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Bakalářská práce
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Coleridge and the Self
Coleridge a já

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Abstract:

In the Romantic era, the concept of the Self changes its meaning. There is a shift from the traditional Cartesian consciousness towards perception of the Self as a complex structure including the unconscious. Conceiving of the Self anew struck not only philosophy but thinking about poetry and poetry as well. The thesis focuses on Samuel T. Coleridge, who is considered a major romantic poet and theoretician on the British Isles, and it illustrates the conceptual shift on two of his poems: “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” and “Kubla Khan”. At the same time, the thesis attempts at an explication of two complex philosophical problems that widely influenced the debates around the concept of the Self, i.e. the problem of the unity of subject and object, and the epistemological problem of the means of knowledge acquisition. Foreshadowing of the philosophical context allows us to situate the chosen poems in the process of the aforementioned conceptual modification.

Key words: S. T. Coleridge, the Self, imagination, “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”, “Kubla Khan”

Abstrakt:

Pojem „já“ během romantismu mění svůj význam. Lze zde sledovat posun od tradičního karteziánského vědomí k vnímání „já“ jako komplexní struktury, která zahrnuje i nevědomí. Konceptuální posun ve významu „já“ zasáhl nejen filosofii, ale i poezii a myšlení o ní. Práce se zaměřuje na Samuela T. Coleridge, který je považován za předního romantického básníka i teoretika na Britských ostrovech, a ilustruje zmiňovaný pojmový posun na jeho dvou básních, a to na Písni o starém námořníkovi a Kublajchánovi. Práce se zároveň snaží o výklad dvou komplexních, filosofických problémů, které zásadně ovlivnily debaty okolo konceptu „já“. Jde o problém jednoty subjektu a objektu a o epistemologické problém toho, jakým způsobem získáváme vědění. Nastínění filosofického kontextu nám dovoluje situovat vybrané básně v procesu zmiňované konceptuální modifikace.

Klíčová slova: S. T. Coleridge, Já, imaginace, Píseň o starém námořníkovi, Kublajchán

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Introduction

“Underlying the surface film of consciousness is the ‘bottomless boundless Deep’; the roots of life ‘stretch down fearfully to the regions of Death and Night’; and only ‘in these dark, mysterious depths... if aught is to be created, and not manufactured, must the work go on,’”¹ asserts Carlyle in his “*Characteristics*” enquiring after the origin of artistic creation. This sentence expresses two assumptions quite typical of romantic thinking. The first assumption is that the Self consists of consciousness plus unconscious mysterious regions whose functional mechanisms are unknown; and the second one is that art is in its essence an expression of the artist’s innermost subjectivity. Carlyle, suggesting that art is generated by these unconscious elements of the Self, as a child of the Romantic era, diverges from Classicist thinking twofold. Not only that the conception of art in Romanticism is completely different from the previous; a major change in the concept of the Self underlies this shift in poetics towards expressive theories. For Romantics, the Self is not a mere consciousness: it is an organic whole involving unconscious areas, too. Our objective is to illustrate the shift in the conception of the Self, that is inherent in romantic thought, on two of Coleridge’s poems. As this conceptual turnover is not an issue of artists exclusively, we are going to work with selected poems in relation to philosophical problems that played a crucial role in the problem. On the one hand, we believe, it is valid to connect Coleridge's poems with philosophical theories because the poet himself was educated in this area, reflected contemporary philosophical issues in his works and himself was contributing to the debate. Since Coleridge held that a great poet must be a profound metaphysician² and his poems are dealing with metaphysics implicitly (if not explicitly), we conclude that it is plausible to perceive Coleridge's poems in relation to selected philosophical problems of great urgency in his times.

On the other hand, it is indispensable to ask in what ways it is beneficial to illustrate philosophical problems on poetry or belles lettres in general. If we desire to do justice to literature, we cannot perceive it as a mere illustration or reflection of philosophical problems. Therefore, we are going

¹ Quoted in Meyer Harold Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, London: Oxford University Press, 1971, pp. 216

² Samuel T. Coleridge, *The Major Works*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1985, Letter to William Sotheby (13 July 1802), pp. 358

to adopt the point of view of the school of Philosophical Romanticism³ proposing that philosophical reflections of literature can lead to realization that literature is capable of expression of truths that for philosophy remain unpronounceable.⁴ By virtue of the tight connection of literature and philosophy in Romanticism we are thus enabled to show changes in perceptions of the Self in a more complex manner.

We have selected two philosophical problems behind this shift in conception of the Self concerning ontology and epistemology that were being dealt with in the Romantic times and illustrate their functioning on an analysis of two of Coleridge's poems: "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and "Kubla Khan". We would like to examine how these problems determine conceptions of the Self in Coleridge's works. The problems thematised by us are the question of subject/object unity and the epistemological dilemma between spontaneous production of imaginative powers and passive collecting of impressions. Explanation of mechanisms of these problems' functioning on concrete case studies, i.e. the selected poems, we believe, will render a complex insight into the holistic change of perception of the Self.

At the same time, we are going to focus on subconscious or irrational areas of the Self that are, as we are going to argue, thematised in these poems. In each poem, we are going to trace one unconscious area of the Self and demonstrate how the thematization of the irrational structures is undermined by the selected philosophical problem. The unconscious realm of subject that is going to be dealt with in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is dream. We are going to examine the structure of the poem that is widely recognized as dream-like and demonstrate how such interpretation illustrates the subject/ object unity problem. In "Kubla Khan" we will examine the field of memory and how the conception of memory is influenced by the debates about knowledge

³ According to Wayne Deakin, Philosophical Romanticism refers to a philosophical school that re-considers romantic problems in relation to current issues. He explains it as „a way of addressing the world, which looks towards on the one hand rejuvenating the experiences and philosophy of the Romantics while on the other hand examining the present world in new and exciting ways. The term denotes a series of contemporary writings by philosophers who are using the techniques of traditional Romanticism, with a view to re-inheriting and reorienting them towards an analysis of contemporary global society. These writers tend to interrogate issues such as the relationship between aesthetics and philosophy, the relationship between the individual and society and humanity's overall adaptation to the dynamics of modernity. This group also adapts traditional romantic concepts such as irony, metaphysics, individualism and imaginative autonomy into a modern context. Key thinkers in this group include Rorty, Cavell, Pippin, Bernstein, Bowie, Eldridge and Beiser." [Wayne Deakin, *Hegel and English Romantic Tradition*, New York: St Martin's Press 2015, pp. 7]

⁴ See Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche*, 2nd edition, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003, pp. 52–54.

acquisition. Nevertheless, at first, we will conceptually clarify the term “Romanticism”, foreshadow the romantic conception of the Self and situate Coleridge in the ongoing debate.

Conceptual Clarifications

The Concept of Romanticism

Writing about Romanticism is generally somewhat tricky especially due to the fact that it is not always possible to identify what exactly the terms “romantic” or “Romanticism” denote. Even if we facilitate our endeavour, omit to elaborate on the complicated history of the term “romantic” and contend with stating that it was originally supposed to refer to the world of the novel⁵, we are still left in doubt about how to demarcate it as a period, style or movement and determine its main features. “Romanticism is a notoriously slippery concept of modern history. As early as 1801, in his *Neology, or Vocabulary of New Words*, the French radical littérateur L. S. Mercier had written of the word ‘romantic’ that one could certainly feel but should not define it,”⁶ says Iain McCalman in *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age*. We somehow feel that wild nature contemplation, ancient ruins, accent on sentiment or thinking in dichotomies are romantic features, however, there is no universal manifesto that would list all ideas that are romantic or that would delineate a program of romantic thinking.

In fact, what we subsume under the single term “Romanticism”, is a set of differing artistic, conceptual and cultural attitudes and thoughts that originated in different countries across Europe and America in different times. The first instantiation of Romanticism is probably the tendency of the German Romantics to counter the Enlightenment and materialistic philosophy:

Schlegel and his comrades extolled the expressive, imaginative role of the artist; against the mechanistic Enlightenment materialism of the French philosophers, the German Romantics revered religion and feeling; against the universalist abstractions of French rationalism, they valued the organic, the particular, and the historical.⁷

⁵ Zdeněk Hrbata and Martin Procházka in their *Romantismus a romantismy* mention: “At the beginning, we find French word ‘roman’ which denoted a non-latin record of narrative in the Middle Ages. Adjectives like ‘romantic’, ‘romantique’, ‘romanesque’ in English and French are later derived from it. All of them originally denote the world of the novel. (Transl. author; originally: Na počátku nalézáme francouzské slovo “roman”, které ve středověku označovalo nelatinský zápis vyprávění. Z něj se pak odvozují přídavná jména v angličtině a ve francouzštině – “romantic”, “romantique”, “romanesque”. Všechna původně označují svět románu.) [Zdeněk Hrbata a Martin Procházka, *Romantismus a romantismy*, Praha: Karolinum, 2005, pp. 12]

⁶ Iain McCalman ed., *An Oxford Companion to Romantic Age: British Culture 1776-1832*, New York: Oxford University Press. 1999, pp. 1

⁷ Ibid.

