***Coleridge’s Metaphysics of Beauty***

This article seeks to foreground the significance of Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s metaphysics of beauty. Coleridge frequently defines beauty as “multeïty in unity,” thereby suggesting the primacy of an aesthetic of harmony. I shall argue, however, that he simultaneously prioritizes an aesthetic of light, perhaps even to the point of displacing the aesthetic of harmony. This shift in emphasis has the potential to clarify important but otherwise aporetic dimensions of his thought.

A singular feature of Coleridgean metaphysics is its essential porosity. This is evident in at least two senses: first, it is not posited over and against phenomenology, but exists as an opening onto, and even an impetus toward, a deeper attentiveness to the world of experience. Secondly, although it draws on many traditions of philosophy and theology, it does not force these often-divergent strands into an artificial synthesis. While some tensions are resolved very suggestively, others are equally suggestive because of the irresolution that is preserved within them. Evidently, Coleridge found meaning in both facets, and both are important to a rigorous understanding of his aesthetics.

These features of Coleridge’s thought have not been sufficiently addressed in the critical literature, which significantly underappreciates his aesthetics. In addressing such deficiencies, I hope to justify a more constructive evaluation of his thought.

J. Robert Barth has argued that the distinctive feature of Coleridge’s stance on beauty is that it attaches an equal importance to the “objective fact” of the beautiful, and the subjective “activity of a perceiving mind.”[[1]](#endnote-1) Barth finds this dual emphasis to represent Coleridge’s proclivities for both Plato and Kant.[[2]](#endnote-2) He does not however address the complexities which emerge from such a dual fidelity. Barth proceeds to link the perception of beauty, and idealized forms of it, to Coleridge’s primary and secondary imagination respectively. Although his enquiry focuses on Coleridge’s “multeïty in unity” formula, he briefly notes that his aesthetics has a Thomistic quality. Thus, like Aquinas, Coleridge is found to invoke wholeness and radiance, in addition to harmony, in his account of beauty.[[3]](#endnote-3) This observation is however not pursued any further. In what follows I shall revisit the medieval influence on Coleridge’s aesthetics in some detail. Barth’s article is perceptive, as far as it goes, but it is also too tentative. He maintains that it would be “foolhardy to attempt to push a definition of beauty much beyond what Coleridge has achieved”.[[4]](#endnote-4) I shall argue, by contrast, that a proper understanding of Coleridge requires that we see this definition, not as the terminus of enquiry, but rather as a starting point.

While Barth’s reading is fundamentally affirmative, Paul Guyer adopts a markedly suspicious stance. In his monumental *History of Modern Aesthetics*, Guyer finds little that is of interest in Coleridge, presenting his aesthetics as something of a diluted and inferior transcript of his German Idealist sources.[[5]](#endnote-5) Thus, he presents Coleridge rather unfortunately as a “poet and journalist”.[[6]](#endnote-6) James Kirwan is similarly suspicious of Coleridge’s achievements. Kirwan argues that Coleridge’s analysis of beauty is essentially an attempt to “rescue the possibility of the enthusiasm of religion from the perceived coldness of the Enlightenment”.[[7]](#endnote-7) His reading is based on the fundamental tension between Kant and Neoplatonism in Coleridge’s aesthetics. He notes that while Coleridge draws on the former, he “is also anxious to return” to the “neo-Platonic idea of beauty as emanating directly from the divine.”[[8]](#endnote-8) For Kirwan, this transition is effected in an essentially rhetorical, and even sophistic manner, for he finds that Coleridge “does not actually argue for this thesis – though the appearance of argument is evidently important to him”.[[9]](#endnote-9) This purported dissemblance is found particularly in Coleridge’s invocation of Plotinus as the source of his definition of beauty. “Why refer to Plotinus,” asks Kirwan, “when, in fact, Plotinus […] explicitly rejects the notion of an order or harmony between parts of the object as the grounds of the beauty of that object?”[[10]](#endnote-10) For Kirwan, the answer to this question is that “the use of Plotinus allows Coleridge to quote the Church Fathers without quoting the Church Fathers.”[[11]](#endnote-11) That is to say, he “can make the thesis seem less like a simple reassertion of religious faith and more like an appeal to Philosophy itself.”[[12]](#endnote-12) This articulation also hints at a tension between Catholicism and Protestantism in Coleridge’s thought, a hint which is underscored by Kirwan’s mention of the “Catholic” quality of beauty.[[13]](#endnote-13)

The key tensions which emerge in Kirwan’s reading of Coleridge – that between Kant and Plotinus, and that between Catholicism and Protestantism – will be addressed in detail below. While it is true that Coleridge is not as forthright and systematic as Kant, it does not necessarily follow, as Kirwan contends, that he “does not actually argue” or that Plotinus is a philosophical mask for theological irrationality. If one recognizes that his more allusive style is itself a manifestation of his Platonism, as James Vigus has demonstrated, then one is encouraged to adopt a different hermeneutical stance. Vigus argues that, like Plato, Coleridge’s philosophical texts involve an essentially poetic dimension, and similarly reflect an esoteric-exoteric distinction. That is, the published, or ‘exoteric,’ texts frequently only hint at doctrines that are more fully articulated in his private, or ‘esoteric,’ writings.[[14]](#endnote-14) Critical responses to Coleridge’s aesthetics have rightly focused on his ‘Principles of Genial Criticism,’ which is his most sustained - and exoteric - enquiry into beauty.[[15]](#endnote-15) While I shall similarly anchor my analysis in this text, I shall also follow up resonances in Coleridge’s broader oeuvre. This hermeneutical stance is informed by Vigus’ insights into Coleridge’s style of writing.

***Multeïty in Unity***

In his ‘Principles,’ as noted above, Coleridge frequently defines beauty as “multeïty in unity”.[[16]](#endnote-16) This section will consider some of the subtleties, and associated critical misunderstandings, which attend this deceptively simple definition. While it is comprised of the most abstract of metaphysical terms, he nevertheless seeks to justify it by appeal to experience, asking that the reader would “steadily look into his own mind to know whether the principles stated are ideally true”.[[17]](#endnote-17) This already suggests both the clash and confluence of metaphysics and phenomenology. I hope to show that Coleridge’s metaphysics, in spite of its aprioristic appearance, ultimately sends the philosopher beyond itself and toward a greater attention to nature and personal experience. This occurs both through the aporias, and the solutions, which flow from his philosophy. Coleridge’s aesthetics has a progressive quality, wherein the early stages are increasingly supplemented and surpassed. Indeed, he concludes the ‘Principles’ by deeming the entire discourse mere “metaphysical Preliminaries”.[[18]](#endnote-18)

At the level of abstraction at which this definition of beauty is given, there are relatively few philosophical options. Which comes first, one or many? If one, as for Coleridge, does the two result from its division, or is it generated with the one remaining undivided? In arguing that the philosopher should “preserve himself constantly aware, that distinction is not division”,[[19]](#endnote-19) Coleridge shows that this concern is at the heart of his thought. Existing scholarship attests to the presence of multiple paradigms, in Coleridge’s metaphysics, which bear on this question. These include Trinitarian theology,[[20]](#endnote-20) Platonist participation,[[21]](#endnote-21) Pantheism,[[22]](#endnote-22) dialectic in the modes of Schelling,[[23]](#endnote-23) and of Hegel,[[24]](#endnote-24) and even a “negative dialectic.”[[25]](#endnote-25) Amongst these perspectives there is a high degree of tension between the dialectical metaphysics of German idealism and the participatory metaphysics of Platonism. The former characteristically entails the ‘division’ of the one - Hegel’s “self-diremption” - while the latter insists on it remaining undivided.[[26]](#endnote-26)

