 570.
22 Burnett, *Antient Metaphysics*, vol. I, p. vii.
23 *Ibid*., p. vi.
24 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, eds. James Engell and Walter Jackson Bate, 2 vols. (Princeton University Press, 1983), vol. I, pp. 141–2.
25 Charles and Mary Lamb, *Letters*, vol. I, p. 188.
26 William Wordsworth, *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, eds. W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser, 3 vols. (Oxford University Press, 1974), vol. III, p. 71.
27 *Ibid*., p. 71.
28 Isaiah Berlin, preface, *The Mind of the European Romantics*, by H. G. Schenk (Oxford University Press, 1979), p. xv.
29 Anthony Ashley Cooper, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (London, 1711), vol. I, p. 207.
30 Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 7.
31 See Plato, *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, eds. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 1162: According to Plato's *Timaeus*, the divine creator came to a universe already existent, but in chaos. Thus, 'finding the whole visible sphere not at rest, but moving in an irregular and disorderly fashion, out of disorder he brought order, considering that this was in every way better than the other'.
32 Alexander Gerard, *An Essay on Genius*, ed. Bernard Fabian (Munich, 1966), p. 37.
33 Cooper, *Characteristics*, vol. I, pp. 146–7.
34 Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol. I, p. 304.
35 William Hazlitt, *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P. P. Howe, 21 vols. (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd, 1930–4), vol. I, p. 26.
36 Wordsworth, *Prose Works*, vol. I, p. 82.

37 Geoffrey H. Hartman, *Saving the Text* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), p. 8.
38 Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol. II, p. 14.
39 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, ed. John Beer (Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 259–60.
40 M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 184.
41 Mark Kipperman, *Beyond Enchantment* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), p. 16. For a thorough examination of Romantic myths of creation, see Warren Stevenson's *Divine Analogy* (Universität Salzburg, 1972).
42 William James, *Pragmatism* (Longmans, Green and Co., Inc., 1907), pp. 256–7.
43 *Ibid*., pp. 54–5.
44 See John Dewey, *Experience and Nature* 1925 (La falle: Open Court, 1958), p. 51.
45 Wordsworth, *Prose Works*, vol. I, p. 141.
46 See Jonathan Bate, 'The Literature of Power: Coleridge and De Quincey', *Coleridge's Visionary Languages: Essays in Honour of J. B. Beer*, eds. Tim Fulford and Morton D. Paley (D. S. Brewer, 1993), p. 149.
47 Thomas De Quincey, *The Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey*, ed. David Masson (Edinburgh, 1889–90), vol. X, p. 48.
48 *Ibid*., vol. XI, p. 4.
49 Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, eds. Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers (Norton, 1977), p. 482.
50 Tilottama Rajan, *The Supplement of Reading: Figures of Understanding in Romantic Theory and Practice* (Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 1.
51 Shelley, *Poetry and Prose*, p. 482.
52 Stanley Cavell, *In Quest of the Ordinary: Lines of Skepticism and Romanticism* (University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 29, 32.
53 Friedrich Schlegel, 'Athenäum Fragments', *The Origins of Modern Critical Thought: German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism from Lessing to Hegel*, ed. David Simpson (Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 195; par. 238.
54 Wordsworth, *Prose Works*, vol. I, p. 135.
55 *Ibid*., p. 120.
56 Hazlitt, *Works*, vol. VII, p. 10.
57 Tom Paulin, *The Day-Star of Liberty: William Hazlitt's Radical Style* (Faber and Faber, 1998), p. 92.
58 I coin the term 'will to value', albeit with a slightly different emphasis for the present purpose, from Laurence Lockridge. See *The Ethics of Romanticism* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 3: 'What I call a "will to value" is the dominant ethical tendency in Romantic writers; it is their response to a moment in history when concepts of value are seen to be reduced or denuded.'
59 Richard Elridge, *Leading a Human Life: Wittgenstein, Intentionality, and Romanticism* (University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 87.

60 Wheeler, *Romanticism, Pragmatism and Deconstruction*, p. 59.
61 Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol. 1, p. 22.
62 *Ibid*., p. 280.
63 *Ibid*., p. 281.
64 Andrew Bowie, *From Romanticism to Critical Theory: The Philosophy of German Literary Theory* (Routledge, 1997), p. 71.
65 *Ibid*., p. 33.
66 Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute* 1978, trans. Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester (Albany: SUNY, 1988), p. 17.
67 Rorty, *Mirror*, pp. 380–1.
68 John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (Beacon Press, 1948), p. 24.
69 Stanley Cavell, foreword, *Must We Mean What We Say?* pp. xxiii, xxvi.
70 *Ibid*., pp. 324, 325.
71 Jacobi, *Main Philosophical Writings*, p. 545.
72 George di Giovanni, introduction, *Main Philosophical Writings*, by Friedrich Jacobi, p. 151.
73 Marjorie Levinson, introduction, *Rethinking Historicism*, by Marjorie Levinson, Jerome McGann, Paul Hamilton and Marilyn Butler (Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp. 6, 12.
74 Alan Lui, 'Local Transcendence: Cultural Criticism, Postmodernism, and the Romanticism of Detail', *Representations* 32 (1990), 81.
75 See Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 1979, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester University Press, 1984), pp. 60–1. Lyotard claims that 'the little narrative [*petit récit*] remains the quintessential form of imaginative invention', and that 'it is now dissention that must be emphasized. Consensus is a horizon that is never reached.' In her afterword to *The Supplement of Reading*, Rajan concludes that 'demystification is not the ultimate horizon of our reading but must itself be inscribed in the intertextual processes generated by the poem [...]' (p. 351). For a critique of Jerome McGann and Paul de Man as trading, respectively, on an explicit and a covert notion of the 'empirical sublime', see Frances Ferguson, *Solitude and the Sublime* (Routledge, 1992), ch. 7.
76 Rorty, *Contingency*, p. 57.
77 David Simpson, *Romanticism, Nationalism, and the Revolt Against Theory* (University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 3.
78 Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?* p. 337.
79 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, trans. Denis Paul and G. E. M. Anscombe, eds. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969), p. 15; par. 97.
80 *Ibid*., p. 46; par. 358.
81 Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, p. 202.
82 John Keats, *The Letters of John Keats 1814–1821*, ed. Hyder Edward Rollins, 2 vols. (Cambridge University Press, 1958), vol. 1, p. 279.
83 Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol. 1, p. 124.
84 *Ibid*., p. 282

85 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Friend*, ed. Barbara E. Rooke, 2 vols. (Princeton University Press, 1969), vol. 1, p. 519.
86 David Vallins discusses the same passage in *Coleridge and the Psychology of Romanticism* (Macmillan, 2000), p. 86. He notes how it 'involves the paradox that while thought is progressing it is also limited – that it is in a continuous tension with the fixed forms of knowledge'.
87 Coleridge, *The Friend*, vol. 1, p. 519.
88 Rorty, *Contingency*, pp. 44, 25, 19.
89 Wheeler, *Romanticism, Pragmatism and Deconstruction*, p. 62.
90 Michael Fischer, 'Accepting the Romantics as Philosophers', *Philosophy and Literature* 12 (1988), 184.
91 W. V. Quine, 'Epistemology Naturalized', *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays* (Columbia University Press, 1969), p. 72.
92 Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, p. 62; par. 471.
93 John Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1960), pp. 243–4.
94 Rorty, *Contingency*, pp. 40–1.

1 FROM ARTISTIC TO EPISTEMIC CREATION: THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

1 David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, 1777, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 3rd edn, rev. P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 165.
2 See esp. James Engell, *The Creative Imagination, Enlightenment to Romanticism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981).
3 Wordsworth, *Prose Works*, vol. II, p. 357.
4 Hazlitt, *Works*, vol. II, p. 117.
5 Jeremy Bentham, 'A Table of the Springs of Action', *Deontology, together with A Table of the Springs of Action and Article on Utilitarianism*, ed. Amnon Goldworth, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 51; par. 538.
6 Thomas Love Peacock, 'The Four Ages of Poetry', *The Works of Thomas Love Peacock*, eds. H. F. B. Brett-Smith and C. E. Jones (London, 1924–34), vol. VIII, p. 11.
7 [George Puttenham], *The Arte of English Poesie* (London, 1589), p. 3.
8 *Ibid*., p. 1 (insertions added).
9 Puttenham's radical conclusion is that '[i]t is therefore of Poets thus to be conceiued, that if they be able to deuise and make all these things of them selues, without any subiect of veritie, that they be (by maner of speech) as creating gods' (*ibid*., p. 2).
10 Philip Sidney, *An Apologie for Poetrie* (London, 1595), p. C2.
11 *Ibid*., p. C2.
12 *Ibid*., p. E2.
13 *Ibid*., p. D3.

14 Sidney acknowledges this in a mock-apology towards the end of the *Apologie*: 'But what? me thinks I deserue to be pounded, for straying from Poetry to Oratorie: but both haue such an affinity in this wordish consideration' (*ibid*., p. L).
15 *Ibid*., p. C.
16 *Ibid*., p. 1. Sidney's replacement of this classical notion of inspiration with something far more worldly looks towards its uneasy position in literary theory over the following two centuries, with its connotations of enthusiasm and irrationalism. Davenant was later to complain to Hobbes about the notion of '*inspiration*, a dangerous word which many have of late successfully us'd' (preface, *Gondibert*. *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century*, ed. J. E. Spingarn (Oxford University Press, 1957), vol. II, p. 25). Hobbes agreed, comparing the inspired poet to a 'bagpipe' ('The Answer of Mr Hobbes to S^r^ Will. D'Avenant's Preface Before *Gondibert*', *Critical Essays*, vol. II, p. 59). By the end of the seventeenth century, Dennis is arguing 'that this extraordinary thing in Poetry which has been hitherto taken for something Supernatural and Divine, is nothing but a very common Passion, or a complication of common Passions' (preface, *Remarks on a Book Entituled, Prince Arthur*. *The Critical Works of John Dennis*, ed. Edward Niles Hooker (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1939–43), vol. I, p. 46). In the eighteenth century, even an enthusiast like Young holds back from the claim that creative genius has access to divine truth (*Conjectures on Original Composition* (London, 1759), p. 38), while Gerard endeavours to explain the fact that genius acts 'as if it were supernaturally inspired' in terms of the effects of enthusiasm, by which genius 'gives vigour and activity to its associating power' (*Essay on Genius*, pp. 68–9).
17 It should be noted here that Sidney's sense of 'genius' approximates to the older, pre-Romantic sense of a characteristic disposition or quality of character, though that itself suggested further an innate ability or capacity.
18 Sidney, *Apologie for Poetrie*, p. 13 (insertion added).
19 Francis Bacon, *The Two Bookes of Francis Bacon of the Proficience and Advancement of Learning Divine and Humane*. *The Works of Francis Bacon*, eds. James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis and Douglas Denon Heath (London, 1857–9), vol. III, p. 284.
20 *Ibid*., p. 286.
21 *Ibid*., p. 343.
22 As Bacon puts it, 'knowledges are as pyramides, whereof history is the basis [. . .]' (*ibid*., p. 356).
23 *Ibid*., pp. 343–4.
24 *Ibid*., pp. 382–3. For further discussion of this question, see, for example: Murray Bundy, 'Bacon's True Opinion of Poetry', *Studies in Philology* 27 (1930), and John Harrison, 'Bacon's View of Rhetoric, Poetry, and the Imagination', *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 20 (1957).

