Coleridge's Politics of Enlightened Understanding

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores Coleridge's politics of epistemology, with special attention to his use of understanding and enlightened understanding in *The Friend* and *The Statesman's Manual*. Appropriating the Kantian tripartite distinction of sensibility, understanding, and reason in his discussion of politics in *The Friend*, Coleridge raised these mental faculties to an ontological status and connected them with the evolution of three distinctive political systems. Aligned with the moral rule of Burkean prudence, understanding became a synecdoche for British Constitutionalism which it initiated and maintained. As the historical context shifted to the post-Napoleonic period, understanding was dismissed as mechanical and immoral in *The Statesman's Manual*, and was blamed for the social unrest and conflicts harassing Britain. Instead of directly accessing the reason, the enlightened understanding resorts to imagination for the source of its passion and ability to idealize the worth of the nation. Grounded in the political status quo with its emphasis on moral duty, Coleridge's approach to empirical idealism refers to a type of conservative politics of amelioration, with its ideal vision of a Christian nation founded on the interests of the landed aristocracy, who address social problems from the perspective of the spiritual rather than the material.

KEYWORDS Coleridge, politics of epistemology, understanding, enlightened understanding, *The Friend*, *The Statesman's Manual*

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Introduction

As the hallmark of English Romanticism, imagination has dominated the bailiwick of Coleridgean criticism for decades. With the aim of either mystifying or demystifying imagination, critics view this creative power as a springboard for further analysis in aesthetics, politics, culture, and religion, calibrating the period from Coleridge's radical youth to his conservative late years. From such canonical works as *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *Kubla Khan* to the distinction between imagination and fancy in *Biographia Literaria*, imagination has been a resourceful powerhouse for critical evaluations and reassessments. From Harold Bloom's *The Visionary Company*, Paul de Man's "The Rhetoric of Temporality," Jerome J. McGann's *The Romantic Ideology*, Nigel Leask's *Politics of Imagination in Coleridge's Critical Thought*, to John Whale's *Imagination under Pressure, 1789-1832*, Coleridgean critics never stop circling around this mental faculty as constitutive of a critical discourse reflecting the spirit of the age.

Compared with what Coleridge terms the Imagination, the Understanding as a mental faculty has received relatively scant critical attention, in Coleridge's time and also in later generations. In the British tradition of empiricism, understanding was not recognized as an independent mental power per se; instead, it simply meant what is "understood," the extent of human knowledge, or simply the mind, as exemplified in John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and David Hume's *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*.[1] The Age of Enlightenment is the age of reason, the period when reason (as it was believed) wielded its analytic powers of deduction and induction to pull religion off its pedestal. For empiricists, it is the cooperation between reason and sensory perceptions that lays the groundwork of human knowledge. The distinction between understanding and reason as two disparate mental faculties was developed to balance empiricism and rationalism by Immanuel Kant, a German philosopher read and appreciated in Britain only by a small group of political enthusiasts, including the young Coleridge. The limited circulation of Kantian critical phi-

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[1] For example, when describing the operation of the mind, Locke explains that "[w]e may as well think the use of reason necessary to make our eyes discover visible objects, as that there should be need of reason, or the exercise thereof, to make the *understanding* see what is originally engraven on it, and cannot be in the *understanding* before it be perceived by it" (*Essay* 42; emphasis added). Here "understanding" refers to the extent of human knowledge. Likewise, Hume believes that the task of philosophers is to study human nature, to examine and "find those principles, which regulate our *understanding*, excite our sentiments, and make us approve or blame any particular object, action, or behavior" (*Enquiry* 1-2; emphasis added). "Understanding" here also stands for knowledge, what is "understood" by the mind.

losophy there explains why Coleridge's usage of understanding was recognized only by a few of his contemporaries. Later on, when critical study turns to Coleridge's connection with German idealism, especially Kant, it is either imagination (*Critique of the Power of Judgment*) or reason (*Critique of Pure Reason*) that comes up for critical review, as in Thomas Weiskel's *The Romantic Sublime*, Raimonda Modiano's *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature*, and Richard Berkeley's *Coleridge and the Crisis of Reason*. As in Kant's epistemological hierarchy, understanding is usually seen in these studies as a power subordinate to the icon of the Enlightenment, Reason, and is mentioned briefly only as the power to generalize sense data.

In recent years, attention to Coleridge's political essays has gradually paved the way for an understanding of the Romantic conception of understanding. In her research on Coleridge's appropriation of Kant, *Coleridge and Kantian Ideas in England, 1796-1817*, Monika Class notices the importance Coleridge places on this power of categorization in *The Friend*, with an insightful summary of Coleridge's political essays: "the Understanding is critical for the overall argument within the essay on political philosophy," which attests to Coleridge's "growing political conservatism" (185, 188). After Class, Timothy Michael, in his *British Romanticism and the Critique of Political Reason*, also notes "the centrality of the understanding in Coleridge's mature political thought," and argues that the "subordination of reason to the higher faculty of understanding" is Coleridge's strategy of "redeeming the understanding from the penury of bureaucratic middle-management" (130, 144). Michael may be one of the few Coleridgean scholars who have foregrounded this intellectual faculty in criticism, though he seems to have either missed or confounded Coleridge's use of the two different understandings. As this article will show, part of the confusion derives from the adoption of the 1818 version of *The Friend* instead of the original 1809 version. Early in his *Coleridge and the Conservative Imagination*, Alan P. R. Gregory finds the two understandings at work in Coleridge's hierarchy of mental powers, as they are listed in Coleridge's note on Wilhem Gottlieb Tennemann's *Geschichte der Philosophie*.[2] In his succinct explanation of Coleridge's diagram of the "Order of

[2] Coleridge's note on Tennemann comments on the mind's contemplation of ideas, and the difference between positive reason and negative reason, the latter being further explained as located "in the lower sphere of the Understanding." A two-parallel diagram is named "Order of the Mental Powers": in the left-hand column, the Sense is placed on top, followed by Fancy and Understanding, with a line dividing the previous three mental powers from Understanding, Imagination and Reason. In the right-hand column the order is reversed, with Reason on top and Sense at the bottom (*A Book I Value* 105). Coleridge sees the understanding as the counterpart of reason (positive/negative reason), or "the Light" and "a Light from the Light," but does not further explain whether the two understandings, one in each column, are

the Mental Powers," Gregory sees understanding "to be itself polar, at one pole related through the imagination, at the other to sense via the fancy" (60). With Coleridge's idea of ascension of being in mind, Gregory follows Coleridge's logic and suggests that understanding "exists within that ascending scheme of mental powers that culminates with the reason," identifying the ascension of understanding from its combination with imagination in *The Statesman's Manual* (61). From the viewpoint of self-consciousness and meditation, Peter Cheyne in "Coleridge's 'Order of the Mental Powers' and the Energic-Energetic Distinction" reworks Coleridge's diagram and redefines the two understandings. He terms one the "higher understanding," together with reason and imagination, as an "energia" act, in contrast to the "energy" of the "lower understanding," sense and fancy, in this way shedding light on Coleridge's opposing method of intellectual and sensual contemplation (172). Both critics pinpoint the position of the two understandings in Coleridge's hierarchy of mental faculties.

