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Sublime Offal: Coleridge, Hegel, Schelling, and the Remains of German Idealism

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ABSTRACT

What remains of German Idealism? This essay sets out by proposing that in both Hegel and Schelling the answer is ultimately an *ontology of remains*: an unsystematic philosophy of divine abjection in which the waste of the One is exposed as its own condition of possibility. This sheds new light on Coleridge's uneasy relationship with German Idealism, especially his puzzlement over Hegel's *Science of Logic* and his scandalized fascination with Schelling's *Freiheitsschrift*. At the heart of Coleridge's disquiet is his detection in both philosophers of a form of transcendental ontology that redirects the Kantian concern with the epistemological conditions of possible *knowledge* into an enquiry into the ontological conditions of the subjectivization of *being*. The essay traces the implications of the ontologizing of transcendental idealism for Coleridge's philosophy, chief among which is the way in which an indivisible remainder or *Abfall* (waste, offal) of the Absolute presents an excess that refuses to be harmonized into the transcendental unity of Coleridge's Prothetic "One."

Nothing beside remains. (P. B. Shelley, "Ozymandias")

Introduction

In their introduction to *Rethinking German Idealism*, S. J. McGrath and Joseph Carew depict their subject as a philosophical revenant, endlessly returning, zombie-like, to stalk modern thought. German Idealism "persists in our thinking like a symptom we cannot get rid of," they claim, "since every time we distance ourselves from it, it comes back with force—or we are forced to go back to it. For this exact reason it is timely to ask in a reflective tone: 'What remains of German Idealism?'" (2). This question takes on a new significance when considered in relation to the philosophies of G. W. F. Hegel and F. W. J. von Schelling, whose systems, according to Slavoj Žižek and Félix Duque, reveal the grounds of Being to be merely the remnants of a "Failed

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Absolute.” Thus, while Žižek points out that in Schelling’s *Freiheitsschrift* the absolute identity of the Unconditioned depends upon an indivisible remainder in the “pure void/abyss [*Ungrund*] of Freedom” (*Indivisible* 72), Duque demonstrates that Hegel’s logic ultimately fails to sublimate its *own* otherness, so that the error, confusion, and contingency that forms the “remains of the Logical, its waste or *Abfall*” (93) can only be subsumed by the Absolute Idea on the condition that it “judges and condemns’ itself to be its own remains, its own beyond” (96). In both Hegel and Schelling, then, what remains of German Idealism is fundamentally an *ontology of remains*: an unsystematic philosophy of divine abjection in which the waste of the One is exposed as its own condition of possibility.

Seen this way, the remains of German Idealism shed new light on one of the perennial questions arising from the philosophical Romanticism of early nineteenth-century Britain: what was the relationship of Coleridge’s mature thought to the totalizing systems of his German contemporaries? Although his famously ambivalent attitude to Schelling has been amply documented,¹ analysis of Coleridge’s treatment of Hegel, whose *Science of Logic* (*Wissenschaft der Logik*) (1812) he dismissed as based on a “confusion of Terms” (*Marginalia* [hereafter *CM*] 2.989), has been more limited.² In this essay, I argue that Coleridge’s relation to German Idealism can only be adequately assessed once a hitherto neglected but important component of the disciplinary frameworks deployed by Hegel and Schelling has been accounted for. Borrowing Markus Gabriel’s term, I identify this component as *transcendental ontology*. As defined by Gabriel, transcendental ontology redirects the Kantian concern with the epistemological conditions of possible *knowledge* into an enquiry into the ontological conditions of the subjectivization of *being*. Rather than asking what subjective conditions are necessary for experience to be possible (*à la* Kant), transcendental ontology asks: “what conditions have to be fulfilled by being (the world) in order for it to appear to finite thinkers who in turn change the structure of what there is by referring to it?” (ix).³ Essential to this endeavor is the goal of re-establishing philosophy’s grasp of the Absolute, thereby obviating the Kantian division of phenomenal and noumenal realms of existence (and with it the Romantic aestheticization of intellectual intuition as the unrepresentable union of subject and object).

