

interpretation

A JOURNAL OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

January 1986

Volume 14 Number 1

- 1 Lessing *Ernst and Falk, Dialogues for Freemasons: a Translation with Notes by Chaninah Maschler*
- 51 Leo Strauss "Exoteric Teaching"
edited by Kenneth Hart Green
- 61 Ronald Hamowy *Progress and Commerce in Anglo-American Thought: the Social Philosophy of Adam Ferguson*
- 89 David Levy *S. T. Coleridge Replies to Adam Smith's "Pernicious Opinion": a Study in Hermetic Social Engineering*
- Review Essays*
- 115 Will Morrissey *Shakespeare and his Roman Plays: Studies by Cantor, Platt and Blits*
- 135 Stephen H. Balch *Setting the Seal on Marxist Criticism*
- Book Reviews*
- 145 Stewart Umphrey *The Being of the Beautiful: Plato's "Theaetetus," "Sophist," and "Statesman" translated with a commentary by Seth Benardete*
- 147 Will Morrissey *The Politics of Moderation: an Interpretation of Plato's Republic by John F. Wilson*
- 150 W. Warren Wagar *Arnold Toynbee and the Crisis of the West by Marvin Perry*

interpretation

Volume 14 number 1

Editor-in-Chief Hilail Gildin

Editors Seth G. Benardete • Charles E. Butterworth • Hilail Gildin • Robert Horwitz • Howard B. White (d. 1974)

Consulting Editors Joseph Cropsey • John Hallowell • Wilhelm Hennis • Erich Hula • Harry V. Jaffa • David Lowenthal • Arnaldo Momigliano • Michael Oakeshott • Ellis Sandoz • Leo Strauss (d. 1973) • Kenneth W. Thompson

Associate Editors Fred Baumann • Patrick Coby • Christopher A. Colmo • Derek Cross • Edward J. Erler • Maureen Feder-Marcus • Joseph E. Goldberg • Pamela K. Jensen • Will Morrisey • Charles Rubin • Leslie Rubin • John A. Wettergreen • Bradford Wilson • Catherine Zuckert • Michael Zuckert

Manuscript Editor Laurette G. Hupman

Design & Production Martyn Hitchcock

Annual subscription rates individual \$15; institutional \$18; student (3-year limit) \$7.50. There are three issues of INTERPRETATION a year.

Address for correspondence INTERPRETATION, Queens College, Flushing, N.Y. 11367, U.S.A.

Authors submitting manuscripts for publication in INTERPRETATION are requested to follow the *MLA Style Sheet* and to send clear and readable copies of their work.

Copyright 1986 • Interpretation

S. T. Coleridge Replies to Adam Smith's "Pernicious Opinion": A Study in Hermetic Social Engineering

DAVID LEVY

George Mason University

A pernicious Opinion that of Dr Johnson's & Dryden's & Adam Smith's &c that Authors by compulsion in the profession are likely to be the best i.e. professional musicians &c
—Coleridge, *Notebooks* 661

The problem can be stated simply enough: How did Samuel Taylor Coleridge convince a generation and more of competent social thinkers to share his disapprobation of a free market in culture and to disregard Adam Smith's analysis of the consequences of the endowments of intellectuals? The fact is that he did.¹ In the history of economic theory Adam Smith has few peers; here is testimony from one of them:

We honour Coleridge for having rescued from the discredit in which the corruptions of the English Church had involved everything connected with it, and for having vindicated against Bentham and Adam Smith and the whole eighteenth century, the principle of an endowed class, for the cultivation of learning, and for diffusing its results among the community. That such a class is likely to be behind, instead of before, the progress of knowledge, is an induction erroneously drawn from the peculiar circumstances of the last two centuries .²

That Coleridge had an influence seems clear. What troubles me is why. My difficulty is very simple: Smith's argument against endowments is a valid deduction from the first principles of economic analysis, what economists today call "the law of demand." In particular, if an endowment reduces the rewards for success and the penalties for failure in intellectual pursuits, we can expect less excellence to be forthcoming.³ Smith's position hardly requires a long chain of

Thanks are due to Warren Wigutow, Charles Griswold and Kathleen Coburn for comments on earlier versions.

1. Basil Willey, *More Nineteenth-Century Studies*, New York, 1956, p. 62: "Here it must suffice to remark that wherever Coleridge's influence was felt, it acted as a seminal force, not conveying systematic doctrine, but quickening and warming both heart and head, revealing the shallowness of the unenlivened understanding, and calling men back to an awareness of spiritual reality."

2. John Stuart Mill, *Essays on Ethics, Religion and Society*, edited by J. M. Robson, vol. 10 of *The Collected Works*, Toronto, 1969, p. 150. Mill's reliance on Coleridge for the linkage between moral reform and social institutions is discussed in Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society*, New York, 1966, p. 62. How Mill's concern for moral reform unifies his work is stressed in J. M. Robson, *The Improvement of Mankind*, Toronto, 1968.

3. Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, Modern Library, New York, 1937, p. 727: "In general, the richest and best endowed universities have been the

technical reasoning; consequently, as Mill writes, Smith's position is scarcely unique. If anything, Samuel Johnson made the more compelling case for the free market in the production of literature:

A man (said he) who writes a book, thinks himself wiser or wittier than the rest of mankind; he supposes that he can instruct or amuse them, and the publick to whom he appeals, must, after all, be the judges of his pretensions.⁴

It should come as no surprise then that Smith and Johnson were coupled together in Coleridge's eyes as opponents to his position:

A pernicious Opinion that of Dr Johnson's & Dryden's & Adam Smith's &c that Authors by compulsion in the profession are likely to be the best i.e. professional musicians &c—⁵

Not only is this analysis of endowments an easy inference from a principle of great empirical power: Oxford and Cambridge stood mute testimony to the disastrous effect of the withdrawal of incentives to diligence.⁶ Now, if the Smith–Johnson argument is valid and there is evidence to substantiate the conclusion, how did Coleridge escape the inference they drew?

What does the commentary say about this issue? Here, I find little guidance from either the studies which deal with classical British economics or from those which consider Coleridge's political philosophy. Modern historians of economics have paid little attention to the "romantic" critics of classical economics so lack of guidance from this literature is expected.⁷ Nonetheless, I was surprised

slowest in adopting those improvements, and the most averse to permit any considerable change in the established plan of education. Those improvements were more easily introduced into some of the poorer universities, in which the teachers, depending upon their reputation for the greater part of their subsistence, were obliged to pay more attention to the current opinions of the world." Technically, there is the possibility that the wealth enhancing aspect of an endowment, combined with a positive wealth elasticity of intellectual output, could dominate the substitution effect. This possibility is not part of the 19th century discussion so it will not be further considered.

4. Samuel Johnson as reported in James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.*, Modern Library, New York, n.d., p. 116.

5. S. T. Coleridge, *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, edited by Kathleen Coburn, New York, 1957, vol. 1, #661.

6. The decay of the endowed Oxford and Cambridge relative to their poorer, unendowed rivals in Scotland is stressed by Garry Wills, *Inventing America*, Garden City, 1978, pp. 175–6, in his explanation of the importance of the Scottish thinkers in eighteenth-century America. News of this corruption would, of course, have come as no surprise to Coleridge, who praises Robert Southey for stepping around the muck, *Biographia Literaria*, edited by J. Shawcross, vol. 1, Oxford, 1907, p. 47: "To those who remember the state of our public schools and universities some twenty years past, it will appear no ordinary praise in any man to have passed from innocence into virtue, "

7. There is some interest remaining in the critics of the classical British economists. A recent look at Robert Southey and Thomas Carlyle by a historian of economics is provided by George J. Stigler, *The Economist as Preacher and other Essays*, Chicago, 1982. Albert O. Hirschman, "Rival Interpretations of Market Society: Civilizing, Destructive, or Feeble?" *Journal of Economic Literature* 20(1982):1463–84, glances at Coleridge. The older historians of economics paid a good deal more attention to these critics,—for example, Joseph Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis*, New York, 1954, pp. 409–11, discusses Carlyle in some detail.

to discover that many famous analyses of Coleridge's political philosophy do not even mention the fact that Coleridge writes in opposition to Smith's analysis.⁸

In spite of the gap in the commentary on this particular issue, one broad point of agreement which does emerge from various studies of Coleridge's social philosophy is his desire to engender spiritual improvement through institutional reform.⁹ Of course this raises a technical question: Just how is one supposed to go about making spiritual improvement through institutional reform? Answering this technical question can, I shall argue, illuminate the mechanics of Coleridge's response to Smith and Johnson.

Coleridge actually made two important proposals for institutional reform: the egalitarian Pantisocracy in the 1790s and the endowed cultural class in the 1830s. Coleridge switched philosophical positions in the time period which separates these proposed reforms. In his Pantisocratic days, he subscribed to the tenets of philosophical materialism.¹⁰ By the time he proposed an endowed status for intellectuals he had converted to neoplatonism.¹¹ Before we turn to the hard problem of the mechanics of endowing intellectuals, we shall deal with the easy problem of looking at what wrecked Coleridge's Pantisocratic hopes. The case shall be made that Coleridge's later proposal came to grips with the lessons taught by the early failure. In the Pantisocratic failure, Coleridge discovers the importance of creating new men and women to act as the founders of a new order. How this can be done will be examined when we look at the role that neoplatonic social engineering plays in the argument.¹²

8. In spite of Mill's explicit statement that there is a debate between Smith and Coleridge, and Coleridge's explicit *Notebook* statement corroborating this interpretation, Coleridge's proposal for an endowed cultural class is not discussed in relation to Smith or Johnson's claims by David P. Calleo, *Coleridge and the Idea of the Modern State*, New Haven, 1966, pp. 97–9, nor by John Colmer in his edition of *Church and State in Collected Works*, nor by R. J. White in *The Political Thought of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* [1939], London, 1970, nor by Charles Richard Sanders, *Coleridge and the Broad Church Movement* [1942], New York, 1972. The tradition is continued by Peter Allen, "S. T. Coleridge's *Church and State* and the Idea of an Intellectual Establishment," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 46(1985):89–106.