Building on but differently from the previous critics, this article is not confined to a pure description of how understanding interacts with imagination to become a higher intellectual power (Gregory), or to analyzing how the two understandings involve different psychological phenomena (Cheyne). Behind the mental faculty of understanding is Coleridge's political stances at work, and they involve a rather intricate process of incorporating contemporary philosophical as well as political discourses differently than the way critics such as Class (for whom there is only one understanding in Coleridge) describe—as they follow Coleridge's logical reasoning—in their haste to label Coleridge politically conservative. From a political and historical perspective, this article aims to identify the function of the two understandings in Coleridge's political essays, and describe how they represent two slightly different political systems, one existing during and the other after the war between Britain and France, with a view to gaining a clearer picture of Coleridge's "politics of understanding."[3]

In *The Friend*, the Kantian understanding is incorporated with the principle of prudence to legitimate a government founded on the interest of the landed aristocracy in the name of experience, in contrast to a government based on

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different or the same.

[3] The "politics of understanding" suggests that there are political inclinations behind the definition and function of understanding as a mental faculty, which can be seen as one instance of the "politics of epistemology." Morton White enumerates examples of the connection between epistemology and politics: John Dewey condemned Aristotle's theory of knowledge as anti-democratic, William James praised pragmatism as democratic, John Locke called innate ideas the dictators of principles, and John Stuart Mill regarded his empiricist theory as a tool for liberal reform (77). These examples illustrate the fact that epistemology is not always free of political ideology.

Kantian reason and deontology. During the period of discontent and distress after the war, the mental power of understanding lapses into a target for attack in *The Statesman's Manual*, taking the blame for social unrest due to its incapacity to recognize feelings and duty. Coleridge therefore envisions a mental power that has experience as its foundation but is open to the ideal, i.e., the "enlightened understanding." In this transit from understanding to enlightened understanding, the transcendental idea of moral duty replaces prudence as a political guide to address the rising social unrest after the war. In his *Imagination under Pressure 1789-1832*, John Whale suggests that imagination was engaged in "two moments of cultural crisis": "the British response to the French Revolution and reaction to utilitarianism" (1). When it comes to Coleridge, as this article will show, the two understandings are central to Coleridge's support for the British political system and its amelioration in the two critical moments of political and moral crisis.

In the first part, the article analyzes Coleridge's problematic combination of epistemology with moral principles in his discussion of three political systems, and argues that the use of a Kantian tripartite distinction of mental faculties was intended to promote understanding as the origin and the maintaining force of British Constitutionalism in Coleridge's justification of the status quo. In the second part, from the 1818 revision of *The Friend* the article identifies a later version of "enlightened understanding" and its intended effect before pointing out its problematic position in Coleridge's hierarchy of epistemology. In the third part, the article analyzes how Coleridge's coinage of the term *enlightened understanding* deviates from the Kantian epistemology in the inclusion of imagination in understanding and the effect it produces. This integration carves out a new route to the ideal and exposes the politics behind it: starting from understanding, the trope for the status quo, the enlightened understanding finally leads to a conservative politics of amelioration.

The Politics of Understanding in *The Friend*

When understanding is mentioned for the first time in *The Friend*, it is in the context where Coleridge enters the debate on the differences between humans and animals, i.e., in the fifth edition, in which he brings forth his theory of knowledge: "the Understanding or regulative faculty is manifestly distinct from Life and Sensation, its' [sic] *function* being to take up the *passive affections* into distinct Thought of the Sense[,] both according to its' own essential forms" (76-77).[4] Humans are

[4] Unless otherwise noted, the quotations of *The Friend* are from the original publication in 1809-1810,

different from animals, Coleridge argues, because "God created Man in his own Image" and gave humans "Reason and with Reason Ideas of its own formation and underived from material Nature" (78), including "the Ideas of Soul, the Free Will," "Immortality, and God" (79). Coleridge's definition of understanding generally follows in the footsteps of Kant, in that understanding, with its *a priori* form (essential form), receives the sense data from sensibility to constitute thought ("Thought of the Sense"), and reason (pure and practical), in its ability to reach the realm of the noumenal, can cogitate on transcendental ideas "underived from material Nature." In his appropriation of Kantian epistemology, Coleridge uses a set of phrases distinct from those of English empiricism, in which reason performs the function of deduction (Locke) or induction (Bacon) while understanding refers only to the mind or the extent of human knowledge. The Kantian ideas derived from reason have no place on empiricist maps as they are either denied (Locke) or seen as no more than the extension of human virtues (Hume).

Coleridge's division of the two intellectual powers, similar to Kant's, grants reason the privilege of accessing the noumenal world (though Kant suggests that what reason can cogitate is not solid knowledge but one's faith), and understanding the task of taking charge of worldly affairs in the phenomenal sphere. The tripartite classification constitutes the basic hierarchy and functionality of the major mental powers of the mind, with God-ordained reason on the top, understanding in the middle, and sensibility at the bottom. However, when Coleridge turns to the discussion of political principles, reason begins to lose its supremacy over understanding due to the political implications. Coleridge's attribution of the political systems in Britain and France to the two intellectual powers aims not just to provide an explanation of their epistemological ground but to view them as synecdochic of the political systems per se. In Coleridge's defense of British Constitutionalism, supposedly derived mainly from understanding, the original epistemological hierarchy is turned upside down, as reason takes the blame for the development of French Jacobinism.

"On the Principles of Political Philosophy" was published in the seventh issue of *The Friend* (September 28, 1809). A long epigraph by Spinoza preceding the essay, praising practice while debasing theory, sets the key tone for the following discussion: "the mere theorists," who "have never conceived a practical scheme of civil policy," imagine "forms of government" as they "have been insti-

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compiled in Barbara E. Rooke's edited version *The Friend II* (London: Princeton UP, 1969). The advantages of using the 1809-1810 edition (instead of the 1818 re-edited version) will be explained in the fourth section of this article.

tuted in Utopia," in contrast to "political institutions under which human society can be maintained in concord"—institutions that are "not abhorrent from experience and practice" and that have been "already tried and proved" (*The Friend II* 97). Coleridge's stance is clearly revealed in this sharp contrast between the utopian theory and practical political institutions: government policy based on experience is capable of maintaining society "in concord" compared with one conceived by an impractical imagination. "For moral Strength, or freedom from the selfish Passions, is the Virtue of Individuals; but Security is the Virtue of a State" (97). It is the security of the state, rather than the freedom of individuals, that constitutes the value of political principles. This simplified dichotomy of theory and practice, as the essay begins, is to be reduced to their epistemological foundation, the antithesis between reason and understanding.

In Coleridge's analysis of political systems and principles, the individual components of the Kantian tripartite division of sensibility, understanding, and reason are each distinguished as the origin of one form of political institution. The three political systems include the Hobbesian Leviathan, a government based on fear and terror that "denies all truth and distinct meaning to the words, RIGHT and DUTY, and affirming that the human mind consists of nothing but manifold modifications of passive sensation" (*The Friend II* 98). In Thomas Hobbes's worldview, humans are merely animals of sensibility, forced into the political community by fear and violence. The second political system regards the human being as "an animal gifted with Understanding, or the faculty of suiting Measures to Circumstances," giving rise to a system of political institution that proves "under the particular circumstances it is EXPEDIENT," referring to British Constitutionalism (104). The third system, based on Rousseau's *Du contrat social*, "denies all rightful origin to Governments" unless "they are derivable from Principles contained in the Reason of Man, and judges all the relations of man in Society by the Laws of moral necessity, according to IDEAS" (105), which designates the political system envisioned in the French Revolution.