In pursuing this question through Coleridge’s readings in German Idealism, I focus upon two texts that caused Coleridge particular disquiet: Hegel’s *Logic* and Schelling’s *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom* (*Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit und die damit zusammenhängenden Gegenstände*) (1809). I argue that Coleridge’s puzzlement over the former and scandalized fascination with the latter reveal the extent to which he struggled to situate the transcendental ontology behind both works into his own theologocentric framework. For instance, the superficial resemblances between Coleridge’s tetradic logic and Hegelian dialectic barely signify when weighed against the fundamental differences between the two thinkers on the key questions of presuppositionless knowledge, the logic of sublation, and the relationship between philosophy and religion. Similarly, in the “unprethinkable” *prius* or ground of Schelling’s Freedom philosophy, the indivisible remainder or *Abfall* (waste, offal) of the Absolute presents an excess that refuses to be harmonized into the transcendental unity of Coleridge’s Prothetic “One.” The key point here is that in both texts

Coleridge encountered an infinitely “remaindered” Absolute, an idea of totality that could only be conceptualized through a metaphysics of waste. As Žižek has argued, this wastage is transcendental ontology’s obscene materialization of the idealized excessiveness of the Romantic sublime. Once its noumenal status is exchanged for an ontology of negativity, sublime surplus materializes not as an incommensurable otherness spurring the mind to an ecstatic awareness of its supersensible status, but as an abjected oversufficiency of being, what Žižek describes as “an object whose positive body is just an embodiment of Nothing” (*Sublime Object* 234). From the perspective of this dejected, ontological sublime, what remains of the symbolic order of Coleridge’s higher logic is, in Percy Shelley’s words, “Nothing beside remains.”

The unprethinkable Schelling

By 1818, Coleridge had finally located his nagging doubt about Schelling’s system. In a notebook entry from September of that year, he concludes that “all his [Schelling’s] other errors ... are referable to the one—the making *Nature* absolute” (*Notebooks* [hereafter *CN*] 3.4449). This primary mistake gave rise to two related and “fundamental errors”: first, the polarization of the Absolute and, secondly, the confusion of “self-evident” with “empirical” truths. For Coleridge, these mistakes are connected, insofar as the polarization of the natural and the supernatural within the Absolute removes the distinction between “Ideas” (living, formative powers contemplated by Reason) on one hand, and “Theorems” and “Anticipations” (hypotheses and empirical cognitions apprehended by the Understanding) on the other (*CN* 3: 4449). Fundamentally, Schelling’s system had no means of distinguishing the *ideal* from the *real*. Worse still, it appeared that, by introducing polarity into the Absolute, he had placed a void within God.

How did Coleridge arrive at this conclusion? It was in the *Philosophical Investigations*, the last and most recent of Schelling’s works to appear in the first (and only) volume of the *Philosophische Schriften*, that he had encountered the German philosopher’s most sustained engagement with the relationship between absolute Being and divine Will.⁴ Throughout the main phases of Schelling’s long philosophical career—the *Naturphilosophie* and transcendental idealism of his early period (1794–1800); the phase of the *Identitäts-philosophie* (1801–09); the *Freiheitsschrift* and the *Weltalter* of his middle period (1809–27); and his later, Positive Philosophy (1827–54)—a fundamental question recurs, one that Kant’s critical philosophy had left unresolved: what is the relationship between nature and freedom, the conditioned and the unconditioned? In *Philosophical Investigations* he attempts to grasp the nettle of thinking the unconditioned as *absolute freedom*—not in terms of human judgement, but as the unthinkable precondition of being. This systematic (rather than critical-transcendental) investigation into freedom entailed speculating not just about human freedom, but also (in a daring revival of eighteenth-century theodicy) about God’s.⁵ Schelling structured the relationship between God’s unthinkable freedom and his formal intelligibility through an ontology of negation. Described in the 1815 draft of *The Ages of the World* (*Weltalter*) (1811–15) as “the necessary precedent (*prius*) of every movement” and “the first transition whatsoever from nothing into something,” negation is the basis of the dynamic energy within life (16). Thus, in *Philosophical*

Investigations, Schelling claims that, in relation to God's origins, "there is no first and last because all things mutually presuppose each other, no thing is another thing and yet no thing is not without another thing" (28). Accordingly, God's notion, which emerges through the self-revelation of the divine Logos as *ratio* (the existing God: the illuminating, absolute whole) is only possible as a counterthrust to the inward gravitational pull of evil (the ground of God: the dark, irreducibly partial *prius*).