25 See Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, *Soliloquy: or Advice to an Author*, *Characteristics*, vol. I, p. 290: '[t]he most ingenious way of becoming foolish, is *by a System*'.
26 In *The Moralists*, Philocles rhapsodizes to Palemon: 'And of this *Mind* 'tis enough to say, "That it is something which *acts* upon a Body, and has something *passive* under it [. . .]" ' (*ibid*., vol. II, pp. 354–5). Later, Theocles remarks that ''Tis *Mind* alone which forms' (*ibid*., p. 405).
27 *Ibid*., pp. 358–9.
28 To Theocles in *The Moralists*, Beauty was 'never in the *Matter*, but in the *Art* and *Design*; never in *Body* it-self, but in the *Form* or *Forming Power*' (*ibid*., p. 405) – a power which man retains in his nature as one of '*the Forms which form*', intermediate between the '*dead* Forms' of matter and the 'Order of *Supreme* and *Sovereign Beauty*' (*ibid*., p. 408).
29 *Ibid*., vol. III, pp. 182–3.
30 *Ibid*., p. 185. He also goes as far as to claim that 'Even *Conscience*, I fear, such as is owing to religious Discipline, will make but a slight Figure, where this Taste is set amiss' (*ibid*., p. 177).
31 *Ibid*., vol. I, p. 142. The concept of 'poetic truth', indeed, becomes something of a tautology in Shaftesbury.
32 *Ibid*., p. 207.
33 *Ibid*., pp. 144–5.
34 *Ibid*., vol. III, p. 229.
35 *Ibid*., p. 237.
36 Dennis, *Critical Works*, vol. I, p. 127.
37 *Ibid*., p. 222.
38 Compare Addison's account of genius's ability to 'raise a pleasing kind of Horrour in the Mind of the Reader, and amuse his Imagination with the Strangeness and Novelty of the Persons who are represented in them' (*The Spectator*, ed. Donald F. Bond (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1965), vol. III, pp. 570–1).
39 Dennis, *Critical Works*, vol. I, pp. 245–6.
40 Edward Niles Hooker, introduction, *Critical Works* by John Dennis, vol. I, p. cxxiii.
41 [Edmund Burke], *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, 2nd edn (Scolar Press, Ltd, 1970), pp. 15–16.
42 As Burke phrases it, '[w]hen we go but one step beyond the immediately sensible qualities of things, we go out of our depth' (*ibid*., p. 243). However, even Burke's empirical method, as Walter Hipple Jr notes (*The Beautiful, The Sublime, and The Picturesque in Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetic Theory* (Carbondale: The Southern Illinois University Press, 1957), p. 85), is not straightforward enumerative induction, but what John Stuart Mill labelled the inverse deductive method, whereby empirical generalization is verified against provisional *a priori* principles (which are themselves subject to revision).
43 Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry*, pp. 58–60.

44 See *ibid*., p. 237: 'sublime objects are vast in their dimensions, beautiful ones comparatively small [. . .]'.
45 *Ibid*., p. 312.
46 *Ibid*., p. 320.
47 *Ibid*., p. 333.
48 *Ibid*., p. 336.
49 Ferguson, *Solitude and the Sublime*, p. 10.
50 On the vexed question as to what Locke intended by 'idea', I see no reason to disagree with Michael Ayers's view as expressed in *Locke: Epistemology and Ontology* (Routledge, 1993) that '[d]espite the relative unpopularity of an affirmative answer, the grounds for holding him [Locke] an imagist are conclusive' (vol. I, p. 44). See, for example, Locke's allusion to '*[t]he Pictures drawn in our Minds* (. . .) *laid in fading Colours*' (*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 152).
51 *Ibid*., p. 118.
52 *Ibid*., p. 105.
53 *Ibid*., p. 118.
54 *Ibid*., p. 150. The rest of this passage has drawn much attention. However, Locke's claim that in the recollection of ideas, '*the Mind is oftentimes more than barely passive*', and that it is in this activity which 'consists that which we call *Invention*, *Fancy*, and quickness of Parts', does not amount to a real defence of creativity. The important point here is that even recollected ideas are 'none of them new ones'; nor do they constitute a discrete form of truth (*ibid*., pp. 152–3).
55 *Ibid*., pp. 156–7.
56 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Edwin Curley (Hackett, 1994), p. 8.
57 See *ibid*., pp. 22–3: 'REASON, in this sense, is nothing but *reckoning* (that is, adding and subtracting) of the consequences of general names agreed upon for the *marking* and *signifying* of our thoughts [. . .].'
58 *Ibid*., p. 19.
59 *Ibid*., p. 6.
60 *Ibid*., p. 47.
61 Locke, *Essay*, p. 538.
62 *Ibid*., pp. 563–4.
63 See Locke, *Essay*, p. 335: 'since consciousness always accompanies thinking, and 'tis that, that makes every one to be, what he calls *self*; and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things, in this alone consists *personal Identity, i.e.* the sameness of a rational Being [. . .]'.
64 Examples of this legacy are Bolingbroke's attack upon 'imaginative' philosophers like Plato in his first essay to Pope: 'all they have done has been to vend us poetry for philosophy, and to multiply systems of imagination' (Henry St. John, *The Works of Lord Bolingbroke* (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1841), vol. III, p. 71) – and his denigration of genius, 'a blazing meteor, irregular in his course, and dangerous in his approach; of no use to any system, and able to destroy any' (*ibid*., vol. II, p. 179).

65 Hume, *Treatise*, p. 4.
66 *Ibid*., p. 1. However, Georges Dicker notes in *Hume's Epistemology and Metaphysics* (Routledge, 1998) that Hume has 'two different and incompatible criteria for distinguishing between impressions of sensation and ideas: his official criterion of "force and vivacity", and the implicit and unacknowledged criterion of objectivity' (p. 6).
67 Hume, *Treatise*, p. 9.
68 *Ibid*., pp. 10–11.
69 *Ibid*., pp. 103, 88 (emphasis added).
70 *Ibid*., p. 252.
71 Hume, *Enquiries*, p. 25.
72 Hume, *Treatise*, p. 469.
73 *Ibid*., pp. 468–9.
74 See Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Monadology* (1714), *Philosophical Writings*, ed. G. H. R. Parkinson (London: Dent, 1990), p. 184: 'the *principle of sufficient reason*, [is that] by virtue of which we consider that no fact can be real or existing and no proposition can be true unless there is a sufficient reason, why it should be thus and not otherwise [. . .].'
75 Hume, *Treatise*, p. 72.
76 *Ibid*., p. 185. See Norman Kemp Smith, *The Philosophy of David Hume* (Macmillan, 1941).
77 Robert J. Fogelin, *Hume's Skepticism in the Treatise of Human Nature* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), p. 150.
78 H. O. Mounce, *Hume's Naturalism* (Routledge, 1999), pp. 11, 49.
79 Hume, *Treatise*, p. 269.
80 Donald Davidson, 'On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme', *Post-Analytic Philosophy*, p. 133.
81 Rorty, *Mirror*, p. 163.
82 Roderick M. Chisholm, *The Foundations of Knowing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press,1982), p. 12.
83 Ernest Sosa, *Knowledge in Perspective* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 110.
84 See de Man, *Blindness and Insight*, p. 18: 'what they call anthropology, linguistics, psychoanalysis is nothing but literature reappearing, like the Hydra's head, in the very spot where it had supposedly been suppressed'.
85 Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue; In Two Treatises*, 4th edn (London, 1738), p. xii (emphasis added).
86 *Ibid*., pp. xiii, xvi.
87 *Ibid*., pp. 14–15.
88 *Ibid*., p. 80.
89 In the Preface to the *Inquiry*, Hutcheson identifies, as well as the internal sense of beauty, 'another *superior Sense*, *natural* also to Men, determining them to be pleas'd with *Actions, Characters, Affections*. This is the *Moral Sense*' (*ibid*., p. xvi).
90 *Ibid*., p. 120.
91 *Ibid*., p. 262.

92 More conservative or Neoclassical theorists saw in inner sense a possible block to the sceptical effects of association. Kames, for instance, ranks the senses according to a 'principle of order' (Henry Home, *Elements of Criticism*, 6th edn (Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1993), vol. 1, p. 22) in perception based on refinement (p. 2). Gerard, (*An Essay on Taste*, 3rd edn (Gainsville: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1963)) while occasionally adopting the language of the '*internal* or *reflex senses*' (p. 1), eventually finds 'that the internal senses are not ultimate principles, because all their phænomena can be accounted for, by simpler qualities of the mind [i.e. external senses]' (p. 147). Later, Francis Jeffrey was to reject outright the notion that the sense of beauty might be a single sensation, or a kind of 'sixth sense' (*Contributions to the Edinburgh Review* (London, 1844), vol. 1, pp. 4–5), arguing that it depends entirely upon 'the accidental relations' of association (p. 11).

93 Thomas Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind, on the Principles of Common Sense*, 4th edn (Bristol: Thoemmes, 1990), pp. iv–v.

94 Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, vol. 1, p. 132. To Shaftesbury, *sensus communis* is a moral intuition linked to '*the Love of Mankind*' (*ibid*., p. 123). Despite the manifold differences between this position and that of Reid, Shaftesbury's wariness of the direction of Lockean empiricism, and its implications for moral philosophy, is similar to that of the Scottish philosopher.

95 Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (Edinburgh, 1785), p. 58.

96 Reid, *Common Sense*, p. vii. See also *Intellectual Powers*: 'I believe *ideas*, take in this sense, to be a mere fiction of Philosophers' (p. 27).

97 *Ibid*., p. 58.

98 Reid, *Common Sense*, p. 62.

99 *Ibid*., p. 75.

100 *Ibid*., p. 79.

101 Reid, *Intellectual Powers*, pp. 43 (emphasis added), 18.

102 *Ibid*., pp. 50–1.

103 Reid, *Common Sense*, pp. 11–12.

104 For example, Coleridge's articulation of the concept of inner sense in *Biographia Literaria* needs to be read in the context of his debt to the German philosophy of freedom. Philosophy, he argues, 'is employed on objects of the INNER SENSE, and cannot, like geometry, appropriate to every construction a correspondent *outward* intuition' (*Biographia Literaria*, vol. 1, pp. 250–1). Without this schema, inner sense is determined only by 'an act of freedom' in the mind.

105 Elridge, *Human Life*, p. 59.

106 Martin Kallich, *The Association of Ideas and Critical Theory in Eighteenth-Century England: A History of a Psychological Method in English Criticism* (The Hague: Mouton, 1970), p. 68.

107 In *Leviathan*, Hobbes had identified the '*Consequence*, or TRAIN of thoughts' which constitutes 'mental discourse', appearing as either a 'wild ranging of

the mind' (p. 12) or as '*regulated* by some desire, and design' (p. 13). Locke, however, condemned association in the *Essay* as 'a Weakness to which all men are so liable' (p. 395). As Kallich observes (*Association*, p. 34), it is something of a paradox that while Hobbes's is the more tolerant view, it was Locke's analysis of the processes of association that was to influence later positivists like Hartley.

108 Hume, *Treatise*, p. 10.

109 This is the distinction deployed by Coleridge in his attack on Hartley in chapter 6 of *Biographia Literaria*. By making the contemporaneity of ideas a constitutive condition of knowledge, Hartley turns reason and will into the mere '*creatures*' of association (*Biographia Literaria*, vol. 1, p. 110).

110 Theodore Huguelet, introduction, *Observations on Man, His Frame, His Duty, and His Expectations*, by David Hartley (Gainesville, Florida: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1966), vol. 1, p. viii.

111 The eighth 'proposition' of *Observations* is that 'Sensations, by being often repeated, leave certain Vestiges, Types, or Images, of themselves, which may be called, *Simple Ideas of Sensation*' (p. 56).

112 *Ibid*., p. 25.

113 See *ibid*., p. 33: 'It may be proper to remark here, that I do not, by thus ascribing the Performance of Sensation to Vibrations excited in the medullary Substance, in the least presume to assert, or intimate, that Matter can be indued with the Power of Sensation.'