9. Willey, *More Studies*, p. 62; Williams, *Culture and Society*, p. 62.

10. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, edited by Earl Leslie Griggs, vol. 1, Oxford, 1956, p. 137: "I go farther than Hartley and believe the corporeality of thought . . ."

11. Coleridge himself seems to have coined the term "neoplatonist," *Marginalia*, edited by George Whalley, vol. 12 of *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, Princeton, 1980, p. 296.

12. It is not accidental, I think, that those studies which emphasize Coleridge's debt to the post-Kantian idealistic developments in Germany have very little to say about political economy or social policy, e.g., G. N. G. Orsini, *Coleridge and German Idealism*, Carbondale and Edwardsville, 1969. Also, Norman Fruman, *Coleridge, The Damaged Archangel*, New York, 1971, who has nothing to say about political economy, says this, p. 476: "The extreme overemphasis on the importance of the Neoplatonists on Coleridge's intellectual development would be utterly inexplicable were it not for the necessity of justifying Coleridge's assertions of independence from the Germans." On the other hand, studies which emphasize Coleridge's use of both the German tradition and the neoplatonic tradition often have a good deal to say about his proposals for social reform, e.g., Owen Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, Middletown, Ct., 1971.

Before we confront the texts, we can consider the problem which confronts anyone who is to deflect the free market conclusion which Smith and Johnson drew from their analysis. This will tell us—at least in outline form—how Coleridge must proceed. Understanding what case he had to press will help considerably. First, it is necessary for Smith and Johnson that human nature is fixed. Without such an assumption, there is no inferential path from the past to the future. Even if past endowments were failures, why would this bear on the future? Perhaps human nature has changed in the meantime.¹³ Second, it is necessary that the judgments in the marketplace of ideas are compelling. Smith refers to the “current opinions of the world” and Johnson speaks of how the public must judge the “pretensions” of authors to instruct them.

By this analysis we know what Coleridge requires to make his case. First, an institutional reform can remake human nature itself in some predictable fashion; or, second, those ideas which are ultimately important are not something about which the masses of mankind can judge. We know, thus, what patterns to look for in Coleridge’s writings. Not to keep the reader in suspense, I shall argue that Coleridge relies upon the Hermetic model of man to defend both the claims at issue: first, institutional reform can remake mankind itself; and, second, judgments from the marketplace of ideas are systematically flawed.

Reading Coleridge’s proposal for constitutional reform as resting on somewhat occult premises is, of course, hardly novel.¹⁴ It is, however, a rather controversial interpretation; indeed, a recent attempt has been made to mechanize Coleridge, to collapse what he calls “Ideas” into public opinion. In this view, Coleridge holds that the masses are dominated by the producers of philosophical truths.¹⁵ In this interpretation, Coleridge’s position is as straightforward as that of J. M. Keynes.¹⁶ This interpretation suffers from, I think, a terrible shortcoming. Coleridge’s argument would be strangled at birth by the Smith–Johnson

13. The critical nature of this assumption for a series of debates is discussed in David Levy, “Rational Choice and Morality,” *History of Political Economy* 14(1982):1–36 and David Levy, “Malthusians, Libertarian Communists and J. S. Mill Who Was Both,” *Mill News Letter* 15 (1980):2–16.

14. Calleo, *Idea of State*, p. 89: “Many of Coleridge’s critics have treated the whole notion of the Idea as incomprehensible philosophical moonshine. But there is nothing necessarily occult in such a theory of the Constitution.” Harold Beeley, “The Political Thought of Coleridge,” *Coleridge: Studies by Several Hands on the Hundredth Anniversary of His Death*, edited by Edmund Blunden and Earl Leslie Griggs, London, 1934, p. 169: “Coleridge insisted on the supreme importance of education because he believed in what may be termed, by contrast with the Marxian formula, the metaphysical theory of history . . . Existing evils he traced back through a chain of consequences to the atomism of Locke, and posterity, he hoped, would similarly attribute its blessings to his own philosophical system. Now the lever by which abstract philosophy operates on the political and economic circumstances is the ‘predominant state of public opinion,’ and that can only be controlled by an educational system in the hands of the State.”

15. Calleo, *Idea of State*, pp. 21–2: “Coleridge believed that public opinion is dominated in the long run by what he called ‘Ideas,’ notions that are often dimly comprehended by the average man, but that nevertheless mold his thoughts and perceptions. These dominating Ideas are ultimately derived from the speculations of those few in society who concern themselves with philosophic truth.”

16. John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, vol. 7 of *Collected Works*, Cambridge, 1973, p. 383: “. . . the ideas of economists and political philosophers,

analysis.¹⁷ Judging the performance of educational institutions by the acceptance in the marketplace of ideas—which is all the Keynes position authorizes—gives the game to Smith and Johnson. Who could deny the unendowed Scottish universities dominated their endowed British rivals in the eighteenth century?

I shall argue that Coleridge found in the Hermetic tradition two theses; first, that all the important ideas are within us, and, second, that these ideas are self-actualizing. These theses meet both parts of the Smith–Johnson challenge. The first gives us a method of judging what ideas are worthwhile independently of what the world thinks; the second tells us that human nature can be changed in lawlike fashion.

In a structural sense, one part of Coleridge's answer to Smith and Johnson is the same as the answer which the Hermetic philosophers gave to those who claimed that the world was governed by fate. How can we possibly change what will be? The Hermetic answer is to remember that we are God, brother to the creator¹⁸ but while fate dominates our material self, God dominates fate; so we become God to escape fate.¹⁹ A concise Hermetic statement of the relation between religious behavior and knowledge was recovered from Nag Hammadi within living memory:

the pious who are counted are few. Therefore wickedness remains among (the) many, since learning concerning the things which are ordained does not exist among them. For the knowledge of the things which are ordained is truly the healing of the passions of matter.²⁰

both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed the world is ruled by little else . . . Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back."

17. The temptation to read Coleridge as if he wrote in modern traditions is a well-known problem. Kathleen Coburn, "Introduction," Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Philosophical Lectures*, London, 1949, p. 40: "I do not wish to try to do for Coleridge what Ritter did for Plato, i.e. de-Platonize him. Nor do I mean to commit the ironical error of making Coleridge out to be one of the naturalistic philosophers he spent his life combating."

18. *Corpus Hermeticum*, edited by A. D. Nock and translated by A.-J. Festugière, vol. I, Paris, 1978, *Traité* I, 13, pp. 10–11: "Or, lorsqu'il eut remarqué la création que le démiurge avait façonnée dans le feu, l'Homme voulut lui aussi produire une œuvre, et permission lui en fut donnée par le Père. Étant donc entré dans la sphère démiurgique, où il devait avoir plein pouvoir, il perçut les œuvres de son frère . . ."

19. Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, New York, vol. I, 1923, p. 290: "Only the chosen few who possess *gnosis* or are capable of receiving *nous* can escape the decrees of fate as administered by the stars and ultimately return to the spiritual world . . ." John G. Burke, "Hermeticism as a Renaissance World View," *The Darker Vision of the Renaissance*, edited by Robert S. Kinsman, Berkeley, 1974, p. 101: "the Hermetic texts declare that man was created as a divine being with divine creative power, and man is characterized as being a 'brother' of the creating demiurge . . . man takes on a mortal body of his own volition, and in so doing he voluntarily submits to the domination of the stars and other celestial bodies . . . man can recover his divinity through a regenerative experience, by casting away material preoccupations . . ."

20. *Asclepius*, translated by James Brashler, Peter A. Dirkse and Douglas M. Parrott, in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, James M. Robinson, New York, 1977, p. 301. The modern edition of the received text is *Corpus Hermeticum*, *Asclépius* 22–3.

My thesis is that Coleridge works within the logical presuppositions of the Hermetic world view to answer Smith and Johnson: Free an elite from material preoccupations, and they will contact the divine within and creativity will flourish. Hermetism provides the key to unlocking creativity because creativity results from uncaused activity;²¹ to open the door to the uncaused world, essentially we must coerce the divine. What we might call Hermetic “social engineering” has a long history, as we have been taught by various Warburg Institute studies over the last three decades. Coleridge’s endowment proposal, as I shall demonstrate, makes sense inside this tradition. And, conversely, only inside this tradition is his argument compelling. There are thus two parts of the exercise. My case that if Coleridge accepted the Hermetic presuppositions then his proposed endowment is sensible, can be made on straightforward textual grounds. The converse—only inside the Hermetic view of the worlds does Coleridge’s proposal make sense—cannot of course be made on textual grounds, but it is a simple case to make on history-of-philosophy grounds: Hermetism allows certain operations which no other ontological system allows.