By installing negation as fundamental to any system, *Philosophical Investigations* establishes as its founding principle the non-coincidence of part and whole, predicate and subject. Conceived as an unthinkable breach or void in the fabric of things, the *prius* infects reality with a fundamental insufficiency. God's emergence, then, comes at the unavoidable cost of his perpetual entanglement with an ontologically indeterminate mode of being. Unconditioned freedom is not so much the nothing from which God as Absolute triumphantly emerges, as it is the indeterminate non-All that always threatens to drag God back into the dark inwardness of the *prius*. In this way, Schelling exposes an abyss within the Absolute, an "incomprehensible base of reality in things, the indivisible remainder, that which with the greatest exertion cannot be resolved in understanding but rather remains eternally in the ground" (*Philosophical Investigations* 29). This "indivisible remainder" becomes, as Žižek characterizes it, a void within the Real, which, since it precedes difference/indifference, necessitates the introduction of "a new trans-ontological function ... that of 'less than nothing'" (*Sex* 61).

As he delved deeper into Schelling's work following the completion of *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge was in equal parts perplexed, appalled, and fascinated by what he found. For instance, in the margins of his copy of Schelling's *Monument to the Scripture of the Divine Things of Mr. Jacobi* (1812), he wrote:

Spite of all the superior Airs of [th]e Natur-philosophen, I confess [that] in the perusal of Kant I [b]reathe the free air of Good Sense [a]nd logical Understanding, with [th]e Light of Reason shining in it [an]d thro' it—While in the Physics [of] Schelling I am amused with happy [con]jectures and but in his theology [be]wildered by Positions which in their [? *best*] sense are transcendent (*überfliegend*) [but] in their literal sense scandalous ...
(*CM* 4.372)

Most "scandalous" of all was Schelling's limiting of God's freedom. By treating the real and the ideal as opposites (by introducing a polarity *within* the Absolute), Schelling created an indeterminacy between being and form, threatening the ontological hierarchy that elevated ordering spirit over chaotic matter.⁶ Accordingly, in his notes to *Philosophical Investigations* he dismisses Schelling's separation of the non-ground from the ground of God's existence by deeming it to be based upon "the material phænomenon of Partibility" and instead invokes "the old more reverential Distinction of the Divine Will relatively to the End from the same Will relatively to the Means: the latter of which we term his Wisdom, and to the former appropriate the name of the Divine Will ..." (*CM* 4.425). What is important to note here is that for Coleridge the most troubling thing about Schelling's account is not its covert materialism, but the way in which it implies a "phænomenon of Partibility" within the divine Being, creating a gap within the Absolute that is incompatible with conceiving the Deity as One.⁷

As a result, the direction and tenor of Coleridge's thought after 1818 reflects his diminishing confidence in the ability of German Idealist philosophy to relieve itself of

the blockage (objective indeterminacy) in its systematization of the Absolute. In response to this deadlock, his post-*Biographia* philosophy assumes two distinct characteristics: fideism and dialectics. Pursuing the first leads him back to where his adventures in German Idealism began: the practico-epistemological transcendentalism of Kant. Thus, in the thirteenth of his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, delivered in late March 1819, Coleridge argues that Kant deserves the title of philosopher not due to his “analysis of mind,” but because he elevates the “will, the ‘practical reason,’” as “a far higher and nobler, constituent of [man’s] being,” thereby establishing the ground for a *moral* imperative for belief in God. From this, Coleridge claims, Kant “deduced a direct moral necessity for the belief or the faith of reason . . .” (2.586). It was in Kant’s separation of practical from theoretical reason that Coleridge sensed the presence of a supporting argument for his claim that all true philosophy must encompass faith, and thus must ultimately be supplemented by theology before it could realize itself in a “life” of Christianity. Indeed, by preserving the “faith of reason,” Kant had “determined the true meaning of philosophy”:

for all our knowledge may be well comprised in two terms: the one, philology, that is to say, all the pursuits in which the intellect of man is concerned, in which he has a desire of arriving at that which the logos or intellectual power can communicate; the other is philosophy, or that which comprises the logos, and, including it, at the same time subordinates it to the will, and thus combining the other, is philosophy the love of wisdom with the wisdom of love. (2.587–88)

By contrast, Schelling’s system appeared both scandalously transcendent and oppressively opaque in its pursuit of the Absolute.⁸ Coleridge objects in particular to what he perceives to be Schelling’s conflation of faith and belief, which upset the fine balance in human knowledge between will and reason. Picking up on the debate between Schelling and Adam Karl August von Eschenmayer, Coleridge observes that the

whole Dispute . . . arises out of this—that what Esch. asserts of Faith (the fēalty of the partial faculti[es,] even of Reason itself as mainly speculative to the *focal* Energy—i.e. Reason + Will x Understanding = Spirit) Schelling understands of *Belief*, i.e. the Substitution of the Will + Imaginati[on] + Sensibility for the Reason (CM 4.398).