This particular tension asserts itself in Thomas Simons’ interpretation of Coleridge’s aesthetics. For Simons, the latter involves “a complex dialectical movement which extends the Hegelian triad to five moments”.[[27]](#endnote-27) Although he insightfully expounds this dialectical moment, he problematically recasts the participatory moment into this alternative grammar. This is evident in his rephrasing of Coleridge’s use of a passage from Plotinus. In situ, the passage translates as “the undivided appearing in many [parts]”.[[28]](#endnote-28) But Simons glosses it as “‘the undivided’ descending into the manifold, and therein *divided into* ‘many [parts].’”[[29]](#endnote-29) Further, while one must agree with Simons that Coleridge’s five-moment pentad has a dialectical character, it should still be maintained that it is yet more fundamentally Platonist.[[30]](#endnote-30) For it preserves both the unity and the transcendence of the one, as Coleridge argues while expositing it: “In order to render the constructions of pure Mathematics applicable to Philosophy, the Pythagoreans [...] represented the Line as *generated*, or, as it were, radiated, by a Point not contained in the Line but independent, and (in the language of that School) transcendent to all production, which it caused but did not partake in [...] in this way the Pythagoreans guarded against the error of Pantheism, into which the later schools fell.”[[31]](#endnote-31) The word “radiated” is metaphysically loaded, here indicating the Neoplatonic doctrine of emanation.

The interpretation which I propose, contrary to Simons’ reading, leaves the tension between Platonism and the dialectic of German Idealism somewhat unresolved. We might read this irresolution as simply Coleridge’s failure to achieve an ultimate system. There are, however, other and better hermeneutical possibilities. The preservation of tensions beside the partial resolutions is consistent with Coleridge’s metaphysical-cum-literary-critical concept of the “war embrace”.[[32]](#endnote-32) As noted above, he appears to find significance both in harmony and in conflict, as this category further suggests. The aporetic quality of the clash acts, in this case, not so much as an invocation of ‘mystery’ but as an invitation to move beyond metaphysics itself. Thus, rather than accentuate his systematicity, or his failure to achieve a system (however fruitful that may have been),[[33]](#endnote-33) we might consider a third option suggested by Friedrich Schlegel. For the German philosopher, it is “equally fatal for the mind to have a system and to have none. It will simply have to decide to combine the two.”[[34]](#endnote-34) Here, Schlegel seems to provide the maxim which is achieved in Coleridge’s oeuvre. This need not be taken as a “positive rhetorical strategy”.[[35]](#endnote-35) Rather, one could consider the oeuvre itself as reflecting both conscious and unconscious responses to the influence of beauty, in line with Coleridge’s own understanding of the agency of ‘Ideas’.[[36]](#endnote-36)

Most significantly, and reflecting the paradox of Schlegel’s maxim, Coleridge posits an oscillation which suggests the mediation of these paradigms, and ultimately his own metaphysical open-endedness: “in order to be an individual Being [the subject] must go forth *from* God, yet as the *re*ceding from him is to *pro*ceed towards Nothingness and Privation, it must still at every step turn back toward him in order to *be* at all”.[[37]](#endnote-37) This oscillation is between a participatory metaphysics, in terms of which one receives one’s being, and a dialectic grammar of individuation through rupture. Further, it suggests that these paradigms are not fixedly resolved into a philosophical instant without the meanderings of time. While the symbolism of oscillation is not unique to Coleridge – both Schelling and Plato have their own variants – it does acquire a unique meaning within his oeuvre, and in light of his own philosophical emphases.[[38]](#endnote-38) This figure occurs with some frequency in his corpus. In his marginalia, for example, Coleridge states that “Fancy and Imagination are Oscillations, *this* connecting R.[eason] and U[nderstanding]; *that* connecting Sense and Understanding.”[[39]](#endnote-39)

One highly significant instantiation of this pattern is his serpentine line of beauty, which appears in a notebook entry as follows: “[The] Serpent by which the ancients emblem’d the Inventive faculty appears to me in its mode of motion most exactly to emblem a writer of Genius. He varies his course yet still glides onwards – all lines of motion [are] his – all beautiful, & all propulsive –”.[[40]](#endnote-40) This Hogarthian model is also deployed in his *Biographia Literaria*: “The reader should be carried forward […] by the pleasurable activity of mind excited by the attractions of the journey itself. Like the motion of a serpent, which the Egyptians made the emblem of intellectual power; or like the path of sound through the air”.[[41]](#endnote-41) Both passages suggest that this metaphysical oscillation is not merely an attempt at conceptual resolution of two grammars of the beautiful, but is itself a formally significant participation in the line of beauty.

Coleridge’s writings, considered more broadly, evince a particular attentiveness to natural phenomena that instantiate this oscillating pattern. Amongst these are “warbling,” “glimmering,” and “fluttering.”[[42]](#endnote-42) These phenomena present various combinations of harmony, interruption, echo, and undulation - all metaphysically significant categories. That Coleridge thought the “path of sound through the air” is serpentine gives a certain phenomenological significance to warbling, for it magnifies a universal sonic pattern that is typically inaudible. Biographically, Coleridge’s attention to such phenomena precedes his mature philosophy, such that the latter may be read as a development of earlier emotive and poetic responses to the beauty of nature. In this sense the serpentine cannot be limited to the realm of metaphysical abstraction but is operative also in the material and phenomenological domains. In Coleridge’s minute attentiveness to natural phenomena, particularly in his conversation poems, Ewan Jones finds evidence of an “irreducible materiality that Coleridge is thought to have exhausted in his Associationist youth, but which never truly went away.”[[43]](#endnote-43) One could surely agree that this attentiveness is striking and significant, though it need not imply a material*ism* – as the link to Associationism might suggest. Coleridge’s emphasis should rather be read, as I shall now argue, as a manifestation of his Platonism.

Richard Bernstein maintains that Plato has been subject to two diametrically opposed interpretations. On the one hand, he has been understood as “the villain to whom we can trace back everything that has subsequently gone wrong with Western rationality.”[[44]](#endnote-44) On the other hand, he has been understood as “the great defender of the spoken and written dialogue – which is always open to novel turns and which knows no finality.”[[45]](#endnote-45) Mary Anne Perkins finds that an uncritical acceptance of this villainous Plato has thoroughly hampered our understanding of Coleridge’s own Platonism.[[46]](#endnote-46) Perkins maintains that Coleridge’s stance reflects, not the villain, but the ‘other’ and more virtuous Plato. Thus, she notes that Coleridge understood Plato not as a philosopher in flight from the world, but as one whose method was “inductive throughout.”[[47]](#endnote-47) Furthermore, she emphasizes Coleridge’s view that Plato’s transcendent unities were relational and dynamic, rather than statically austere.[[48]](#endnote-48) In his investigation of Plato’s notion of beauty, Jean-Louis Chrétien makes similar observations. In particular, he argues that the beautiful beloved in the *Phaedrus* represents the appearance of the divine in the “*idea* of the body (251 A)”.[[49]](#endnote-49) Chrétien here underscores the fact that the same word designates “the sensible form and the intelligible form”.[[50]](#endnote-50) When Coleridge’s Platonism is understood in these terms, one finds the lingering affinity for ‘materiality’ identified by Jones to be less anomalous. Indeed, it may be seen as positively representative of his enduring philosophical commitments – as his view of John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* would suggest. Coleridge thought this poem contained the exemplary articulation of Platonism. In particular, he refers to book five (lines 469 – 88), which he describes as a representation of the Platonic system that is “far more accurately as well as beautifully given by Milton than you will find it in […] all the writers of philosophical history”.[[51]](#endnote-51) In this passage, both creation and an ascent to God are described. The passage is particularly illuminating in its configuration of the relations between body and spirit:[[52]](#endnote-52)