In *On Being Authentic* Charles Guignon states not about German Romanticism exclusively that “The term ‘Romanticism’ refers to a sprawling and uneven set of tendencies and cultural forms that developed at various times and in very different ways in different parts of Europe in response to the Enlightenment worldview”⁸.

This opposition against the rationalist Enlightenment thinking will remain quite crucial for our purposes. We believe that explaining romantic thought processes on the background of the previous may well illustrate the unique shift of ideas typical of the era. M. H. Abrams explains the discursive rupture between the Enlightenment and Romanticism in terms of approaches to poetry. The romantic shift from mimetic (and pragmatic) towards expressive critical theories is illustrated by the metaphor of the mirror and the lamp. Perception of poetry as the mirroring of reality loses its justification due to various reasons and the interpretative frame of poetry is newly rendered by the genius of the author illuminating the meaning. According to expressive critical theories “a work of art is essentially the internal made external, resulting from a creative process operating under the impulse of feeling, and embodying the combined product of poet's perceptions, thoughts, and feelings.”⁹ Prevailing of this kind of interpretation of art during the Romantic era is inherently connected with a shift in perception not only of artistic genius, but of the Self in general.

⁸ Guignon, pp. 26

⁹ Meyer Harold Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, London: Oxford University Press, 1971, pp. 22

The Concept of the Self and the Romantic Writing

When Wordsworth writes his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* and states that "... all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings", he implies a brand-new situating of the subject. The topic of the Self for the Romantics stands in the centre of creative processes through self-expression and we dare say that it plays a major role in the romantic conceptualizations of the world in general. Harold Bloom in *Romanticism and Consciousness* even asserts that "Subjectivity or self-consciousness is the salient problem of Romanticism, at least for modern readers, who tend to station themselves in regard to the Romantics depending on how relevant or adequate they judge the dialectic of consciousness and imagination to be."¹⁰ Romantic attempts at redefinition of the problem of the Self stem overall mainly from dissatisfaction with solutions and answers offered by the Enlightenment. In the background of Enlightenment conceptions of the Self stand, among others, philosophical inventions of John Locke and René Descartes. "Part of the limitations in Enlightenment thought had been that it was drawn either from Descartes' rationalism or Lockean empiricism. For the historian of ideas, the Enlightenment split the inner (subject) and outer (substance) worlds from each other,"¹¹ notes Marciniak seeing the problem of the Enlightenment Self in its division from the outer world. Rationalistic philosophy of Descartes introduced the concept of certainty to the discourse about the Self through his notion of cogito. Even though John Locke accepted that there is a consciousness, he perceived it only as a mere moment in construction of the Self, which was to be defined by consciousness' unity through time. Nevertheless, an important statement of his epistemology is the fact that the consciousness is a passive recipient of perceptions that are caused by things in the world.

Albeit Descartes and Locke are not Enlightenment thinkers, their concept of personal identity hugely influenced those who were to pose the question of the Self after them (either in rationalistic or empiricist context) and thus help in naming a common feature of Enlightenment approaches towards the Self. Both in a sense perceive the world as divided between reason (or consciousness) and matter, thus separating the Self from the world. And, secondly, deem reason to be the quality crucial for determination of what the Self is, thus identifying it with consciousness¹². The Age of

¹⁰ Harold Bloom, *Romanticism and Consciousness*, New York: Norton and Company, 1970, pp.1

¹¹ Marciniak, pp. 370

¹² As Marciniak puts it: "...with the earliest stages of self-identity also came an analytically—rather than a spiritually-driven being." [Marciniak, pp. 317]

Reason, in short, praised reason as the instrument by which we understand the structure of the world and the Self, longing for a new ontological order, the one “dominated by the new natural philosophy and with it an understanding of our world through the new methodological reason as a means of discovery.”¹³

However, the Self of the Age of Reason essentially always suffers the impossibility of identity with itself. The means of rational analysis separate the reflecting “I” and the subject of reflection, be it the world or the Self. As Guignon puts it: “It is the nature of rational reflection that it requires a gap between the reflecting “I” and the stream of life from which it is dissociated in reflection and knowing. Because it introduces a fissure into the stream of life, knowing undermines the wholeness of the self.”¹⁴ Analytical reason fails to grasp and clarify the mechanisms of the Self in its unity, and therefore, Romantics feel the urge to redefine it. Some of them decide to base their notions of the Self on sentiment. Sentiment, contrary to reason, elicits a sense of wholeness of the perceived object, it cannot be wrong, it cannot misjudge – in case of grasping the Self, it is supposed to give a completed picture depending on immediate experience which is always true. Guignon comments on this problem as follows: “To heal the division within the self, we must regain our original grasp of the limits of reason. It is not reason that gives us guidance in understanding what is worthwhile; feelings alone show us what genuinely matters.”¹⁵ Consequently, feelings should have the capacity to reveal the truth of oneself. However, there is a major problem: if the truth of the Self is revealed by the means of sentiment, how does one guarantee that this sentiment is not fake? Are feelings to have a universal (i.e. unlimited in terms of time) claim on truth or is it sufficient that they are true in the very moment when they are being felt? And how do we recognize a genuine feeling? – These questions accompany the emerging notion of authenticity.

Considering the Copernican Revolution, we find the Self, its inner genuine life and truth as crucial topics of romantic pondering. The Self becomes the imaginary centre of the universe and all scientific, literary and artistic notions or phenomena are being redefined in relation to it. Its nature thus is one of the most examined areas. As put in *On Being Authentic*:

The ultimate metaphysical reality is the human Self, Romanticism and the ideal of authenticity independent of and untouched by anything outside itself, in its own unbounded freedom creating

¹⁴ Guignon, pp. 28

¹⁵ Guignon, pp 31

realities for itself, and in no way answerable to anything outside itself. In Wordsworth's words, "the mind of man becomes/A thousand times more beautiful than the earth/On which he dwells."¹⁶

In other words, the question "Who am I?" became one of the crucial questions of Romanticism. Scrutinizing one's feelings, inner desires and special states of mind becomes crucial for self-determination. "Unique and authentic are new words now being explored,"¹⁷ and romantic authors meditate possibilities of self-perception in an original way hitherto undreamt of. The inner reality of the Self is now perceived as something original, meaningful, meaning constructing and important. A tension between the desire to discover the depths of the Self and the strenuousness of communicating it in practice emerges articulated as impossibility of capturing the Self in its integrity by reason. It seems that the Romantics have been dealing with the topic of the Self regarding these problems, situating themselves in relation to rationalistic and sentimentalist self-views. In every case, we propose that whichever was the connection of the Romantics to rationalism or sentimentalism, in Romanticism it is further impossible to conceptualize the Self as a mere reflecting consciousness. The romantic Self faces the necessity of incorporation of feelings and unconscious items to its concept as those now seem to constitute its nature via memory, dreams or phantasms essentially.

The concept of the unconscious in romantic thought cannot be, however, defined positively and unanimously. By the unconscious we rather mean the non-conscious, everything belonging to the Self that is not consciousness. As Geoffrey Hartman puts it: "Unconsciousness remains an ambiguous term in Romantic and Victorian periods, referring to a state distinctly other than consciousness or simply to unselfconsciousness."¹⁸ Therefore, manipulation with the unconscious in Romanticism rather varies depending on the theoretical approach of the author.

¹⁶ Guignon, pp 33-4

¹⁷ Marciniak, pp. 373

¹⁸ Bloom, pp. 55

Coleridge and Writing the Self

Coleridge, as a major Romantic who was widely educated in German and English philosophy, develops a stance towards the issue of the Self that reflects to a certain point contemporary philosophical debates. According to John Beer, it was “Coleridge who first gave the most important place to the inward life and perceptions of man, as opposed to his outward behaviour.”¹⁹ We assume that Coleridge intensively thought through the tensions concerning the conceptions of the Self in Romanticism. Even though we acknowledge that the prism of the romantic Self is only one of many possible ways to perceive and interpret Coleridge's writing, we believe it to be an essential one. “Writing in his *Notebooks*, Coleridge found that it was in the new world of psychology where he found consciousness: ‘...the problem, the solution of which cannot too variously be re-worded, too manifoldly be illustrated....Almost all is yet to be achieved’,”²⁰ notes Marciniak in *Towards a History of Consciousness*. For Coleridge as a thinker, metaphysics and psychology are deeply intertwined: he maintains that topics that need to be examined on the field of metaphysics consist mainly of setting the place for the Self in the system.