114 *Ibid*., p. 34.

115 See the tenth proposition of *Observations*: 'Any Sensations *A, B, C, &c.* by being associated with one another a sufficient Number of Times, get such a Power over the corresponding Ideas *a, b, c, &c.* that any one of the Sensations *A*, when impressed alone, shall be able to excite in the Mind, *b, c, &c.* the Ideas of the rest' (p. 65).

116 *Ibid*., p. 66.

117 *Ibid*., pp. 70–1 (emphasis added).

118 Not every commentator has taken this view, arguing that Hartley unified perception through the notion of 'coalescence'. See, for example, Walter Jackson Bate, *From Classic to Romantic: Premises of Taste in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), pp. 118–20, and Stephen H. Ford, '*Coalescence*: David Hartley's "*Great Apparatus*" ', *Psychology and Literature in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Christopher Fox (New York: AMS, 1987), pp. 199–223. However, what Hartley designates as 'the highest Kind of Induction, and as amounting to a perfect Coincidence of the Effect concluded with those from which it is concluded', he confines to mathematics alone (*Observations*, vol. 1, pp. 341–2).

119 *Ibid*., p. 368.

120 *Ibid*., p. 371.

121 *Ibid*., p. 501.

122 Locke, *Essay*, p. 117.

123 Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, p. 4.

124 One notable opponent of Hartley was Burke, who in the *Philosophical Enquiry* argued that 'it would be absurd [...] to say that all things affect us by association only' (p. 245).
125 William Davenant, preface, *Gondibert*. *Critical Essays*, vol. II, p. 7.
126 John Dennis, ed., *Letters Upon Several Occasions* (London, 1696), p. 55.
127 Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, vol. I, pp. 12–13.
128 Adam Smith, 'Of the Nature of that Imitation which takes place in what are called The Imitative Arts', *The Works of Adam Smith, LL.D.* (London, 1811–12), vol. V, p. 248.
129 Joshua Reynolds, *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, [ed.] Edward Malone (London, 1797), vol. I, pp. 100–1.
130 Thomas Rymer, preface, *Reflections on Aristotle's Treatise of Poesie*. *The Critical Works of Thomas Rymer*, ed. Curt A. Zimansky (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), p. 4. Compare Henry Felton, for example, who wrote that even the ancients 'knew every good *Genius* would write and judge by Nature, whether any Rules had been set or no' (preface, *A Dissertation on Reading the Classics* (London, 1715), p. ix).
131 Dennis, *Critical Works*, vol. II, p. 104. See, also *The Impartial Critick* (1693): 'Poetry in general, being an imitation of Nature, Tragedy must be so too' (*ibid*., vol. I, p. 11), and 'The Causes of the Decay and Defects of Dramatic Poetry' (1725): 'all poetry is an Imitation of nature' (*ibid*., vol. II, p. 285).
132 *The Spectator*, vol. II, pp. 126–7.
133 *Ibid*., pp. 129–30.
134 Young, *Conjectures*, p. 9.
135 *Ibid*., pp. 42–3.
136 *Ibid*., pp. 28, 31.
137 The ambiguity of the term remained, however. Compare Abram Robertson, *An Essay on Original Composition* (n.p., 1782), p. 8: '[n]ovelty is the most certain proof of originality in the productions of a refined people. Every suspicion of imitation must vanish, when we behold truth before unknown to man, sentiment not before expressed' – and Robert Wood, *An Essay on the Original Genius of Homer* (London, 1769), p. vi: 'however questionable Homer's superiority may be, in other respects, as a perfect model and standard for composition, in the great province of *Imitation* he is the most *original* of all Poets, and the most *constant and faithful copier after Nature*'.
138 Young, *Conjectures*, pp. 12, 36–7. As well as using the model of vegetable growth, Young writes of how 'Genius implies the rays of the mind concenter'd, and determined to some particular point [...]' (*ibid*., pp. 84–5).
139 Henry More, *An Antidote Against Atheism* (London, 1653), p. 17.
140 William Sharpe, *A Dissertation upon Genius* (London, 1755), pp. 6, 9.
141 *Ibid*., p. 19.
142 *Ibid*., pp. 19, 23–4.
143 See Locke, *Essay*, pp. 162–3.
144 George Campbell, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1766), vol. I, p. 3.

145 Adam Ferguson, *Principles of a Moral and Political Science*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1792), vol. I, p. 292.
146 Dugald Stewart, *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, 3 vols. (London and Edinburgh, 1792–1827), vol. I, p. 315.
147 James Beattie, *Dissertations Moral and Critical* (London, 1783), p. 156.
148 Isaac D'Israeli, *An Essay on the Manners and Genius of the Literary Character* (London, 1795), p. 43.
149 Bacon, *Works*, vol. III, p. 389.
150 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 13.
151 See Locke, *Essay*, p. 153: ' 'Tis the business therefore of the Memory to furnish to the Mind those dormant *Ideas*, which it has present occasion for, and in the having them ready at hand on all occasions, consists that which we call *Invention, Fancy,* and quickness of Parts.'
152 John Dryden, preface, *De Arte Graphica. Prose 1691–1698: De Arte Graphica and Shorter Works*, eds. A. E. Wallace Maurer and George R. Guffey (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 61–2.
153 Rymer, preface, *Reflections on Aristotle's Treatise of Poesie, by R. Rapin. Critical Works*, p. 12.
154 William Temple, 'Of Poetry', *Critical Essays*, vol. III, p. 81.
155 *The Spectator*, vol. II, pp. 586–7.
156 *Two Dissertations Concerning Sense and the Imagination, with an Essay on Consciousness* (London, 1728), pp. 72–3. This work continues mistakenly to be attributed to Zachary Mayne (1631–94). See Tim Milnes,'On the Authorship of *Two Dissertations Concerning Sense and the Imagination, with an Essay on Consciousness* (1728)', *Notes and Queries* 47.2 (2000), 196–8.
157 Joseph Warton, *An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope*, 5th edn, 2 vols. (London, 1806), vol. I, p. 108.
158 *Ibid*., p. 115.
159 *Ibid*., p. 47.
160 Samuel Johnson, *The Rambler*, eds. W[alter] J[ackson] Bate and Albrecht B. Strauss (Yale University Press, 1969), vol. II, p. 300.
161 Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets*, ed. George Birkbeck Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), vol. I, pp. 194, 291.
162 Johnson attributed many other qualities to the imagination, most of which are listed by Raymond Havens in his article, 'Johnson's Distrust of the Imagination', *English Literary History* 10 (1943), 243–55. Most importantly, however, as Havens notes, 'he did not believe the imagination creates' (p. 243), or that it stood for 'a means of insight into truth' (p. 246).
163 Samuel Johnson, *The Idler and the Adventurer*, eds. W[alter] J[ackson] Bate, et al. (Yale University Press, 1963), p. 137.
164 Johnson, *Lives*, vol. III, p. 247.
165 Gerard, *Essay on Taste*, p. 163.
166 Gerard, *Essay on Genius*, p. 27.
167 William Duff, *An Essay on Original Genius*, ed. John L. Mahoney (Florida: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1964), p. 7.
168 Gerard, *Essay on Genius*, pp. 41, 46.

169 *Ibid*., pp. 63–4.
170 *Ibid*., p. 71.
171 *Ibid*., pp. 95, 72–73, 29.
172 See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 186–7: Since originality is genius's primary quality, and 'there can also be original nonsense, its products must at the same time be models, i.e. *exemplary*, hence, while not themselves the result of imitation, they must yet serve others in that way, i.e. as a standard or a rule for judging'.
173 Duff, *Essay on Original Genius*, pp. 73–4.
174 Gerard, *Essay on Genius*, pp. 8, 14 (emphasis added).
175 *Ibid*., pp. 98, 101.
176 Ferguson, *Principles*, vol. I, pp. 286–8.
177 Stewart, *Elements*, vol. I, pp. 492, 310.
178 See Ferguson, *Principles*, vol. I, p. 286: 'Mere efforts of ingenuity, which are thus made to adorn what is otherwise useful and necessary, or to gratify an original disposition of the mind to fabricate for itself on the models of beauty presented in nature, are commonly termed the fine arts.'
179 Stewart, *Elements*, vol. I, pp. 475, 156, 318.
180 *Ibid*., vol. III, p. 308.
181 Ernest Lee Tuveson, *The Imagination as a Means of Grace: Locke and the Aesthetics of Romanticism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960), p. 185.
182 Archibald Alison, *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (Edinburgh, 1790), pp. 2, 53, 84.
183 *Ibid*., pp. 90–1, 108.
184 See James Engell, *Forming the Critical Mind: Dryden to Coleridge* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 48: 'The controversy surrounding ideas of progress and decline in English literary culture fascinates the strongest minds [. . .].'
185 Ferguson, *Principles*, vol. I, p. 291.
186 Beattie, *Dissertations*, pp. 161–2.
187 Young, *Conjectures*, pp. 12–14.
188 D'Israeli, *Essay*, p. xv.
189 Francis Jeffrey, rev. of *De la Litérature considerée dans ses Rapports avec les Institutions Sociales*, by Mad. de Staël-Holstein, *Contributions*, vol. I, p. 100.
190 Thomas Pfau, *Wordsworth's Profession: Form, Class, and the Logic of Early Romantic Cultural Production* (Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 25.
191 Leslie Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, 3rd edn (London: John Murray, 1927), vol. I, p. 55.
192 Stewart, *Elements*, vol. II, p. 23.

2 THE CHARM OF LOGIC: WORDSWORTH'S PROSE

1 William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805), II, 27–33.
2 Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol. II, p. 156.

3 Kenneth R. Johnston, *Wordsworth and* The Recluse (Yale University Press, 1984), p. 15.
4 Aubrey de Vere, 'Recollections of Wordsworth', *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. Alexander B. Grossart (London: Edward Moxon, Son, and Co., 1876), vol. III, p. 488.
5 Geoffrey H. Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787–1814*, 1964 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), p. 66.
6 Paul de Man, 'Wordsworth and the Victorians', *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 87.
7 Richard Elridge, 'Wordsworth and "A New Condition of Philosophy" ', *Philosophy and Literature* 18.1 (1994), 52, 54. See also Johnston, p. 118.
8 John Barrell, introduction, *Poetry, Language and Politics* (Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 15.
9 Alan Bewell, introduction, *Wordsworth and the Enlightenment: Nature, Man, and Society in the Experimental Poetry* (Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 12, 41.
10 Rajan, *The Supplement of Reading*, pp. 149, 153.
11 See Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry*, p. 18: In Wordsworth, Hartman claims, 'it is the evidence of the poems which is decisive; the prose, in fact, depends for its sense on the poetry'.
12 Johnston, preface, *Wordsworth and* The Recluse, p. xiv.
13 James Chandler, *Wordsworth's Second Nature* (University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 223, 67.
14 Wordsworth, *Prose Works*, vol. III, p. 26.
15 John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic Ratiocinative and Inductive*, ed. J. M. Robson, 2 vols. (University of Toronto Press, 1973–4), vol. I, p. 7.
16 W. V. Quine, *Pursuit of Truth* (Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 19.
17 *Ibid*., p. 19.
18 Wordsworth, *Prose Works*, vol. II, p. 8.
19 Quine, *Pursuit of Truth*, p. 20.
20 W. V. Quine, *Word and Object* (The MIT Press, 1960), p. 5.
21 Wordsworth, *Prose Works*, vol. I, p. 132.
22 *Ibid*., vol. III, p. 71.
23 Henryk Skolimowski, 'Quine, Ajdukiewicz, and the Predicament of 20th Century Philosophy', *The Philosophy of W.V. Quine*, eds. Lewis Edwin Hahn and Paul Arthur Schlipp (Open Court, 1986), p. 471.
24 Wordsworth, 'Essay, Supplementary to the Preface', *Prose Works*, vol. III, p. 82.
25 See, for example, Engell, *Forming the Critical Mind*, p. 222: 'Wordsworth's primary distinction, and what is most representative about the Preface for romanticism as a whole, is not between forms of writing but forms of knowing. The difference is first a philosophical one.' Mark Kipperman notes that 'the epistemology of post-Kantian idealism [. . .] seems to take as its central topic the same question that drives the psychological quest of English romantic poetry: what does it mean for a subject to conceive himself as the maker of his own circumstances?' (*Beyond Enchantment*, p. ix). Keith Thomas, meanwhile

(*Wordsworth and Philosophy: Empiricism and Transcendentalism in the Poetry* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989)), argues that '[t]he project Coleridge and Wordsworth set themselves in 1797–98 is essentially epistemological, for at the center is the interaction of self with nature' (p. 9).