Till body up to spirit work, in bounds

Proportion’d to each kind. So from the root

Springs lighter the green stalk: from thence the leaves

More airy: last, the bright consummate flower

Spirits odorous breathes. Flowers and their fruit,

Man’s nourishment, by gradual scale sublim’d,

To *vital* spirits aspire: to *animal*:

To *intellectual!*

One notes here the striking absence of a dualism of ‘material’ and ideal as the latter is traced through color, scent, animality and even the earthiness of roots. In the light of this passage we could glance back at Coleridge’s metaphysical serpentine and understand it as the intellectual sublimation of glimmering light and warbling sounds. But there is also a sense in which such imagery seems to diverge meaningfully from the Platonic dialogues: glimmering light is surely only distantly related to the divine sun of the *Republic*? This is an important question, and will be considered in detail further below.

Insofar as this understanding of Platonism places the intellectual and even the divine in such proximity to the ‘material’ it may be thought to raise the question of pantheism. In his *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition*, Thomas McFarland has demonstrated that Coleridge moved beyond his early Pantheism to a later embrace of Trinitarianism.[[53]](#endnote-53) But McFarland also finds that Coleridge retained an aporetic “acceptance and rejection of Spinoza”.[[54]](#endnote-54) This is found to be reflected in the tension between his poetic love of nature - “I am *blessed* in worshipping the Loveliness of Fields, Lakes, Streams”– which, he believes, drew Coleridge closer to Pantheism, and the Trinitarianism which “always summoned him back”.[[55]](#endnote-55) McFarland thus finds that even though Coleridge had an ultimate commitment to the latter, rather than Pantheism, he “remained true to the ineradicable fact of their tragic opposition – longing for their reconciliation, but foundering, as do we all, before the mysteries of existence.”[[56]](#endnote-56) That McFarland presents the “identity of the One and the Many” as the “final equation of pantheism” further underscores the suggestion that Coleridge’s notion of beauty, insofar as it is thought to exist in nature, is itself a remnant of his Pantheism.[[57]](#endnote-57)

While McFarland is correct to identify a decisive shift towards Trinitarianism, he problematically assumes that Coleridge adopts a distinctly ‘Reformed’ variant of this doctrine. This is evident when he states: “for the pantheist, God must be somehow in all things – be these things themselves. For the Christian, however, as Barth has insisted, God must be conceived as a being *totaliter aliter* – of a totally different manner.”[[58]](#endnote-58) This however leaves out a third possibility, more prevalent in the Catholic tradition, which is a mode of Trinitarianism that reflects a Platonic metaphysic. He does in fact briefly note this alternative when he quotes a nineteenth-century assessment of Coleridge: “his theology had affinities with Popish rather than Protestant doctrine”.[[59]](#endnote-59) McFarland however does not further consider this possibility. Karl Barth was radically opposed to such perspectives, having notoriously dismissed Erich Przywara’s Trinitarian theology, precisely because of its participatory ontology, as “*the* invention of Anti-Christ”.[[60]](#endnote-60) Thus McFarland’s invocation of Barth, as representative of theology, is somewhat misleading.

A more Catholic Trinitarianism would share with Coleridge such a participatory ontology. Both Catholics and Protestants affirm, contrary to Pantheism, the transcendence of God. But the Catholic model also emphasizes a degree of participation and thus analogy between finite and infinite which is not preserved in the Barthian “*totaliter aliter*”. One finds evidence of the former metaphysic at key moments in Coleridge’s corpus: in the *Biographia*, for example, the primary imagination is understood as the “repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I am.”[[61]](#endnote-61) Similarly, Coleridgean symbols do not merely refer to transcendence but, as he states in his *Lay Sermons*, entail the “the translucence of the Eternal through and in the Temporal”.[[62]](#endnote-62) Lastly, and perhaps most strikingly, Coleridge states in *The Friend* that “[reason] is an organ identical with its appropriate objects. Thus, God, the Soul, eternal Truth, &c. are the objects of Reason; but they are themselves *reason*.”[[63]](#endnote-63)

In the Catholic tradition, such a participatory ontology is associated with the doctrine of ‘proper predication’. That is, certain properties, such as goodness and beauty, are thought to be properly predicated only of God. They are predicated secondarily of creatures only insofar as they ‘participate’ in God’s being. Coleridge effectively invokes this doctrine when he refers to the “foundation” of the spirit, “who alone is truly *One*”.[[64]](#endnote-64) In this sense, the unity which Coleridge associates with beauty is ultimately true only of God, but is evident also in a secondary sense in creatures to the extent that they participate in it. This is consistent with his view that unity is not merely an aspect of beauty, but that through which multiplicity is “ennobled”. [[65]](#endnote-65) In this more Catholic light, “multeïty in unity” could no longer be seen to suggest a Pantheistic stance. Thus Coleridge, at least metaphysically, was apparently less tragically conflicted than McFarland suggests. I have characterized this tension as one between Protestantism and Catholicism. It could however also be understood as essentially a question of Platonic ontology, insofar as the latter does appear within important Protestant influences on Coleridge’s thought – notably Milton and Edmund Spenser.[[66]](#endnote-66)

***Beauty as a Transcendental***

Coleridge’s claims about beauty imply that it is a property of being as such. That is, what a Thomist would call a ‘transcendental.’ This word must be used with caution, because its homonym is used by Coleridge to refer to a style of German Idealist philosophy.[[67]](#endnote-67) As a transcendental in the Thomist sense, in addition to being a property of being, beauty would also be ‘convertible’ with other transcendentals, such as goodness and truth.[[68]](#endnote-68) This maximalist stance has been censured by his critics: G. N. G. Orsini argues that his definition of beauty “suffers from a limitation” because it “defines other things besides Beauty. In effect, it belongs to almost every complex unity, natural or ideal, philosophical or scientific.”[[69]](#endnote-69) Although question begging, this critique raises a legitimate concern over excessive breadth. The concern is however eased if not fully dispelled if one recalls Coleridge’s constant emphasis on the differences in degree of that which may be universally present in kind.[[70]](#endnote-70) That is, beauty’s status as a transcendental must be interpreted in light of Coleridge’s participatory metaphysics.