When Coleridge meditates on the order in nature, he explains it on the background of the evolving sense of the Self: “The later Coleridge developed an elaborate philosophy of nature which leans heavily on Schelling's and Steffens' Naturphilosophie. Nature is consistently interpreted by analogy with the progress of man to self-consciousness...”²¹ In *Biographia Literaria* the topic of the Self emerges especially in Coleridge's metaphysical sketches that think over the epistemological dilemma between imagination and perception. As Martin Procházka notes in *Romantismus a osobnost*: “...in Coleridge's treatise the theme of personality comes to the fore in quite an important place: in the seam between preliminary philosophical reflections and aesthetic theory of imagination.”²² Albeit Coleridge writes *Biographia Literaria* which is a literary autobiography and his major theoretical attempt, he does not literally render a universal theory of psychology in his writing. We rather notice this topic as diffused within his works as a revolving focal point. The urge to conceptualize the Self in its wholeness, the separation of the inner Self from the outer world

¹⁹ Beer, pp. 14

²⁰ Marciniak, pp. 373

²¹ Wellek, 163

²² Martin Procházka, *Romantismus a osobnost*, Pardubice: Nakladatelství Mgr. Marie Mlejnkové, 1996, pp. 33 [Transl. author; originally: “...v Coleridgeově spise [se] osobnostní tematika dostává do popředí, a to na poměrně důležitém místě, na ‚švu‘ mezi předběžnými filosofickými úvahami a estetickou teorií imaginace.]

or the question of how to define the Self in relation to the world are crucial points of view of Coleridge's poetry. "What is there in thee, Man, that can be known? – / Dark fluxion, all unfixable by thought,"²³ writes Coleridge in his poem "Self-Knowledge" questioning reason's capacity to know the Self. He finds that there are areas of the "I" that are obscure and like the "dark flux" defy rationalization; in other words, that the concept of consciousness does not exhaust the reality of the Self. M.H. Abrams in *Mirror and the Lamp* in the context of Coleridge's organic theory notes that

Coleridge followed Schelling in maintaining that the artist's mind, repeating the workings of external nature, where we find a 'coistantaneity of the plan and execution,' contains in itself a similar unconscious purposefulness. 'Hence there is in genius itself an unconscious activity; nay, that is the genius in the man of genius.' Coleridge, therefore, like the German theorists, holds that literary invention involves the natural, unplanned, and unconscious process by which things grow.²⁴

Coleridge himself in his *Biographia Literaria* names the unconscious as a vital element in artistic creation and thus in self-constitution, too. Nevertheless, it is not possible to infer that Coleridge denies reason and adheres to feeling or the unconscious without any rational order of the universe. Martin Procházka in *Romantismus a osobnost* comments on Coleridge's inspiration by German philosophers (especially Schelling) in creation of a stance held towards the Self:

While Schelling's system in fact creates a theoretical model of personality, I which is determined by interaction with objective reality conceived of as a resultant of free actions of other selves, it seems that Coleridge's dialectic holds an older, cartesian, rational conception of subject as I, recognizing the inner dynamics of its consciousness, and Kantian notion of reality as thing in itself.²⁵

Even though widely influenced by Schelling and Naturphilosophie of German philosophers, Coleridge remains convinced of the rationalistic stance to a certain degree. We must not forget that despite the fact that Coleridge might have reflected the insufficiency of the concept of the Self as consciousness, he does not favour sentiment nor any irrational human capacity as an explicatory tool. As Beer writes:

²³ Samuel T. Coleridge, *The Major Works*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1985, pp. 152

²⁴ Abrams, pp. 222

²⁵ Procházka, pp. 32-33 (Transl. author; originally: Zatímco Schellingův systém vytváří vlastně teoretický model osobnosti, já, které je určeno interakcí s objektivní realitou chápanou jako výslednice svobodného jednání jiných já, zdá se, že Coleridgeova dialektika zůstává ještě při starším, karteziánském, racionálním pojetí subjektu jako já poznávajícího vnitřní dynamiku svého vědomí a při kantovském pojetí reality jako „věci o sobě“.)

Coleridge did not wish to destroy rationalism: his aim was simply to set the current idea of rationalism in a broader perspective. Far from wishing to cast down Reason from her throne, he wished to restore to her some of the qualities which an empirical age withheld. In the same way, the object of his poetic art was not to produce a counterweight to Augustan verse, but to create a poetry which ministered to the human consciousness as a whole.²⁶

Coleridge recognizes the problems regarding the rationalist conception of the Self, however, he does not give up on reason's ability to comprehend it. He solely desires to broaden the sense of what is comprehended and, in his poems, presents the Self as a complex instance that contains, apart from self-consciousness, irrational or unreflected elements. We are not going to search for a unitary line of Coleridge's thought, nor precisely define what opinion exactly Coleridge held on the Self and what kind of rationalism Coleridge accepted in which stage of his life as his thought is quite varied in time.²⁷ Our aim is to show that Coleridge as a romantic thinker does perceive the Self as a complex structure where unconscious and unreflected components are present and play their genuine role.

²⁶ Beer, pp. 10

²⁷ We would like to point out that Lawrence S. Lockridge does not find convincing endeavours to situate Coleridge precisely in a single thought school. He proposes an approach to Coleridge studies which consists rather in connecting 'the continuities of an internal dialogue' than in searching for a 'total consistency in doctrine or steady development toward some settled point of view'. [Lawrence S. Lockridge in 'Explaining Coleridge's Explanation: Toward a Practical Methodology for Coleridge Studies' in *Reading Coleridge: Approaches and Applications*, ed. Walter B. Crawford (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1979), pp. 48]

The Sunless Sea

*“What if you slept
And what if
In your sleep
You dreamed
And what if
In your dream
You went to heaven
And there plucked a strange and beautiful flower
And what if
When you awoke
You had that flower in your hand
Ah, what then?”*

The change in the conception of the Self that was underway during the Romantic era has, generally speaking, the character of transition from an isolated subject affected by the outer object towards the Self united with the objective world, Self as a participant in the creation of reality. The philosophical and literary tradition preceding the Romantics grounded its concept of the Self in substantial dualism and opposition of subject and object. The Self, conceived of as consciousness standing in opposition to the world which is comprehended by it, is the image depicting the Self's status. This order, however, was completely turned upside down during the Romantic era. The problems and questions that led to this turnover, questions that Romantics were posing and trying to answer (i.e. those questions that became characteristic of the philosophy of German Idealism) were formulated mainly in direct reaction to Kant's critical philosophy. In his ontology, Kant remained to a certain degree within the dualistic tradition. The world, according to the first *Critique*, is undermined by capacities of subject's knowledge. The form of things is essentially determined by our perception or, in other words, what we encounter in the world are mere phenomena, appearances of things in themselves shaped by our perceptive and cognitive capacities. The subject thus wholly determines the structure of the phenomenal world which is, nevertheless, corresponding to the world of things in themselves. Kant claims that we cannot know *what* things in themselves are like, how they function bereft of the eye of perceiving subject, however, he insists on the possibility of knowing *that* they exist and somehow affect the phenomena we perceive in them. Thus, Kant reproduces the ontological scheme of the unbridgeable difference between subject and object with problems this scheme brings, such as the question of possible contact or correspondence between those two separate entities and the inherent threat of solipsism. German

Idealists elaborate on these problems and criticise Kant's dualism, among others, for the impossibility of objective statements. As Hegel notes:

Objectivity of thought, in Kant's sense, is again to a certain sense subjective. Thoughts, according to Kant, although universal and necessary categories, are only our thoughts – separated by an impassable gulf from the thing, as it exists apart from our knowledge. But the true objectivity of thinking means that the thoughts, far from being merely ours, must at the same time be the real essence of the things, and of whatever is an object to us.²⁸

Hegel is going to argue that reality, part of which are our thoughts, is constituted in accordance with our concepts. In other words, he will try to reconcile the chasm between subject and object and assert that those are essentially interdependent and mutually constitutive ontological units. This endeavour is a connecting feature of philosophers of German Idealism who, in quest for the escape from dualism of subject and object, had to find their way between materialism and solipsism. Thus, according to Frederick Beiser, the Romantics were trying to connect two seemingly opposite philosophical systems: on the one hand, the naturalistic, realistic monism of Spinozism, and on the other hand, Fichte's subjective idealism with its inherent dualism.²⁹ They felt that the solution of their problem is neither to favour the objective status of nature perceiving the subject as its mere product, nor to deny the outer world whatsoever and ground all reality in the Self. For Romantics, an essential interconnection of subjectivity with the world of matter became vital. As Abrams suggests, they attempted "...to overcome the sense of man's alienation from the world by healing the cleavage between subject and object, between the vital, purposeful, value-full world of private experience and the dead postulated world of extension, quantity, and motion."³⁰ The necessary consequent rethinking of the status of matter and its connection to the Self resulted in the invention of the philosophy of absolute idealism. That was a systematic solution of the aforementioned problem which was advocated by Hegel, Schelling (whose work was Coleridge's major inspiration) and some Romantics. It was grounded in following propositions:

First, there is a single universal substance in nature, which is the absolute. Second, this absolute consists in living force, so that it is neither subjective nor objective, but the unity of them both.