In Coleridge’s Pantisocratic discussion in the 1790s, we find him attending to a fundamental issue—the vicious circle between personal immorality and evil institutions—which his endowment proposal seeks to evade. In the materialist tradition where human nature is assumed fixed, moral reform is mainly a matter of changing incentives.²² Following the libertarian communism of William Godwin, Coleridge claims property is a barrier to moral conduct. In a letter we read:

The real source of inconstancy, depravity, & prostitution, is *Property*, which mixes with & poisons every thing good—& is beyond doubt the Origin of all Evil.²³

Coleridge’s defense of his proposed communal experiment is clearly offered in the spirit of philosophical materialism—to change behavior one must first change incentives:

Wherever Men *can* be vicious, some *will* be. The leading Idea of Pantisocracy is to make men *necessarily* virtuous by removing all Motives to Evil—all possible Temptations.²⁴

In his emotional divorce from Southey, he states that his communistic hopes are for spiritual improvement:

I returned to Cambridge hot in the anticipation of that happy Season, when we should remove the *selfish* Principle from ourselves, and prevent it in our children, by an *Abolition* of Property: or in whatever respect this might be impracticable, by such sim-

21. The texts are cited below.

22. The subtitle of David Hume’s *Treatise of Human Nature* is “An attempt to introduce the experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects.” Without stability of human nature, the evidence from experiments in time (t) have no bearing on experiments in time ($t + 1$).

23. *Collected Letters* 1:214.

24. *Collected Letters* 1:114.

ilarity of Property, as would amount to a *moral Sameness*, and answer all the purposes of *Abolition*.²⁵

In Godwin's account, institutions are unambiguously the *cause* of moral evil in people. Contrary to this, even in the midst of his Pantisocratic fever, Coleridge worried about the moral fiber of the founders of the new order and, in so doing, spelled out an awareness that the evil in institutions could be caused by the evil in people. In a letter to Southey he writes:

I was challenged on the subject of Pantisocracy, which is indeed the universal Topic at this University—A Discussion began and continued for *six* hours. In conclusion, Lushington & Edwards declared the System impregnable, supposing the assigned Quantum of Virtue and Genius in the first Individuals.²⁶

In the same letter, these concerns are spelled out in graphic detail. The stabilizing of the moralizing society would be undermined by immoral founders:

. . . there are *Children* going with us. Why did I never dare in my disputations with the Unconvinced to *hint* at this circumstance? Was it not, because I knew even to certainty of conviction, that it is subversive of *rational* Hopes of a permanent System? These children—the little Fricker for instance and *your* Brothers—Are they not already *deeply* tinged with the prejudices and errors of society? Have they not learnt from their Schoolfellows *Fear* and *Selfishness*—of which the necessary offspring are Deceit, and desultory Hatred? *How* are we to prevent them from infecting the minds of *our* Children?²⁷

Consequently, Coleridge's earliest thoughts on institutional reform confront the delicate problem of mutual causality of evil. Institutions corrupt people, but without virtuous individuals to act as founders of the new society, what hope is there to purge vice? And, where can we find those uncorrupted by their society? Coleridge is left with Archimedes' problem: Where is there is a place outside the world by which to move it?

Only a little after he had discarded his Pantisocratic hopes, Coleridge writes that he has discovered the Hermetic branch of the neoplatonic tradition:

Metaphysics, & Poetry, & 'Facts of mind'—(i.e. Accounts of all the strange phantasms that ever possessed your philosophy-dreamers from Tauth [Thoth], the Egyptian to Taylor, (the English Pagan), are my darling Studies.²⁸

The burden of the argument below is inside the Hermetic tradition; Coleridge breaks out of a circle of vice. Reform can first moralize an elite who then moralize the rest.

In my interpretation, Coleridge's proposal to create an endowed learned class (the clerisy) in *Constitution of Church and State According to the Idea of Each* is an attempt to rip apart the chains binding effects with material cause, to create by

25. *Collected Letters* I:163.

26. *Collected Letters* I:119.

27. *Collected Letters* I:119–20.

28. *Collected Letters* I:260.

a change in legal institutions a vacuum in time and space for spiritual activity, for what he authorizes us to call the supernatural.²⁹ Sheltered from the causal nexus, spiritual activity by this clerisy could create a new reality; a reality where men no longer confound wealth with welfare, where no longer would the worse be chosen over the better.

In brief, I shall argue that Coleridge's proposal to endow a learned class through institutional change, an instance of what we would today call social engineering, takes on meaning within what we now know to be the "Hermetic tradition" where efforts to expand the scope of personal spiritual activity are commonplace. Our guides for this tradition are, of course, Paul O. Kristeller, A. J. Festugière, D. P. Walker and Frances Yates. What I find most particularly helpful in Yates' series of studies on the Hermetic tradition is her reconstruction of an engineering school within the broad neoplatonic point of view.³⁰

Knowing first-hand so much of the excitement from the triumphs of modern engineering within our Einsteinian-Newtonian tradition in astrophysics and microelectronics, we can more easily empathize with the neoplatonic engineers. Raymond Lull's symbolic constructs are only a world-view away, artificial intelligence under paradigm-shift, from Charles Babbage's analytical-engine and H. A. Simons' theorem-proving programs.³¹ Similarly, the pictures on our television of Jupiter and Saturn, which the engineers at Cal Tech's Jet Propulsion Lab have arranged to appear, prepare us, at least to some degree, for the sort of result expected to flow from a neoplatonic memory theater.³²

In broad brush, the scope of Coleridge's interest in the neoplatonic supernatural is too well-known to belabor. Thomas Carlyle's icily contemptuous caricature,³³ John Livingston Lowe's classic study of the *Ancient Mariner*,³⁴ and now

29. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, edited by Henry Nelson Coleridge [1840], Post Washington, 1971, p. 108: "Whatever is comprised in the chain and mechanism of cause and effect, of course necessitated, is said to be natural; . . . It is, therefore, a contradiction in terms to include in this the freewill, of which the verbal definition is—that which originates an act or state of being. In this sense, therefore, which is the sense of St. Paul, and indeed of the New Testament throughout, spiritual and supernatural are synonymous."

30. Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, Chicago, 1964; *The Art of Memory*, Chicago, 1966; *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, London, 1972.

31. Yates, *Memory*, p. 176: "[Lull] believed that if he could persuade Jews and Muslims to do the Art with him, they would become converted to Christianity . . . Starting from premisses common to all, the Art would demonstrate the necessity of the Trinity."

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 147–8: "It is because he believes in the divinity of man that the divine Camillo makes his stupendous claim of being able to remember the universe by looking down upon it from above, from first causes, as though he were God . . . The microcosm [man] can fully understand and fully remember the macrocosm, can hold it within his divine *mens* or memory."

33. Thomas Carlyle, *Life of John Sterling*, p. 53, quoted in Thomas McFarland, *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition*, Oxford, 1969, p. 333: ". . . he had, especially among young inquiring men, a higher than literary, a kind of prophetic or magician character. He was thought to hold, he alone in England, the key of German and other Transcendentalisms . . . to the rising spirits of the young generation he had this dusky sublime character; and sat there as a kind of *Magus*, girt in mystery and enigma."

34. John Livingston Lowes, *The Road to Xanadu*, Boston and New York, 1927, pp. 229–36.

in our time Thomas McFarland's examination of Coleridge's place in the pantheistic tradition³⁵ and Kathleen Coburn's study of the notebooks and marginalia,³⁶ all carry the same message: the Coleridgean world-view ventures into neighborhoods where occult sympathy still rules, where ideas carry power to bind and release.

The obvious objection to my thesis must be first considered. Who took the critical texts of the hermetic revival seriously after Issac Casaubon's demolition of the *Corpus Hermeticum's* claims to antiquity? After all, Coleridge wrote in the clear light of the nineteenth century.³⁷ In fact, Coleridge seems to have accepted the historicity of some of the key texts of the Hermetic tradition,³⁸ but I place no real weight on this. Today, learned philologists still argue about the confusion of texts and religious traditions in the ancient world. For my purposes, such evidence can be waived because Coleridge took the *Bible* very seriously, and although it is often neglected in modern studies of the occult, it is a very magical book. This is central to my argumentative strategy.³⁹ For if one takes as the literal truth of the *Bible* as given,⁴⁰ then one could accept, as Ralph Cudworth and Henry More did, the philological demonstration that the Hermetic treatises were contaminated by frauds of the Christian era, yet still save Hermetism from the ash heap.⁴¹ The More-Cudworth position that the *Corpus Hermeti-*

35. McFarland, *Pantheist Tradition*.

36. Kathleen Coburn, *Experience into Thought*, Toronto, 1979, pp. 29–54.

37. The occult is however rather hardy, cf. Mircea Eliade, "The Occult and the Modern World," *Occultism, Witchcraft, and Cultural Fashions*, Chicago, 1976.

38. Coleridge attributes some of the Old Testament to the Chaldean Sages [?= Oracles], Notebook F, Huntington Library, HM 17299, p. 24: "It is highly probable that the origin of this Chromometry is to be sought for in the astronomical or astrological Sciences, in which Daniel as a Pupil of the Chaldean Sages had been initiated." There is an interesting marginale on Jeremiah 52, Coleridge, *Marginalia*, p. 440: "The 52nd Chapter was probably written by the Author of the Book of Kings, who resided in Chaldea—& was appended to the Oracles, as a Note, as we now should say." Similarly, he is willing to assert the great antiquity of the Kabbala, in the Manuscript Commonplace Book of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Huntington Library, HM 8195, p. 157: "With still less hesitation may the statement of the Jewish Cabbala in the purest state, with the grounds for its existence before the Christian era . . ." I have not found his opinion of the *Corpus Hermeticum* itself. Below, we see that he knew that a "false Dionyus" was responsible for the angel lore and he thought very poorly of Agrippa.

39. There is another strategy which I shall not consider. Could Coleridge's rather impressive consumption of opiates have given credence to the reality of the supernatural? Karen Vaughn made this suggestion. Mircea Eliade, *Zalmoxis: The Vanishing God*, translated by Willard R. Trask, Chicago, 1972, p. 42, notes that the translation of one of traditional names of shamans is "those who walk in smoke." He glosses this as "an ecstasy induced by smoke of hemp."