26 Wordsworth, preface, *Lyrical Ballads*. *Prose Works*, vol. I, p. 139 (emphasis added).

27 Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805), XII, 301–2, 307–12.

28 Wordsworth, ['Reply to "Mathetes" '], *Prose Works*, vol. II, p. 20.

29 *Ibid*., vol. I, p. 128.

30 Wordsworth, 'To William Matthews', 23 May 1794, letter 40 of *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Alan G. Hill, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), vol. I, p. 119.

31 Pfau, *Wordsworth's Profession*, pp. 11–12.

32 Young, *Conjectures*, p. 12.

33 D'Israeli, *Essay*, p. xvi.

34 John Keats, 'To J. H. Reynolds', 9 April 1818, letter 76 of *Letters*, vol. I, p. 267. Keats had already written that 'I have not the slightest feel of humility towards the Public or to any thing in existence, but the eternal Being, the Principle of Beauty, and the Memory of great Men' (*ibid*., p. 266). Lamb's advice to an aspiring author is similar in outlook: 'Trust not to the Public, you may hang, starve, drown yourself, for anything that worthy *Personage* cares' ('To Richard Barton,' 9 Jan 1823, letter 453 of *Letters* (1935), vol. II, p. 364).

35 Wordsworth, 'To Lady Beaumont', 21 May, 1807, letter 75 of *Letters*, vol. II, p. 150.

36 Wordsworth, 'To Sir George Beaumont', [Feb. 1808], letter 96 of *Letters*, vol. II, p. 194.

37 Lamb, 'Readers against the Grain', *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E. V. Lucas (London: Methuen and Co., 1903), vol. I, p. 274.

38 Pfau, *Wordsworth's Profession*, p. 16.

39 Jerome J. McGann, *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* (Chicago University Press, 1983). See also: Paul Hamilton, *Wordsworth* (The Harvester Press, 1986). Hamilton sees it as a feature of Wordsworth's conservatism that he makes 'alternative, richer conceptions of people's worth a matter of poetic rather than political endeavour' (p. 3). Richard Bourke, meanwhile, in *Romantic Discourse and Political Modernity* (Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), notes how Wordsworth's theory after 1797 'increasingly came to identify authority with the inner resourcefulness of the individual', and after 1802 took 'the elected or chosen individual as its point of departure'. In doing so, 'political validity is substituted by aesthetic credibility, that the rules of pleading are confined to a specific register the aesthetic dimension in relation to which one can argue only as one of the unbelievers or as one of the converted' (p. 13). A similar tack is taken by Terry Eagleton, who observes in *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Basil Blackwell, 1990) that the birth of aesthetics in the eighteenth century 'coincides with the period when cultural production is beginning to suffer the miseries and indignities of commodification' (p. 64).

40 Wordsworth, *Prose Works*, vol. I, p. 135.
41 *Ibid*., vol. II, p. 76.
42 *Ibid*., vol. I, p. 142.
43 For a discussion of the connection of the idea of 'genius' with Jacobinism, see Simon Schaffer, 'Genius in Romantic Natural Philosophy', *Romanticism and the Sciences*, eds. Andrew Cunningham and Nicholas Jardine (Cambridge University Press, 1990).
44 Wordsworth, 'To William Rowan Hamilton', 24 July 1829, letter 444 of *Letters*, vol. V, pp. 96–7.
45 Wordsworth, ['Preface to the Edition of 1815,'] *Prose Works*, vol. III, pp. 26–7.
46 *Ibid*., vol. I, p. 128.
47 *Ibid*., vol. II, p. 84 (emphasis added).
48 *Ibid*., vol. III, pp. 31–3.
49 It is noteworthy that any potential lawlessness in imagination's creativity is attributed by Wordsworth to the type of *materials* with which it works, as it 'recoils from every thing but the plastic, the pliant, and the indefinite [. . .]'. These, together with its 'different purpose', constitute its distinctness from fancy – not the nature of the imaginative process itself, which is likewise ' "aggregative and associative" ' (*ibid*., vol. III, p. 36).
50 *Ibid*., vol. III, pp. 36–7.
51 *Ibid*., p. 82.
52 *Ibid*., vol. I, p. 103.
53 Indeed, Bewell claims that since the essay 'was originally drafted as part of a preface explaining why Wordsworth was taking up moral issues in verse' (*Wordsworth and the Enlightenment*, p. 10), the 'Essay on Morals' fragment should be renamed 'Against Moral Inquiry'.
54 Wordsworth, *Prose Works*, vol. I, pp. 122–4.
55 *Ibid*., p. 126 (emphasis added).
56 Jacobi, *Main Philosophical Writings*, p. 563.
57 Wordsworth, *Prose Works*, vol. I, p. 139 (emphasis added).
58 Sidney, *Apologie for Poetrie*, p. c2.
59 See Wordsworth's letter to Joseph Kirkham Miller in 1831, which implicitly attacks Benthamite utilitarianism, with its interpretation of right action according to a system of ends based upon notions of what is useful to human well-being. Wordsworth counters that 'means, in the concerns of this life, are infinitely more important than ends, which are to be valued mainly according to the qualities and virtues requisite for their attainment.' ('To Joseph Kirkham Miller', 17 Dec. 1831, letter 658 of *Letters*, vol. V, pp. 464–5).
60 Wordsworth, *Prose Works*, vol. I, pp. 124–6.
61 On one side, hedonistic act-utilitarianism is distinguished from rule-utilitarianism by its claim that an action should be judged according to the consequences of the particular action itself, rather than according to the consequences of that action being adopted as a rule by any individual in similar circumstances. On the other side, a hedonistic utilitarian like Bentham is distinguishable from a non-hedonistic or 'ideal' utilitarian like G. E. Moore

in that he evaluates an action's outcome simply in terms of the net pleasure produced, rather than other criteria such as knowledge or virtues of character. For a succinct discussion of these positions, see J. C. C. Smart, 'An Outline of a System of Utilitarian Ethics', *Utilitarianism: For and Against*, by J. C. C. Smart and Bernard Williams (Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 9–27.

62 Wordsworth, *Prose Works*, vol. I, p. 130.
63 *Ibid*., p. 138.
64 *Ibid*., p. 138.
65 Hazlitt, 'Coriolanus', *Works*, vol. V, p. 348.
66 Wordsworth, *Prose Works*, vol. I, p. 139 (emphasis added).
67 *Ibid*., pp. 140–1.
68 *Ibid*., pp. 140–1.
69 See Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, eds. J. H. Burns and H. L. A. Hart (University of London: The Athlone Press, 1970). Bentham argues that of all the species of pleasure, 'the only difference there is among them lies in the circumstances that accompany their production' (p. 36).
70 Wordsworth, *Prose Works*, vol. I, p. 150.
71 *Ibid*., p. 126.
72 *Ibid*., p. 126 (emphasis added).
73 *Ibid*., p. 161.
74 *Ibid*., p. 148 (emphasis added).
75 *Ibid*., vol. II, p. 8.
76 Elridge, 'Wordsworth', 67.
77 Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1799), I, 1.
78 Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805), I, 1.
79 Cooke, *Acts of Inclusion*, p. 204.
80 Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805), XI, 74–5, 79–92.
81 For example, line 83, containing the reference to the 'charm of logic', is dropped between the AB-stage (1805–6) and C-stage (1818–20) versions of the text. See William Wordsworth, *The Thirteen-Book Prelude*, ed. Mark L. Reed, 2 vols. (Cornell University Press, 1991), vol. I, p. 296, and vol. II, p. 204.
82 Wordsworth, *Prose Works*, vol. I, p. 144 (emphasis added).
83 Wordsworth, 'To William Mathews', [8] June [1794], letter 42 of *Letters*, vol. I, pp. 124–5.
84 Wordsworth, 'To Sir George Beaumont', [Feb. 1808], letter 96 of *Letters*, vol. II, p. 195.
85 Wordsworth, *Prose Works*, vol. I, p. 139.
86 *Ibid*., vol. III, p. 63.
87 *Ibid*., p. 65.
88 *Ibid*., p. 66.
89 *Ibid*., vol. II, pp. 351–2.
90 *Ibid*., p. 354.

91 Cf. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, p. 149: For Kant, the 'modality of aesthetic judgements, namely their presumed necessity [...] makes us cognizant of an *a priori* principle in them, and elevates us out of empirical psychology, in which they would otherwise remain buried among the feelings of enjoyment and pain [...]'.
92 Wordsworth, *Prose Works*, vol. II, p. 350.
93 *Ibid*., p. 357.
94 *Ibid*., p. 53.
95 *Ibid*., pp. 355–7.
96 *Ibid*., vol. III, p. 82.
97 *Ibid*., p. 82.
98 The eighteenth-century genius was a colonizer, discovering, appropriating and assimilating new lands by force of imagination. Campbell writes of the modern genius in the arts that 'it may be said to bring us into a new country, of which, though there have been some successful incursions occasionally made upon its frontiers, we are not yet in full possession' (*Philosophy of Rhetoric*, vol. I, p. 19).
99 Wordsworth, *Prose Works*, vol. III, p. 82.
100 Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, p. 62; par. 471.
101 Wordsworth, 'To Lord Lonsdale', 28 Nov. 1818, letter 523 of *Letters*, vol. III, p. 508.
102 Wordsworth, 'To Sir William Rowan Hamilton', 4 Jan. [1838], letter 1197 of *Letters*, vol. VI, 509. However, Wordsworth's output of essays in the years following the first Preface suggests, as Stephen Gill notes, that he 'cared more than a straw about theory' (*William Wordsworth: A Life* (Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 187).
103 Wordsworth, *Prose Works*, vol. I, p. 132.
104 Marjorie Levinson, *Wordsworth's Great Period Poems: Four Essays* (Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 17, 24.
105 Wordsworth, *Prose Works*, vol. III, p. 80.
106 *Ibid*., vol. II, p. 357 (emphasis added).
107 Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', *Lenin and Philosophy*, trans. B. Brewster (New Left Books, 1971), p. 169.

3 THE DRY ROMANCE: HAZLITT'S IMMANENT IDEALISM

1 Hazlitt, *Works*, vol. I, p. 37.
2 See W. P. Albrecht, *Hazlitt and the Creative Imagination* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1965); Roy Park, *Hazlitt and the Spirit of the Age: Abstraction and Critical Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); John Kinnaird, *William Hazlitt: Critic of Power* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978); John L. Mahoney, *The Logic of Passion: The Literary Criticism of William Hazlitt* (Salzburg, 1978), and David Bromwich, *Hazlitt: The Mind of a Critic* (Oxford University Press, 1983). Superseded, but still valuable, is Elisabeth Schneider's pioneering *The Aesthetics of William Hazlitt: A Study of the Philosophical Basis of his Criticism* (Philadelphia, 1933).

3 See, for example, M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, p. 135: In Abrams' view, with Hazlitt, '[w]e are well on the way to critical impressionism [...]'; an opinion echoed by Marilyn Butler in *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries* (Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 170.