²⁸ Georg W. F. Hegel trans. William Wallace, 2nd ed., *The Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences, The Logic*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1892, pp. 86

²⁹ For more detail, see Frederick Beiser, "The Paradox of Romantic Metaphysics", *Philosophical Romanticism*, ed. Nikolas Kompridis, London: Routledge, 2006, pp. 217-237

³⁰ Abrams, 65

Third, through its organic structure all of nature conforms to a purpose, plan, or design, which is not created by God but inherent in matter itself.³¹

The combination of substantial monism, vitalism and inherently teleological organization of nature completely restructure the relation between the subject and the object: in the romantic thought grounded in the absolute idealism, these two are to be synthesized in a fundamental unity. Relationship between the Self and the world is thus radically changed. The concept of the Self shifts from a passive recipient of sensual data to an active participant on the shape of objective world. As Beiser explains in his “The Enlightenment and Idealism”:

The mind and body now become completely interdependent. The mind is the highest degree of organization and development of the living forces of the body, while the body is the lowest degree of organization and development of the living forces of the mind. The subjective and ideal is the internalization of living force, while the objective and the real is the externalization of living force. As Schelling put it in some poetic lines: “[M]ind is invisible nature, while nature is visible mind.”³²

Absolute idealism thus proposes a world-scheme where the Self produces the outer reality from within while its reality is at the same time being in the objective world.

The figure of the Self creating the world it is a part of or, in other words, unity of subject and object, is a theoretical stance held, to a certain degree, by our poet. Coleridge, inspired namely by philosophy of Schelling, was a great promoter of organicist conceptions of mind, nature and art in England. Demonstrating his affinity with German Idealists he writes in a letter to W. Sotheby, that

Nature has her proper interest, and he will know what it is who believes and feels that everything has a life of its own, and that we are all One Life. A poet’s heart and intellect should be coined, intimately and unified with the great appearance of nature, and not merely held in solution and loose mixture with them, in the shape of formal similes.³³

Coleridge basically adopts the monistic point of view in terms of subject/object difference problem believing that subject and object (that is presented as nature or the whole of the world) create a teleological unity. I. A Richards asserts that for Coleridge “Subject is the Self or the

³¹ Frederick Beiser, “The Enlightenment and Idealism”, *Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*, ed. Karl Ameriks, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 33

³² Ibid.

³³ Samuel T. Coleridge, *Collected Letters of S. T. Coleridge*, ed. E. L. Griggs, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956-71, To W. Sotheby, 10. Sept. 1802, pp. 403

Intelligence, the sentient knowing Mind; his Object is Nature, what is known by the mind in the act of knowing.”³⁴ Mind, artistic creation produced by the mind, and its unity with the world have a certain common purpose and, what is more, a common substance. Therefore, it is possible for Coleridge to liken mind to the world and the process of artistic creation to natural processes. He thus often metaphorizes the functioning of reason and its products in terms of organic growth.³⁵ When Richards in his *Coleridge on Imagination* famously coins knowledge and ‘growledge’,³⁶ he points out exactly that, in Coleridge’s thought, the mind is being epitomized as a growing plant that is granted its evolving and growth partly because of its own products – the air it has created. It is important to mention that all this is unconsciously done, the system in the world and the growth are granted by the order inherent to the substance they represent. Coleridge’s inspiration by the philosophy of organicism which can be defined by metaphorically attributing life and growth to its major categories³⁷ is in his works expressed quite overtly by metaphors of minds as plants, aeolian harps or fountains. Nevertheless, we judge that other features of his figurative language – e.g., symbols – can be perceived through this prism, too.

According to *The Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics*, a symbol is a “sign, which joins a signifier and a signified.”³⁸ It means that it is a figure based on a more complex scheme than representation: the picture that stands for a thing represented is a part of the process of making the thing. For instance, tempestuous sea symbolically depicting danger is, indeed, the very source of this danger. Coleridge was quite interested in the nature of symbol and its function in art and creative processes; he is convinced that “[t]rue natural philosophy is comprised in the study of the science and language of symbols,” explaining that: “[b]y a symbol I mean, not a metaphor or allegory or any other figure of speech or form of fancy, but an actual and essential part of that, the whole of which it represents.”³⁹ Nature speaks to man by the language of symbols that emerge in one’s mind while apprehending nature. And, at the same time, ideas are most precisely expressed

³⁴ Ivor A. Richards, *Coleridge on Imagination*, London: Oxford University Press, 1934, pp. 47

³⁵ “Coleridge, therefore, like the German theorists, holds that literary invention involves the natural, unplanned, and unconscious process by which things grow.” [Abrams, pp. 222]

³⁶ Richards, pp. 52

³⁷ Abrams, pp. 168

³⁸ *The Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Roland Greene, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012, pp. 1390

³⁹ *The Complete Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. William G. T. Shedd, New York: Oxford University Press, 1853, I, pp. 465

symbolically: “an IDEA, in the highest sense of that word, cannot be conveyed but by a symbol.”⁴⁰ Symbol rendered (by an artist or a thinker) is thus an abridgement of the structure of nature “which makes the whole of nature comprehensible to man.”⁴¹ Regarding the aforementioned problem of unity of subject and object, we can say that the structure of functioning of the symbol mirrors the structure of construction of reality as conceived of from the absolute idealist point of view. As symbol joins the thing presented and the thing represented into a unity where both items are inseparably connected, the mind projects onto and thus co-creates the objective structure of nature it apprehends. For Coleridge who “thought of art as imitation of the creative process”⁴² and his oeuvre this nature of symbols rendering the general in the particular becomes crucial. In his poems we encounter countless symbols whose presence may be interpreted as an endeavour to express man’s ideas that, being expressed, shape the objective world.

In “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” symbolic expressions are abundant, indeed, and interpretations of the central focus of the symbolic language of the poem have been numerous: from Robert Penn Warren’s explanation of the poem as a journey of the mind to the land of imagination,⁴³ over conceiving of the poem as of a religious tale of crime and punishment⁴⁴ to interpreting it as an expression of innermost desires, failures and apologies of Coleridge himself.⁴⁵ However, we will not predominantly analyse the symbols of the poem meaning-wise, rather, we are going to focus mainly on the logic that may stand behind the structure and symbolic language of “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”. “The bewildering panorama of objective and subjective, material and spiritual, supernatural and natural, real and fantastic, makes the poem a treacherous

⁴⁰ Samuel T. Coleridge, *The Major Works*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1985, pp. 326

⁴¹ Mary Rahme, “Coleridge’s Concept of Symbolism” in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol. 9, No. 4, Nineteenth Century, (Autumn, 1969), pp. 619-632 Published by: Rice University Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/450036> Accessed: 28-06-2018 14:43 UTC, pp. 627

⁴² Rahme, 619

⁴³ See Eliot B. Gose, ‘Coleridge and the Luminous Gloom: An Analysis of the “Symbolical Language” in “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”’, *PMLA*, Vol. 75, No. 3 (Jun., 1960), pp. 238-244, Modern Language Association Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/460334> Accessed: 29-06-2018 14:01 UTC, pp. 238

⁴⁴ J. W. R. Purser, “Interpretation of The Ancient Mariner”, *The Review of English Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 31 (Aug., 1957), pp. 249-256, Oxford University Press Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/511367> Accessed: 23-02-2018 11:18 UTC

⁴⁵ L. M. Grow, “‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’: Multiple Veils of Illusion’, *Notre Dame English Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Fall 1973), pp. 23-30, The University of Notre Dame Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42748866> Accessed: 23-02-2018 11:18 UTC

quagmire of misleading appearance.”⁴⁶ Thus L. M. Grow describes the nature of Coleridge’s masterpiece. And, indeed, it seems so. Considering the hallucinatory descriptions of the whirling green, and blue, and white witch’s oils of the sea, ships wandering in the middle of nowhere, a dead bird hanging round one’s neck – a religious omen? – (super)natural spirits and involuntary listeners to the story who, spellbound, cannot leave due to the “glittering eye” of the creepy mariner, ... the whole of the poem more than anything else resembles a reverie. It is full of images and occurrences that do not follow any logical scheme, simply do not make sense:

In the question of causality in “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” Wordsworth famously pointed out that “[t]he events having no necessary consequence do not produce each other, but they seem to.”⁴⁷ In other words, the events of “The Mariner” do not follow one another, consequentiality is not logical. In one instant, the mariner cherishes in the presence of the bird of good omen and the other he kills it cold-bloodedly:

‘God save thee, ancient Mariner!
From the fiends, that plague thee thus! –
Why look’st thou so?’ – With my cross-bow
I shot the Albatross.⁴⁸

Why does he do so, we never get to know. Generally speaking, reasons for many occurrences of the poem are not given at all. Why does the albatross, first of all, come to accompany the ship? Why does the sky brighten and the wind sails the crew northwards even after the death of the bird? Why does the mysterious ship with the Night-mare Life-in-Death appear? Or why does the mariner’s heart gush with love when coming into sight of water-snakes?