40. Coleridge's opinion of the *Bible* as revelation is discussed in Sanders, *Broad Church*, pp. 82–3. J. Robert Barth, *Coleridge and Christian Doctrine*, Cambridge, 1969, p. 71, makes the important point about "Coleridge's profound respect for the literal sense of the Bible."

41. Kathleen Raine, "Thomas Taylor in England," *Thomas Taylor The Platonist*, edited by Kathleen Raine and George Mills Harper, Princeton, 1969, pp. 45–6: "It will be obvious that the historicity or otherwise of Orpheus would not, from the standpoint of metaphysics, either establish or diminish the 'authenticity' of the Hymns that bear his name. In this charge against Taylor's unhistorical point of view we hear an echo of Isaac Casaubon's 'discrediting' of the *Hermetica* a century and a half earlier, . . . [both] embody a tradition, and it is not upon their date but upon their content that their authenticity rests."

cum—albeit contaminated with Christian era frauds—contains genuine Egyptian teachings, rescues considerable Hermetism for Jews and Christians.⁴² The fact is that in *Exodus* the highest of all possible authority attests to the prowess of the Egyptian magicians. For Jews or Christians reading the *Corpus Hermeticum*, the wonder-working passages simply corroborate the Mosaic account of the competence of Egyptian magicians.

Because my argument depends upon the seemingly incredible proposition that someone of Coleridge's dates and stature took Hermetism seriously, it is important for me to establish that the *Bible* gives credence to the Hermetic engineering claims. In fact, in *Exodus* the Egyptian magicians provide independent, albeit hostile, testimony for the majesty of God's works.⁴³ For their testimony to be compelling, they cannot be incompetent. This they are not. Indeed, in competition with God, the first few exchanges are rather close. The magicians almost matched God turning rods to snakes, although God had the larger snakes.⁴⁴ God and the magicians run dead heats exterminating fish⁴⁵ and generating frogs.⁴⁶ While it is true that God removes the frogs first, any fair reading would consider this part of the contest called for lack of vermin.⁴⁷ At the beginning of

42. Here I am timidly disagreeing with Yates, *Bruno*, pp. 423–31 and Wayne Shumaker, *The Occult Sciences in the Renaissance*, Berkeley, 1972, p. 210, about the extent of the salvage. The continuity between the Florentine Academy and the Cambridge Platonists is stressed in Ernst Cassirer, *The Platonic Renaissance in England*, translated by James P. Pettegrove [1953], New York, 1970, p. 9: "For Cudworth and More, as for Ficino and Pico della Mirandola, Plato formed but one link in that golden chain of divine revelation, which besides him includes Moses and Zoroaster, Socrates and Christ, Hermes Trismegistus and Plotinus."

43. This is, of course, not the only such appeal to occult authority in the *Bible*. The reader will doubtless think of *Matthew* 2:1–11 where the "Wise Men" in the King James Version or "Magi" in the Greek (*Novum Testamentum Graece*, cum apparatus critico D. Eberhard Nestle and D. Erwin Nestle, Stuttgart, 1952) are such able astrologers that they can read the hidden hand of God in the sky. Modern pictures of the passage strip the Wise Men of all need for wisdom—the guiding star is a super-nova—and makes absolutely no sense. If the star were obvious enough to show up on a Hallmark card, it would be plain enough for Herod's associates to follow.

The translation in the King James Version is worthy of note because when used to describe Simon (*Acts* 8:9) the cognate is translated as "sorcery." The complicated philology of the Persian "Magus" is discussed by Arthur Darby Nock, *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*, edited by Zeph Stewart, Cambridge, 1972, 1:308–30.

A classic study of the magical presuppositions of the *Bible* and *Apocrypha* is, of course, Thorndike, *History*, 1:385–479. Here is what Thorndike writes about the *Matthew* verses, 1:471: "When the writer of the Gospel according to Matthew included the story of the wise men from the east who had seen the star, there can be little or no doubt that he inserted it and that it had been formulated in the first place, . . . to secure the appearance of support for the kingship of Jesus from that art or science of astrology which so many persons then held in high esteem."

A. D. Nock, *Conversion*, Oxford, 1961, p. 210, stresses the importance of Christianity's various superhuman claims for its early acceptance. Also, Nock, *Essays*, 2:517: "though Egypt afforded no such *point de départ* as the story of the visit of the Magi to Bethlehem, thrice-greatest Hermes and Zoroaster were alike pressed into the service of Christianity."

44. *Exodus* 7:10–12.

45. *Exodus* 7:19–22.

46. *Exodus* 8:5–7.

47. *Exodus* 8:12–15.

the fourth round God is ahead on points, but the magicians still stand. Then, class tells:

And the Lord said unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch out thy rod, and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt.

And they did so . . .

And the magicians did so with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not: so there were lice upon man, and upon beast.

Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh. This is the finger of God ⁴⁸

In any such contest there is a simultaneity of prowess. Just as the magicians explicitly testify for God's power, God implicitly testifies for theirs. While it is true that when the magicians are last seen, they are not standing,⁴⁹ Pharaoh would have been well advised to heed his Council of Occult Advisers. Coleridge was not the only one who drew some interesting conclusions from this report and others like it.⁵⁰

If there is genuine Egyptian doctrine which can be extracted from the Hermetic texts, then all is not lost to the Hermetist. Because the power of natural or demonic Egyptian magic can be established independently, by the best of all possible authority, the only real problem is how to tap this power. To the extent that there is ancient Egyptian doctrine mixed with the frauds, then there is still information to be gained from the Hermetic tradition. Philology is not destiny.

The critical presuppositions which we must accept to work within a neoplatonic world-view are these:

1. True knowledge is found in Ideas (Plato's archetypes) which are the thoughts of God.⁵¹

48. *Exodus* 8:16–19. Thorndike, *History* 1:437 quotes Celsus (via Origen, of course) as characterizing both Moses and Jesus as wizards and at 1:438 quotes Origen as pointing out that the "Egyptians charge Moses and the Hebrews with the practice of sorcery during their stay in Egypt."

49. *Exodus* 9:11: "And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians."

50. Coleridge, *Marginalia*, [*Exodus* 7.15 to 8.11] p. 419: "Hieroglyphicè historical. Predictiones Astrologicae—*Baculus* Astronomicus—Enchantments = Constellated Talismans—Metallic Almanachs." Whalley provides no gloss for "Constellated Talismans" but cannot we read in this phrase Coleridge's respect for the powers of Zodiac, the Hermetic Governors? Plotinus, *Ennead* 4.44 (cited in note 59 below) might be read in conjunction with this. Also, John Henry Cardinal Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, London, 1964, pp. 29–30: "Also, besides the hosts of evil spirits, I considered there was a middle race, *δαυμόνια*, neither in heaven, nor in hell; partially fallen, capricious, wayward; noble or crafty, benevolent or malicious, as the case might be. These beings gave a sort of inspiration or intelligence to races, nations, and classes of men . . . I thought it countenanced by the mention of 'the Prince of Persia' in the Prophet Daniel; and I think I considered that it was of such intermediate beings that the Apocalypse spoke, in its notice of 'the Angels of the Seven Churches.'"

51. Paul Oskar Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino* [1943], translated by Virginia Conant, Gloucester, Mass., 1964, p. 163: "According to the Neoplatonic doctrine it [Idea] is nothing but a concept of the divine mind. But in so far as the difference between knowing and known is canceled in the perfect thought, all Ideas are identical with the essence of divine thought and therefore with each other."

2. Human beings have within them a divine spark (soul, mind) which allows them potentially to contemplate these Ideas directly. (Trivially, 1 and 2 imply that in so doing, a human being can contemplate God directly.)⁵²

3. Human beings rarely are able to achieve this contemplative feat because they are distracted by Matter, in particular pleasure and pain of the body.⁵³

4. Ideas are self-actualizing; they are more than images of reality, they cause reality itself.⁵⁴

It follows immediately that to attain this True knowledge, one must free oneself from the lures of the flesh, that one cannot attain union with the divine while lusting after money and fame.⁵⁵ Equally immediately it is clear why the doctrine of Thomas Hobbes presents such a challenge to this tradition: for Hobbes there is no life without striving, no quiet from the passionate storm in which to contemplate and reflect.⁵⁶

52. Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola, "Oration on the Dignity of Man," translated by Elizabeth Livermore Forbes, in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, edited by Ernst Cassirer, Paul Oskar Kristeller and John Herman Randall, Jr., Chicago, 1948, p. 235: "Then the saying *γνώθι σεαυτόν*, that is 'Know thyself,' urges and encourages us to the investigation of all nature, of which the nature of man is both the connecting link and, so to speak, the 'mixed bowl.' For he who knows himself in himself knows all things, as Zoroaster first wrote, and then Plato in his *Alcibiades*. When we are finally lighted in this knowledge by natural philosophy, and nearest to God are uttering the theological greeting, *εἴ*, that is, 'Thou art,' we shall likewise in bliss be addressing the true Apollo on intimate terms."

53. Marsilio Ficino, "Five Questions Concerning the Mind," translated by Josephine L. Burroughs, in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, pp. 209–10: "the Magi, followers of Zoroaster and Hostanes, assert something similar. They say that, because of a certain old disease of the human mind, everything that is very unhealthy and difficult befalls us; but, if anyone should restore the soul to its previous condition, then immediately all will be set in order [Pythagoreans and Platonists] say that the soul is manifestly afflicted in the sensible world by so many ills because, seduced by an excessive desire for sensible goods, it has imprudently lost the goods of the intelligible world."