The three mental powers operating and coordinating, with their corresponding moral values, "the relation of man in Society," constitute three distinctive political philosophies and political systems: a Leviathan nation made up of men of sensibility with no moral obligation to others; British Constitutionalism constituted by men of understanding, capable of adopting appropriate methods (prudence) to address the problem at hand (expediency); and a political system founded on Rousseauian principles presupposing that men are perfectly rational and predisposed to relate to others out of selfless moral necessity. In his explanation of the three political systems, Coleridge demonstrates that epistemology is

not merely a theory of knowledge confined to describing the way we gain knowledge and its limitations. In Kant's epistemology, according to Leask's interpretation, the division of mental powers prescribes the division of political power, and the limitations of reason keep the religious from becoming involved in the mundane affairs dominated by understanding only.[5] In Coleridge's analysis of political principle, the three mental powers gain their individual ontological status from human nature, whose moral rules lead to the evolution of a unique political system. Sensibility, understanding, and reason, originally deriving from a mental power responsible for processing and forming part of human knowledge, provide an epistemological foundation and become a synecdoche for the political system they help develop. However, this combination of epistemology and moral principles, in the formation of a society or nation, is problematic in two ways. First, the three Kantian mental powers do not naturally correspond to three moral principles. Kant did not formulate a direct link between reason and moral commands, understanding and prudence. As humans have autonomy, the freedom to do as they believe, both categorical imperatives and hypothetical imperatives belong to one's choice as to whether to follow one's conscience or satisfy one's desire. It is fair to say that in Hobbes's political theory, humans are forced into the political community out of their fear of war, originating from their savage passions,[6] but this should be included in the category of prudence if Coleridge consistently adopts Kant's terminology. Second, in all three types of social contract theory (of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau), the development of the argument usually centers on why humans left the (imaginary) original state, gave up some of their natural rights, and consented to enter the social state. The ontological question about the essence of human nature is beside the point in the social contract theory (all three philosophers believe man has reason). Coleridge's identification of the three mental faculties with three types of human nature is forged only to make a clear-cut distinction, a one-to-one pairing of mental faculty, moral principle, and political system, manipulated mainly in anticipation of the following anti-thesis of understanding and reason.

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[5] In his *The Politics of Imagination in Coleridge's Critical Thought*, Nigel Leask points out the political implications working behind Kant's separation of reason from understanding. Leask argues that "Kant's 'distinction of powers,' the laying-aside of the Ideas of Pure Reason," was designed to "free the executive efficacy of understanding from theological dogma and the prerogative power of absolutism," which "represented a treaty between old and new, between achievements of understanding and the theistic power of the Ideas of Reason" (98-99).

[6] The origin of a political community, according to Hobbes, is to get humans "out from that miserable condition of Warre," which is "consequent (as hath been shewn) to the naturall Passions of men," as "there is no visible Power to keep them in awe, and tye them by feare of punishment to the performance of their Covenants" (93).

Among the three political systems, Coleridge highlights British Constitutionalism and French Jacobinism as his principal venues of political discourse. After denigrating Hobbesian politics for its debasement of humans to the level of animals driven predominantly by feelings and passions, Coleridge proceeds to suggest that the advantages of the second system are premised on the disadvantages of the third. As with Edmund Burke's harsh criticism of the French Revolution in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Coleridge finds a leverage in defending British Constitutionalism for its relative (or less harmful) advantages compared with the French political system. For Coleridge, the major problem of Rousseauian politics lies not so much in its theory as in its impracticality. The establishment of "a free and yet absolute Government" based on "universal necessary Laws, and pure IDEAS of Reason" is undeniably what many political theorists have dreamt of, according to Coleridge, because ideas discovered by the synthesis of the transcendental dialectic of reason, pure or practical, are "in themselves . . . not only Truths, but most important and sublime Truths," as it is a common belief that we should "act that thou mayest be able without involving any contradiction to will that the Maxim of thy Conduct should be the Law of all intelligent Beings" (*The Friend II* 128)—an unauthorized translation from the Kantian principle of morality.[7] Nevertheless, "their falsehood and their danger consist altogether in their misapplication" (110-11). Coleridge does not point his finger directly at Kant. Rather, he directs his aim at the implementation of these transcendental ideas, which is "undisciplined, and unhumbled, by practical Experience" (105), corresponding to the statement quoted from Spinoza in the introductory epigraph.[8] Ideas and principles derived from both pure and practical reason, "the equality of Rights and Duties," are the ideal truth, "which our Understandings are to apply" and should "endeavor to approximate" (131), but it is questionable whether men are able to carry out these ideas, for in reality reason "dwells in every Man *potentially*, but actually and in perfect purity is found in no Man and in no Body of Men" (127-28). In contrast to Kant's optimism about human autonomy and man's obedience to the demands of the categorical imperative, Coleridge attributes the infeasibility of theory to the ignorance of our complicated human nature. Worst of all, the practice of transcen-

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[7] Coleridge's unauthorized quotation of Kant may be from the moral principle stated in the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*: "I ought never to act except in such a way that I could also will that my maxim should become a universal law" (15).

[8] John Beer has a cogent explanation of Coleridge's hesitancy on criticizing relentlessly either Rousseau's political theory or Kant's pure reason. In *Coleridge's Playing with Mind*, Beer argues that "[w]hen it came to Rousseau, certainly, Coleridge could not allow him to be criticized in the manner that came naturally to Burke, since to do so would have been to negate much of what he had most valued in his youth" (116).

dental ideas in a nation only "cleared the way for military Despotism, for the satanic Government of Horror under the Jacobins, and of Terror under the Corsican" (128). Compared with the disasters the Kantian ideas of reason brought, British Constitutionalism was designed to constrain the irrational aspects of human behavior so as to foster better functionality in the political realm:

> The Individuals indeed are subject to Errors and Passion . . . But when Men are assembled in Person or by real Representatives, the actions and re-actions of individual Self-love balance each other; errors are neutralized by opposite errors. (127)

The essence of human nature casts doubt on the possibility of comprehensive freedom and unconditional moral obligation on the national level, at the same time justifying the formation of British Constitutionalism, through which selfishness and human errors are neutralized in "the nature and course of parliamentary proceedings, and the infinitely diversified Characters who compose the two Houses" (127), here referring to the House of Lords and House of Commons in Britain (mirroring modern constitutional systems of separation of powers and checks and balances). Coleridge rejects any oversimplification of human nature as the sole principle for politics: "This however gives no proof that Reason alone ought to govern and direct human beings, either as Individuals or as States. It ought not to do this, because it cannot" (131).