O happy living things! No tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware:

⁴⁶ Grow, pp. 28

⁴⁷ Quoted in John L. Lowes, *The Road to Xanadu*, London: Constable, 1927, pp. 303

⁴⁸ Samuel T. Coleridge, “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”, *The Major Works*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1985, pp. 51 [line 79-82]

Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.⁴⁹

Whether it was the kind saint who caused the outburst of love in the mariner's heart, consequent possibility of prayer and sinking of the albatross to the sea or not, is hard to say. We are left to consider the causal relations missing from the sequence of events of the poem. Or, there might be a completely different logical structure of continuity than we are accustomed to in the physical world.

...[w]e come to the conclusion that the only way out of this logical labyrinth is to accept every event as an individual event, as an arbitrary series of effects without causes (known and perceptible). Therefore, randomness plays a major role in the poem: it is a question of coincidence, much more than of causality.⁵⁰

Manuel Botero Camacho concludes that events of the poem are completely arbitrary, not connected by any causal relation.

What contributes to the generally confused nature of the poem on many levels, is the fact that many instances and images of "The Mariner" seem to be products of his raving mind or hallucinations. Even if we omit to comment on the presence of supernatural spirits, we encounter the Night-mare Life-in-Death, for instance, who is certainly not real and whose description strongly resembles the mariner's phantasm:

Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold:
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Night-mare Life-in-Death was she,
Who thicks man's blood with cold.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Coleridge, pp. 57 [lines 282-7]

⁵⁰ Manuel Botero Camacho, "To Dream or not to Dream: Incursión en la Lógica de la Canción de S. T. Coleridge", *Razón Crítica*, 1, 122-147, 2016, doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21789/25007807.1139>, pp. 136
[Translation: author; originally: ...[s]e llega a la conclusión de que la única manera de salir de este laberinto lógico, es aceptar cada evento como un evento individual, una serie arbitraria de efectos sin causas (conocidas o perceptibles). La accidentalidad, entonces, cobra un papel protagónico en el análisis del poema: un asunto de casualidad más que de causalidad.]

⁵¹ Coleridge, pp. 55 [lines 190-4]

Who is this mysterious lady and why is she accompanied by Death? She may be a mere outcome of the mariner's confused senses, as well as the unchanging state of dead bodies of his fellow mariners. Even if exposed to extreme heat, they do not decay:

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
Nor rot nor reek did they:
The look with which they looked on me
Had never passed away.⁵²

They do not even smell, and their terrifying look haunts the mariner even with his eyes closed. In fact, this is simply not possible. We are, therefore, led to consider the option that all of these are the mariner's fancies, delusions produced by his tortured imagination. Throughout the poem, it is not clear what is the mariner's fancy, and what is real; what is just an illusion, and what is truth; what is subjective, and what exists objectively. Charles A. Owen comments on the topsy-turvy character of the poem as follows:

The geography of journey disappears from the poem. The external and internal worlds fuse. What we witness is man striving to account for the incomprehensible and using as evidence all that his awareness encounters: dreams, visions, the vivid moments of insight when the creatures and things of the outside world are possessed by the mind. It is a world full of presences and meaning. The ordinary, the repetitive, the routine no longer exist. Even the causal relationships that belong to the everyday world seem no longer to operate.⁵³

The poem has a character of a personal story told from the subjective perspective of an unreliable narrator. Thus, the reader is – like the wedding guest – compelled to perceive the tale of the ancient mariner from his own, often confused, point of view and accept it as the only truth at hand.

This subjective nature of the poem is well exhibited in the use of nature and natural processes or events. They, to a certain degree, mirror the mariner's inner processes and, what is more, they influence the logic of the story. Considering the subject/object unity problem, it almost seems as if nature and the mariner's psyche were intertwined and co-created the world, kept the events going,

⁵² Coleridge, pp. 56-7 [lines 253-6]

⁵³ Charles A. Owen, "Structure in the Ancient Mariner", *College English*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (Jan., 1962), pp. 261-267, National Council of Teachers of English Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/373065> Accessed: 23-02-2018 11:20 UTC, pp. 264

together. For instance, the crew experience extreme heat and drought, possibly as a punishment for shooting the albatross:

Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, every where.
Nor any drop to drink.⁵⁴

And, after the blessing of the water-snakes by the mariner, when the penance is over, it starts raining suddenly and the mariner is saved:

The silly buckets on the deck,
That had so long remained,
I dreamt that they were full of dew
And when I awoke, it rained.⁵⁵

We are compelled to ask what kind of logic this world, where the purely subjective story influences nature and where nature itself acts in accordance with the story, has. What kind of world enables such a complete appropriation of the objective world by the subject? Botero Camacho has an answer at hand: "...it is almost impossible not to relate the hallucinatory poem of Coleridge's with the world of dreams."⁵⁶ Dream-like nature has been attributed to "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" univocally by many recognized Coleridgean scholars. Not only that Thomas de Quincey characterizes the poem as a "poem on delirium, confounding its own dream-scenery with external things, and connected with the imagery of high latitudes."⁵⁷ For instance, Cecil M. Bowra⁵⁸ or John L. Lowes in his *The Road to Xanadu* have asserted the same. As foreshadowed earlier, from the rational point of view, events of the poem (non-existent causality, hallucinatory objects or characters and natural phenomena influenced by the inner logic of one subject's story) cannot be real. However, they seem real, we read them as real, as having a kind of structure and logic. The dream-like logic is deeply connected with the subjective; the laws are irrational but as if well-

⁵⁴ Coleridge, pp. 52 [lines 119-122]

⁵⁵ Coleridge, pp. 58 [lines 297-300]

⁵⁶ Botero Camacho, pp. 139

[Translation: author; originally: "...puede ser una declaración acerca de los sueños: es casi imposible no relacionar el alucinado poema de Coleridge con el mundo de los sueños."]

⁵⁷ Thomas de Quincey, "Literary and Lake Reminiscences," in *The Collected Writings of Thomas de Quincey*, ed. by David Masson, Edinburgh: Black, 1889, II, pp. 145

⁵⁸ Cecil M. Bowra, *The Romantic Imagination*, London: Oxford University Press, 1961

known and making sense somehow. As Lowes states, this dream-like logic is, being expressed by such a piece of art, intimately comprehensible and compelling to be believed in: The poem's "...[w]orld is, in essence, the world of a dream. Its consequence is the dream's irrelevance, and by a miracle of art we are possessed, as we read, with that sense of an intimate logic, consecutive and irresistible and more real than reality, which is the dream's supreme illusion."⁵⁹ The nature of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is thus best characterized by Coleridge's quote on the nature of dreams and our relation to them: "We do not conceive the matter of our dreams real, we just do not realize it is unreal."⁶⁰ Through poems like "The Ancient Mariner" the rational opens to the irrational accepting logic of dreams, phantasms and illusions.⁶¹ The mind is now opened to the unconscious, the concept of the Self broadens to incorporate what is not conscious, too.

This dream-like nature of the poem, a structural feature expressing the semantic change in the concept of the Self, however, points to a set of problems dealt with by Coleridge especially later in *Biographia Literaria*. The mariner functions as both, the subject of the dream and the channel through which we understand the world of the poem. Thus, the world does not make sense to the mariner and we are constantly being persuaded about its absurdity by the deeply subjective style of the poem's narrating. However, the world is, meta-poetically speaking, full of symbols that need to be taken into consideration. We believe that the symbolic language speaking to the reader throughout the poem not only accounts for the dream-like structure but brings into focus a topic that permeates Coleridge's thought: the topic of creation. How exactly does the subject/object unity function, what are the capacities in man that enable us to co-create the world and how do we create it? All of these questions determine Coleridge's theoretical and poetical endeavour. Humphrey House in his "The Ancient Mariner" notices how Coleridge points out the connection of this topic to symbolic clusters of the landscape under the sun and the moon. He picks up the threads of abovementioned Robert Penn Warren asserting that sunlight in Coleridge's works and especially in "The Ancient Mariner" symbolizes understanding and moonlight represents imagination.⁶² The

⁵⁹ Lowes, pp. 303

⁶⁰ Quoted in Cecil M. Bowra, *The Romantic Imagination*, London: Oxford University Press, 1961, pp. 138

⁶¹ See Botero Camacho, pp. 146 ["Como en los sueños, hay que aceptarlos como son, sin preguntas hacia los porqués, pues las realidades del sueño no pueden ser evaluadas bajo los parámetros de la razón, pues no responden a relaciones causales, deben ser entendidas en el febril lenguaje del sueño, abriendo así la mente racional a los mundos de ilusión y fantasía, del milagro y la sorpresa."]