4 For a defence of Hazlitt as a sustained thinker who draws upon materialist analogies for his theory of mind, and who 'uses the methods of empiricism to achieve a criticism that combines sensitive observation with inductive inference' (p. 255), see James Mulvihill, 'Hazlitt and "First Principles" ', *Studies in Romanticism* 29 (1990), 241–55. A persuasive case for Hazlitt as a psychologist and a philosopher of personal identity 'whose insights and perspectives are so far ahead of his own times that they drop through the cracks of history' (p. 465) is assembled by Raymond Marin and John Barresi, 'Hazlitt on the Future of the Self', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56.3 (1995), 463–81.

5 See Thomas McFarland, *Romantic Cruxes: The English Essayists and the Spirit of the Age* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 65: McFarland describes Hazlitt's imagination as 'coarctive', by which he means 'a tendency, restricted to Hazlitt alone, to express his sympathy or antipathy with the claims or merits of others in two different and discrete ways rather than in one unified way'.

6 Hazlitt, *Works*, vol. 11, p. 117.

7 Hazlitt, 'Madame de Staël's Account of German Philosophy and Literature,' *The Morning Chronicle*, 3 March 1814, *Works*, vol. xx, p. 26.

8 See, for example, Hazlitt's preface to the *Abridgement of the Light of Nature Pursued*. *Works*, vol. 1, p. 130: Tucker, Hazlitt claims, 'believed with professor Kant in the unity of consciousness, or 'that the mind alone is formative' [...].' A. F. M. Willich's *Elements of the Critical Philosophy* was published in London in 1798.

9 In 'The Literature of Power', for example, Jonathan Bate distinguishes De Quincey's Wordsworthian, affective notion of power from Hazlitt's more 'sinister' and 'political' sense, adding that '[t]he fact that for one hundred and fifty years it was De Quincey's, not Hazlitt's, sense of "power" which held sway in literary criticism goes a long way to explain the ardour of recent attacks on criticism's claims to be above ideology' (p. 148).

10 Uttara Natarajan, *Hazlitt and the Reach of Sense: Criticism, Morals and the Metaphysics of Power* (Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 2, 37.

11 Hazlitt, *Works*, vol. xii, p. 10.

12 Tom Paulin, in *The Day-Star of Liberty*, notes that '[t]he word "dry" [...] is a significant critical term in Hazlitt's writing [...]' (p. 163), expressing at times 'his detestation of all that is fixed [...] concrete, or literal' (p. 151) and yet at others 'an affirmation of physicality, a sort of worked *thingness* in prose [...]' (p. 189).

13 Hazlitt, 'Coriolanus', *Works*, vol. v, p. 347.

14 *Ibid*., vol. 1, pp. 26–7.

15 See Paulin, *Day-Star of Liberty*, p. 142.

16 Hazlitt, *Works*, vol. xii, pp. 296–7.

17 *Ibid*., vol. xx, p. 371.

18 Locke, *Essay*, p. 596.
19 George Berkeley, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge. The Works of George Berkeley Bishop of Cloyne*, eds. A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1949), vol. II, p. 32.
20 *Ibid*., p. 42.
21 *Ibid*., p. 72.
22 Hume, *Treatise*, p. 163.
23 *Ibid*., pp. 165–6.
24 *Ibid*., p. 167.
25 *Ibid*., p. 577.
26 See Hazlitt, *Works*, vol. I, p. 124: 'Abstraction is a trick to supply the defect of comprehension. The moulds of the understanding may be said not to be large enough to contain the gross concrete objects of nature, but will still admit of their names, and descriptions, and general forms, which lie flatter and closer in the brain, and are more easily managed.'
27 Hazlitt's debt to Hume has been a hotly contested issue over the years. Elizabeth Schneider's contention that to Hume 'he owed a good deal in general outlook, though probably not in specific points' (*Aesthetics of William Hazlitt*, p. 20), is supported by David Bromwich's claim that the critic 'argues as a thinking disciple of Hume' (*Mind of a Critic*, p. 18). John Mahoney, meanwhile, notes that Hazlitt was reading the *Treatise* while in the process of composing the *Essay* (*Logic of Passion*, p. 40), adding that Hazlitt's basic philosophical outlook 'is on the one hand solidly grounded in [...] the British empirical tradition, and yet on the other a sharp rejoinder to that tradition' (*ibid*., p. 3). My own position is that what Hazlitt inherited from Hume was a predicament or a dilemma rather than a creed.
28 Hazlitt, 'On Abstract Ideas', *Works*, vol. II, p. 191.
29 *Ibid*., p. 206.
30 *Ibid*., p. 192.
31 *Ibid*., vol. I, p. 127.
32 See *ibid*., vol. II, p. 209: 'The knowledge upon which our ideas rest is general, and the only difference between abstract and particular, is that of being more or less general.'
33 Wilfrid Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (1956) (Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 76.
34 Sellars, *Empiricism*, p. 19.
35 See John Horne Tooke, *The Diversions of Purley*, ed. Richard Taylor, rev. edn, 2 vols. (London, 1829), vol. I, p. 49: 'The business of the mind [...] extends no farther than to receive impressions, that is, to have Sensations or Feelings. What are called its operations, are merely the operations of Language. A consideration of *Ideas* [...] will lead us no farther than to *Nouns*: i.e. the signs of these impressions, or names of ideas.'
36 Natarajan, *Reach of Sense*, p. 19.
37 *Ibid*., pp. 38, 20.
38 Davidson, 'On the Very Idea', p. 135.

39 Sellars, *Empiricism*, p. 63.
40 Hazlitt, *Works*, vol. 11, p. 6.
41 Paulin, *Day-Star of Liberty*, p. 35.
42 Hazlitt, *Works*, vol. 1, p. 9.
43 A. C. Grayling, *The Quarrel of the Age: The Life and Times of William Hazlitt* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2000), pp. 363–4.
44 Hazlitt, *Works*, vol. 1, p. 39.
45 *Ibid*., p. 35.
46 *Ibid*., pp. 71–2.
47 *Ibid*., p. 16.
48 Roy Park argues that Hazlitt's theory of abstraction breaks new ground by denying, *pace* Locke and Hume, that all abstraction is a result of *generalization* (*Spirit of the Age*, p. 98). Instead, Park claims, Hazlitt adopts a *particularist* view which, like that of Blake, stemmed from his concrete experience as a painter: 'In Hazlitt's view, as indeed in the view of most painters, no two leaves, no two grains of sand are alike. Each is composed of an infinity of parts' (*ibid*., p. 100). Yet Hazlitt's epistemology depends upon the premise that, as he puts it, the 'knowledge upon which our ideas rest is general, and the only difference between abstract and particular, is that of being more or less general' ('On Abstract Ideas', *Works*, vol. 11, p. 209). While it is certainly true that Hazlitt retained a corpuscularian view about reality, it is the very gap between this atomistic, indeterminate 'external' world, and the unified world of consciousness 'within' which his theory of abstraction is designed to bridge; that is, how the 'manifold' forms of things in nature 'become one by being united in the same common principle of thought' (*ibid*., vol. 1, p. 71).
49 *Ibid*., vol. xx, p. 32.
50 *Ibid*., p. 34.
51 *Ibid*., p. 35.
52 *Ibid*., vol. 1, pp. 19–23.
53 *Ibid*., vol. 11, p. 117.
54 Hazlitt, 'On Locke's "Essay on the Human Understanding" ', *Works*, vol. 11, p. 151.
55 A. F. M. Willich, *Elements of the Critical Philosophy* (London, 1798).
56 See Preface to an *Abridgement of the Light of Nature Pusued*: Tucker, according to Hazlitt, 'believed with professor Kant in the unity of consciousness, or "that the mind alone is formative" ' (*Works*, vol. 1, p. 130). See also his review of Madame de Staël for *The Morning Chronicle*: the necessity of the 'superintending faculty' (*ibid*., vol. xx, p. 25) of understanding for the unity of experience demonstrates that '[*t*]*he mind alone is formative*, to use the expression of Kant' (*ibid*., p. 26). However, Hazlitt's belief in 1807 that Tucker's notion of the coalesence of association might be sufficient for the unity of mental representations was not a secure one.
57 *Ibid*., vol. 11, p. 166.
58 *Ibid*., p. 117.

59 *Ibid*., vol. xx, p. 43.
60 *Ibid*., vol. xvi, p. 137.
61 Park argues that Hazlitt's work differs radically from that of Coleridge insofar as it forgoes the attempt to distinguish poetry from (empirical) science; removing it instead from *all* forms of knowledge, and marking it as non-affirmative: poetry has no truth-value, because it does not make statements. Instead, it offers the reader or listener a 'middle way' (*Spirit of the Age*, p. 5), and gives one a feeling for the ineffable aspects of existence; or, as Park puts it, the 'experiential' (*ibid*., p. 78).
62 Hazlitt, 'Prejudice', *Works*, vol. xx, p. 321.
63 *Ibid*., vol. xii, p. 46.
64 *Ibid*., vol. viii, p. 36.
65 *Ibid*., vol. i, pp. 132–3.
66 Reid, *Inquiry*, p. 39.
67 *Ibid*., p. 29.
68 Hazlitt, *Works*, vol. i, pp. 124–5.
69 See Jacobi, supplement, *David Hume on Faith* (1787), *Main Philosophical Writings*, p. 331: Jacobi complains, with regard to Kant's postulation of noumena, that 'I must admit that I was held up not a little by this difficulty [. . .] viz. that *without* that presupposition I could not enter into the system, but *with* it I could not stay within it.'
70 Hazlitt, 'Common Sense', *Works*, vol. xx, pp. 289–90.
71 *Ibid*., vol. viii, pp. 35–8.
72 *Ibid*., vol. ii, p. 117.
73 Hume, *Treatise*, pp. 10–11.
74 Hartley, *Observations*, vol. i, pp. 65–6.
75 Hazlitt, *Works*, vol. i, p. 52.
76 *Ibid*., pp. 51–3.
77 *Ibid*., p. 17.
78 *Ibid*., p. 69. He adds, in a typically candid moment, that '[i]f I am asked if I conceive clearly how this is possible, I answer no: – perhaps no one ever will, or can. But I do understand clearly, that the other supposition [i.e., associationism] is an absurdity' (*ibid*., p. 70).
79 *Ibid*., p. 60.
80 *Ibid*., p. 59.
81 Tucker, *Light of Nature*, vol. i, p. 349.
82 *Ibid*., pp. 14–15.
83 *Ibid*., p. 351.
84 Hartley, *Observations*, vol. i, pp. 341–2.
85 Tucker, *Light of Nature*, vol. i, p. 338.
86 Hazlitt, *Works*, vol. xii, p. 51.
87 *Ibid*., p. 46.
88 Tucker, *Light of Nature*, vol. i, p. 316.
89 Hazlitt, *Works*, vol. xii, p. 50.
90 *Ibid*., vol. xx, p. 301.