Tracing the origin of the dichotomy between "reason" and "experience" in the contemporary political theory, Deirdre Coleman suggests that Richard Hooker's *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiasticall Politie* (1593) had a direct influence on *The Friend* regarding its rejection of pure reason in politics. Hooker's criticism of "the laws of Reason" (represented by the Puritans) and his praise of "positive or human laws" (represented by the Church of England), coupled with his "repeated insistence upon the importance of 'particular circumstances,'" "all emerge as features of *The Friend*'s political philosophy" (112). That the practice of Kantian pure reason in the political field leads to violence and chaos, following this tradition of Hooker's rejection of "the laws of Reason" in religion, justifies the legitimacy of British Constitutionalism founded on the coordination of understanding and prudence, a system centered on the parliamentary proceedings of the two Houses. The dichotomy of reason and positive laws during the French Revolution became the antithesis of reason and experience in Britain, exemplified in Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. By replacing British empiricist phrases with Kantian critical terms, Coleridge turns the

opposing concepts into the Kantian reason and understanding and, in granting them an ontological status, connects them with the evolution of two disparate political systems.

Coleridge's social contract theorization of British Constitutionalism, which presupposes that "[t]he chief object, for which Men first formed themselves into a State was not the protection of their Lives but of their Property," replicates Locke's social contract theory and further accentuates the significant role understanding plays in political origins. Identifying the goal of protecting property amounts to acknowledging the fact that "where individual landed Property exists, there must be inequality of Property; the nature of the Earth and the nature of the Mind unite to make the contrary impossible" (*The Friend II* 132). Humans' different intelligence, or different degrees of understanding, makes inequality unavoidable, and it is man's understanding in different degrees that leads to man's inequality in the first place. On Coleridge's identification of the ownership of landed property with the abilities of the mental faculty John Morrow comments:

> Reason was equal in all men, but property was, by its very nature, unequal. Its acquisition depended upon, or was significantly influenced by, environmental conditions, and by individual effort which relied upon the understanding. Since men were not equal in their understanding, they would not have opportunities for possessing similar amounts and kinds of property. (89)

To keep the property they gain through intelligence, humans signed the social contract for the maintenance of their advantage in the established political system:

> it could do no more than bind the contracting parties to act for the general good in the best manner, that the existing relations among themselves, (state of property, religion, &c.) on the one hand, and the external circumstances on the other (ambitious or barbarous Neighbours, &c.) required or permitted. (*The Friend II* 103)

Furthering Locke's social contract theory, in which "government has no other end but the preservation of property" (58), Coleridge's understanding both initiated inequality and established the British Constitutionalism designed to preserve the vested interests of aristocrats, and it aligned itself with prudence to maintain an advantage in the name of tradition or experience.

In defining the Understanding as "the faculty of suiting Measures to Circumstances," Coleridge expands the scope of this mental faculty from a power that conceptualizes and organizes sense data in its constitution of experience to a faculty that is able to choose a method appropriate to a specific political scenario. When describing the second system of British Constitutionalism, Coleridge adds a footnote to further explicate the three mental faculties, in which the Understanding now becomes "the faculty of thinking and forming *judgements* on the notices furnished by the Sense, according to certain rules existing in itself, which rules constitute its distinct name" (*The Friend* 104). This further definition extends the previous one in the 5th Issue of "tak[ing] up the *passive affections* into distinct Thought of the Sense[,] both according to its' own essential forms" with an emphasis on the power of judgment. Of this definition of understanding's "suiting Measures to Circumstances," Timothy Michael teases out the two Kantian judgments that are at work:

> These appear to be two vastly different operations, one being a basic act of perception (or a comparison of perceptions) and the other an active engagement with the objective world or even a refined skill in the art of policymaking. Kant suggests a link when he posits two species of judgment: theoretical and practical. Theoretical judgment applies a concept to a determinate given object; practical judgment determines how to produce an object (in this sense a goal or purpose). (145)

In Kantian epistemology, as formulated in *Critique of Pure Reason*, when the sense data are formed into a concept, or when two concepts are connected, based on the twelve categories of the transcendental analytic, the judgment, cognitive or practical, decides on its value in a proposition (all judgments are basically in the form of proposition). However, defining it as the ability of "suiting Measures to Circumstances" surreptitiously incorporates the principle of prudence in understanding, since understanding, or judgment in understanding, only lays out possibilities (causality or dependence of relation, and possibility or necessity of modality) for the mind to choose from. Deciding whether its application is to be goal-oriented (hypothetical) or if it stems from good will (categorical) is a moral issue, out of the reach of understanding. Seeing the Understanding as if it contained prudence in essence betrays Coleridge's implicit intention to make the correspondence seem natural and the designated political system look like an inevitable outcome.

The idea of prudence—phronēsis or "practical wisdom"—can be traced to

Aristotle's *Ethics*, in which the philosopher sees it as a practical virtue, in contrast to scientific or intuitive knowledge. With its special focus on "variables and contingencies," prudence is a quality "that enables men effectively to pursue their self-interest" (Hoy 243). In Kant's distinction between practical judgment based on result or intention, expounded in *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, prudence is defined as a type of hypothetical imperative, the "if . . . then" proposition of judgement that calculates the means to achieve an end. It stands opposite to the categorical imperative, or the universal "imperative of morality." Prudence is "skill in the choice of means to one's own greatest well-being," so its action is "not commanded absolutely," "but only as means to another purpose" (26-27). Different from the highest principles of the categorical imperative, in which humans are treated as the end itself and action is based on good intention as the only standard, "let the result be what it may" (27), the hypothetical imperative of prudence is for pursuing one's self-interest at the expense of those of others.

Prudence's orientation to self-interest, calculated for a personally satisfactory end, takes on further political meaning in Edmund Burke's favoritism of prudence in the overhaul of the incumbent political system. In his charges against the French political system and defense of traditional British values (political as well as religious) in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Burke turns the hypothetical imperative of prudence into a political decision-making power. Seeing policy-making usually as a choice between preservation or abolishment, Burke tips the balance in favor of the former:

> Prudence would be neutral; but if, in the contention between fond attachment and fierce antipathy concerning things in their nature not made to produce such heats [passions], a prudent man were obliged to make a choice of what errors and excesses of enthusiasm he would condemn or bear, perhaps he would think the superstition which builds, to be more tolerable than [that] which demolishes—that which adorns a country, than that which deforms it—that which endows, than that which plunders—that which disposes to mistaken beneficence, than that which stimulates to real injustice. (135)

When applied to the realm of politics, prudence has to make a decision between total destruction of the incumbent system or its preservation. In the series of dichotomies "fond attachment/fierce antipathy," "adorns/deforms," "endows/plunders," and "disposes to mistaken beneficence/stimulates to real injustice," with preference placed on preservation of the status quo and demonization of radical change, Burke reveals his bias for the former. Tolerating the less harmful,

instead of destroying the whole system, constitutes Burkean prudential politics. In his description and explanation of prudence, Burke implicitly identifies it with another word he uses, "prejudice." For Burke, prejudice is more than a blind repetition of thought and habit; it suggests the bias for traditional values in which reason and wisdom have perennially resided. When people encounter a thorny political situation:

> Many of our thinkers, instead of exploding general prejudices, use their skill to discover the wisdom that lies hidden in them. If they find what they seek (which they usually do), they think it wiser to continue the prejudice with the reason nested in it than to throw away the coat of prejudice and to leave nothing but the *naked reason*. (74; emphasis added)