⁶² See Humphrey House, "The Ancient Mariner", *English Romantic Poets: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. M. H. Abrams, New York: Oxford University Press, 1975

analytical power of understanding, however, in “The Ancient Mariner” causes death and suffering: tragic occurrences always happen in sunlight, quite contrary to the moonlight: “evil and disaster in the poem occur under the light of the sun, and the different phases of the redemption occur under the light of the moon.”⁶³ It seems that imagination and reason are put into opposition and imagination has a beneficial effect on actions of the mariner. He does not understand what happens under the moon and why he is redeemed, however, this lack of understanding does not imply any deficiency. The imaginative, unknown and irrational that stem from depths of one’s Self in the end play the role of the most needed faculties. House broadens the meaning of the symbolic cluster of moonlight and mist to incorporate not only imagination but also the experiential and irrational. He does not imply that symbols in “The Ancient Mariner” function as an explanation of his theoretical conception of imagination, nevertheless, he perceives them as the beginning of Coleridge’s lifelong theoretical enquiry. Coleridge never stopped exploring the irrational and imaginative capacities of man, asking the question of the exact nature of unifying the subject and the object. The symbolic language woven into the tissue of the poem thus alludes to the problem of creation and Coleridge’s later reflections on imagination.

⁶³ House, pp. 227

Doing Nothing Ends in Being Nothing⁶⁴

“...[G]ive me matter and motion and I will construct you the universe,”⁶⁵ proclaims Descartes according to *Biographia Literaria*; and Coleridge comments on that as follows: “We must of course understand him to have meant: I will render the construction of the universe intelligible.”⁶⁶ The thirteenth chapter of Coleridge’s literary life in print thus opens with connection of creating of objective reality and subject’s understanding. I. A. Richards in his *Coleridge on Imagination* notes that “...Coleridge’s theory of knowing treats knowing as a kind of making, i.e. the bringing into being of what is known.”⁶⁷ Put differently, an essential coalescence of knowledge and being is crucial for Coleridge’s thought in general. Our task will be to enquire about the nature of this coalescence.

When the venerable Sage of Koenigsberg reversed the order of the universe by setting man to its centre, he reversed the order of knowledge acquisition, too. As mentioned before, he held that being is to a certain degree undermined by human knowledge and what we perceive are phenomena of things in themselves adjusted to fit our knowing capabilities. The shape of the world is determined by the subject, not otherwise, which is the complete opposite of the beliefs of pre-Kantian metaphysical and epistemological tradition. In terms of knowledge acquisition, the Self had been conceptualized as a passive recipient of data that are being sent towards her knowing capacities by objects themselves. And, as noted in the previous chapter, the shift towards the Self that is active during the act of apprehension, which stance was widely held by Romantics, means a definite reversal of the scheme. M. H. Abrams reflects this revolution while speaking of a change in metaphorical apparatus that accompanied Romanticism. Metaphors of mind in literature previous to the romantic turnover, Abrams suggests, were mostly inspired by the philosophy of John Locke and had the semblance of a passive recipient of the data delivered by objects:

The mind in Locke’s *Essay* is said to resemble a mirror which fixes the objects it reflects. Or ... it is a tabula rasa on which sensations write or paint themselves. Or (employing the analogy of camera obscura, in which light, entering through a small aperture, throws an image of the external scene on

⁶⁴ Coleridge’s *Notebooks, A Selection*, ed. Seamus Perry, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 9

⁶⁵ Samuel T. Coleridge, *The Major Works*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 308

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Richards, 49

the wall) external and internal senses are said to be ‘the windows by which light is let into this dark room.’⁶⁸

This picture of the mind as affected by objects, however, remained accepted and reproduced long after Locke’s death, until the Romantic era, we can say. According to Abrams, the metaphorical language of the Romantics influenced by German Idealism and its ideas expresses this shift metaphorically depicting the mind by completely different images. He suggests that even though vehicles of these metaphors vary (from stream or fountain to a lamp), they ordinarily express activity in the role of the recipient of objective data:

The analogies for the mind in the writings of Wordsworth and Coleridge show a radical transformation. Varied as these are, they usually agree in picturing the mind in perception as active rather than inertly receptive, and as contributing to the world in the very process of perceiving the world.⁶⁹

The problem of origin and the question after the agent of the acquisition of knowledge is in Romanticism solved by philosophies of German Idealists (along the lines of solution of the problem of subject/object unity treated hereinbefore) as follows: subject becomes an active participant on the process of knowing and she, by means of her innate capacities, shapes the object that is being understood. As foreshadowed in the previous chapter, Coleridge perceives the subject as an organic whole suggesting that “imaginative unity is an organic unity: a self-evolved system, constituted by a living interdependence of parts, whose identity cannot survive their removal from the whole.”⁷⁰ Coleridge’s depiction of mind as a plant expresses the organic unity of the Self knowing with the Self organically growing and merging with its production. According to Richards, Coleridge held that “[t]o know is in its very essence a verb active”, in fact, he held that there is a parallel between knowing and growing: “the rules of the IMAGINATION are themselves the very powers of growth and production.”⁷¹ In the previous chapter, we were trying to show *that* this figure is essential for Coleridge’s thought; that the unity of subject and object plays a major role in his oeuvre. Now, we are compelled to enquire: *how?* What capacities of the mind enable it to shape the object, what exactly is the subject’s active stream; and mainly, how does it function?

⁶⁸ Abrams, 57

⁶⁹ Abrams, 58

⁷⁰ Abrams, pp. 175

⁷¹ Richards, pp. 52

Grosvenor Powell in his article “Coleridge's ‘Imagination’ and the Infinite Regress of Consciousness” notes:

In order to demonstrate the mysterious unity in being of the objective (that which is known) and the subjective (that which knows), Coleridge begins first with the one taken in isolation and then with the other, and shows that they both issue in the perfect coalescence where object and subject, being and knowing, are identical. The objective, through a regress of expanding consciousness, becomes subjective as it becomes known: The phenomena (the material) must wholly disappear, and the laws alone (the formal) must remain.⁷²

He asserts that to apprehend Coleridge’s usage of the subject/object unity problem in practice it is necessary to pay attention to the knowing subject and its inner laws. It seems that the object ends up being fully explained by the activity of subject’s mental capacities and thus becomes identical with it; what is real about the object is the knowable, rational structure. Richards expresses a similar train of thought when schematically depicting Coleridge’s notion of theory of acquisition of knowledge: Subject – Awareness – Object.⁷³ It is suggested that the Object is in fact the Subject’s projection, an apparition perceived by Subject and nothing else. Turning towards the subject and explaining her capacities and their *modus operandi* in order to clarify the objective world is a step taken by Coleridge in his theoretical treatises, too. In his literary autobiography, he presupposes two infinite, essentially counteracting powers in subject that are indestructible; their interaction produces ‘*tertium aliquid*’ – something third, or ‘finite generation.’ Coleridge holds that “this *tertium aliquid* can be no other than an interpenetration of the counteracting powers, partaking of both.”⁷⁴ In other words, it means that there are two forces in the subject and their cooperation produces objective reality. Coleridge deals with this problem in Chapter XIII of *Biographia Literaria*, called ‘On imagination, or the *esemplastic* power’ wherein he distinguishes between a) *primary imagination* that is to be “the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM,”⁷⁵ and b) *secondary imagination* which is of the same kind as the primary imagination, however, its manner of functioning differs: “It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate...” and “is essentially

⁷² Grosvenor Powell, Coleridge's "Imagination" and the Infinite Regress of Consciousness, *ELH*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (Jun., 1972), pp. 266-278, The Johns Hopkins University Press, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2872246>, Accessed: 14-07-2018 06:59 UTC, pp. 274

⁷³ See Richards, pp. 54

⁷⁴ Coleridge, pp. 310

⁷⁵ Coleridge, pp. 313

vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead.”⁷⁶ The subject, who is now the agent of perception, abounds with the animate power of the primary imagination that incessantly creates new realities and unifies dichotomies; and on the other hand, there is the analytical, dissipating secondary imagination, too.