By ignoring the “fēalty” of reason to its intuitive objects, and thus the primacy of conscience within consciousness, Schelling reduces Christianity as a “life” to a naturalized system in which the faith of reason is translated into a kind of mechanized volition within sensibility. In a fragment on the errors in Schelling’s philosophy written that same autumn, Coleridge recalls how, upon reading the first 20 pages of Schelling’s *Einleitung zu seinem Entwurf eines Systems der Naturphilosophie* (1799), both he and Green “obtained a clear conviction, that he [Schelling] had imprisoned his system within a Circle that could never open”; the system, then, was “merely analytic, and the Natur-philosophie a Theory grounded on a Hypothesis—not a . . . proven Science, not the Philosophy which is the Spirit of Science . . .” (*Shorter Works* 1.786–87). Rather than supplementing reason with religion, Schelling had encircled theology with philosophy.

For Coleridge, however, philosophy could not capture the Absolute without becoming something *else*, something more than philosophy. Initially, he attempts to mediate this philosophical excess through the poetic imagination: hence the abortive project in

Biographia Literaria (1817) to both theorize and embody through its incondite narrative Schelling's early account of the aesthetic destiny of philosophy in his *System of Transcendental Idealism* (*System des Transcendentalen Idealismus*) (1800). From 1818, however, Coleridge replaces the dynamic activity of aesthetic imagination with a more contemplative model of noetic intuition, arguing that philosophy ultimately transcends the space of reasons, logic, and dialectic, and merges with religious experience. As he writes in *The Friend* (1818), since "Religion, in its widest sense, signifies the act and habit of reverencing the Invisible," the same principle, "which in its application to the whole of our being becomes religion, considered *speculatively* is the basis of *metaphysical science*" (1.440). For the same reason, he insists in *Aids to Reflection* (1825), "Christianity is not a Theory, or a Speculation; but a *Life*. Not a *Philosophy* of Life, but a *Life* and a living Process" (202).

The division between, on one hand, Coleridge's Romantic defense of the autonomy of religion and "life" against the encroachments of philosophy and, on the other, Schelling's absolutizing of philosophy as a kind of fractured transcendental ontology is most vividly illustrated by the different uses they make of the work of Jacobi. It is notable that Coleridge's later works, especially the "Essay on Faith" and *Magnum Opus*, share with Schelling's middle-period writings such as the *Philosophical Investigations* and the *Ages of the World* a renewed interest in Jacobi's theories of the non-rational basis of thought.⁹ In *David Hume on Faith* (1787), Jacobi had complained that Kant's biggest mistake was to try to play the sceptics at their own game. By attempting to turn the tables on Hume and demonstrate the indemonstrable (the foundations of knowledge), transcendental idealism surrenders the objective world to the sceptic only to gain, in return, a prison-house of purely transcendental subjectivity, a "bare void of cognition" (545). Although Jacobi acknowledges Kant's "doctrine of faith" as true "in spirit," insofar as it recognizes the existence of an instinct in man "that unceasingly commands him *to prove himself mightier than the nature that surrounds him*" (556), he maintains that what Kant failed to recognize was that this instinct was itself *irrational* and could not be established as a philosophical principle. Since they cannot be philosophically refuted, there is "no defeating the *upper or full blown idealist à la Hume*" (570). The only recourse, according to Jacobi, is to affirm the status of *feeling* in its purity and objectivity: thus, "Man necessarily believes in his senses; he necessarily believes in his reason, and there is no certainty above the certainty of this faith." To attempt to demonstrate the truth of this feeling, as Kant did, was to enter an inescapable, nightmare binary world of "idealism" and "nihilism" (583).