91 *Ibid*., vol. 11, pp. 116–17.
92 See *ibid*., vol. 1, p. 26.
93 *Ibid*., vol. 11, p. 147.
94 *Ibid*., p. 163.
95 *Ibid*., pp. 165–6.
96 *Ibid*., p. 119.
97 Prior to Natarajan, John Kinnaird had claimed in *William Hazlitt: Critic of Power* that Hazlitt's notion of power 'is the informing vision of all his criticism' (p. viii).
98 Hazlitt, *Works*, vol. 1, p. 129.
99 *Ibid*., p. 130.
100 *Ibid*., vol. xx, pp. 16–21.
101 [Hazlitt?], 'Coleridge's Literary Life', *Works*, vol. xvi, p. 123. In an editorial note, P. P. Howe (*ibid*., p. 425) points out that Jeffrey claimed the authorship of all of 'Coleridge's Literary Life', even though parts of it were republished by Hazlitt elsewhere, and argues that '[f]ew, if any, articles in the present volume are entirely free from Jeffrey's editorial touches' (*ibid*., p. 420).
102 *Ibid*., vol. xx, p. 18 (emphasis added).
103 Hazlitt's misunderstanding of the significance of 'Kant's notions *a priori*' has been discussed before, most notably by René Wellek in *Immanuel Kant in England 1793–1838* (Princeton University Press, 1931), pp. 166–7.
104 This does not remove Hazlitt's epistemic ambivalence, merely inverts it. As W. P. Albrecht notes, '[w]hereas the *Essay* and Hazlitt's political writings stress the moral, sympathizing quality of the imagination, his critical essays emphasize its creative, truth-finding power' (*Creative Imagination*, p. 74). Yet at the same time, in his writing on aesthetics and art Hazlitt is less concerned to curb the notion of power as such.
105 Park, *Spirit of the Age*, p. 14.
106 Natarajan, *Reach of Sense*, p. 9. In 'Power and Capability: Hazlitt, Keats and the Discrimination of Poetic Self', *Romanticism* 2.1 (1996), Natarajan notes the 'bigotry' which Hazlitt attributes to genius; an innate bias or predisposition to view the world in a given way which is singular and exclusive, guaranteeing in itself no access to knowledge (pp. 57–8). Instead, it is a form of power which represents 'a kind of tyranny: the colonisation and subjection of lesser understandings by the powerful assertion of an individual ego' (*ibid*., p. 59).
107 Hazlitt, *Works*, vol. viii, p. 32.
108 *Ibid*., vol. xx, p. 90.
109 *Ibid*., vol. viii, p. 84.
110 *Ibid*., p. 31.
111 *Ibid*., p. 42.
112 *Ibid*., vol. xx, p. 297.
113 *Ibid*., p. 298.
114 *Ibid*., vol. v, pp. 1–5.
115 *Ibid*., p. 3.

116 *Ibid*., vol. xx, p. 44.
117 *Ibid*., vol. v, p. 8.
118 *Ibid*., p. 204 (emphasis added).
119 *Ibid*., p. 261.
120 *Ibid*., pp. 7–8.
121 *Ibid*., vol. xx, pp. 298–302.
122 *Ibid*., vol. v, p. 9.
123 *Ibid*., vol. viii, p. 7.
124 *Ibid*., pp. 43–4.
125 See Harold Bloom, *Agon: Towards a Theory of Revisionism* (Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 17: 'I have come to a conviction that the love of poetry is another variant of the love of power, a conviction in which I am happy to note I have been preceded by Hazlitt.'
126 Hazlitt, *Works* xx: 321.
127 *Ibid*., p. 325.
128 *Ibid*., p. 327.
129 See *ibid*., vol. vii, p. 306: 'Burke was so far right in saying that it is no objection to an institution, that it is founded in *prejudice*, but the contrary, if that prejudice is natural and right; that is, if it arises from those circumstances which are properly subjects of feeling and association, not from any defect or perversion of the understanding in those things which fall strictly under its jurisdiction.'
130 Hazlitt, *Works*, vol. i, p. 61.
131 *Ibid*., vol. ii, pp. 211–12.
132 *Ibid*., vol. viii, p. 46.
133 *Ibid*., vol. xvi, p. 265.

4 coleridge and the new foundationalism

1 Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol. i, pp. 266–7.
2 Bowie, *Romanticism*, p. 16.
3 See Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, p. 28: Abrams represents Wordsworth's 'high argument' as a way of communicating the power of mind 'to create out of the world of all of us, in a quotidian and recurrent miracle, a new world which is the equivalent of paradise'.
4 Coleridge, 'To Thomas Poole', 16 March 1801, letter 387 of *Letters*, vol. ii, pp. 706–7.
5 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 136.
6 Coleridge, *Logic*, ed. J. R. de J. Jackson (Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 146.
7 In particular, G. N. G. Orsini, *Coleridge and German Idealism* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969).
8 Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol. ii, p. 26.
9 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lectures 1818–1819: On the History of Philosophy*, ed. J. R. de J. Jackson (Princeton University Press, 2000), vol. ii, p. 588.

10 I say 'ungenial' to distinguish this view from Seamus Perry's 'third course' for Coleridge scholarship, presented in *Coleridge and the Uses of Division* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), which despite 'accepting his failure as just that' (p. 2) sees Coleridgean ambiguity and indecision as 'an example of muddle in its nobler aspect, a whole-hearted dealing with intractables' (p. 9).
11 Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol. 1, p. 143.
12 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Basil Blackwell, 1962), p. 270.
13 Coleridge, *Logic*, p. 146.
14 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 141.
15 Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*, trans. and ed. Gary Hatfield (Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 17.
16 Gottlob Frege, *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, trans. J. L. Austin, 2nd edn (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953), p. vi.
17 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 143.
18 *Ibid*., p. 145.
19 Kant, *Prolegomena*, p. 74.
20 Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol. 1, p. 155.
21 Coleridge, *Lectures 1808–1819 On Literature*, ed. R. A. Foakes, 2 vols. (Princeton University Press, 1987), vol. 1, p. 192.
22 Frege, *Foundations of Arithmetic*, p. 4.
23 A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, 2nd edn, 1946 (Penguin Books, 1990), p. 44.
24 Rudolf Carnap, *Meaning and Necessity*, 2nd edn (University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 222.
25 Quine, *Word and Object*, p. 3.
26 W. V. Quine, *From a Logical Point of View*, 2nd edn (Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 37.
27 See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 2nd edn, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Basil Blackwell, 1958), p. 51; par. 133, 'There is not *a* philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies.'
28 Michael Williams, *Unnatural Doubts* (Blackwell, 1991), pp. xiv–xv.
29 Laurence Bonjour, *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge* (Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 158.
30 Jerrold J. Katz, *Realistic Rationalism* (The MIT Press, 1998), p. 191.
31 Friedrich Schlegel, *Kritische Schriften und Fragmente 1–6* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1988), vol. 11, p. 145. Quoted in Bowie, *Romanticism*, p. 53.
32 Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol. 1, p. 303.
33 Coleridge, *The Friend*, vol. 1, pp. 148–9.
34 Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol. 11, p. 244.
35 *Ibid*., vol. 1, p. 302. As the editors note here, by this Coleridge probably had in mind the work he was to take up later in the 'Logic' and 'Opus Maximum' manuscripts.
36 *Ibid*., p. 264.

37 See Thomas McFarland, *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 126: 'Coleridge's connexion with Kant only becomes meaningful in terms of the counter-pull of Spinoza [...].'
38 Orsini, *Coleridge*, p. 205.
39 For a reading of *Biographia Literaria* as reflexively and ironically enacting its own imaginative metaphysics, and thereby executing 'a transcendental deduction of mind in aesthetic terms', see Kathleen Wheeler, *Sources, Processes and Methods in Coleridge's Biographia Literaria* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 157. Paul Hamilton has claimed in *Coleridge's Poetics* (Oxford, 1983), however, that Coleridge's 'ideas on desynonymy, repressed in *Biographia*, are the clue to his missing theory [...]' (p. 12). More recently Tim Fulford has argued in *Coleridge's Figurative Language* (London, 1991) that Coleridge saw figurative language as an embodiment of intellectual intuition. Additionally, for a thorough defence of the logos as forming the apex of Coleridge's philosophy after 1805, see Mary Anne Perkins, *Coleridge's Philosophy. The Logos as Unifying Principle* (Oxford, 1994). Perkins's view that 'Coleridge's thought is, taken as a whole, integrated and coherent' (p. 10) is similar to Nicholas Reid's contention in 'Coleridge and Schelling: The Missing Transcendental Deduction', *Studies in Romanticism*, 33 (1994), that 'a stable, coherent and systematic philosophy is evident in his writings from September 1818 onwards' (452), in that both continue the attempt made over the past quarter of a century to repair the damage inflicted upon Coleridge's philosophical reputation by Kantian-orientated critics such as René Wellek in *Immanuel Kant in England 1793–1838* (Princeton, N.J., 1931), and (more damagingly still) by accusations of plagiarism; for which, see Norman Fruman, *The Damaged Archangel* (New York, 1971).
40 Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol. I, p. 5.
41 *Ibid*., vol. II, p. 15.
42 *Ibid*., pp. 83–4.
43 *Ibid*., p. 282.
44 Thomas Pfau, 'Excursus: Schelling in the Work of S.T. Coleridge', *Idealism and the Endgame of Theory*, by Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, trans. and ed. Thomas Pfau (State University of New York Press, 1994), p. 275.
45 Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism (1800)*, trans. Peter Heath (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1978), p. 230.
46 Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, *On the History of Modern Philosophy*, trans. and ed. Andrew Bowie (Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 165–6.
47 Schelling (*History*, p. 165) maintains that the 'first declaration in philosophy (which even precedes philosophy) *can* in fact only be the expression of a wanting'.
48 Schelling, *History*, p. 95.
49 Elridge, *Human Life*, p. 59.
50 McFarland, *Coleridge*, p. 127.

51 See, for example, John A. Hodgson, *Coleridge, Shelley, and Transcendental Inquiry* (University of Nebraska Press, 1989). Hodgson applies the term 'transcendental' indifferently to Freud, Coleridge and Shelley, and 'to arguments and tropes of mind no less than of God, to querying of inner no less than of outer noumena', as a 'practice [...] genuinely and broadly Romantic [...]' (p. xv).
52 Transcendental argument returned to prominence during the 1960s and '70s, largely due to its anti-sceptical use in P. F. Strawson's *Individuals* (London: Methuen, 1959). It has also been used by Wittgenstein, Austin and Davidson.
53 Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol. 1, pp. 236–8.
54 *Ibid*., p. 237.
55 This is a far more telling difference between the positions of the two than it might at first appear: Coleridge's idea of what our 'intellectual faculties' are capable of outreaches Kant's limitation of what can possibly constitute experience.
56 Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol. 1, p. 289.
57 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 123.
58 *Ibid*., p. 121.
59 *Ibid*., p. 126.
60 *Ibid*., p. 127.
61 See *ibid*., p. 146: 'The real problem of pure reason is now contained in the question: *How are synthetic judgements* a priori *possible?*'
62 Robert Paul Wolff, *Kant's Theory of Mental Activity* (Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 50. Similar arguments have been made against Strawson. See, for example: T. E. Wilkerson, 'Transcendental Arguments', *Philosophical Quarterly* 20 (1970), 200–12.
63 Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge* (Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 6.
64 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, pp. 244, 245.
65 Guyer, *Claims of Knowledge*, p. 5.
66 Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol. 1, p. 251.
67 *Ibid*., pp. 270–2.
68 *Ibid*., p. 281.
69 See Elinor S. Shaffer, 'The "Postulates in Philosophy" in the *Biographia Literaria*', *Comparative Literature Studies* 7 (1970), 297–313. Shaffer argues that the issue of philosophical postulates in *Biographia* marks the point at which Coleridge shares more ground with Kant's critical epistemology than the 'aesthetic usurpation' of Schelling (309).
70 Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol. 1, p. 123. Cf. *The Friend*, vol. 1, p. 179: 'the eye must exist previous to any particular act of seeing, though by sight only can we know that we have eyes'.
71 Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol. 1, pp. 141–2.
72 Coleridge, *Logic*, p. 147.
73 *Ibid*., p. 205.