While proper predication emphasizes the highest instantiation of beauty and goodness, the doctrine of the transcendentals emphasizes that even the lowest instances of existence retain some degree of participation in them. Addressing this lower extreme, Coleridge focuses on unities which barely hold together, arguing that these too are beautiful: “Should an Englishman gazing on a mass of cloud rich with the rays of the rising sun exclaim, […] how beautiful! I should have no quarrel with him.” For, states Coleridge, there is “at least an indistinct subsumption of form and relation”, and “an approximation to the reduction of *the many* into one.”[[71]](#endnote-71) But the cloud, in this illustration, also indicates the limitations of a model of beauty based too narrowly on harmony. For sunlit clouds have also been regarded, in Coleridge’s poetry, as exemplars of beauty.[[72]](#endnote-72) It may be that here he simply flags his departure from Shaftesbury, who defined beauty in similar terms, but used the cloud as an illustration of disorder, and so the lack of beauty.[[73]](#endnote-73) Even so, the image seems to mark an important transition in his essay: having beforehand considered the triangle as the “first-born of beauty”, thereby suggesting a rationalist aesthetic, he proceeds to expound the limitations that would result from “an obvious regular figure”.[[74]](#endnote-74) Thus the “confining Form” requires modification by the principle of “Free Life”.[[75]](#endnote-75) Shortly thereafter, the new form-freedom ideal is again supplemented by an aesthetic of light.[[76]](#endnote-76) This broad pattern of progress and supplementation includes, as here, the defense of a principle which simultaneously manifests its limitations.

The way in which Coleridge both posits and restricts the convertibility of beauty and goodness reflects the tension between German Idealism and participatory metaphysics in his thought. In the ‘Principles,’ he refers to an imagined argument between Milton and a puritan, in which the former finds a cathedral beautiful, in spite of a litany of moral objections brought against it.[[77]](#endnote-77) Coleridge thereby drives home the Kantian point of the independence of judgements of beauty and goodness. But in the final paragraph of the ‘Principles’ he changes tack, arguing that “supersensual Beauty” is “distinguishable, not separable” from the “absolutely good”.[[78]](#endnote-78) In this latter case he reflects the participatory doctrine insofar as it posits convertibility of transcendentals. Coleridge thus appears to have a conflicted fidelity to both Kant and Plato. A degree of resolution is however evident if one observes that, for Kant, beauty is also a symbol of the good, even though this would not entail the ontology that attaches to the word ‘symbol’ for Coleridge.

Coleridge seems to posit his notion of the symbol as itself a transcendental. Like beauty, the symbol has a near universal scope in his thought: “all that meets the bodily sense I deem / Symbolical”.[[79]](#endnote-79) This breadth has similarly attracted the censure of critics. Nicholas Halmi argues that, “by universalizing the application of the term *symbol*”, such statements “deprive it of any specificity” and are consequently “meaningless from the perspective of semiotics”.[[80]](#endnote-80) I hope to show that this conclusion does not follow because Coleridge’s symbol is ultimately a mode of the beautiful and thus also involved in different degrees of predication. The link between beauty and the symbol is furthermore evident insofar as “multeïty in unity” is reflected in his account of the symbol: “while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that Unity, of which it is the representative.”[[81]](#endnote-81) Halmi’s genealogy falls broadly within the hermeneutic of suspicion.[[82]](#endnote-82) In terms of this article’s hermeneutic, a different aspect of the genealogy may be highlighted for the purpose of elucidating further conceptual connections between the symbol and the beautiful.

Toward this end, one could note that Coleridge’s symbol is constructed in terms of the grammars of harmony and light. It is characterized by the “translucence of the Special in the Individual or of the General in the Especial or of the Universal in the General. Above all by a translucence of the Eternal through and in the Temporal.”[[83]](#endnote-83) There is an important medieval precedent here. In a study of the period’s aesthetics, Edgar de Bruyne traces the conflict and ultimate resolution of its two central aesthetics, which are also based on harmony and light. By his account, the conflict arose because light is “a simple entity”, and thus its beauty “is not ‘musical’ in nature”.[[84]](#endnote-84) Its resolution came through a metaphysical development which resulted in physical light being replaced by a notion of the “illumination of ontological form”.[[85]](#endnote-85) In this “Metaphysical Esthetics”, which developed into a “Symbolist Esthetics”, beauty came to be defined as “the radiation of the substantial or actual form upon the perfectly proportioned and defined parts of matter.”[[86]](#endnote-86) This mediation of harmonious form and metaphysical light is essential to Coleridge, but he does not simply repeat the formula. In the medieval position, “Harmony constitutes the matter of the beautiful, light its essence.”[[87]](#endnote-87) For Coleridge, however, harmony extends beyond the material form and exists also in the analogical hierarchy. Furthermore, although Coleridge’s symbol is evidently a mode of the beautiful, the converse is not true: for beauty is understood ultimately to be a transcendent ‘Idea’, while the symbol is only ever a partial shining-through of such an ‘Idea’. De Bruyne regards the medieval symbol as “an admirable fusion of Aristotelian and Plotinian ideas”,[[88]](#endnote-88) suggesting again an important Coleridgean precedent. We shall see presently how Coleridge used the thought of Kant, whom he dubbed the “modern Aristotle,” similarly to modify his reading of Plato and Plotinus.[[89]](#endnote-89)

***Nominalism and Realism***

Coleridge’s treatment of beauty in the ‘Principles’ raises the question of its status as either a regulative or a constitutive ‘Idea’. In this regard, Vigus has noted a puzzling leap and an apparent lack of proper explanation.[[90]](#endnote-90) This occurs when Coleridge states, at first in Kantian terms, that the beautiful “arises from the perceived harmony of an object” with the “rules of the judgement and imagination”.[[91]](#endnote-91) But then, as Vigus observes, he “suddenly invokes a constitutive Idea of an objective beauty” when he states that beauty involves a “*calling on* the soul”.[[92]](#endnote-92) For Vigus, what is distinctive at this point is that Coleridge simply “truncates the discussion” when one would surely expect an elaboration of this admittedly “radical” shift.[[93]](#endnote-93) He thereby highlights the esoteric-exoteric distinction insofar as it is manifest in the ‘Principles’. My concern in this section is better to understand this shift by placing it in the broader context of Coleridge’s reflections on nominalism and realism.

The medieval doctrine of the transcendentals, discussed above, was developed within the realist tradition which defends the existence of universals. Nominalists, by contrast, deny the existence of universals, and thus also the realist stance on transcendentals. These schools would consequently affirm and deny, respectively, the existence of the ‘Idea’ of beauty.[[94]](#endnote-94) As we shall see, Coleridge places Kant on the side of nominalism, and identifies Platonism with the stance of realism. The presence of the transcendentals in Coleridge’s corpus is rendered somewhat complex by his sympathies for both traditions. In his *Lectures on Philosophy*, he argues that they have “between them [...] divided all the truths of philosophy that perhaps the human mind can ever arrive at.”[[95]](#endnote-95) Later in these *Lectures*, regarding the works of Thomas Aquinas and John Duns Scotus, which are exemplars of medieval realism as opposed to nominalism, he develops a similar conviction: “I should be perplexed to name any books which impressed me with a deeper sense of the power of the human mind, however they may have been misled by their partiality or by moving in one direction.”[[96]](#endnote-96) As Coleridge then gives equal praise to the nominalist William of Ockham, there is at least a distant echo here of his own oscillating principle, now deployed in criticism of the “partiality” of these medieval giants.