Coleridge and Schelling both return to Jacobi's ideas, but in different ways and, crucially, for different ends. Coleridge's rejection of pantheism draws him back to Jacobi's insistence that faith is fundamental to human reason, but his approval of the former's methods is limited. Jacobi's priorities, for all his anti-philosophical bluster, are chiefly epistemological: for him, the ineliminable role of trust and personhood in experience is itself determined *by experience*.¹⁰ Moreover, his idea of "faith" is heavily indebted to the Scottish Enlightenment, and especially to Thomas Reid's and Dugald Stewart's theories of common sense as the extra-epistemological basis for rational thought (this was itself, of course, a naturalization and essentialization of Hume's own appeal to custom, habit, and the "sentiment" of belief in the absence of epistemic certainty).¹¹ Intuitive knowledge for Jacobi thus necessitates "the firm *faith* that

immediately emerges from a knowing not-knowing and is in truth *identical* with it” (545), a radical unknowingness that Coleridge, with his ambitions for a systematic theology, could never accept. As he would later write in the margins of John Donne’s *LXXX Sermons* (1640), faith implied the “fealty of the finite Will” to the “Truth-powers of the pure Reason”:

Faith i.e. fidelity, the fealty of the finite Will and Understanding to the Reason! = the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the World, as one with and the representative of the Absolute Will, and to the Ideas—i.e. Truths or rather Truth-powers of the pure Reason, the super-sensuous Truths which in relation to the finite Will and as meant to determine the Will, are moral Laws, the voice and dictates of the Conscience—. (CM 2.297)

For Coleridge, the fidelity of consciousness is determined by and applied to absolutes, not particulars. Ultimately, faith in the divine personae reconstructs the bridge between philosophy and theology that Kant had dismantled. Nonetheless, at a minimal level, Coleridge saw Jacobi’s arguments as supporting his claim that, since the basis of any system of comprehension must *itself* be incomprehensible, the role of faith in that system is ineliminable.

For the Munich-period Schelling, however, the lesson of Jacobi’s irrationalism is the need not for faith, but for a new *philosophical* encounter with the non-rational. As he became increasingly dissatisfied with attempts to mediate between the unconditioned and the conditioned, between the Absolute and the intelligible world (whether dialectically, aesthetically, or in terms of identity), Schelling came to agree with Jacobi that, if Spinozism and pantheism were to be avoided, the fundamental ground of intelligibility could not *itself* be treated as intelligible. Jacobi had inferred from the incommensurability of the unconditioned and the conditioned that philosophy had to choose between accepting its limitations and embracing faith or heading down the deterministic road to Spinozism. To this Schelling objects that by uncritically accepting a flawed, rationalist model of philosophical knowledge, Jacobi effectively abandons the philosophical field to the Spinozists. Thus, in his 1833–37 lectures on the history of philosophy, he complains that Jacobi’s philosophy, “instead of really attacking the knowledge which displeases it, *completely* gives way to it, by withdrawing into not-knowing” (*History* 165). Instead, he claims, philosophy needs to find a language with which it can engage with the unintelligible basis of Being in non-Being.

For Schelling, then, the vital question is not epistemological (is it possible to comprehend the relation between the unconditioned and conditioned?), but *ontological* (how does the unconditioned give rise to the conditioned?). Schelling’s answer is that, for freedom to have any meaning (i.e. as freedom from logic and causation), “ground” cannot be conceived merely as a necessary “One,” as a unified All; it *also* has to be thought as indeterminate, as the non-All. Žižek’s notion of “ontological parallax” illustrates the way in which Schelling accommodates this contradiction. As Žižek notes, the parallax effect is commonly defined in relation to an epistemological problem, namely “the apparent displacement of an object ... caused by a change in observational position that provides a new line of sight.” In the ontological parallax described by Schelling (and, in Žižek’s account, Hegel), however, “an ‘epistemological’ shift in the subject’s point of view always reflects an ‘ontological’ shift in the object itself” (*Sex* 5).