The advantage of prejudice lies in the reason and wisdom accumulated from experience, as a part of tradition. When one is facing an emergency, prejudice "has the mind already engaged in a steady course of wisdom and virtue, and doesn't leave the man hesitating" (74). The importance of past experience for problem-solving, along with this favoritism for the preservation of the status quo, becomes the model for Coleridge to shape the Understanding as containing a natural trait of prudence, in the sense of Burke rather than Kant. What past experience informs us of, according to Coleridge, is that drastic change made to the status quo resulted in "the horror of the Peasants' War in Germany," "the direful effects of the Anabaptist Tenets," and atrocious events inclusive of "the imprisonment of Charles the first [up] to the Restoration of his Son" (*The Friend II* 106), not to mention "the satanic Government of Horror under the Jacobins, and of Terror under the Corsican" in France (128). Prudence is therefore not value-free because, for Burke as well as for Coleridge, it is a choice of tradition over a fresh but risky new start. Prudence as the guidance for understanding, therefore, further politicizes understanding not just as a power to judge, but as a power that prioritizes the incumbent power structure, with preservation of the self-interest of the landed gentry who constituted the two Houses of Parliament of British Constitutionalism as the rule of thumb.

Similar to Burke's *Reflections* in various ways, Coleridge's political essays in *The Friend* apply understanding to explain the inequality of property in the formation of a political system, and highlight its coordination with prudence using past experience as conceptualized and categorized by understanding for the defense and preservation of the British Constitution. "We must rely on our *Understandings*, enlightened by past experience and immediate Observation, and de-

termining our choice by comparisons of Expediency" (129). Adoption of ideas from pure speculative reason and moral laws from pure practical reason is recognized as impractical and conducive to nothing but terror. Using the epistemology of Kant to subsume Burkean tradition and the concept of prejudice, Coleridge rationalizes his defense of British Constitutionalism. As Coleman points out:

> Coleridge's firm repudiation of novelty in morality and politics, his opposition to *a priori* conceptions of political rights, his dislike of abstract notions in statesmanship, and his rejection of the doctrine that absolute sovereignty resides in the will of the people—all these can be traced to a common tradition of English conservatism. (120)

From the mental ability to categorize sensory perceptions to the power to judge one's best self-interest, understanding is politicized in a way that invites and maintains the foundation of Britain Constitutionalism. It does not produce knowledge of phenomena or constitute experience only; it causes inequality of property, which is preserved by a political system dominated by interest groups, as part of experience, and a group memory produced by understanding. To maintain the interest of those who are dominant, prudence incorporated in understanding makes claims for the priority and advantage of maintaining the status quo in the name of tradition. In full circle, the experiences recognized by understanding constitute tradition, which understanding then aims to maintain. Epistemology of understanding in this way works with the moral principle of prudence to constitute and preserve British Constitutionalism.

The Enlightened Understanding in *The 1818 Friend*

The 1818 re-edited version of *The Friend* questionably elevated the status of understanding over sensibility and reason in one place.[9] In Essay V of the second volume, preceding the "On the Principles of Political Knowledge" essay, Coleridge redefines reason, following Jacobi, as "an organ bearing the same relation to spiritual objects, the Universal, the Eternal, and the Necessary, as the eye bears to material and contingent phœnomena" (*The Friend I* 155-56).[10] On the surface,

[9] In his clear analysis of the difference between the 1809 and 1818 versions of *The Friend*, Earl Leslie Griggs points out three major differences: first, the disorganized order of the 1809 version is rectified in the 1818 version; second, a large part, including the poems, quotations, and translations, is omitted in the 1818 version; third, the addition of explanatory footnotes that show "Coleridge's increasing interest in scientific attempts to reconcile the inductive method principles of Platonic philosophy" is included (370).

[10] Quotations of the 1818 version of *The Friend* are from *The Friend I*, edited byBarbara E. Rooke (London:

reason is transformed from a mental faculty to a higher status of spiritual organ. As Berkeley puts it, the importance of this change is placed on "the 'being' of reason"(190). Reason is therefore "not simply a rational activity, the way understanding is, rather it is something that has a relatively concrete ontological status[,] as Logos" (190). This reconfiguration, while raising reason to the status of a spiritual organ, at the same time deprives it of its independent operation, as is clear when Coleridge later reveals his intention: "the Understanding and Experience may exist without Reason. But Reason cannot exist without Understanding; *nor does it or can it* manifest itself but in and through the understanding . . . an *understanding enlightened by reason*" (*The Friend I* 156; emphasis added). With sufficient confidence Coleridge believes that as long as the reader integrates these explanations, "he will have removed before hand every possible difficulty from the Friend's political section" (157). Both reason and sensibility are emphasized as organs used by understanding, interiorly and exteriorly. This is the definition Timothy Michael applies when he states that Coleridge's concept of understanding is "furnished by sense experience and enlightened by reason" (145), but it should be pointed out that this re-definition has no practical usage for Coleridge's following arguments, most of which are unchanged from the previous version. Coleridge still retains the statements of 1809 and argues that "our understanding, enlightened by past experience [rather than reason]," constitutes a resourceful repository for politics (*The Friend I* 196), not to mention an essential one.

Far less conditional, this "understanding enlightened by reason" is only present as a re-definition in the 1818 version of *The Friend*. The allegiance to and practice of reason are still blamed for the eruption of the French Revolution, with no suggestion of reason being used as an organ by understanding, while understanding itself maintains a relatively prestigious status in its initiation and protection of British Constitutionalism. No mention is made of the combination of or co-operation between the mental faculty of understanding and reason the organ. This re-definition becomes redundant in terms of its relation with the main argument, in that it renames either a faculty already put in use or a new faculty not used at all. What Coleridge was attempting to do, while failing to rewrite and harmonize the whole argument, was maintain that, instead of working independently (see "nor does it or can it" in the previous paragraph), reason "can be" supervised by understanding so that it will not unduly influence, thereby posing a threat to, the ideology and power of British politics, at the same time

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Princeton UP, 1969).

leaving the British political system room for improvement. Coleridge's intention is two-fold: he was looking for a revised theory to prevent the independent operation of reason (an organ to be used by understanding), and to find a way to guide understanding out of the labyrinth of experience (understanding "enlightened" by reason) so that it could "apply" and "approximate" the ideas from reason. But Coleridge took this task lightly. The single transmogrification of the quality of reason with no thorough change in the whole essay put him only in a double bind: if reason were under the control of understanding, it would not have been the underlying cause of the French Revolution, thus negating the unchanged argument of his that follows; however, if it still worked the way it did, then the re-definition would lose its raison d'être.