How might Coleridge’s approach have avoided the purported excesses of their perspectives? His own framing of the question of the status of ‘Ideas,’ in his *Lay Sermons*, gives the beginning of an answer: “Whether Ideas are regulative only, according to Aristotle and Kant; or likewise constitutive, and one with the power and Life of Nature, according to Plato, and Plotinus […] is the highest *problem* of Philosophy, and not part its nomenclature.”[[97]](#endnote-97) The adjectives ‘constitutive’ and ‘regulative’ are Kantian terms which Coleridge appears to understand as synonyms for a realist and nominalist stance on ‘Ideas’ respectively. His definitions involve a divergence from Kant, for whom the constitutive merely “describes the sensible world”.[[98]](#endnote-98) In articulating his own stance on ‘Ideas,’ Coleridge actually, in one sense, agrees with Kant: they have no “adequate correspondent in the world of the senses”.[[99]](#endnote-99) But for Coleridge, this does not reduce them to regulative heuristics, as it does for Kant.[[100]](#endnote-100) Rather, he places the ‘Ideas,’ with the Platonists and in terms of a very different meaning of ‘constitutive,’ in the divine mind. Coleridge’s use of “adequacy” here does not entail a complete bifurcation of ‘Ideas’ and the senses, but rather emphases that the latter bear only a partial and distant analogy to the former. Recall that he does posit the “translucence” of eternity within time, and the presence, albeit residual, of Reason in the senses.[[101]](#endnote-101)

In the passage quoted above, one of the key words is ‘likewise.’ It indicates that Plato is thought to regard ‘Ideas’ as both regulative and constitutive. In this sense the truly Platonic is understood somehow to contain the Kantian paradigm.[[102]](#endnote-102) Coleridge appears to refer here to the ‘letter’ of Kant in order to emphasize the distinction between nominalism and realism. But in *Biographia*, he argues that the spirit of Kantian thought went beyond its letter, and that Kant wrote symbolically.[[103]](#endnote-103) This reading effects the ontologizing of what is, in the ‘letter,’ merely phenomenal, and thus a drift toward Plato. Thus, the Kantian “universal subjective”, as Coleridge argues in his *Logic*, “must be acquired before we can form any judgement” of the “properly objective”.[[104]](#endnote-104) In this development, Coleridge seems to use the regulative as a kind of philosophical stepping-stone on the way to the Platonically constitutive. Yet his progression does not ultimately reject Kant. The German philosopher, at least, gives Coleridge rigorous and apparently lasting distinctions “in kind” (notably that between the agreeable and the beautiful);[[105]](#endnote-105) these distinctions made, he proceeds to develop their analogical spectrum in a more Platonic stance (differences in “degree” of beauty).[[106]](#endnote-106) This Platonist reading of Kant, to answer the question posed above, seems to preserve some of his philosophical rigor, while curtailing what Coleridge regards as the nominalist excess present in its ‘letter’.

The nominalist-realist tension in Coleridge’s thought could be explored further by considering its presence within his understanding of the symbol. The latter comprises a hierarchy in which the category of the “general” is interposed between the “individual” and the “universal”.[[107]](#endnote-107) Symbols, as we have seen, involve the “translucence” of the ontologically higher through the ontologically lower.[[108]](#endnote-108) The highest kind of symbol would involve the translucence of an ‘Idea’ and would thus be Platonist in character. That Coleridge uses the word “translucence” in relation to such symbols is to be expected, given the clear association between ‘Ideas’ and light in the Platonic tradition.[[109]](#endnote-109) While the nominalists would reject such an ‘Idea’, the notion of the “general” is consistent with their metaphysics. The Coleridgean symbol is thus apparently Platonic in its most elevated form, but simultaneously nominalist in its ‘lower’ regions. In this sense the symbol itself internalizes the nominalist-realist tension.

The nominalist dimension is at first puzzling insofar as the “general” has not, in its historical use, been similarly associated with light. Can Coleridge, then, still use the word “translucence” to describe it? This aporia is eased if we consider what appears to be a Kantian aspect of the symbol’s genealogy. In the *Critique of Judgement*, Kant considers how the general emerges from individuals: if a person “wishes to judge normal size” of a man, then imagination “allows a great number of these images […] to fall one upon the other,” and “in the space where they come most preponderantly together, and within the contour where the place is illuminated by the greatest concentration of color, one gets a perception of the *average size* [...] and this is the stature of a beautiful man.”[[110]](#endnote-110) Coleridge never mentions this passage directly, but he does refer to this critique as the “most astonishing” of all Kant’s works.[[111]](#endnote-111) This excerpt’s resonance with the general-individual aspect of Coleridge’s symbol is so striking that it is likely to be an important source. As well as clarifying how the general could be luminous, it also suggests that the symbol itself is a mediation of Kant and Plato, one that echoes the medieval shift from physical to metaphysical light, and Coleridge’s own shift from a regulative to a constitutive stance on ‘Ideas.’ These shifts are apparently grounded in the residual Platonism evident here in Kant. [[112]](#endnote-112)

***The Beauty of Metaphysics***

We have seen how Coleridge addresses the partiality he attributes to nominalism. This section will consider his corresponding critique of realism. Both critiques, if they are not to resolve into an arbitrary average of opposites, require some sense of a reference-point that is free of the purported excesses of each school. It appears that it is ultimately through his notion of beauty that Coleridge specifies this ideal. His thought therefore reflects both the metaphysics of beauty, and a notion of the beauty of metaphysics. Both are grounded phenomenologically in the poet’s early proclivities for light and sound phenomena, such as dim and glimmering light, which form a connecting thread running from the earliest poetry, through to his mature criticism, and even on to his later metaphysics. It is furthermore noteworthy that such a critique of metaphysics presupposes a degree of convertibility between truth and beauty, for it entails the claim that a deviation from beauty is indicative of a deviation from truth.

In a mature work, Coleridge expresses a critical stance on Pseudo-Dionysius that is based in part on beauty. Pseudo-Dionysius’ thought represents the Christian form of the Neoplatonic theology of Proclus. This critique can consequently be seen as the converse of his Platonic reading of Kant. In this critique, Coleridge states: “Pile up winged Hierarchies on Hierarchies, and outblaze the Cabalists, and Dionysius the Areopagite; yet what a gaudy vapor for a healthful mind is the whole conception”.[[113]](#endnote-113) While not exclusively aesthetic, there is an important aesthetic dimension to this critique which is registered in words and phrases like “pile up”, “outblaze”, and “gaudy”. Indeed, the latter two categories appear to have been constituted first in the domain of literary criticism, before being deployed metaphysically: in *Biographia*, an earlier work, Coleridge identifies the “false and showy splendour” of modern poets, chastening their “gaudy affectations” of style.[[114]](#endnote-114) Similarly, *Biographia*’s critical vocabulary draws significantly on the symbolism of light, being particularly critical of an excess of radiance. Thus, the artistic exhibition of “glare”, “glitter”, or the “florid” is subject to censure as “false beauty”.[[115]](#endnote-115) Such literary critical sensibilities are reflected here in his metaphysical use of the word “outblaze”. It is consequently evident that the sense of beauty, which took shape in his early poetry and literary criticism, is used later as a philosophical razor against what is seen to be an excess of hypostatization. There is however a crucial asymmetry between Coleridge’s critiques of nominalism and realism, for he is ultimately a realist with regard to the ‘Ideas’. He is thus more fundamentally critical of nominalism, but is critical of realism only to the extent that it is deemed to be excessively hypostatizing.

***Geometric Form***

The aesthetic status of geometric form represents a prominent disagreement between Coleridge and Kant. In the *Critique of Judgement*, Kant observes that “geometrically regular figures” are “commonly brought forward by critics of taste as the most simple and unquestionable examples of beauty.” [[116]](#endnote-116) This is a good description of Coleridge’s own stance, for he posits the triangle as “the first-born of beauty”, a view which he attributes to the Neoplatonist Proclus.[[117]](#endnote-117) Kant, however, flatly rejects this position, placing it in strict antithesis to his own: “One or other of these two views must, therefore, be wrong: either the verdict of the critics that attributes beauty to such figures, or else our own, which makes purposiveness apart from any concept necessary for beauty.”[[118]](#endnote-118) In what follows I shall consider Coleridge’s justification of his position. Even though his conclusion that geometric forms are beautiful contradicts Kant sharply, his argument to that effect contains some distinctly Kantian moments. One can still, even here, discern some important mediations between Kant and Platonism.