The *precondition* for God and his creation to come into being thus emerges as an inadequacy within reality, an ontological parallax whereby Absolute substance fails to achieve self-identity. For Schelling, this does not imply, as it did for Jacobi, the abandonment of apodeictic philosophy for faith; nor does it entail, as it does for Coleridge, bowing before the incomprehensibility of the Absolute. Instead, it means positively affirming that reason itself is made possible only by a disequilibrium within Being. Rather than marking the terminus of philosophy, the incomprehensible in Schelling is incorporated *within* philosophy as the “unprethinkable” (*Unvordenklichkeit*) (Ages 13) ontological paradox at the basis of existence. Thus, although Schelling and Coleridge both foreground the irrational as the condition of spontaneity and “life” in the face of pantheism, only the former installs the irrational as the unprethinkable abyss in *being*. Coleridge’s fidelity to an incomprehensible, ineffable Absolute, by contrast, operates as a practico-theological lacunae within *knowing* that attempts to side-step the obscene possibility raised by Schelling’s middle-period transcendental ontology: that life is irredeemably tainted with partibility, contradiction, and groundlessness. As I discuss below, this is significant because, despite Hegel’s legendary disputes with Schelling, on this fundamental issue—the need for philosophy to encompass the fractured nature of the real—they were in agreement.

Beyond the “Presuppositium”: Hegel

This brings us to the second defining characteristic of Coleridge’s post-*Biographia* philosophy: dialectics. Coleridge’s endeavor to establish a kind of disciplinary equipoise between religion and philosophy precipitates a chiasmus that runs throughout his later thought: a dyadic philosophy-of-life/life-as-philosophy.¹² This chiasmus, as Jerome Christensen observes, becomes the rhetorical signature of Coleridge’s philosophy, “the methodological envoy of a dialectical empire” (27).¹³ For instance, it enables him to establish the first thesis in the philosophical movements of *Biographia Literaria* as “Truth is correlative to being” (1.264) without (immediately, at least) falling into the trap of pantheism. Convinced that Schelling had become ensnared by this very problem, Coleridge later refines *Biographia*’s subject-object polar logic into a symbolic hierarchy of being.¹⁴ Grappling with the problem of how, *contra* Schelling, difference might emerge from a non-polarized, originally unified Godhead thus entailed demonstrating how the ideal and the real could be unified without being reduced to a bare Identity. In a sequence of notes written in 1818, he sets out (as he puts it in a contemporaneous letter to C. A. Tulk) “steadily to deny and clearly to expose, the Polarity as existing or capable of existing in the unity of a perfect Will or in the Godhead as ens realissimum” (*Collected Letters* 4.873). In this respect, the weakness of *Naturphilosophie* as Coleridge perceived it lay in its neglect of the Neoplatonic principle of distinction-in-unity, or distinction without division. Schelling’s great fault was that he could not conceive of distinction within the Absolute without partibility.¹⁵ To do so required engaging a higher logic through which the Absolute could be seen to descend through its manifestations without shedding its unity as the All.

Accordingly, in another note from autumn 1818 headed “Unitrine,” Coleridge works through the metaphysical relations of tri-unity in the fundamental logic of the Holy

Trinity, an arrangement to which the principle of distinction-in-unity is essential. Through Pythagorean Tetractys, God becomes “Absolute Essence begotten in the Form, Absolute Form co-existing in the Essence, and the Unity of Both. Or the Subject-Object in absolute Identity neither Subject or Object, or both in Combination, but the Prothesis or Unground of both. . . .” At the same time, and without division, the Absolute through an act of self-positioning “absolutely begets itself as it [*sic*] own Object, in which being all, it is Object-Subject. . . .” This thetic Subject, or Son of God, in turn affirms itself “as having its Subject or Essence = God, and the Father asserting the Form identical with his Essence, there proceeds from both Father and Son, the Spirit of God, or Subject-Object.” As the “Unground” of the Object-Subject/Subject-Object, then,

God *is* one, but exists or manifests himself to himself, at once total in a three-fold Act, total in each and one in all.—

Prothesis = God

Thesis = Son

Antithesis = Spirit

Synthesis = Father

Hence in all things the Synthesis . . . images what in God only absolutely is, the Prothesis manifested—it is a return to the Prothesis, or re-affirmation[.] (CN 3.4427)

To summarize, then: Coleridge’s higher logic symbolizes the devolution of living ideas from a foundational ground (the primordial Prothesis, a difference-in-unity above relativity) through a dynamic process of alterity (Thesis-Antithesis), which in turn gives rise to a new element (Synthesis). In this constellation, the Synthetic new product (*tertium aliquid*) creates a difference that does not compromise the order and integrity of its original ground in the Prothesis, which remains unconditioned as Absolute *presupposition*. God’s status as both the “Unground” *prior* to existence and an *existing* being in his own right is accounted for by the way in which the principle of distinction-in-unity frames the three-fold manifestation of the Absolute to itself. In this way, the Divine Tetractys preserves the unity of the Creator in his creation.