The seemingly redundant new term *enlightened understanding* is added to the original tripartition of reason, understanding, and sensibility, with its awkward presence situated between reason and understanding in the epistemological hierarchy. Since reason can intuitively discover the noumenal, as a mental power or an organ used by understanding, what is the point of an understanding that uses reason to find transcendental ideas? Coleridge attempts to clarify his different usages of reason by further explanation, but this inconsistent disposition of the mental powers causes only further confusion by giving reason the double identity of an organ and a mental power in the mind, calling forth two systems of epistemology at work.[11] In 1809, when Coleridge viewed the ideas from pure reason as what "our Understandings are to apply" and "endeavor to approximate," he was unable to find a niche for a power not designated in the Kantian system to practice or fulfill the task (*The Friend II* 131). In the re-edited 1818 version, however, he was aware that harmonizing the previous essay was required if he introduced this mental power in the later essay. Before the 1818 re-edition, he had already found and coined a new term to combine reason with understanding—though it was not deemed an organ per se—so as to "apply" and "approximate" the transcendental ideas. The new term was first used in *The Statesman's Manual or, The Bible, the Best Guide to Political Skill and Foresight*, published in 1816, in which understanding extends its scope to reach the transcendental ideas in reason to address domestic problems in another historical context, the post-Napoleonic economic and moral crisis.

[11] "Reason therefore, in this secondary sense, and used, *not* as a spiritual *Organ*, but as a *Faculty* (namely, the understanding or Soul *enlightened* by that organ, —Reason, I say, or the *scientific* Faculty, is the Intellection of the *possibility* or *essential* properties of things by means of the Laws that constitute them" (*The Friend I* 158).

The Politics of Enlightened Understanding in *The Statesman's Manual*

In *The Statesman's Manual*, understanding as a cognitive capacity loses its dominant status in political principles and becomes the touchstone for a new mental faculty: the enlightened understanding. After Britain won the Napoleonic War in 1815, the highlight of the threat of foreign power shifted to the domestic tension of the post-war economic crisis as seen in the skyrocketing unemployment rate and grain prices. Riots against measures adopted by the government broke out in several places, finally resulting in the oppressive Treason Act and Seditious Meetings Act in 1817. When reflecting on the social unrest in the post-war depression, Coleridge attributed it to "the corruptions of moral and political philosophy," the result of the dominance of mechanical philosophy in British society (14).[12] Mechanical philosophy, represented by the Lockean philosophy (*Manual* 28n3), moved the country in the direction of technological development and military prowess, but ignorance of the moral aspects of society and its inability to learn the lessons of history caused serious social conflict. To save the nation from moral deterioration, Coleridge coins the term *enlightened understanding* to strike a balance between Kantian reason and understanding, a mental power that incorporates the advantages of both while fixing each of their drawbacks. It is assigned the task of delving into the transcendent from the experiential, of accessing the noumenal from the phenomenal. Based on British Constitutionalism, the enlightened understanding is deemed able to provide access to moral guidance and political skills, so as to coordinate duty with prudence.

Positing the upper-class as his imagined readers, Coleridge's *The Statesman's Manual* attempts to guide statesmen toward addressing the public discontent in the depression period, encouraging them to shoulder their responsibility, to study "the expectations and plans of statesmen and state-councillors" (7). Through perusing the content of the Bible, the statesman can recognize "the sufficiency of the Scriptures in all knowledge," which is requisite "for a right performance of his *duty* as a man and a *Christian*" (7; emphasis added), their categorical imperative toward the disadvantaged. It is this combination of religion with politics that sets the key tone for the apodictic arguments in *The Statesman's Manual*, with the Bible as guidance for an Anglican nation: "two dogmas argued Scripture's political relevance: the state is an Idea, and all Ideas are God's" (McVeigh 88). Under this premise, mundane tradition accumulated from expe-

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[12] Quotations of *The Statesman's Manual* are from *Lay Sermons*, edited by R. J. White (London: Princeton UP, 1972).

rience is no longer supportive in the realm of politics, as it is in *The Friend*. Since the Bible has recorded a real piece of history with miracles showing the intervention of God, therefore it is, as the subtitle states, "the best guide to political skill and foresight." As Pamela Edwards points out: "In contradistinction to these profane and sensual histories rooted as they were in the understanding," Coleridge "posited a sacred history inspired [by] and revelatory of the moral law of reason" (240).

Quoting from Machiavelli, Coleridge postulates three types of intelligence based on the ability of each to read the underlying meaning of an event: "The one understands of itself; the other understands as much as is shown it by others; the third neither understands of itself, nor what is shewn it by others" (*Manual* 13), presumably referring to the intuitive reason, enlightened understanding, and understanding per se. The intelligence of most people belongs in the last group, the mechanical understanding, causing them to "attribute national events to particular persons, particular measures, to the errors of one man . . . rather than to the true proximate cause" (13). The mind, limited by its power of understanding, recognizes only the literal phase of events and loses sight of the moral aspects, as is typified in the "Scotch philosopher," presumably Hume and his rendition of historiography:

> This inadequacy of the mere understanding to the apprehension of moral greatness we may trace in this historian's cool systematic attempt to steal away every feeling of reverence for every great name by a scheme of *motives*, in which as often as possible the efforts and enterprizes [sic] of heroic spirits are attributed to this or that paltry view of the most despicable selfishness. (22-23)

In his criticism of the mechanical philosophy, Coleridge exposes the problem of understanding and its accompanying ethical rule of prudence. The "mere understanding," or the "mechanical understanding," stays on the level of generalizing and thinking what the contingency offers. From the sensory data in the material world, or what has been stored in memory, understanding operates in a mechanical way, and its accompanying prudential politics (as Coleridge believes) aims only to address the problem in hand, seeing humans as means to an end rather than an end in itself. The restricted power of understanding, limited by its boundaries, is not able to cross beyond the realm of phenomena, to discover transcendental ideas such as God, freedom, and morality. Without the ability to find the moral principles revealed in history and the miracles testifying to the

intervention of God, we "degrade ourselves into mere slaves of sense and fancy" (9). The indirect charge against Locke and Hume, one refusing to accept the innate idea of rationalism while the other views transcendental ideas as nothing but the extension of the perceived sensory ideas, in turn, casts doubt on the understanding he advocated earlier in *The Friend*, the power of "suiting measures to circumstances" that founded and maintained the relatively stable British political system (*The Friend II* 103).[13] Human history, as well as the inspired writing of the Bible, testifies to the fact that "[m]ightier powers were at work than expediency ever yet called up; yea, mightier than the mere Understanding can comprehend!" (22). In his emphasis on "mere," Coleridge implies the possibility of its variation and augmentation. It is in this different historical context and shifting target of attack that the enlightened understanding was brought into view.

The major difference between the mechanical understanding and the enlightened understanding lies in the fact that "the understanding or experiential faculty, unirradiated by the reason and the spirit, has no appropriate object but the material world in relation to our worldly interests" (*Manual* 68), while the enlightened understanding extends its scope to reach the transcendental, from restricted space and time to the realm of universality and infinity. Resorting to the authority of the Bible (*Ephesians* and *Colossians*, in particular), the understanding with a sublime vision is said to be a mental state wherein "the eyes of the understanding [are] being enlightened," when understanding reaches "its utmost power and opulence" (46),[14] foreshadowing the two understandings Coleridge

[13] Locke refused to accept the theory of innate principles, which suggests that speculative and practical ideas are inborn, including the idea of God. After debunking the origin of these innate ideas by resorting to experience and hands-on observation, he concludes that "[w]hereas had they examined the ways whereby men came to the knowledge of many universal truths, they would have found them to result in the minds of men from the being of things themselves, when duly considered" (85). In similar vein, Hume argues that "all this creative power of the mind amounts to no more than the faculty of compounding, transposing, augmenting, or diminishing the materials afforded us by the senses and experience." Following this logic of surmising the unknown from the known, "[t]he idea of God, as meaning an infinitely intelligent, wise, and good Being, arises from reflecting on the operations of our own mind, and augmenting, without limit, those qualities of goodness and wisdom" (13-14).