Having made beauty a transcendental, Coleridge cannot evade the defense of the beauty of geometric form. But his use of analogy nuances the conflict, such that it moves toward being a fruitful tension. Kant seems to be attacking critics who make geometric form an exemplar of beauty. Coleridge, however, regards it as the lowest degree of beauty, indeed something like “heat in ice”. [[119]](#endnote-119) His objective is to challenge the perspective of “common life” which, he argues, focuses only on exemplars, and thus loses an ability to discern the beautiful in its lowest degrees.[[120]](#endnote-120) Nevertheless, this attempt at philosophical rigor is at risk of losing a phenomenological basis, something that would be uniquely problematic for a credible account of beauty. As Kant has shown, we may allow our moral or intellectual judgements to be influenced by reasons, but in regard to aesthetic judgements, we insist upon “[looking] at the object with our own eyes”.[[121]](#endnote-121) How then is one able to take what the language of “common life” would call ugly and argue for its beauty, without thereby simply overriding phenomenology?

Coleridge’s likely response to this question could be assessed in terms of a fragment in which he does indeed refer to the triangle as ugly. Here, Coleridge presents a “youth” who has just drawn the figure: “he is struck with the relation of each part to the other, & of all the parts to one perfect Whole, by the shortest way – nothing too little, nothing superfluous: And he exclaims, what a beautiful Figure! – His Sister of 15, or perhaps his dear Mother, looking over his Shoulder, says Harry! What does that *ugly* Scrawl mean? In illustration of the Definition I adduce the fine remark of Proclus, that the *Triangle* is the first-born of Beauty […]”[[122]](#endnote-122) This passage contains a suggestive reversal in terms of which the youth’s vision actually coincides with philosophy, while his older sister and mother see through the lens of “common life”. His vision also coincides with that of Coleridge’s ideal poet, who has freed himself from the “film of familiarity and selfish solicitude” that is thought to characterize the world of custom, and in consequence of which “we have eyes, yet see not”.[[123]](#endnote-123) Thus Coleridge might contend that philosophy does not involve the dogmatic assertion of metaphysical *a prioris*, in the teeth of our felt responses, but is rather an attempt to recover the freshness and immediacy of youthful vision. But that vision may ultimately be thought to entail the direct perception of such *a prioris*. In this sense Coleridge is apparently close to Wordsworth’s conviction, as expressed in his ‘Immortality Ode’. [[124]](#endnote-124)

This interpretation is underscored by a similar instance of apparent ugliness in the ‘Principles’: an “old coach-wheel” that is “disfigured with tar and dirt”.[[125]](#endnote-125) Here, Coleridge imagines himself (now resembling the youth) defending the beauty of the disfigured coach-wheel from a companion’s suspicion: “‘there is beauty in that wheel, and you yourself would not only admit, but would feel it, had you never seen a wheel before.”[[126]](#endnote-126) Rather than using the geometric model to coercively legislate judgements of beauty, Coleridge uses it to invite his interlocutor to imagine himself into a different vantage point, and so a renewed awareness of things. Thus, the poet’s ideal of Edenic perception is apparently not an impossible fantasy, but something one could approach through imagination. Rather than burying the phenomena, metaphysics acts here to uncover. That Coleridge disputes another’s aesthetic response, though by appeal to feeling and imagination rather than by argument, suggests another rapprochement with Kant. For the latter’s insistence on seeing with our own eyes is prefaced by, and associated with, a concern about aesthetic coerciveness. As he states, there can “be no rule according to which anyone is to be compelled to recognize anything as beautiful”.[[127]](#endnote-127) Coleridge’s treatment of geometric form, which seems superficially regressive, is a powerful example of his imaginative use of metaphysics for phenomenological purposes. That is, by an appeal to imagination, it suggests the possibility of a new experience, and mediates a difference in aesthetic judgements on that basis, rather than by means of an argument. The latter is consistent with Kant’s own concern about the validity of arguments as a means for such mediations.

***The Aesthetic of Light***

Even though Kant rejected geometric form as a candidate for beauty, his aesthetics is still essentially formalist. He argues, for example, that judgements of beauty “ought properly to be a question merely of the form”.[[128]](#endnote-128) With the sole exception of the ‘luminous line,’ addressed above, his stance on beauty excludes the aesthetic of light. Coleridge’s definition of beauty as “multeïty in unity” might first have suggested that he similarly eschews an aesthetic of light. This article has however tracked the profound extend to which he relies upon this aesthetic. To understand how Coleridge develops an aesthetic of light is thus also to understand his digression from, and supplementation of, both Kantian influences and his own aesthetic of harmony. This development is more complex than a mere embrace of Platonism over and against Kant. Indeed, as I shall argue, Coleridge’s aesthetic of light also involves a digression from Plato and Plotinus. These latter philosophers do indeed understand beauty in terms of light. But Coleridge’s own stance involves some fundamentally different emphases. These differences seem ultimately to reflect, to a meaningful degree, a Kantian sense of finitude. Thus, as with geometric form, what appears to be a simple rejection of Kant actually involves multiple layers of negotiation between Kantian and Platonic sensibilities.

This section begins by considering Coleridge’s appropriation of the Platonic divine sun. This image appears in his ‘Principles,’ which he brings to a close with a quotation of Plotinus, given in the original Greek. The same passage appears in the *Biographia*, but with this translation attached: [[129]](#endnote-129)

‘To those to whose imagination it has never been presented, how beautiful is the countenance of justice and wisdom; and that neither the morning nor the evening star are so fair. For in order to direct the view aright, it behoves that the beholder should have made himself congenerous and similar to the object beheld. Never could the eye have beheld the sun, had not its own essence been soliform,’ (*i.e. pre-configured to the light by a similarity of essence with that of light*) ‘neither can a soul not beautiful attain to an intuition of beauty.’

The passage uses sunlight as a symbol of beauty, but it simultaneously interprets the analogical interval between finite and infinite through the model of harmony. In this sense Plotinus already suggests the medieval reconciliation, noted above, of these two grammars. But in emphasizing harmonious proportion, apparently without mention of disanalogy, the excerpt gives a construal of finitude which Coleridge would proceed to nuance and modify. We can track this divergence by considering his original formulations of the symbolism of sunlight, such as the following fragment, where he reflects upon glancing at the sun:[[130]](#endnote-130)

God was impelled by *infinite Love* to multiply finite images of Deity each happy in contemplating itself & the images around it – as being representative of Deity – Snatch a gaze at the Sun, then turn & contemplate them in the fountain – Prayer & meditation – Angels in the beatific Vision, then turn to created things -

Although somewhat cryptic, it is evident that Plotinus’s principle of harmony, which allows for sight in the first place, is here partly retained. But there is also a marked sense of the sun exceeding the eye’s capacity. Most significantly, the retinal traces associated with small flickering images of the sun are themselves the result of disanalogy. Thus finitude, in this mediating image, does more than merely limit. Rather, very suggestively, the finite analogies of the infinite seem only to emerge through disanalogy. In this sense, the phenomenological detail of this reflection is itself doing serious metaphysical work. It cannot simply be paraphrased, without loss of intellectual content, into the *via negativa* and *positiva* of the tradition. This passage could be seen to embody Coleridge’s own modification of Plotinus in terms of a Kantian sensibility for finitude.