Nevertheless, Coleridge’s presentation of the processes of subject’s knowledge acquisition is restricted to these definitions and further explication of the problem, which would be useful for its precise analysis, is missing. The author of *Biographia Literaria* famously interrupts the passage on the function of mind’s imaginative capacity and epistemological abilities by a fictitious letter of a friend persuading Coleridge to postpone the explanation and insert it into his upcoming treatise on constructive philosophy. The thirteenth chapter thus breaks from the form of a philosophical text and employs a meta-message on the functioning of imagination. The letter, apart from practical reasons for omittance of incorporating it into *Biographia Literaria* and admiration of how new and revolutionary Coleridge’s methods are, contains descriptions of *feelings* most sublime caused by the reading of the chapter. Martin Procházka in his “Between Hoax and Ideology” asserts that “Coleridge’s hoax does not have to be interpreted as a mere trick, performed in order to avoid the philosophical elaboration of the notion of imagination. Rather, it is a liberating gesture, giving art a position above philosophy, and a different dimension of imagination.”⁷⁷ Seemingly, feeling and personal experience have more to say in the matter of imagination and knowledge acquisition than the rational language of philosophy. Even though there have been various elaborations of possible theories of inner laws of imaginative processes in Coleridge’s thought,⁷⁸ the inserted letter can be perceived as an expression of the assertion that however knowledge and being are intertwined, their functional unity cannot be explained fully in a rational manner. Or, from the point of view of the object produced, “the unity and beauty of the work of art [or creation in general⁷⁹] can be grasped

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Martin Procházka, “Between Hoax and Ideology, Phantasms and Simulacra in Coleridge’s Theory of Imagination”, in *Transversals*, Prague: Literaria Pragensia, 2007, pp. 119

⁷⁸ We would like to mention *The Road to Xanadu* where Lowes proposes a theory of imagination’s work in Coleridge’s conception. He, by a remarkable method of tracing possible units of meaning of Coleridge’s imagination collected from the texts the poet had read, digs into Coleridge’s unconscious, we might say, where these processes are to take place: “There once more, between consciousness and consciousness, is the Well. And there in the Well goes on the same incessant activity of combination and amalgamation which, on other evidence, we have postulated for the poet’s mind.” [Lowes, pp. 63]; see: Richards, *Coleridge on Imagination* or Josef Fulka, “Básnictví a snová práce: k Lowesovu výkladu Coleridge”, *Filozofia* roč. 66, 2011, pp. 644-654

⁷⁹ Note added by the author

only intuitively.”⁸⁰ Whether understandable or not, we admit that there should be the aforementioned unity in the process of knowing and being, in the workings of imaginative powers. This is a statement inferred by Richards, as he writes that the fact that “in the products of knowing we later have occasion to distinguish Subject from Object does not entail their separation in the process.”⁸¹ On the other hand, the statement also confirms that there is a distinguishable difference between subject and object in created things. Coleridge notes that the product of imagination, object qua object, is in itself dead and unchangeable – in terms of essence the complete opposite to the vital power of imagination. Even though the secondary imagination has a different way of functioning, it is of the same kind as the primary one and thus cannot produce dead, fixed creation. What, then, renders the dead object possible when both of these powers are essentially vital?

We have suggested that Coleridge was inspired by the scheme of subject/object unity in construction of reality in “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.” The dream-like structure of the poem gave an impression that the deeply subjective is being materialized and thus creates reality. Asking how this was possible, we examined Coleridge’s concept of subject’s capacities of knowledge acquisition and creation. Nevertheless, consideration of the explanation of imaginative powers given in *Biographia Literaria* made our attention turn to the object: it is necessary to clarify how the differing nature of product and cause is possible. Another way of posing this question is to examine the degree of reality of products of imagination and objects as objects. Explained in the context of “The Ancient Mariner,” we must ask whether the events of the poem were real objectively or only as products of the mariner’s imagination that remained in his head. Did the mariner’s story actually happen or was it just a dream? And what remains a mere dream and what deserves to be called real? What is truth and how does it differ from illusion? These questions do not permeate only the poem of “The Mariner”. We believe that for offering an answer to them, a closer look upon another Coleridge’s poem must be cast.

“Kubla Khan: Or, A Vision in a Dream” is from its very title presented as connected with the world of dream. In the note prefixed to the poem the author accounts – presumably – for its origin; after using anodyne when slightly ill, he has fallen asleep reading following lines in *Purchas His Pilgrimage*: ‘Here the Kubla Khan commanded a palace to be built, and a stately garden thereunto:

⁸⁰ Wheeler, 143; paraphrased by Procházka, pp. 120

⁸¹ Richards, pp. 53

and thus ten miles of fertile ground were inclosed with a wall.’⁸² The author dreamt about this passage from *Purchas* and, in his vision, he composed a poem of two or three hundred lines. He woke up, started writing it down and suddenly was interrupted by a person from Porlock who has detained him for some hour. Afterwards, the author was not able to remember the rest of the poem he had composed: “though he still retained some vague and dim recollection of the general purport of the vision, yet, with the exception of some eight or ten scattered lines and images, all the rest had passed away like the images on the surface of a stream into which a stone had been cast...”⁸³ Then the poem itself is annexed and presented as a fragment composed on the basis of the vision. Nevertheless, the prefix to “Kubla Khan” was added some twenty years after the poem originated, in the time when Coleridge was writing his *Biographia Literaria*. In the chapter on imagination our author gives up on the philosophical explanation of the esemplastic power and gives art, or the particular instantiation of creative process, the upper hand over ratio. However, at the same time, he favours adding an explanatory prefix to a poem composed almost quarter of century ago. Therefore, this prefix may be perceived as contradicting his endeavour: as an attempt at rationalization of art, or a need to rationally explain what is going on.

Though there have been various attempts at connecting Coleridge’s real life with this prefix and interpreting it as a factual note,⁸⁴ we adopt the point of view proposed by Fred L. Milne⁸⁵ who claims that it is in terms of Coleridge’s biography irrelevant. In his “Coleridge’s ‘Kubla Khan’: A Metaphor for the Creative Process,” he proposes that the function of the prefix is that it “...signals the subject of the poem it introduces and provides a context for reading the poem.”⁸⁶ The headnote gives an account of composition of a poem and, according to Milne, the poem below does the same: he interprets the poem as a depiction of the creative process. Milne, Chayes or Gerber⁸⁷ perceive the land of Xanadu (the sacred river, the mighty fountain or Kubla Khan) as metaphorical expressions of the entities of the realm of the mind. From the activity of consciousness symbolized

⁸² Samuel T. Coleridge, *The Major Works*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 102

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ For instance, Elisabeth Schneider, “Coleridge, Opium, and Kubla Khan”, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953, or Robert Graves, *The Meaning of Dreams*, London: Palmer, 1924, pp. 145-15

⁸⁵ Or by Irene Chayes: Irene H Chayes, “Kubla Khan’ and the Creative Process.” *Studies in Romanticism* 6, 1966, pp. 1- 21

⁸⁶ Fred L. Milne, ‘Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan”: A Metaphor for the Creative Process’ in *South Atlantic Review*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (Nov., 1986), South Atlantic Modern Language Association, Stable URL:<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3199754>, Accessed: 07-07-2018 12:33 UTC, pp. 18

⁸⁷ Richard Gerber, “Keys to ‘Kubla Khan’”, *English Studies* 44, 1963, pp. 321-41

by the flux of the sacred river Alph, to the “caverns measureless to man” and “the sunless sea”, into which the river runs, standing for the unconscious, the landscape mirrors the processes employed in the artistic creation. According to Milne, the character of Kubla Khan stands for imagination:

As the mind's creative power, Kubla Khan is a reflection of the divine in man, what Coleridge calls "a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM" (Biographia 167). As the imagination, Kubla Khan resides in the mind-"In Xanadu"-and there he creates the visions that must then be embodied in art.⁸⁸

Kubla Khan represents a creative power whose contents spring out of the unconscious realm as the fountain. Imagination, as noted hereinbefore, creates out of nothing and without any effort and as such is the source of art or, in general, things created. Kubla Khan decreeing his pleasure dome mirrors the passage from the prefix where the author sleeps and without effort literally materializes the poem:

The author continued for about three hours in a profound sleep, at least of the external senses, during which time he has the most vivid confidence, that he could not have composed less than from two to three hundred lines; if that indeed can be called composition in which all the images rose up before him as things, with a parallel production of correspondent expressions, without any sensation or consciousness of effort.⁸⁹

The spring of imagination is the power through which the subject is capable of creation (or thingifying⁹⁰) of the world it has been previously perceiving; it is the power enabling the aforementioned process of unifying the subject and object, so it seems. Imagination's functioning is moreover enabled only after turning the reason from contents received by the senses. At the beginning of the poem, we are thrown into the garden of sensual perceptions: sinuous rills are gurgling and incense-bearing trees giving a smell in the sunny garden so pleasant to behold. Only once we abandon the world of senses and pay attention to the inner processes, we can follow the river to the caverns of the Self: we can give imagination the space to manifest itself.