[14] Coleridge either intentionally or unintentionally misinterprets *Ephesians* and *Colossians* to suit his needs in the argument, for in both texts the emphasis is laid on the extension of the human scope of vision, from the worldly to the spiritual, rather than on the advancement of a single mental faculty of Kantian understanding ("And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ" [Ephesians 3.9]; "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ" [Colossians 2.2]). In the first case, Coleridge adds "understanding," making it the object of "enlightened" (also added) in his translation, thereby taking the broad meaning of the biblical passages and narrowing them down and categorizing them in a way that was surely never intended; in the second case, understanding simply means the mind, not the Kantian understanding. Quotations from the Bible are from the King James Bible.

will list, in 1818, in the diagram of the "order of power" in his note on Tennemann.[15]

Different from the 1818 *Friend*, this understanding does not employ the power of reason (as an organ) directly; the enlightenment is a process of transformation with imagination as catalyst, which is "[t]he completing power" that "unites clearness with depth, the plenitude of the sense with the comprehensibility of the understanding," "impregnated with which the understanding itself becomes intuitive, and a living power" (*Manual* 69). The "mere understanding" being mechanical, cold, and amoral, Coleridge finds ways to emphasize the significance of feeling for imagination, and imagination for broadening the vision of understanding. He encourages the statesman to act like a poet-prophet to start this process of transformation, to "let the winds of passion swell, and straitway [sic] men begin to generalize" (15). With reference to the classical invocation of the Muses joining in this epistemological process, Coleridge notes that "our own great poet has placed the greater number of his profoundest maxims and general truths" when they were "under the influence of passion, when the mighty thoughts overmaster" (15).

The need for imagination to bridge reason and understanding, as an alternative way to reach reason, suggests Coleridge's discontent over the chilling stoicism in Kant's critical philosophy as well as the ignoring of feeling in William Godwin. Comparing the different attitudes toward morality, Laurence S. Lockridge suggests that while for Kant feeling "is irrelevant to the moral worth of one's maxim of conduct[,] . . . Coleridge wishes . . . to retain feeling as an essential component of morality, whatever its theoretical awkwardness within a Kantian superstructure" (111). By carving out an alternative for morality, Coleridge did cause "theoretical awkwardness" by introducing passion into the Kantian system, with understanding empowered by reason through imagination so as to reach what imagination could already accomplish independently. This combination is another example of Coleridge's inclination to incorporate different discourses in the hope of engaging all functions. Whale suggests that to counter

[15] In both his marginal note and notebook, Coleridge attempts to elaborate on the enlightened understanding as receiving the light of reason and becoming as universal and necessary as reason is. For example, when understanding is enlightened by ideas, "the Reason . . . shines down into the Understanding. . . . Now these being Contingency, and Particularity . . . the Understanding becomes a conclusive or logical Faculty" (*Marginalia III* 746); "Let me by all the labors of my life have answered but one end, if I shall have only succeeded in establishing the diversity of Reason and Understanding, and the distinction between the Light of Reason in the Understanding, viz. the absolute Principles presumed in all Logic and the conditions under which alone we draw universal and necessary Conclusions from contingent and particular facts, and the Reason itself, as the Source and birth-place of IDEAS, and in its conversion to the Will the power of Ultimate Ends, of which Ideas only can be the Subjects" (*Notebooks* 4: 5293).

"utilitarian ethics" developed from mechanical understanding and represented by William Paley, Coleridge advocates "the spontaneous benevolence of the sympathetic imagination" (175). The eighteenth-century tradition of sympathetic imagination, popularized by Shaftesbury (Anthony Ashley Cooper), Francis Hutcheson, and Adam Smith, attempted to "bridge the gap between atomistic individualism (premised by the empirical philosophy) and the possibility of altruism (Abrams 332). Their formulation of sympathetic imagination as an aesthetic/moral doctrine legitimates the power of imagination in its extension of sympathy to others and the complementary workings between passion (extreme sensibility) and imagination (Bate 146-51).[16] In his appropriation of this doctrine, Coleridge in his early poems had shifted the focus from identification with others to sympathy's potential for integration and totality, as exemplified in "Religious Musings" ("Feeling himself, his own low Self the whole, / When he by sacred sympathy might make / The whole ONE SELF!" [*Coleridge's Poetry* 166-68]), or "The Eolian Harp" ("At once the Soul of each, and God of all? [40]). [17] Though in 1817 Coleridge gradually discarded his penchant for pantheistic thinking, the ultimate goal of totality through "sacred sympathy" of love still persists in the function of an imagination that "struggles to idealize and to unify" (*Biographia Literaria* 304). The touchstone for seeing the hidden truth, imagination is included to ensure the element of feeling in morality, yet the necessity of starting from understanding circumscribes the possibility of its political scope being limited by mechanical understanding.

Under the influence of passion, the power of imagination is conjured up and transfers the transcendental ideas of reason in the envelope of symbol. This de-

[16] In the development of sympathetic imagination in eighteenth-century Britain, Adam Smith laid the groundwork of substituting sympathy for moral feelings and suggested the need for imagination to initiate sympathy. Shaftesbury, seeing Homer as the exemplar, promoted the idea of annihilation of the poet's identity in the process of identification with his characters to disclose the truth and essence of his objects (Bate 144-64).

[17] Coleridge's early appropriation of sympathetic imagination was founded on his mixture of Christian faith and pantheism, in that every living thing was said to contain indwelling spirits (instead of the projection of feeling through practice of association from objects to humans for the Scottish moral philosophers) to be revealed by the poet's power, with the final goal to be one with God. The Romantic version of sympathetic imagination was adopted by Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, and Hazlitt, though their employment of this aesthetic idea differed. For example, Wordsworth illustrated a self-conscious and meditative type: "Sympathies there are / More tranquil, yet perhaps of kindred birth, / That steal upon the meditative mind, / And grow with thought" (*The Excursion* I.481-84), or Shelley's emphasis on self-annihilation in "A Defence of Poetry," in which he argues that "[t]he great secret of moral is Love; or a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own" and "[a] man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own (487-88).

scription of imagination's creative process is an elaboration of the Kantian imagination that "make[s] sensible rational ideas" (*Critique* 192),[18] as the middle ground for the spiritual and the material, enabling understanding to see into ideas through the symbol:

> In the Scriptures they are the living educts of the imagination; of that reconciling and mediatory power, which [operates by] incorporating the reason in images of the sense, and organising (as it were) the flux of the senses by the permanence and self-circling energies of the reason. (Coleridge, *Manual* 28-29)

Like the process of divine writing, imagination presents to understanding what it can organize in "the flux of the senses by the permanence and self-circling energies of the reason." "Impregnated" with imagination, the enlightened understanding seems to be adequately empowered to decode the symbols and uncover the key ideas in the Bible. However, the methodology Coleridge adopts and the strategy he offers to address social conflict betrays what could be presented in this restricted imagination under understanding.