As was noted above, Coleridge’s serpentine is associated with ‘glimmering’ light, while his literary criticism, with its aversion to bright light, seems to emphasize the ‘dim’. These two qualities appear together in a striking passage in which he reflects on the “dim-glimmering” of moonlight: [[131]](#endnote-131)

 In looking at objects of Nature while I am thinking, as at yonder moon dim-glimmering thro’ the dewy window-pane, I seem rather to be seeking, as it were *asking*, a symbolical language for something within me that already and forever exists, than observing any thing new. Even when that latter is the case, yet still I have always an obscure feeling as if that new phaenomenon were the dim Awaking of a forgotten or hidden Truth of my inner Nature / It is still interesting as a Word, a Symbol! It is Λογος the Creator! <and the Evolver!>

Such descriptions indicate that the phenomenology of beauty, and of religious experience, are for Coleridge inextricably intertwined. Similarly, the passage’s physical and metaphysical light seem to be inseparable moments of one phenomenon. If this is indeed true, then his metaphysics of participation, including his view that eternity is present in time, and the reason in the senses, would have a phenomenological basis in such an experience of light. Earlier, I noted a ‘shift’ from physical to metaphysical light in the medieval synthesis, itself echoed in Coleridge’s Platonic reading of Kant. The above passage suggests that this shift was not an arbitrary choice, but was grounded in such a phenomenology of light.

One might balk at the apparently anachronistic use of ‘phenomenology’ here. To defend it, I would adduce the frequency with which key figures in that tradition have glanced back to Romantic and post-Romantic poets as sources of phenomenological insight. Gaston Bachelard, himself within the tradition of French phenomenology, states the underlying principle quite explicitly: “poets and painters are born phenomenologists.”[[132]](#endnote-132) In this sense one might, with due caution, be willing to treat such profoundly attentive descriptions as properly phenomenological records.

The symbolism of light considered here suggests that Coleridge constructed his own position on the basis of both Platonic and Kantian influences. While the divine sun is not rejected, neither is it his most important symbol of metaphysical light. That distinction would apparently go, instead, to forms of “dim” and “glimmering” light. This section has thus far considered both exoteric and esoteric reflections on light. To bring it to a close, I shall return to the ‘Principles,’ and to one of its most suggestive images of light:[[133]](#endnote-133)

When I reflect on the manner in which smoothness, richness of sound, &c. enter into the formation of the beautiful, I am induced to suspect that they act negatively rather than positively. Something there must be to communicate the form, something in and by which the forma informans reveals itself: and these, less than any that could be substituted, and in the least possible degree, distract the attention, in the least possible degree obscure the idea, of which they (composed into outline and surface) are the symbol. An illustrative hint may be taken from a pure chrystal *[sic]*, as compared with an opaque, semi-opaque, or clouded mass, on the one hand, and with a perfectly transparent body, such as the air is, on the other. The chrystal is lost in the light, which yet it contains, embodies, and gives a shape to; but which passes shapeless through the air, and in the ruder body, is either quenched or dissipated.

This reflection could be seen to mediate Coleridge’s geometric aesthetic, evident in the crystal, and his aesthetic of light. They represent the two extremes of his aesthetics. The lower extreme, as we have seen, has been characterized by geometric form. The opposite and highest extreme is represented by metaphysical light. The latter appears in this image as the “forma informans” which “reveals itself” in and through simplicity of form. The bodily or ‘material’ symbol of this metaphysical construal is represented by physical light passing through a crystal. The crystal is thought both to “contain” the light, and then to be “lost in” it. As these two states do not seem to be possible simultaneously, there is a suggestion here of a glimmer.

Neither of these extremes would accommodate a Kantian position, for the latter excludes both the aesthetics of light and of geometric form. But the suggestion of a liminal form that wavers on the edge of visibility, now containing the light, now being lost in it, could be seen to accommodate Kant’s stance. For the latter, in a judgement of taste, the “cognitive powers” are “engaged in a free play, since no determinate concept restricts them to a particular rule of cognition.”[[134]](#endnote-134) Unlike geometric form, which, for Kant, would be so restrictive, such a glimmering form would indeed allow for the free play of the faculties. We might then also regard Coleridge’s glimmer as mediating the Kantian and the Platonic.

The broad trajectory of this article has seen Coleridge’s aesthetic of harmony increasingly supplemented by, and perhaps even displaced by, his aesthetic of light. Taken together, these considerations should be seen to extend Barth’s tentative observations, and to displace the suspicious interpretations offered by Kirwan and Guyer. Ultimately, Coleridge’s responses to philosophical, theological, and poetic traditions, and to beauty itself, result in a singular philosophical stance that is at once metaphysically rigorous and phenomenologically sensitive.