Pico, *Oration*, p. 235: "But after we have, through the agency of moral philosophy, both voided the lax desires of our too abundant pleasures and pared away like nail-cuttings the sharp corners of anger and the strings of wrath, only then may we begin to take part in the holy rites . . . and to be free for our contemplation . . ."

Kristeller, *Ficino*, p. 225: "The mind can therefore achieve the highest act of contemplation under certain conditions, but it is hindered from remaining in that state by the needs of the body and of external life."

54. Taylor, *Taylor*, p. 443: "I believe that the rational part of man, in which his essence consists, is of a self-motive nature, and that it subsists between intellect, which is immoveable both in essence and energy, and nature, which both moves and is moved."

55. Pico, *Oration*, p. 238: ". . . it has come to the point where none is now deemed wise, alas, save those who make the study of wisdom a mercenary profession . . . I speak all these accusations . . . against the philosophers, who both believe and openly declare that there should be no study of philosophy for the reason that no fee and no compensation have been fixed for philosophers, . . . that since their whole life is set either on profit or on ambition they do not embrace the very discovery of truth for its own sake."

56. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, edited by C. B. MacPherson, Penguin Books, 1972, p. 160: "For there is no such *Finis ultimus*, (utmost ayme,) nor *Summum Bonum*, (greatest Good), as is spoken of in the Books of the old Morall Philosophers. Nor can a man any more live, whose Desires are at any end, then he, whose Senses and Imagination are at a stand. Felicity is a continuall progresse of the desire, from one object to another; . . ."

A particularly lovely statement of this neoplatonic vision is found in *The Platonic Philosopher's Creed* by Coleridge's contemporary Thomas Taylor:

I believe that the human soul essentially contains all knowledge, and that whatever knowledge she acquires in the present life is nothing more than a recovery of what she once possessed; and which discipline evocates from its dormant retreats, . . .⁵⁷

In what I take to be the majority view of the commentary, the Hermetic contribution to the neoplatonic tradition is the startling claim that the activity of the divine can be changed by means of a formula taught to the not-so-gifted, in a word by a science. This seems to me a critical distinction between the orthodox neoplatonists and the Hermetic school.

There are two cases to consider: (1) Can prayer move the divine? (2) Can magic move the divine? In this context prayer is a weak form of magic, asking the divine to do such and such. Magic is prayer which does not have to say "please."

The first case is easy to answer for any thinker within the broad orthodox Platonic tradition. Prayer cannot have an effect upon the divine.⁵⁸ Belief that the will of God can be moved by prayer and supplication, is of course Plato's definition of the third type of atheism.

Prayer will not work, but what about magic? This is a complicated case to make, in part, because there is no doubt that Plotinus, the founder of neoplatonism, believed magic to be an empirical discipline.⁵⁹ The critical difference between Plotinus and the Hermetist, as I read the texts, is that for Plotinus one escapes magic by turning inward. Entrapment by magic, seems to me to be Plotinus' metaphor for life in the material world:

For everything that looks to another is under spell to that: what we look to, draws us magically. Only the self-intent go free of magic. Hence every action has magic as its source, and the entire life of the practical man is a bewitchment: we move to that only which has wrought a fascination upon us.⁶⁰

The life of the mind is immune to magic:

Contemplation alone stands untouched by magic; no man self-gathered falls to a spell; for he is one, and that unity is all he perceives, so that his reason is not beguiled but holds the due course, fashioning its own career and accomplishing its task.

In the other way of life, it is not the essential man that gives the impulse; it is not

57. Taylor, p. 444.

58. Albrecht Dihle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity*, Berkeley, 1982, pp. 2–3. A.-J. Festugière, *Epicurus and His Gods*, translated by C. W. Chilton, Cambridge, 1956, pp. 73–6.

59. Plotinus, *The Six Enneads*, translated by Stephen MacKenna and B. S. Page, Chicago, 1952, 4.40: "But magic spells; how can their efficacy be explained? By the reigning sympathy and by the fact in Nature that there is an agreement of like forces and an opposition of unlike, and by the diversity of those multitudinous powers which converge in the one living universe. There is much drawing and spell-binding dependent on no interfering machination; the true magic is internal to the All, its attractions and, not less, its repulsions. Here is the primal mage and sorcerer—discovered by men who thenceforth turn those same ensorcellations and magic arts upon one another."

60. *Ibid.*, 4.43. Cf. Cassirer, *Platonic Renaissance*, p. 50.

the reason; the unreasoning also acts as a principle, and this is the first condition of the misfortune. Caring for children, planning marriage—everything that works as bait, taking value by dint of desire—these all tug obviously⁶¹

Just as the Egyptian magicians are made to testify to God's power in *Exodus*, so too an Egyptian magician is made to testify to Plotinus' immunity to magic.⁶² When one can attain union with the Divine, what power can the material world bring to bear?⁶³

But there is a dissenting tradition which reads Hermetism as a purely contemplative doctrine, akin to Plotinus'. In particular, Hermetism (in this reading) claims no power to operate on "the physical world or upon other human beings for one's own advantage."⁶⁴ If this is so then the Hermetic philosopher does not claim an ability to influence activity. Thus, there can be no social engineering claims made from a Hermetic framework. In this interpretation of the Hermetic philosopher, "his object is not power but enlightenment."⁶⁵ I don't think this is a correct reading of the Hermetic texts where knowledge of the divine is power. Knowledge of the divine drives magic, it does not laugh the siege to scorn. What I find to be critical are the passages in *CH* which describe the creation of powerful idols by the divine power within us. Here is A.-J. Festugière's translation:

De même que le Seigneur et le Père ou, pour lui donner son nom le plus haut, Dieu, est le créateur des dieux du ciel, ainsi l'homme est-il l'auteur des dieux qui résident dans les temples et qui se satisfont du voisinage des humains: non seulement il reçoit la lumière (vie), mais il la donne à son tour, non seulement il progresse vers Dieu, mais encore il crée des dieux. Admires-tu, Asclépius, ou manques-tu de foi toi aussi, comme la plupart?

—Je suis confondu ô Trismégiste .

— . . . les images des dieux que façonne l'homme ont été formés des deux natures, de la divine qui est plus pure et infiniment plus divine, et de celle qui est en deçà de l'homme, je veux dire de la matière qui a servi à les fabriquer; en outre, leurs figures ne se bornent pas à la tête seule, mais ils ont un corps entier avec tous ses membres. Ainsi l'humanité, qui toujours se souvient de sa nature et de son origine, pousse-t-elle jusqu'en ceci l'imitation de la divinité, que, comme le Père et Seigneur a doué les dieux d'éternité pour qu'ils lui fussent semblables, ainsi l'homme façonne-t-il ses propres dieux à la ressemblance de son visage.

—Veux-tu dire les statues, ô Trismégiste?

61. *Ibid.*, 4.44.

62. Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus*, quoted in J. M. Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality*, Cambridge, 1967, pp. 16–17.

63. E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Berkeley, 1971, p. 286: "And as to the Plotinian *unio mystica*, it must surely be clear to any careful reader of passages like *Enn.* 1.6.9 or 6.7.34, that it is attained, not by any ritual of evocation or performance of prescribed acts, but by an inward discipline of the mind which involves no compulsive element and has nothing whatever to do with magic."

64. Shumaker, *Occult Sciences*, p. 206.

65. *Ibid.* Shumaker regards the "idol making" passage (*Asclépius* xiii, 37) as an outlier, accordingly gives it little weight in his interpretation.

—Oui, les statues, Asclépius. Vois comme toi-même tu manques de foi! Mais ce sont des statues pourvues d'une âme, conscientes, pleines de souffle vital, et qui accomplissent une infinité de merveilles; des statues qui connaissent l'avenir et le prédisent par les sorts, l'inspiration prophétique, les songes et bien d'autres méthodes, qui envoient aux hommes les maladies et qui les guérissent, qui donnent, selon nos mérites, la douleur et la joie.⁶⁶

Granting, then, the Hermetic world-view that men and women are in a world sprinkled with divinity, the technical problem remains—how to go about contacting the divine? There seems to have been basically two points of view, not necessarily mutually exclusive: one which emphasizes the possibility of contacting divinity within us purely through meditation, another which emphasizes external possibilities to contact the divine “out there.” Walker summarizes these neoplatonic research traditions as follows:

The tradition, as Ficino left it, comprised two kinds of magic, the natural, spiritual magic . . . and the demonic magic . . . The tradition, therefore was likely to grow in two divergent directions; which it did. The demonic magic, combined with mediaeval planetary magic, led to the overtly demonic, recklessly unorthodox magic of Agrippa and Paracelsus. The spiritual magic tended to dissolve into something else: music and poetry. . . .⁶⁷

Let me take it as demonstrated that Coleridge has sympathy for the Hermetic tradition.⁶⁸ We can draw a consequence out of this which can sharpen a distinction between the Hermetic tradition and neoplatonism more generally.⁶⁹ The

66. *Corpus Hermeticum* 2:325–6 (*Asclépius* viii, 23–4). The Nag Hammadi *Asclepius* reads this way, p. 302: “Just as God has willed that the inner man be created according to his image, in the very same way man on earth creates gods according to his likeness.” Shumaker has no trouble discarding a passage which suggests that working idols are created by tricking demons. The fatal problem, that I see, with his interpretation are the passages where we create gods by the power within ourselves. The Hermetic treatises after all describe our divine origin, e.g., *Corpus Hermeticum*, *Traité* I, 13.