74 *Ibid*., p. 206. For J. H. Muirhead's view of this issue, see *Coleridge as Philosopher* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1930), p. 68.
75 Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol. I, p. 263.
76 Cf. Kant's footnote in the preface to the second edition of the first *Critique*, in which he likens his method to that of Copernicus, beginning with a 'hypothesis [. . .] in a manner contradictory to the senses' which will later 'be proved not hypothetically but rather apodictically from the constitution of our representations of space and time and from the elementary concepts of understanding' (*Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 113).
77 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'On Poesy or Art', *Biographia Literaria*, ed. J. Shawcross (Oxford University Press, 1907), vol. II, pp. 254–5.
78 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lectures 1808–1819 on Literature*, vol. II, p. 218.
79 Coleridge, 'On Poesy', Shawcross, vol. II, p. 257.
80 *Ibid*., p. 259.
81 Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol. II, pp. 15–18.
82 Pfau, *Idealism*, p. 275.
83 Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol. II, pp. 64–5.
84 Coleridge, 'Essays on the Principles of Genial Criticism', *Shorter Works*, vol. I, p. 358.
85 *Ibid*., pp. 377–80.
86 See Hume, 'On the Standard of Taste', *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary* 1741–77, ed Eugene F. Miller, rev. edn (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1985), p. 230: 'It is evident that none of the rules of composition are fixed by reasonings *a priori* [. . .].'
87 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, p. 192.
88 See *ibid*., pp. 186–7: Kant maintains that 'genius (1) is a *talent* for producing that for which no determinate rule can be given [. . . and] consequently that *originality* must be its primary characteristic. (2) That since there can also be original nonsense, its products must at the same time be models, i.e., *exemplary*, hence, while not themselves the result of imitation, they must serve others that way, i.e., as a standard or rule for judging. (3) That it cannot itself describe or indicate scientifically how it brings its product into being, but rather that it gives the rule as *nature* [. . .].'
89 *Ibid*., p. 26.
90 Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol. I, pp. 124–5.
91 See Kant's 'Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgement', *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, p. 233: 'But that things of nature serve one another as means to ends [. . .] for that we have no basis at all in the general idea of nature as the sum of the objects of the senses.'
92 See Jeremy Bentham, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, p. 12: To Bentham, the principle of utility 'approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever, according to the tendency which it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question [. . .]'.
93 Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, p. 68.

94 As Kant puts it, 'beautiful art cannot itself think up the rule in accordance with which it is to bring its product into being': '[*g*]*enius* is the inborn predisposition of the mind (*ingenium*) *through which* nature gives the rule to art' (*ibid*., p. 186).

95 Guyer sees this as a virtue rather than a problem in *Kant and the Claims of Taste* (Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 10: 'the analysis of aesthetic judgement without the explanatory theory of the harmony of the faculties would be empty, though the explanation without the analysis would surely be blind'.

96 Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, p. 26.

97 *Ibid*., p. 204.

98 J. G. Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, ed. and trans. Peter Heath and John Lachs (Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 111–14.

99 These have been discussed extensively in McFarland, *Coleridge*, esp. ch. 2.

100 Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters*, trans. Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby (Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 95.

101 Friedrich Schlegel, 'From "Critical Fragments" ', *Origins of Modern Critical Thought*, p. 190.

102 Bowie, *Romanticism*, p. 15.

103 See Coleridge, *The Friend*, vol. 1, p. 455: Coleridge maintains that all sound method supposes 'a *staple*, or *starting-post*, in the narrator himself; [...] *the leading Thought*, which, borrowing a phrase from the nomenclature of legislation, we may not inaptly call the INITIATIVE'.

104 See *ibid*., p. 457: 'The term, Method, cannot [...] otherwise than by abuse, be applied to a mere dead arrangement, containing in itself no principle of progression.'

105 See *ibid*., pp. 459–60: 'we contemplate it [i.e., law] as exclusively an attribute of the Supreme Being, inseparable from the idea of God: adding, however, that from the contemplation of law in this, its only perfect form, must be derived all true insight into all other grounds and principles necessary to Method, as the science common to all sciences [...]. Alienated from this (intuition shall we call it? or stedfast [sic] faith?) ingenious men may produce schemes, conducive to the peculiar purposes of particular sciences, but no scientific system.' Reconciling the claims of science/knowledge and religion/faith was to become the chief project of Coleridge's later career.

106 See *ibid*., p. 464: Coleridge is relatively brief on Theory, 'in which the existing forms and qualities of objects, discovered by observation or experiment, suggest a given arrangement of many under one point of view [...] for the purposes of understanding, and in most instances of controlling, them. In other words, all THEORY supposes the general idea of cause and effect.'

107 *Ibid*., p. 464.

108 *Ibid*., p. 465.

109 *Ibid*., pp. 476–77.

110 See *ibid*., p. 492: 'Hence too, it will not surprise us, that Plato so often calls ideas LIVING LAWS, in which the mind has its whole true being and permanence [. . .].'

111 See *ibid*., pp. 515–16. Namely, that unity which 'is absolutely one, and that it IS, and affirms itself TO BE, is its only predicate. And yet this power, nevertheless, is! In eminence of Being it IS! [. . .].' The manifestation of this is 'REVELATION': '[a]nd the manifesting power, the source and the correlative of the idea thus manifested – is it not GOD?'

112 See *ibid*., pp. 519–20: 'But here it behoves us to bear in mind, that all true reality has both its ground and its evidence in the *will*, without which as its complement science itself is but an elaborate game of shadows, begins in abstractions and ends in perplexity.'

113 *Ibid*., p. 457.

114 See Schelling, *History*, p. 134: Hegel identifies knowing with what is within the concept, Schelling claims, but 'cognition is the Positive and only has being (*das Seyende*), reality (*das Wirkliche*), as its object, whereas *thinking* just has the possible [. . .]'. For Schopenhauer, however, knowledge must be forsaken, not reconstructed: 'For in everything in nature there is something to which no ground can ever be assigned, for which no explanation is possible [. . .]' (*The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1966), vol. I, p. 124).

5 THE END OF KNOWLEDGE: COLERIDGE AND THEOSOPHY

1 Coleridge, 'To John Kenyon', 3 Nov. 1814, letter 954 of *Letters*, vol. III, p. 542.

2 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Table Talk*, ed. Carl Woodring (Princeton University Press, 1990), vol. I, p. 248.

3 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Kathleen Coburn, 4 vols. to date (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957–), vol. IV, note 5280.

4 It was such a doctrine as this that Coleridge repeatedly forecast in *Biographia*, as when he claims that '[i]n the third treatise of my *Logosophia* [. . .] I shall give (deo volente) the demonstrations and constructions of the Dynamic Philosophy scientifically arranged' (*Biographia Literaria*, vol. I, p. 263).

5 Coleridge, *Lectures on Philosophy*, vol. I, p. 374.

6 *Ibid*., pp. 359–60.

7 In a letter to Hugh Rose, for instance, Coleridge outlines his plans 'from Philosophy to derive a Scientia Scientiarum, and by application of its Principles and Laws a reversed arrangement of the Sciences: namely by *Descent* instead of the hitherto plan by Ascent. 1. Theology. 2. Ethics. 3. Metaphysics or Constructive Logic [. . .]' ('To Hugh J. Rose', 23 May 1818, letter 1136 of *Letters*, vol. IV, p. 864).

8 Perry, *Uses of Division*, p. 24.

9 Coleridge, *Table Talk*, vol. I, p. 192.

10 See Nigel Leask, *The Politics of Imagination in Coleridge's Political Thought* (Macmillan, 1988), p. 163, for how this idea coincided with Coleridge's increasing interest in mystery cults.

11 Muirhead, *Coleridge as Philosopher*, p. 110. See also James D. Boulger, *Coleridge as a Religious Thinker* (Yale University Press, 1961) for a description of Coleridge as an Anglican 'voluntarist traditionalist' (p. 43), and Raimonda Modiano, *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature* (Macmillan, 1985) for a discussion of 'Coleridge's voluntaristic philosophy' (p. 195). Mary Anne Perkins observes that '[h]is philosophy, despite its emphasis on Reason, cannot, owing to the primacy which he attributes to the Will, be adequately categorized as idealist or rationalist' (p. 141). However, Jerome Christensen notes in *Coleridge's Blessed Machine of Language* (Cornell University Press, 1981) that because of this 'the will never settles anything for Coleridge – least of all its own recklessness' (p. 25).

12 S.V. Pradhan, 'The Historiographer of Reason: Coleridge's Philosophy of History', *Studies in Romanticism* 25.1: (1986), p. 45.

13 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Shorter Works*, vol. 11, p. 1385. In this passage, written for Joseph Henry Green, Coleridge also claims that 'The Ground of Man's nature is the Will in a form of Reason' (vol. 11, p. 1368).

14 See Immanuel Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, ed. Mary J. Gregor, (Cambridge University Press, 1996): 'the concept of a being that has free will is the concept of a *causa noumenon* [. . .]'. 'But because no intuition, which can only be sensible, can be put under this application, *causa noumenon* with respect to the theoretical use of reason is, though a possible, thinkable concept, nevertheless an empty one' (p. 184). Kant argues that concepts which cannot be schematized in intuition, such as objective freedom – which is simply 'unconditioned causality', 'which for theoretical purposes would be *transcendent* (extravagant)' (p. 224) – can only be realized through the moral law, and thus practically.

15 See Kathleen Wheeler, 'Coleridge's Theory of Imagination: a Hegelian Solution to Kant?' *The Interpretation of Belief: Coleridge, Schleiermacher and Romanticism*, ed. David Jasper (London, 1986).

16 Anthony J. Harding's *Coleridge and the Idea of Love* (Cambridge University Press, 1974), p. 144, Stephen Prickett's *Coleridge and Wordsworth: The Poetry of Growth* (Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 186, and Modiano, *Concept of Nature*, p. 203, have each argued that combining the Christian idea of love to his metaphysics of polarity provided Coleridge with a more sophisticated, value-based model for solving such problems as the nature of personal identity and divine activity. In *Coleridge's Philosophy*, Perkins maintains that the same idea takes Coleridge's thought beyond both Kantian and Hegelian philosophy (p. 204).

17 Schelling, *History*, p. 134.

18 Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol. 11, p. 282.

19 Coleridge, 'To Thomas Poole', 16 Oct. [17]97, letter 210 of *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 354.

20 Coleridge, 'To Robert Southey', 30 Sept. [1799], letter 294 of *Letters*, vol. I, p. 534.
21 Coleridge, *Notebooks*, vol. I, note 556.
22 *Ibid*., vol. III, note 3756.
23 *Biographia* frames Spinoza and Jacob Boehme as united in opposition to the mechanistic philosophy of 'DEATH', and denies that Spinoza's *Ethics* is '*in itself* and *essentially* [...] incompatible with religion, natural or revealed' (*Biographia Literaria*, vol. I, p. 152). However, by 1818 Schelling and Spinoza have jointly been implicated in the error of considering 'Ens and Non-Ens as having no possible intermediates or degrees' (*Notebooks*, vol. III, note 4445).
24 Coleridge, *Notebooks*, vol. IV, note 4737.
25 Schelling, *History*, pp. 189–90.
26 Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics. The Collected Works of Spinoza*, trans and ed. Edwin Curley (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985), vol. I, p. 433.
27 *Ibid*., p. 472.
28 *Ibid*., p. 434.
29 Coleridge, *Notebooks*, vol. IV, note 4662.
30 See Spinoza, *Collected Works*, vol. I, p. 456: 'the human Mind is part of the infinite intellect of God'.
31 To a coherentist like Quine, indeed, '[w]hat the empirical underdetermination of global science shows is that there are various defensible ways of conceiving the world' (*Pursuit of Truth*, 102).
32 Spinoza, *Collected Works*, vol. I, pp. 472–3.
33 See *ibid*., pp. 477–8: knowledge derived from 'opinion or imagination' is '*the only cause of falsity* [...]'. The highest form of knowledge, meanwhile, is a kind of intuitive reason, which 'proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things'. For further discussion of Spinoza's theory of knowledge, see G. H. R. Parkinson, *Spinoza's Theory of Knowledge* (Oxford University Press, 1954), pp. 187–90, and E. M. Curley, 'Experience in Spinoza's Theory of Knowledge', *Spinoza: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Marjorie Grene (University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), pp. 25–59.
34 See Coleridge, *The Friend*, vol. I, p. 419. Coleridge here defines genius 'as the faculty which *adds* to the existing stock of power, and knowledge by new views, new combinations, *&c*.'
35 *Ibid*., p. 476.
36 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lay Sermons*, ed. R. J. White (Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 89.
37 Coleridge, *Table Talk*, vol. I, p. 364.
38 Coleridge, *Lectures on Philosophy*, vol. I, p. 76.
39 *Ibid*., vol. II, p. 531.
40 Coleridge, *Notebooks*, vol. II, editorial note 2316.
41 Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol. I, p. 155.
42 Coleridge, *Shorter Works*, vol. II, p. 1084.