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1. Barth, “Coleridge,” 15. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid., 15. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid., 22. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid., 21. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Guyer, *History*, vol. 2, 63-75. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Ibid., 57. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Kirwan, *Coleridge*, 47. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Ibid., 57. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Ibid., 51. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Ibid., 53. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Ibid., 48. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Vigus, *Platonic*, 4-5. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Coleridge, “Principles of Genial Criticism,” in *Shorter Works,* vol. 1, 353-86. Hereafter cited as “Principles”. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Ibid., 369. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Ibid., 361. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Ibid., 385. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Coleridge, *Biographia*, II, 11. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Vigus, “Philosophy”, 536. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Barfield, *Coleridge*, 117. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. McFarland, *Pantheist Tradition*. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Guyer, *History*, I, 63-75. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Simons, “Coleridge,” 465-481. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. O’Connor, “To Read a Bull.” [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 84. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Simons, “Coleridge,” 465-66. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. “Principles,” 377; Simons, “Coleridge,” 470. Cf. Orsini, *Idealism*, 14. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Simons, “Coleridge,” 470. Emphasis added. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. I have treated Plotinus as a ‘Platonist’ in light of Coleridge’s conviction regarding their fundamental consonance. See: Coleridge, *Sermons*, 113-14. For Neoplatonist and Christian Platonist influences on Coleridge, especially in his *Aids to Reflection*, see: Hedley, *Coleridge, Philosophy and Religion*. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. Coleridge, *Reflection*, 181. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. Coleridge, *Biographia*, II, 26; Coleridge, “What is Life?” in *Poetical Works*, I.2, 767. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. See, e.g., Perry, *Division*, 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. Schlegel, *Shorter Works*, 24. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. Perry, *Division*, 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. Coleridge, *Church*, 12. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. Coleridge, *Letters,* IV, 545. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. Schelling, *Ages*, 118; Plato, *Timaeus*, 52e - 53a. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. Coleridge, *Marginalia*, vol. 5, 798. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. Coleridge, *Notebooks: A Selection*, 17. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. Coleridge, *Biographia*, II, 14. See: Paley, *Fine Arts*, 169. [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. See, e.g., “The Eolian Harp” (line 32), “Frost at Midnight” (lines 15 and 26), “Fears in Solitude” (line 11), and “The Nightingale” (line 5) in: Coleridge, *Poetical Works*, I.1, pp. 231-35, 453-56, 469-77, 516-20, respectively. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. Jones, *Poetic Form*, 6. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. Bernstein, *New Constellation*, 50. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. Perkins, “Coleridge,” 25. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. Coleridge, *Friend*, vol. 1, 482; Perkins, “Coleridge,” 28. [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. Perkins, “Coleridge,” 34. [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. Chrétien, *L’effroi*, 60, my translation. [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. Coleridge, *Lectures on Philosophy*, vol. 2, 832-33. [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book 5 (lines 481-88). [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
53. McFarland, *Pantheist*, 107. [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
54. Ibid., 254. [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
55. Coleridge, *Notebooks*, II, 2647; McFarland, *Pantheist*, 252. [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
56. McFarland, *Pantheist*, 254. [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
57. Ibid, 68. [↑](#endnote-ref-57)
58. Ibid., 270. [↑](#endnote-ref-58)
59. James H. Rigg, quoted in: McFarland, *Pantheist*, 327. [↑](#endnote-ref-59)
60. Barth, *Dogmatics*, xiii. [↑](#endnote-ref-60)
61. Coleridge, *Biographia*, I, 304. [↑](#endnote-ref-61)
62. Coleridge, *Sermons*, 30. [↑](#endnote-ref-62)
63. Coleridge, *Friend*, I, 156. [↑](#endnote-ref-63)
64. Coleridge, *Literature*, I, 68; *Church*, 202. [↑](#endnote-ref-64)
65. Coleridge, “Aesthetic Terms,” in *Shorter Works*, I, 346. [↑](#endnote-ref-65)
66. Coleridge, *Sermons*, 101. [↑](#endnote-ref-66)
67. Coleridge, *Biographia*, II, 297. [↑](#endnote-ref-67)
68. Aertsen, *Transcendentals*, 25-70, 207, 303, 335-359. [↑](#endnote-ref-68)
69. Orsini, *Idealism*, 171. [↑](#endnote-ref-69)
70. “Principles,” 509. [↑](#endnote-ref-70)
71. Ibid., 373. [↑](#endnote-ref-71)
72. Coleridge, “*Dejection: An Ode*,” in *Poetical Works*, I.2, 699. [↑](#endnote-ref-72)
73. Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 272-74. [↑](#endnote-ref-73)
74. “Principles,” 369 & 373. [↑](#endnote-ref-74)
75. Ibid., 374. [↑](#endnote-ref-75)
76. Ibid., 377. [↑](#endnote-ref-76)
77. Ibid., 382. [↑](#endnote-ref-77)
78. Ibid., 385. [↑](#endnote-ref-78)
79. Coleridge, “The Destiny of Nations,” in *Poetical Works*, I.2, 282. [↑](#endnote-ref-79)
80. Halmi, *Genealogy*, 18. [↑](#endnote-ref-80)
81. Coleridge, *Sermons*, 30. [↑](#endnote-ref-81)
82. See, e.g., Halmi, *Genealogy*, 116, 133. [↑](#endnote-ref-82)
83. Coleridge, *Sermons,* 30. [↑](#endnote-ref-83)
84. De Bruyne, *Esthetics*, 58-59. [↑](#endnote-ref-84)
85. Ibid., 65. [↑](#endnote-ref-85)
86. Ibid., 62, 65, 67-73. [↑](#endnote-ref-86)
87. Ibid., 66. [↑](#endnote-ref-87)
88. Ibid., 66. [↑](#endnote-ref-88)
89. Coleridge, *Logic*, 195. [↑](#endnote-ref-89)
90. Vigus, *Platonic*, 52 [↑](#endnote-ref-90)
91. “Principles,” 383. [↑](#endnote-ref-91)
92. Vigus, *Platonic*, 52; “Principles,” 383. [↑](#endnote-ref-92)
93. Vigus, *Platonic*, 52. [↑](#endnote-ref-93)
94. While Coleridge’s ‘Idea’ of beauty is also a transcendental and a universal, this does not necessarily follow for the other ‘Ideas’ or in other metaphysical contexts. [↑](#endnote-ref-94)
95. Coleridge, *Lectures on Philosophy*, 389. [↑](#endnote-ref-95)
96. Ibid., 391-92. [↑](#endnote-ref-96)
97. Coleridge, *Sermons*, *113 – 14*. [↑](#endnote-ref-97)
98. French, “Constitutive-Regulative,” 624. [↑](#endnote-ref-98)
99. Coleridge, *Sermons*, 114. Cf. Kant, *Judgement*, §59, pp. 178-79. [↑](#endnote-ref-99)
100. French, “Constitutive-Regulative,” 625. [↑](#endnote-ref-100)
101. See: Barfield, *Coleridge*, 95. [↑](#endnote-ref-101)
102. See: Vigus, *Platonic*, 35 – 56. [↑](#endnote-ref-102)
103. Coleridge, *Biographia*, I, 140, 154, 163. [↑](#endnote-ref-103)
104. Coleridge, *Logic*, 145; Wilson, “Coleridge,” 185. [↑](#endnote-ref-104)
105. “Principles,” 368 & 380. [↑](#endnote-ref-105)
106. Ibid., 371-72, 385-86. [↑](#endnote-ref-106)
107. Coleridge, *Sermons*, 30. [↑](#endnote-ref-107)
108. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-108)
109. See, e.g., Plato, *Phaedrus*, 250d-e. [↑](#endnote-ref-109)
110. Kant, *Judgement*, § 17, pp. 64-5. [↑](#endnote-ref-110)
111. Coleridge, quoted in: Orsini, *Idealism*, 159. [↑](#endnote-ref-111)
112. See, e.g., Caygill, *Judgement*, 333. [↑](#endnote-ref-112)
113. Coleridge, *Church*, 170. [↑](#endnote-ref-113)
114. Coleridge, *Biographia*, II, 90. [↑](#endnote-ref-114)
115. Coleridge, *Biographia*, I, 23-5. [↑](#endnote-ref-115)
116. Kant, *Judgement*, § 22, p. 72. [↑](#endnote-ref-116)
117. “Principles,” 369. [↑](#endnote-ref-117)
118. Kant, *Judgement*, § 22, 72. [↑](#endnote-ref-118)
119. “Principles,” 368. [↑](#endnote-ref-119)
120. Ibid., 368. [↑](#endnote-ref-120)
121. Kant, *Judgement*, § 8, p. 47. [↑](#endnote-ref-121)
122. “Principles,” 278. [↑](#endnote-ref-122)
123. Coleridge, *Biographia II*, 7. [↑](#endnote-ref-123)
124. Wordsworth, *Major Works*, 297-302. [↑](#endnote-ref-124)
125. “Principles,” 372. [↑](#endnote-ref-125)
126. Ibid., 372. [↑](#endnote-ref-126)
127. Kant, *Judgement*, § 8, p. 47. [↑](#endnote-ref-127)
128. Ibid., 54 [↑](#endnote-ref-128)
129. Coleridge, *Biographia*, I, 114-15; “Principles,” 385-86. [↑](#endnote-ref-129)
130. Coleridge, “Reflections on God’s Ideas,” in *Shorter Works*, I, 156. [↑](#endnote-ref-130)
131. Coleridge, *Notebooks*, II, 2546. [↑](#endnote-ref-131)
132. Bachelard, *Poetics*, xxviii. [↑](#endnote-ref-132)
133. “Principles,” 377. [↑](#endnote-ref-133)
134. Kant, Judgement, § 9, p. 48. [↑](#endnote-ref-134)