67. D. P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic* [1958], Notre Dame, 1975, p. 75. Coleridge, *Marginalia*, p. 296, writes of “gross impieties in Paracelsus.”

68. Newman, *Apologia*, p. 100: “while he indulged a liberty of speculation, which no Christian can tolerate, and advocated conclusions which were often heathen rather than Christian, yet after all installed a higher philosophy into inquiring minds . . .”

69. One critical piece of evidence is Plotinus' opinion of the gnostic philosophy. Plotinus, *Enneads*, 2.9. This conflict is stressed by E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety*, Cambridge, U.K., 1968, pp. 12–13: “Marcus Aurelius, Plotinus and Palladas were men brought up in the Greek tradition, who thought and felt within the limits set by that tradition. They could recognise with Plato that this sublunary world ‘is of necessity haunted by evil,’ . . . But no Stoic or Aristotelian, and no orthodox Platonist, could condemn the cosmos as a whole . . . Where we find the visible cosmos set in opposition to God, the opposing principle may be described in any or all of three ways: . . . as Fate, whose agents are the planetary demons, the Keepers of the Seven Gates which cut off the world from God . . .” It is not clear whether this distinction could be made in the nineteenth century because there was a tradition, now discredited, that Plotinus himself engaged in theurgy, E. R. Dodds, *Irrational*, pp. 283–311. Dodds' interpretation is supported by Rist, *Plotinus*, p. 250. John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, Ithaca, 1977, pp. 384–96 describes the gnostic and Hermetic groups as part of the “Platonic Underground.”

non-Hermetic neoplatonist would claim that it is possible to encounter the divine within without accepting the possibility that this can have any consequence upon the empirical world. Mystical union does not allow us to turn our neighbor into a frog. For if it can, this means we can coerce the divine; we can operate on the divine in the same way we can operate the telephone in Paris. Any occultist will acknowledge a random component.

We can bring out the metaphysical difference if we can temporarily adopt Kantian terminology. Divinity is clearly a property of things-in-themselves, not of appearance. Hermetism makes causal statements about things-in-themselves; that is, under such and such conditions so and so will probably occur. A non-Hermetic neoplatonist needs to make no causal statements about the divine. It exists but we have no science to control it.⁷⁰

We know what to look for now. If Coleridge participates in the Hermetic tradition, he is allowed to make causal statements about the divine, in Kantian terms, about things-in-themselves.

We know that Coleridge regards intellectual inquiry for its own sake as an ideal⁷¹—study of its own sake as an aspect of *uncaused* activity. Here Coleridge contrasts work for reward with work for its own sake:

But this is the worst sort of Slavery: for herein true Freedom consists, that the outward is determined by the inward, as the alone self-determinating Principle—what then must be the result, when in the vast majority of that class in which we are most entitled to expect the *conditions* of Freedom, and Freedom itself as manifested in the *Liberal Arts and Sciences*, all Freedom is stifled & overlaid from the very commencement of their career, as men—namely, in our Universities, Schools of Medicine, Law &c?⁷²

Here we have a suggestion of what Coleridge found attractive in the proposal of an endowed cultural class: it would free the learned from the thrall of the material world itself.

70. Reference should be made, again, to Dodds' separation of Plotinus from the Hermetists, cited in note 63.

71. The importance of study for its own sake is apparent in the Notebook passages cited in Kathleen Coburn, *The Self Conscious Imagination*, London, 1974, p. 49: "The noblest feature in the character of Germany I find in the so general tendency of the young men in all but the lowest ranks (N.b. and highest) to select for themselves some favorite study or object of pursuit, besides . . . their Bread-earner—and where circumstances allowed, to choose the latter with reference to the former. But this, I am told, is becoming less and less the fashion even in Germany: . . ." This ideal is contrasted with the actual experience in England where the only study undertaken is for the sake of material reward: "but in England it is the misery of our all-sucking all-whirling Money-Eddy—that in our universities those, who are not idle or mistaking Verses for Poetry . . . appreciate all knowledge as means to some finite and temporal end, the main value of which consists in its being itself a means to another finite & common end—Knowledge—Profession—Income—and consequently selecting their particular Profession in exclusive reference to the probability of their acquiring a good income & perhaps ultimately a Fortune thereby, then set about getting in the easiest way exactly that sort and that quantity of knowledge, which will pass them in their examinations for the Profession, and which is requisite to . . . making money . . . by his Profession."

72. *Ibid.*

It is important for us to recognize that Coleridge knew of both Hermetic traditions that Walker has called our attention to, and *explicitly* renounced any attempt to engage in external daemonic magic. Many references to the mss. of the Huntington Library, with its wonderfully revealing, redundant title, *On the Divine Ideas*,⁷³ have appeared in the last fifty years, but the significance of the moral constraints which Coleridge puts on himself has gone unremarked. If Coleridge here distances himself from Thomas Taylor, who wished to sacrifice a bull to Zeus, as he distances himself from the daemonic tradition of neoplatonism in *Philosophical Lectures*,⁷⁴ it is not completely out of conviction that their approach will not work.

I cannot commence this subject more fitly than by disclaiming all wish and attempt of gratifying a speculative refinement in myself, or an idle presumptuous curiosity in others. I leave the heavenly hierarchies with all their distinctions “Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Virtues, Powers,” Names, Fervours, Energies with the long et cetera of the Cabalists and degenerated Platonists, to the admirers of the false Dionyus, and the obscure students of Cornelius Agrippa. All pretence, all approach to particularize on such a subject involves its own contradiction. Or had the evident contradiction implied in the attempt failed in preventing it [. . .] the fearful abuses, the degrading idolatrous superstitions, which have resulted from its applications form too palpable a warning not to have deferred me even from motives of common morality.⁷⁵

In this same manuscript Coleridge gives a very clear definition of the Idea; a definition which locates him firmly in the neoplatonic tradition:

An Idea is not simply knowledge or perception as distinguished from the thing perceived: it is a realizing knowledge, a knowledge causative of its own reality, in it in Life . . .⁷⁶

73. Mss. number HM 8195.

74. The important passages are those where Coleridge acknowledges that the “Plotian school” could tap the same occult power as Christians, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Philosophical Lectures*, edited by Kathleen Coburn, London, 1949, p. 243: “the great object of Eclectic philosophy was to persuade men Heaven was already practicable on earth; not to raise men up to God, but by pernicious practices and contrivances of rites to bring God down to man . . .” *Ibid.*, p. 244: “Yet let me not say this without acknowledging that truths are to be found in those writers, and in my mind, awful truths.”

Coleridge summarizes the differences and similarities between Eclectics and Christians as a controversy not over whether Christ was God (freely admitted) but whether Pythagoras and Plotinus were too, *ibid.*, p. 295. Coleridge notes the *engineering* difference, *ibid.*: “This constituted them enemies of Christianity, if they were so; which should teach us to look not only at what a man disbelieves, but at what he believes beyond or besides it, for on that the nature of his belief and disbelief must depend. This was, however, very fascinating, especially as the Eclectic philosophy was connected with the boldest purposes for the extension of the human powers.”

Coleridge’s emphasis on Pythagoras is consistent with Dodds’ discussion of the importance of Pythagorean themes in the wider literature, Dodds, *Pagan and Christian*, pp. 23–4. Perhaps, neopythagorean is a fairer characterization of the tradition.

75. *Divine Ideas*, pp. 3–5.

76. *Ibid.*, 31. Coleridge’s marginal comments on Marcus Aurelius’s “the God within us” point out its resemblance to St. John’s Gospel, *Marginalia*, p. 178: “the Spirit, (or principle of the Will,

Can we read this definition of an Idea—self-actualizing knowledge, knowledge which creates reality—back into the *Constitution of Church and State According to the Idea of Each*?

If so, then we may have some insight why an endowed learned class was so important. The Ideas are accessible through meditation, what Walker and Yates have taught us to call “spiritual astrology.” Since the important truths are in us, study of our inner self is a vastly more appealing route to knowledge for Coleridge than study of the external world.⁷⁷

The efficient creation and dissemination of new knowledge about the physical universe, a claim which Smith uses to justify a competitive educational system, is for Coleridge a far from unmixed blessing. The material reward for study of the new ideas may lead people to forsake the old. Thus, one part of the Smith-Johnson challenge is addressed. The new ideas which are produced under material incentives are not as important as that which has been forgotten as a consequence.⁷⁸

We gain insight into what attracted Coleridge to an endowed culture if we attend to the facts which Smith presents both about the origin of the new ideas and the fate of the old in the competitive market for ideas:

The improvements which, in modern times, have been made in several different branches of philosophy, have not, the greater part of them, been made in universities; . . . several of those learned societies have chosen to remain, for a long time, the sanctuaries in which exploded systems and obsolete prejudices found shelter and protection, after they had been hunted out of every other corner of the world.⁷⁹

the Conscience, and the Reason) he is fond of considering [as God] & calls it [the] *God* within us—/Something very like this is noticeable in many Texts of St John’s Gospel.” The neoplatonic philosophers obviously would have little to quarrel with *John* 1:1—“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Dodds, *Pagan and Christian*, p. 104: “His Logos-doctrine appealed to the philosophers: Amelius, the pupil of Plotinus, cited it with approval . . . and a Platonist quoted by Augustine thought that the opening words of St John’s Gospel ‘should be written in letters of gold and set up to be read in the highest places of all churches’ ”

77. The interest in the interrelations of truth within us and without us brought out in Coburn’s summary of her findings from the notebooks, Coburn, *Imagination*, p. 28: “Thus we see that Coleridge’s poetry and prose, like his notebook memoranda, took root in his minute inspection not only of the inner self, but of external relations; and the two were never severed from each other but seen always in some dynamic tension of opposition or reconciliation.” She quotes one especially illuminating passage of the word becoming real, *ibid.*, p. 64: “. . . I have always an obscure feeling as if that new phenomenon were the dim Awakening of a forgotten or hidden Truth of my inner Nature/It is still interesting as a Word, a Symbol! It is Λόγος, the Creator! [and the Evolver!]”