43 Coleridge, 'To Mr. Pryce', April 1818, letter 1126 of *Letters*, vol. IV, p. 851.
44 This has already been noted by at least one commentator. See D. M. MacKinnon, 'Coleridge and Kant', *Coleridge's Variety: Bicentenary Studies*, ed. John Beer (Macmillan, 1974). MacKinnon observes that Coleridge 'was very wrong to regard the *Dissertation* as a summary of the first *Kritik*' (*ibid*., p. 196), but finds the misinterpretation understandable in view of the 'extent to which he found in the *Dissertation* an attempt to formulate the kind of pure unfettered intellectual ascent to the ultimate which he desired' (*ibid*., p. 197).
45 Immanuel Kant, *On the Form and Principles of the Sensible and the Intelligible World* ['Inaugural Dissertation'], *Theoretical Philosophy, 1755–1770*, trans. and ed. David Walford and Ralf Meerbote (Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 384.
46 Kant, *Theoretical Philosophy*, p. 387.
47 *Ibid*., pp. 407–9.
48 See *Biographia Literaria*, vol. I, pp. 288–9.
49 Coleridge, 'To Thomas Poole', 16 March 1801, letter 387 of *Letters*, vol. II, p. 706.
50 Coleridge, 'To Hugh J. Rose', 23 May 1818, letter 1136 of *Letters*, vol. IV, p. 862.
51 Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, p. 400.
52 Coleridge, *Lectures on Philosophy*, p. 276.
53 Coleridge, *Logic*, pp. 159–60.
54 Leibniz, 'Metaphysical Consequences of the Principle of Reason', *Philosophical Writings*, p. 172.
55 Leibniz, 'Of Universal Synthesis and Analysis', *Philosophical Writings*, p. 10.
56 Coleridge, *Lectures on Philosophy*, vol. II, p. 525.
57 Coleridge, 'To Mr. Pryce', April 1818, letter 1126 of *Letters*, vol. IV, p. 852.
58 Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans. and ed. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch and Anthony Kenny (Cambridge University Press, 1984–91), vol. I, p. 204.
59 Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, p. 175.
60 John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, 1920, rev. edn (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1948), p. 112.
61 William James, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (N.Y.: Longmans Green and Co., 1904), p. 92.
62 Coleridge, *The Friend*, vol. I, p. 440.
63 *Ibid*., p. 463.
64 See Coleridge, *Lay Sermons*, p. 62: Religion considers the particular and universal as one, '[h]ence in all the ages and countries of civilization Religion has been the parent and fosterer of the Fine Arts, as of Poetry, Music, Painting, and c. the common essence of which consists in a similar union of the Universal and the Individual'.
65 Coleridge, *Table Talk*, vol. I, p. 174.
66 Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol. II, p. 244.

67 See Kant, *Groundwork of The Metaphysics of Morals*. *Practical Philosophy*, p. 66.
68 Coleridge, *Notebooks*, vol. I, note 1717.
69 *Ibid*., vol. III, note 4265. See also Thesis 6 of ch. 12: *Biographia Literaria*, vol. I, pp. 272–3.
70 *Ibid*., p. 116 (emphasis added).
71 *Ibid*., p. 280.
72 Schelling, *System*, p. 26.
73 Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Introductions to the* Wissenschaftslehre *and Other Writings*, 1797–1800, ed. and trans. Daniel Breazeale (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett, 1994), p. 49.
74 See Fichte, *Science of Knowledge*, p. 195. To Fichte, the problem of knowledge will be solved when the division between the self and its converse, the not-self, can be seen to be resolved in the principle that '[t]he not-self is itself a product of the self-determining self, and nothing at all absolute, or posited outside the self', and that the realisation of this principle (which would mean an intellectual intuition) can only be achieved practically.
75 See Schelling, *System*, p. 12.
76 *Ibid*., pp. 235–6.
77 *Ibid*., pp. 230–1.
78 Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature as Introduction to the Study of This Science*, 2nd edn, trans. Errol E. Harris and Peter Heath (Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 49. Thus, eternal knowing produces three unities, or the 'three potencies of Nature-philosophy [. . .] the *universal structure of the world* [. . .] *universal mechanism* [. . . and] *organism* [. . .]' (p. 51).
79 Schelling, *System*, p. 27.
80 *Ibid*., p. 33.
81 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 26.
82 Coleridge, *Notebooks*, vol. IV, note 5283.
83 Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, p. 268.
84 See Schelling, *System*, p. 47: 'absolute freedom is identical with absolute necessity'.
85 Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, p. 286.
86 *Ibid*., p. 339.
87 Coleridge, *The Friend*, vol. I, p. 16.
88 Coleridge, *Lay Sermons*, p. 18.
89 Coleridge, *The Friend*, vol. I, p. 97.
90 *Ibid*., p. 432
91 Coleridge, ['On First Postulates in Philosophy'], *Shorter Works*, vol. I, p. 775.
92 Coleridge, ['On the Will'], *Shorter Works*, vol. I, pp. 777–80.
93 Reid ('Coleridge and Schelling') claims that Coleridge moves away from a correspondence theory of truth after *Biographia* (and thus from the purely 'binary' dialectic of subject and object in Schelling) and towards a Trinitarian-based polarity in which the human will exists finitely, and a

prothetic 'Will is the ground of the Trinity, but [. . .] has no existence other than in its existence *as* the Trinity [. . .]' (p. 472). It remains to be explained, however, how Coleridge can be said to have embraced a holistic or relational view of truth while he maintains that there is such a *ground* of reality.

94 Coleridge, *The Friend*, vol. I, pp. 155–6.
95 Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, p. 217.
96 Coleridge, *The Friend*, vol. I, p. 157.
97 Schopenhauer, *World as Will*, vol. II, p. 579.
98 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 29.
99 Coleridge, *Lectures on Philosophy*, p. 389.
100 *Ibid*., p. 390.
101 Coleridge, Notebooks, vol. IV, note 5286.
102 Schopenhauer, *World as Will*, vol. I, p. 428.
103 Muirhead, *Coleridge as Philosopher*, pp. 88–9.
104 See Gerald McNiece, *The Knowledge that Endures: Coleridge, German Philosophy and the Logic of Romantic Thought* (Macmillan, 1992), p. 25. Coleridge's progression as a thinker, McNiece argues, follows that of post-Kantian idealism, culminating in Hegelianism, but 'all the time professing an abiding allegiance to Kant'. Perkins claims that Coleridge's 'dialectical thinking' means that 'his thought has more in common with Hegel' (*ibid*., p. 7). Charles De Paolo's *Coleridge: Historian of Ideas* (University of Victoria, 1992) and James McKusick's *Coleridge's Philosophy of Language* (Yale University Press, 1986) have traced dialectical method through Coleridge's theories of history (p. 81) and language (p. 94) respectively. For a general appraisal of the function of dialecticism in Romanticism, see Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, pp. 172–6.
105 See Wheeler, 'Coleridge's Theory of Imagination'.
106 René Wellek, *Immanuel Kant in England*, p. 80.
107 *Ibid*., p. 86.
108 Arthur O. Lovejoy, 'Coleridge and Kant's Two Worlds', *Essays in the History of Ideas* (New York: George Braziller, 1955), p. 272.
109 Most notably, Thomas McFarland, whose main purpose in *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition* was to defend the 'organic unity' of the Coleridgean corpus (p. xxxvii). More recently, Perkins has identified the 'Logos' as 'the unifying factor of Coleridge's "system" ' (*Coleridge's Philosophy*, p. 3).
110 For a discussion of 'the Romantic, as opposed to the Idealist, view of the post-Kantian situation', see Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: from Kant to Nietzsche* (Manchester University Press, 1990), ch. 2.
111 Coleridge's translation.
112 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Marginalia*, eds. George Whalley and H. J. Jackson., 4 vols. to date (Princeton University Press, 1980–), vol. III, pp. 247–9.
113 Coleridge, *Logic*, p. 144.
114 Fichte, *Science of Knowledge*, pp. 111–13.

115 See, for example, Coleridge, *Lectures on Philosophy*, vol. II, pp. 553–4: Coleridge describes desynonymy of language as 'an organ and vehicle of thought', in which the duty of the philosopher is 'to aid and complete this process as his subject demands [. . .]'. For an exploration of desynonymy and its relation to Coleridge's aesthetic and political theory, see Paul Hamilton, *Coleridge's Poetics*.
116 See Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art*, ed. and trans. Douglas W. Stott (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 17: Schelling notes the idealist's perennial problem of particularity: how can 'a principle that is in and for itself absolutely one and simple [. . .] pass over into multiplicity and differentiation'? His conclusion is based on the view that 'the universe is structured in two directions corresponding to the two unities within the absolute', which are together 'essentially one' (*ibid*., p. 201).
117 Coleridge, *The Friend*, vol. I, p. 476.
118 Coleridge, *Notebooks*, vol. IV, note 4538.
119 Coleridge, *Marginalia*, vol. III, p. 262.
120 Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, p. 175.
121 *Ibid*., p. 180.
122 *Ibid*., pp. 180–1.
123 Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 29.
124 *Ibid*., pp. 31–2.
125 *Ibid*., p. 34.
126 Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, p. 180.
127 Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 11. See also: George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1945), p. 34: 'The method whereby, in philosophic science, the concept develops out of itself [. . .] is a purely immanent progress, the engendering of its determinations. Its advance is not effected by the assertion that various things exist and then by the application of the universal to extraneous material of that sort culled from elsewhere.'
128 Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol. I, p. 236.
129 Dewey, *Quest for Certainty*, pp. 180-1.

CONCLUSION: LIFE WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE

1 Hume, 'The Sceptic', *Essays*, p. 180.
2 Hume, *Enquiries*, p. 165.
3 Charles and Mary Lamb, *Letters*, vol. I, p. 188.
4 Jacobi, *Main Philosophical Writings*, p. 556.
5 Schelling, *History*, p. 165.
6 Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 23.
7 Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol. II, p. 14.
8 Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, pp. 257, 259.

9 See James A. Notopolous, *The Platonism of Shelley: A Study of Platonism and the Poetic Mind* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1949), pp. 186–8 and H. B. de Groot, 'The Ouroboros and the Romantic Poets: A Renaissance Emblem in Blake, Coleridge, and Shelley', *English Studies* 50 (1969), 553–64. Abrams (*Natural Supernaturalism*, pp. 149–62) discusses the symbol's meaning to the Romantics in light of its origins in Plato, Proclus, Plotinus and Boehme.
10 Coleridge, *Logic*, p. 200.
11 Hazlitt, 'Coriolanus', *Works*, vol. v, p. 347.
12 Schelling, *History*, p. 165.
13 Quine, 'Epistemology Naturalized', p. 72.

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