⁸⁸ Milne, pp. 21

⁸⁹ Coleridge, pp. 102

⁹⁰ Kathleen M. Wheeler, “‘Kubla Khan’ and The Art of Thingifying”, *The Creative Mind in Coleridge's Poetry*, New York: Harvard University Press, 1981

Nevertheless, considering the poem “Kubla Khan”, we can see that imagination is not almighty and does not suffice to complete the (artistic) creation alone. Imagination creates images with a certain degree of reality, however, in some time, those disappear like fata-morganas, “like the images on the surface of a stream into which a stone had been cast.”⁹¹ We believe that the most important moment in the whole process of creation is an externalization of the contents that had been created by the author’s imagination. Kubla’s pleasure dome remains a mere projection “floating midway on the waves,” unless someone builds it, i.e. spares some effort to bring it to a higher degree of reality, to bring it out of the subject among other people. As Milne summarizes in his article:

Preservation of the imagination's conceptions from the "flux and reflux" threatening their destruction demands that they be built, that is, somehow embodied or externalized, thereby giving them concrete reality outside the mind. Only when it is built or executed does an imaginative conception move from a potential to an actual work of art.⁹²

As we are reading along, we come to the conclusion that for this externalization of imagination’s products, memory is crucial. The author of “Kubla Khan” laments, noting that only if he could revive, only if his memory permitted, he would be enabled to build the pleasure dome:

“Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight ’twould win me,
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air...”⁹³

Creation of the miraculous pleasure dome symbolizing the work of art⁹⁴ is undermined by functioning of such a second-hand capacity as memory. For memory, as noted in *Biographia Literaria*, is connected with fancy which is a capacity contrasted to imagination and, we believe, it is subjected to a certain degree of rationalization. Coleridge asserts that

⁹¹ Coleridge, pp. 102

⁹² Milne, pp. 26

⁹³ Coleridge, pp. 104, line [41-4]

⁹⁴ See Milne, pp. 23

The Fancy is indeed no other than a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space; while it is blended with, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will, which we express by the word CHOICE.⁹⁵

We get to know that memory is a capability on whose grounds the analytical power of fancy poses the cornerstone of its functioning. There is nothing inventive in memory, like in understanding, however, only memory enables objectification of what imagination produces. And it does so via the equality of structures of the faculty of memory and the object: both of them are rational.

Martin Procházka in his “Between Hoax and Ideology” asserts that the end of a work of art (or an object) is its materialization within the objective world:

The result of the creative process is its externalization and objectification: the work as an aesthetic object, revealing, in a fixed and stable form, ‘its principles of organization and construction.’ Such a work, however, is no longer alive: it is a dead object used to verify the dogmatic law of imagination, the unity of the absolute subject.⁹⁶

Without the final externalization, the object remains a mere dream: the poem does not exist until it is written down and one’s story is in illusion until it is voiced. “The Ancient Mariner” is abounding with symbolic expressions of communication with others. The mariner’s punishment is symbolized as an extreme drought where his parched throat cannot utter a word:

I looked to heaven, and tried to pray;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.⁹⁷

Afterwards, when the mariner is redeemed, he is enabled to speak, to bless the water-snakes. The urge to wander around the world and tell his story confirms the importance of dialogue and voicing inner thoughts. Thus, when the wedding guest is compelled to listen to the mariner’s fate, the story becomes real. The externalization and objectification take shape of recognition by others. Impossibility to “revive” that is present in “Kubla Khan” follows the same logic. The poem must

⁹⁵ Coleridge, pp. 313

⁹⁶ Procházka, pp. 120

⁹⁷ Coleridge, [lines 240-3], pp. 56

be written down, read by other people and, first of all, remembered so that it was not solely a vision in a dream.

Memory with its rational structure thus plays a salient role in the process of knowing and creating: it functions as an interface between the inner world of the subject and the objective reality constituted in coexistence and cooperation with other subjects. We left the exact nature of laws of imagination's functioning unsolved and focused on its products due to the fact, that the incessant flux of imagination diffuses into nothing. Only what is remembered and known remains and is ready for externalization or becoming an unchangeable object as object. Such inventions in the area of problems of knowledge and creation have, of course, implications in terms of the concept of the Self. It ceases to be the unity of consciousness through time: now, to exist, the Self has to be recognized by other people in its actions and remembered accordingly. Therefore, the issue of self-presentation arises during the Romantic period. Moreover, we would like to point out that however rational memory's structure is so that it enables connection with the others and thus grants establishment of the objective world, its functioning is unconscious or, at least, based on unconscious processes. Memory is selective and imprecise in what it preserves and, moreover, it does not depend on the subject's will or conscious decision what to remember and what to displace into the lifeless ocean of the unknown and unconscious. The concept of the Self in Coleridge's thought thus broadens to incorporate these non-conscious areas: the caverns measureless to man and the sunless sea become a part of the land of Xanadu.

Conclusion

We can observe a certain divergence in Coleridge's thought on the Self, imagination and its role in artistic creation. On the one hand, Coleridge points out the existence of the unconscious realm, the "Dark fluxion/ all unfixable by thought,"⁹⁸ and its importance for creation and structuring of the world. The dream-like structure that determines the shape of the world of "The Ancient Mariner" is an expression of the innermost subjectivity imprinted into the structure of the co-created world. Symbolically speaking, through the images of sunlight and moonlight in "The Ancient Mariner" Coleridge promotes imagination that defies understanding to the primary principle of human action and creation. In the thirteenth chapter of *Biographia Literaria* he rejects full theoretical explanation of his central concepts and resorts to art as an imaginative product. On the other hand, however, there is a tendency towards a certain degree of rationalization. Even though Coleridge praises imagination, he is urged to write a theoretical treatise and add an explanatory prefix to his "Kubla Khan" where the rationalization of the creative process is given importance. Coleridge sees that there is the unknown, a dark fluxion in man, however, he concludes his poem "Self-Knowledge" as follows:

A phantom dim of past and future wrought,
Vain sister of the worm,--life, death, soul, clod--
Ignore thyself, and strive to know thy God!⁹⁹

It seems, that in the end Coleridge favours the world, where the subject is subjected to the will of God and the intersubjective order. Nevertheless, he in his thought and poetry does not return to the order of the classicist world. Romanticism breaks the laws of classicist poetry: from Coleridge's point of view, art does not imitate nature and its order. As Abrams differentiates between the classicist and romantic poetry, he points out that the conceptions of art and its role are completely disparate. The expressive romantic conceptions conceive of art as an expression of subjectivity of the artist. Therefore, through contemplations of the role of the artist, thinking about the Self comes to fore. And, most importantly, the Self read through the prism of expressive literary criticism aimed at the author is not conceptualized as a mere consciousness. The Self, as we have remarked in Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and "Kubla Khan", contains irrational elements

⁹⁸ Coleridge, pp. 152

⁹⁹ Ibid.

and unconscious processes as well. The poems analysed, we have argued, structurally and symbolically illustrate the shift in the conception of the Self from consciousness towards a complex structure including the unconscious. In “The Ancient Mariner” with its dream-like structure the purely subjective determines the reality of the poem, which suggests not only that the dream and the unconscious realm are constitutive for the Self whose expression the poem represents. Considering the solution of the problem of the rupture between subject and object, it also suggests that the unconscious is essential for construction of the Self as for the creator of the world that is at the same time being understood. The symbolic language of “The Mariner” alludes to our second problem, i.e. the dilemma of how knowledge is acquired and the role of the subject in knowing. In relation to “Kubla Khan”, we examined the nature of creating in Coleridge’s thought. The subject becomes active participant in the process of knowing and organically co-creates the shape of the world by their creation which, to a certain point, stems from the inner powers of imagination. At the same time, however, a certain degree of rationalization in this process is necessary: to achieve full effectuation of creation, it must be conceptualized by memory with a structure graspable by reason and it must be established intersubjectively. We can see that Coleridge’s notion of the creative process, the Self and its unconscious parts vary in time: there is a counter-motion in his thought, from his giving the imaginative powers the upper hand over understanding and his fascination with the unconscious to a more conservative stance of necessity of rationalization. Nevertheless, the subject, whose capacities Coleridge examines, is never conceptualized as consciousness or ratio: it is a complex organic whole including the unconscious.

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