78. See the passage cited above in note 71. The neoplatonic concern over the cost of the attention given to experimental matters is not unique to Coleridge, e.g., Taylor, *Platonist*, pp. 138–9: “Where, says Mr. Harris, is the microscope which can discern what is smallest in nature? Where the telescope, which can see at what point in the universe wisdom first began? Since then there is no portion of matter which may not be the subject of experiments without end, let us betake ourselves to the regions of mind, where all things are bounded in intellectual measure; where every thing is permanent and beautiful, eternal and divine.”

79. *Wealth of Nations*, p. 727.

Smith's previous discussion of school learning gives a good picture of what sorts of "systems" might have been hunted out:

. . . if subtleties and sophisms composed the greater part of the Metaphysicks or Pneumatics of the schools, they composed the whole of this cobweb science of Ontology, . . .⁸⁰

The description which Coleridge gives in *Aids to Reflection* of some of the new methodological developments in education stands in sharp contrast to Smith's high opinion.

He only thinks who reflects. [Note] The indisposition, nay, the angry aversion to think, even in persons who are most willing to attend, and on the subjects to which they are giving studious attention, as political economy, biblical theology, classical antiquities, and the like,—is the phenomenon that forces itself on my notice afresh, every time I enter into the society of persons in the higher ranks.⁸¹

Coleridge asserts that the new ideas are substituting study of what is "out there" for what is "in here":

Distinction between thought and attention. —By thought is here meant the voluntary reproduction in our minds of those states of consciousness, or . . . of those inward experiences, to which, as to his best and most authentic documents, the teacher of moral or religious truth refers us. In attention we keep the mind passive: in thought, we rouse it into activity . . . but self-knowledge, or an insight into the laws and constitution of the human mind and the grounds of religion and true morality, in addition to the effort of attention requires the energy of thought.⁸²

What remains to be demonstrated is that Coleridge thought an endowed cultural class would offer a better chance for study for its own sake, (remember: this is uncaused activity) of ideas of real importance. Here it helps a great deal to remember that some critical passages in *Church and State* are explicitly reproduced from *Biographia Literaria*.

The preliminary sketch of the idea of a clerisy, as noted in *Church and State*, is found in *Biographia Literaria*. This occurs in a context which emphasizes Coleridge's contention that literature should be produced without motivation from either money or "immediate" fame.⁸³ This contention is a vital link in the neoplatonic chain. Matter must not corrupt spiritual things:

I would address an affectionate exhortation to the youthful literati, grounded on my own experience . . . NEVER PURSUE LITERATURE AS A TRADE . . . Three hours

80. *Ibid.*, p. 726.

81. *Aids to Reflection*, p. 69.

82. *Ibid.*, pp. 69–70.

83. This qualification made to reputation could, in the eyes of an untender critic, provide evidence of a rather careless handling of the tools of mechanical school. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 162: "Desire of Praise, disposeth to laudable actions, . . . Desire of Fame after death does the same . . . yet is not such Fame vain; because men have a present delight therein, from the foresight of it, . . ."

of leisure, unannoyed by any alien anxiety, and looked forward to with delight as a change and recreation, will suffice to realize in literature a larger product of what is truly *genial*, than weeks of compulsion. Money, and immediate reputation form only an arbitrary and accidental end of literary labor. The *hope* of increasing them by any given exertion will often prove a stimulant to industry; but the *necessity* of acquiring them will in all works of genius convert the stimulant into a *narcotic*. Motives by excess reverse their very nature, and instead of exciting, stun and stupify the mind . . . he should devote his *talents* to . . . some known trade or profession, and his genius to objects of his tranquil and unbiassed choice.⁸⁴

True knowledge, in Coleridge's idealism, cannot result from activity generated by material incentives. Johnson and Smith, across their political-religious divide, both hold the "pernicious opinion" that the production of literature requires substantial motivation: desire of money or fame.⁸⁵

Of course, Coleridge would have been negligent if he did not suggest a profession which allowed a regular income, sufficient leisure time, and minimal motive for the production of literature. All these conditions could be satisfied by working for the established church:

. . . the church presents to every man of learning and genius a profession, in which he may cherish a rational hope of being able to unite the widest schemes of literary utility with the strictest performance of professional duties⁸⁶

Coleridge also notes that the emoluments of the profession were quite handsome, and went on to suggest that the presence of an established clergyman provides social benefits to the neighborhood:

. . . a neighbour and a family-man, whose education and rank admit him to the mansion of the rich land-holder, while his duties make him the frequent visitor of the farm-house and the cottage⁸⁷

In *Church and State* Coleridge uses Hermetic machinery to argue that motiveless study ("thinking" as defined in *Aid to Reflection*) will be co-extensive with religious study. Two critical issues are clear: we contact the divine within us and the Ideas in which divinity is embodied are self-actualizing. In the next passage

84. *Biographia Literaria*, 1:152–3. Is this hypothesis—"three hours of leisure is as productive as weeks of compulsion"—the basis for Coleridge's systematic underreporting of his compositional difficulties, the facts of which are brought out by Fruman, *Coleridge*, pp. 3–12? Perhaps, Coleridge simply confused what ought to be with what is.

85. Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, p. 717, argues that all difficult choice requires strong motivation. Boswell, *Life*, p. 182: "In 1756 Johnson found the great fame of his Dictionary had not set him above the necessity of 'making provision for the day that was passing over him.' No royal or noble patron extended a munificent hand to give independence to the man who had conferred stability on the language of his country. We may feel indignant that there should have been such unworthy neglect; but we must, at the same time, congratulate ourselves when we consider, that to this very neglect, operating to rouse the natural indolence of his constitution, we owe many valuable productions, which otherwise, perhaps, might never have appeared."

86. *Biographia Literaria*, 1:154.

87. *Biographia Literaria*, 1:155.

the former is clear, the latter is hinted, although this too will be clear in later passages.

That in all ages, individuals who have directed their meditations and their studies to the nobler characters of our nature, to the cultivation of those powers and instincts which constitute the man, at least separate him from the animal, and distinguish the nobler from the animal part of his own being, will be led by the *supernatural* in themselves to the contemplation of a power which is likewise super-human; that science, and especially moral science, will lead to religion, and remain blended with it . . .⁸⁸

The group who comprise the clerisy is defined:

THE CLERISY of the nation, or national church, in its primary acceptation and original intention comprehended the learned of all denominations;—the sages and professors of the law medicine and physiology; of music; of military and civil architecture; of the physical sciences; with the mathematical as the common *organ* of the preceding; . . .

and linked to the neoplatonic research tradition, “the doctrine and discipline of ideas.” When we look inside ourselves, what do we see? We see the divine. “Theology” is, of course, simply a transliteration of the Greek for “study of god”:

[Theology] . . . was, indeed, placed at the head of all; and of good right did it claim the precedence. But why? Because under the name of Theology, or Divinity, were contained [the substantive issues] . . . and lastly, the ground-knowledge, the *prima scientia* as it was named,—PHILOSOPHY, or the doctrine and discipline of *ideas*.⁸⁹

Thus, in *Church and State*, the links between theology and the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake are connected far more tightly than they are in *Biographia Literaria*. Finally, the self-actualizing property of the divine is appealed to:

The Theologians took the lead, because the SCIENCE of Theology was the root and the trunk of the knowledges that civilized man, because it gave unity and the circulating sap of life to all other sciences . . .⁹⁰

When we recall the material conditions under which the Ideas can be contemplated, Coleridge’s elitism does not seem unnatural; the many are in no position to free themselves from material interests. The philosophical truths unearthed through contemplation are self-enforcing. This is just another way of saying they are Ideas, not simple opinions:

88. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *On the Constitution of the Church and State*, edited by John Colmer, vol. 10 of *The Collected Works*, Princeton, 1976, p. 44. Colmer notes “a close connection between C’s poetic explorations of the supernatural and his psychological and religious speculations.”

89. *Ibid.*, pp. 46–7.

90. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

NATIONAL EDUCATION, the *nisus formativus* of the body politic, the shaping and informing spirit, which *educing*, *i.e.*, eliciting, the latent *man* in all the natives of the soil, *trains them up* to citizens of the country, free subjects of the realm . . . And of especial importance is it to the objects here contemplated, that only by the vital warmth diffused by these truths throughout the MANY, and by the guiding light from the philosophy, which is the basis of *divinity*, possessed by the FEW, can either the community or its rulers fully comprehend, or rightly appreciate, the permanent *distinction*, and the occasional *contrast*, between cultivation and civilization; . . .⁹¹

We see how the Ideas are recalled and how they are self-actualizing. The freedom from material incentives is obvious when we examine the details of the proposed endowment. Coleridge's three-tiered proposal to be financed by the national endowment⁹² of the national church—(i) national universities, (ii) a “*parson* in every parish,” and (iii) a “*school-master* in every parish”—makes explicit provision for incentives in the lowest tier: the school-master “who in due time, and under condition of a faithful performance of his arduous duties, should succeed to the pastorate.”⁹³

The formal argument now stands complete. It is an elegant, spare construction. Each of the Hermetic premises has been employed and the validity of the enterprise is clear. The obvious question is whether this system would actually do what it is supposed to do. Coleridge offers as evidence the history of previous experiments in Hermetic social engineering. The critical text here is Coleridge's chapter 7 of *Church and State*, “*Regrets and Apprehensions*.” It contains a review of the “*moral history of the last 130 years*,” a history of gloom caused by the mechanic philosophy⁹⁴ “*Ouran Outang* theology of the origin of the human race,”⁹⁵ “*hardness of heart, in political economy*,”⁹⁶ the “*Guesswork of general consequences substituted for moral and political philosophy*,”⁹⁷ and the “*gin consumed by paupers*.”⁹⁸ By contrast Coleridge recalls the bright episodes before 1660. The episodes worth remembering occurred when Hermetism was at the center of culture. Here is what he says about Ficino's social engineering:

. . . the remarkable contrast between the acceptance of the word, *Idea*, *before* the Restoration, and the *present* use of the same word. *Before* 1660, the magnificent SON OF COSMO was wont to discourse with FICINO, POLITIAN and the princely MIRANDULA on the IDEAS of Will, God, Freedom. SIR PHILIP SIDNEY, the star of serenest brilliance in the glorious constellation of Elizabeth's court, communed with SPENSER, on the IDEA of the beautiful: and the younger ALGERNON—Soldier,

91. *Ibid.*, pp. 48–9.