The discovery of idea from experience, or the Baconian method to reach the Platonic form, suggests Coleridge's awareness of the political aspects of epistemology in his time. In his *Romanticism, Nationalism, and the Revolt against Theory*, David Simpson traces the "genealogy of method and theory"—from the original tripartite distinction of the "Orthodox Baconian method," "Theory," and "Rationalism," to the dichotomy of "theory" and "practice" during the period of the French Revolution. Although the British anti-revolutionary at first saw method ("a way of doing things according to a progressive procedure") and theory ("a more speculative or hypothetical mental projection") as synonyms, equally regarding them as "wild and visionary delusion," method gradually became less controversial and was aligned with practice, leaving "theory" and "practice" antithetical and in opposition (7-8). In *The Friend*, Coleridge's dichotomies of reason/understanding and French/British testify to his understanding of this political antithesis as represented by the mental faculties. In *The Statesman's Manual*, the enlightened understanding avoids the use of theory (the ideas of pure reason) as well as the now impoverished practice, but at the same time attempts to incorporate the advantages of both. Having its basis in experience, or

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[18] Unlike the reproductive and productive power for its cognitive function designated in *Critique of Pure Reason*, imagination in *Critique of the Power of Judgment* takes on the role of presenting aesthetic ideas and moral ideas from reason in its "free play" with the faculty of understanding in the work of art.

the British political tradition, the enlightened understanding "struggles to idealize and to unify" in a progressive procedure of the Baconian method to reach the order of ideas, but the adaptation of the Baconian method has determined a different direction from the Platonic approach to the ideal. From the Marxist point of view, McGann identifies Coleridge's description of the idea in *The Statesman's Manual* (as something which is "living, productive, partaketh of infinity, and . . . containeth an endless power of semination" [23-24]) as Coleridge's defense of "ideology," "a coherent or loosely organized set of ideas which is the expression of the special interests of some class or social group" (5). What imagination discovers is the projection of the class interest of understanding, the class relation consolidated by the material base of property.

Based on the distinctive traits of "eternal and immutable" or "historically actualized," Cheyne separates the Coleridgean sense of idea (not Kantian) into two levels: the first-order ideas such as "freedom, the soul, the infinite, the morally good" and the second-order ideas such as "the constitution, workers' rights and 'the *idea* of an ever-originating social contract'" ("Samuel Taylor Coleridge" 490). This distinction is convenient as a way to separate the Kantian pure reason from its actualization in history and rightly explains Coleridge's change of Kantian "regulative" to "constitutive" ones in terms of ideas. Throughout *The Statesman's Manual*, Coleridge's main focus is to encourage statesmen to discover their duty, to envision an ideal nation ("What makes a nation happy and keeps it so, / What ruins kingdoms and lays cities flat" [8]) through the reading of the Bible, which is morally and politically requisite. Coleridge gives an example from the Bible to illustrate the idea in history and its relatedness to the present situation in Britain in 1816: the Israelite kingdom under the rule of King Solomon:

> Were it my object to touch on the present state of public affairs in this kingdom, or on the prospective measures in agitation respecting our sister island, I would direct your most serious meditations to the latter period of the reign of Solomon, and to the revolutions in the reign of Rehoboam, his successor. (33)

In his justification for the sufficiency of the Bible, Coleridge identifies the similarities between Britain and Israel, the reign after King Solomon and the danger of the fall of an empire. According to the Bible, when Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, succeeded to the throne, he was requested by the people to relieve the "heavy yoke" pressed on them when Solomon was ruling the country. Instead of accepting the plea, the new king insisted on showing no mercy to the people, and

this resulted in revolution and the split of the kingdom into two. The story of Rehoboam, when read in the historical context of the Distress Period in England, provides a moral lesson to the British government, whose unwillingness to make changes in its policies (cutting taxes or implementing parliamentary reform, for instance) to relieve the "yoke" placed on its people could result in revolution, as in the 1789 France.[19]

When making suggestions to practice the ideas discovered in the Bible, Coleridge discloses the real meaning of "endeavor to approximate" the ideal, as stated previously in *The Friend*. To practice his duty as a public servant, the statesman is encouraged, for example, to adopt education as one way to eradicate evil, because "the greater part of human Misery depends directly on human Vices":

> To *make use* of all means and appliances in our power to the actual attainment of Rectitude is the abstract of the Duty which we owe to ourselves: To *supply* those means as far as we can, comprizes [*sic*] our Duty to others. The question then is, what are these means? Can they be any other than the communication of Knowledge and the removal of those Evils and Impediments which prevent its reception? It may not be in our power to combine both, but it is in the power of every man to contribute to the former, who is sufficiently informed to feel that it is his Duty. (*Manual* 47)

Foreshadowing the class of clerisy designated to spread themselves around the nation to cultivate the people in *On the Constitution of the Church and State* in 1830, religious thoughts are believed to be the cure-all for the class conflict: "we should endeavor not so much to remove Ignorance, as to make the Ignorant religious" because "all effective Faith presupposes Knowledge and individual Conviction" (47). Duty-based morality and political skills find a common ground in education, or cultivation of the soul, whose aim would be to address the social unrest after war. Ironically Coleridge quotes from Milton's *Sampson Agonistes* (Milton is famous for his Republican and Puritan stance) to make it clear that the statesman's duty includes delivering knowledge in order to address evil and cleanse the souls of the disadvantaged, which further reveals Coleridge's transformation from a radical to a conservative: what hope has a man "Unless he feel within / Some source of consolation from above, / Secret refreshings, that repair his strength, / And fainting spirits uphold" (47). When reading the same Bible,

[19] "And they sent and called him. So Jeroboam and all Israel came and spake to Rehoboam, saying, 'Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore ease thou somewhat the grievous servitude of thy father, and his heavy yoke that he put upon us, and we will serve thee'" (2 Chronicles 10.3-4).

the idea discovered by the young Coleridge was that "an abolition of all individual Property is perhaps the only infallible Preventative against accumulation" and could be compared with the common ownership practiced by the ancient Israelites (*Lectures, 1795* 116), but the adult Coleridge shifted his attention to the spiritual part, instead of the material aspect, of the social problem. The ideal wholeness of political organicism, seeing all the parts as one, necessitates the privileging of some and sacrifice of others: "necessity and free-will are reconciled in the higher power of an omnipresent Providence" (*Manual* 31) in the name of religion.

In the formulation of the enlightened understanding, imagination is conjured up to transform understanding and bring forth the idea of the ideal state, of a political entity pursued by statesmen and hidden in the symbol. Political undertones reside in aestheticized epistemology: ideas of God, state, and duty delineate the ideal of the statesman, which is a Christian state the statesman endeavors to protect and modify. Passion and imagination are traits needed for understanding not only the teachings of God but also the duty a statesman must carry, a mediatory power that seeks to reconcile the interests of the landed gentry and the disadvantaged. In sum, understanding and the enlightened understanding explore two different, if not drastically opposite, political systems. One focuses on expediency and tradition in face of challenges from French ideology; the other, a limited ideal from a tradition under threat of domestic revolution.

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