92. *Ibid.*, pp. 52–3.

93. *Ibid.*

94. *Ibid.*, p. 64

95. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

96. *Ibid.*, p. 68

97. *Ibid.*

98. *Ibid.*

Patriot, and Statesman—with HARRINGTON, MILTON, and NEVIL on the IDEA of the STATE: .⁹⁹

It seems clear that Coleridge's clerisy is the proposed rebirth, in Christian guise and on a national scale, of Ficino's Academy.¹⁰⁰ The vision of endowed intellectuals freed from motive penetrating the divine as a technique to provide moral uplift to the masses, helps put what Coleridge found attractive in a clerisy into much sharper focus. Thanks to modern historical work in many fields, we now know a great deal about previous neoplatonic social engineering, government sponsored academies and masques recalling to life the ancient mysteries in an attempt to change the morals of people. On the basis of what economists call revealed preference grounds, we must take this activity seriously. For instance, British kings spent vast amounts of their money, and caused others to spend vast amounts, on masques to uplift court morals.¹⁰¹ Moreover, Yates has shown us the depth of the Elizabethan court's involvement in Hermetic social engineering.¹⁰² It is consequently no surprise that Coleridge would see this as a bright spot in history. Joe Dee, the grand *magus*, is, of course Sidney's teacher.¹⁰³

We can summarize our argument supported by independent passages from the *Philosophical Lectures*. In the neoplatonic world-view, one must be purified before one can contemplate the divine, the source of Ideas, self-actualizing knowledge of real worth. Coleridge's debt to engineering neoplatonism, the Hermetic tradition, is clear in his use of the most famous of all Hermetic phrases:

At once the most complex and the most individual of creatures, man, taken in the idea of his humanity, has been not inaptly called the microcosm of the world . . .¹⁰⁴

To break the thrall of this material world, Coleridge proposes to free an elite from material motive, thus bringing about the requisite purification. Here we can contact the divine within us:

. . . which exists in all men *potentially* and in its germ, though it requires both effort from within and auspicious circumstances from without to evolve it into effect—by

99. *Ibid.*, pp. 64–5.

100. For details on Ficino's Academy and its influence, Frances A. Yates, *The French Academies of the Sixteenth Century* [1947], Nendeln, 1968, pp. 1–13, 36–76.

101. Stephen Orgel and Roy Strong, *Inigo Jones*, London, 1973, 1:49–75, have an extensive discussion of the "Platonic Politics" involved in the Stuart court masques. Here is some of their discussion of Inigo Jones' contributions, 1:55: "[he] realising the royal ideas by creating what were essentially models of the universe, was a living demonstration of the power of the mind to comprehend and control the workings of nature, both human and elemental, through intellect and art. And thus in *Love's Triumph*, once the anatomy of neo-Platonic politics has been completed, the universe is at the King's command." Orgel and Strong provide a history of the expenses of this activity: it is considerable.

102. Frances A. Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*, London, 1979.

103. *Ibid.*, pp. 79–93.

104. *Philosophical Lectures*, p. 312.

this third and higher power he places himself on the same point as Nature, and contemplates all objects, himself included, in their permanent and universal being and relations.¹⁰⁵

Coleridge cites Bacon's views on purification:

He tells us that the mind of man is an edifice not built with human hands, which needs only to be purged of its idols and idolatrous services to become the temple of the true and living light.¹⁰⁶

These are, of course, "idols of the den, of the theatre, and of the market place."¹⁰⁷

Coleridge draws the reader's attention to the past glories of neoplatonic policy, to Ficino's academy, where the divine within us was tapped, even if in a pagan context. These, we are led to believe, were magical times:

. . . yet there was the power felt, and and [sic] with the power the grace and the life and the influence of Platonic philosophy. This was under the auspices of Lorenzo the Magnificent . . . There the mighty spirit still coming from within had succeeded in taming the untractable matter and in reducing external form to a symbol of the inward and imaginable beauty.¹⁰⁸

Ficino's academy seems to be the paradigm of Coleridge's social engineering. Here was an institution which quite literally worked magic. When Coleridge discusses the good times, he is talking about Ficino. Yates and Walker have taught us to understand what this means.

Let me not pretend that the argument above accomplishes more than it does. I have attempted to demonstrate that Coleridge's argument against Smith's and Johnson's anti-endowment position is coherent inside the Hermetic tradition. What is special about the Hermetic tradition is the claim that under well-specified conditions we can control the divine within us and by so doing, control the material world. What I claim to have shown is *if* Coleridge were a social engineer in the Hermetic tradition, *then* his argument follows. Coleridge proposes we create an institutional setting inside which we can let the divine speak through us.

The next step in my argument is to demonstrate the converse to my claim: if Coleridge were not a social engineer in the Hermetic tradition, then his argument does not follow. This is a logical, not a textual, argument and we consider a special case first.

Suppose Coleridge were developing his argument from a Kantian point of view. Would the argument be valid? Would freeing individuals from incentives

105. *Ibid.*

106. *Ibid.*, p. 333.

107. *Ibid.*, p. 332.

108. *Ibid.*, p. 193.

allow them to obtain self-actualizing knowledge, to break free of determinism? For Kant, determinism is necessary to think about appearances; free will is only sensible for things-in-themselves.¹⁰⁹ Obviously, in a Kantian framework we cannot conduct social policy to determine things-in-themselves. The Kantian split between the determined world and the free world will not support Coleridge's claims *because Coleridge needs to make causal statements about self-actualizing events*. This can be done in a Hermetic system—the paradigm is that if we free individuals from material concern they will obtain *gnosis* and this event will take an individual outside fate, outside determinism, outside the chain of cause and effect. I think it clear that Coleridge knew that Kant's construction would not suffice for his result. Things-in-themselves cannot be coerced.¹¹⁰

The general case is now easy. For Coleridge's argument to hold, we must be able to coerce the divine within us. In particular, we want to create an institutional setting in which all sorts of good things would be created outside material causality. We are the operators on the divine. This is a defining characteristic of theurgy, and the link between theurgy and the *Chaldean Oracles* is well-known.¹¹¹ Thus, we find ourselves back in the Hermetic tradition. This establishes the converse as required.

If the above reconstruction of Coleridge's political economy is correct, we can break the silence in the commentary on *Church and State* about how Coleridge comes to grips with Smith and Johnson. Further, we find reason to believe that Coleridge's claimed debt to the neoplatonics is quite real and not a sham throwing sand over his debt to Kant. Indeed, if we are willing to grant the Hermetic view, Coleridge's construction is absolutely first-rate. At bottom, however, we must ask whether the game is worth the effect, whether there is reason to believe that such social engineering would work. The proper question was asked long ago by Coleridge's great master:

109. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by Norman Kemp Smith, New York, 1937, A536–B565: “if appearances are things in themselves, freedom cannot be upheld. Nature will then be the complete and sufficient determining cause of every event.”

110. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, I:100: “In spite therefore of his own declarations, I could never believe, that it was possible for him to have meant no more by his *Noumenon*, or THING IN ITSELF than his mere words express; or that in his own conception he confined the whole *plastic* power to the forms of the intellect, leaving for the external cause, for the *materiale* of our sensations, a matter without form, which is doubtless inconceivable.”

In his discussion of Swedenborg, Kant made an unsurprising claim, Immanuel Kant, *Dreams of a Spirit Seer*, translated by John Manolesco, New York, 1969, p. 70: “the spiritual nature can never be known but only assumed and can never be thought of in a positive sense because no data are available to us in our total experience.” His attitude toward the occult is expressed in terms that might surprise those who know only the great critiques, *ibid.*, p. 66: “Perhaps the clever *Hudibras* alone could have solved the riddle for us; according to his opinion, when a hypochondriac wind rattles through the intestines, it all depends on the direction it takes: if down, it becomes a f____, if up, it turns into an apparition or a holy inspiration.”

111. Dodds, *Irrational*, pp. 283–4.

GLENDOWER I can call spirits from the vasty deep.

HOTSPUR Why, so can I, or so can any man; But will they come, when you do call
for them?¹¹²

And, it really makes no difference whether the spirits are in here or out there,
will they come when we call?

112. *1 Henry IV*, III.i. Coburn glosses a passage in *Philosophical Lectures*, p. 316, "call forth spirits FROM THE VASTY DEEP," as recalling only Milton's *Paradise Lost* I.177, "vast and boundless deep." Coleridge's reference occurs in an illuminating context where he discusses magical operations.