Here, we can return with greater precision to the question of Coleridge’s relation to Hegel. As has been seen, Coleridge’s own view is categorical. In a September 1818 notebook entry, he labels Hegel as one of the misguided “doctors of the Absolute” (with Schelling and Spinoza) who ignores the degrees between Being (“as a primary Self-revelation of Idea having itself for its Object”) and non-Being, and who instead attempts to account for existence by building a polarity of Being and Nothing *into* the absolute (CN 3.4445). But was Coleridge right to reject Hegel? Given his own advocacy of “the necessary form of Dialectic, or the evolution of Truth by means of logical Contradictions” (CN 3.4418) as the fundamental logic of mediation whereby the All passes into the *tertium aliquid* of the Whole, does not Coleridgean logic parallel the Hegelian dialectic, at least to the extent that that in both cases thesis and antithesis produce an *Aufhebung* or sublation of positions rather than a cancellation?¹⁶

To understand why this is *not* the case, it is essential to consider how in Coleridge’s higher logic “Contradictions” are overcome not, as in Hegel, by a process in which *everything*, including the Absolute, is viewed as self-reflexive and relational, but by the “resolution” of a transcendent Prothesis into a synthesis. This difference forms the

basis of Coleridge's disagreement with Hegel's *Logic*. The two most substantial and significant annotations that Coleridge makes in Green's copy consist of (a) a specific response to Hegel's discussion of becoming as the sublation of Being and Nothing and (b) a general observation on the system, penned on the blank page at the beginning of the volume. Tellingly, both notes focus upon the same "primary error" Coleridge highlights in his notebook entry: the "logical informality" in Hegel's account of Becoming as the sublation of Being and Nothing and the latter's claim that "[a]s long as the absolute diversity of Being and Nothing is assumed, then ... Beginning or Becoming is of course something incomprehensible" (CM 2.989). In response, Coleridge alleges that Hegel's argument is bedeviled by a "confusion of Terms":

I seem to perceive a logical informality in this reasoning viz. that the "To be" (Seyn ...) is opposed to the "Nothing" (Nichts) whereas the true Opposite of "To be" is "Not to be". Thing, is the opposite to Nothing: for even Something or Somewhat (Etwas) implies more than Being and belongs to predicable Existence, having as its proper opposite no what or not-any-thing. (CM 2.989)

According to Coleridge, since the true contrary of Being is not Nothing but *non-Being*, and the true opposite of Nothing is a *Thing*, Hegel's dialectic of Being (Seyn) and Nothing (Nichts) is based upon a false polarity. *Nothing* is merely phenomenal, relative: it is "at all times *subjective*—that is, a *word*, expressing the relation of Being not manifested, relatively to the Subject, *to whom* it is not manifested—In plain English *Nothing* = nothing *to you*." An Objective nothing, meanwhile, "is not so truly *non-ens* as *non-sens*—it is an absurdity" (CM 2.991–92). Pure Being, on the other hand, is noumenal and absolute: it transcends the world of Things and Nothing. Nothing, then, is not that which is sublated by Being into Becoming; rather, it is a phase in Being's descent into Thing: "The *Potential* of Existence." Consequently, Coleridge argues, "it is an equivocation to affirm, simply, Nichts ist das Seyn im Werden [Nothing is Being in Becoming], whence doubtless it might be inferred, ... that Nichts dem Seyn gleich sey [Nothing is the same as Being]. The true position is: das Nichts ist das Seyn im werden zur Existenz [Nothing is Being coming into Existence]. S. T. C." (CM 2.990)

As these contortions demonstrate, what troubles Coleridge most about Hegel's theory of Beginning (Becoming) was the way in which it subjects the Absolute to a dialectical counterposition in which contingency is installed as a precondition for Being's existence. As the negation of the Thing, the subjective Nothing is already tainted with the particularity of the existential, and the idea that it is somehow necessary for God's existence is utterly at odds with Coleridge's vision of Becoming as pure emanation. As with Schelling, Hegel's fundamental error, for Coleridge, lies in locating negativity *within* the Absolute itself, and thereby "overbuilding the Προθεσις [Prothesis] by the Thesis, Antithesis and Synthesis" (CM 2.990). Consequently, God as the absolute presupposition of the system "is confounded with the Position and Counter-position and thus that which is exclusively Subjective (ex. gr. Nichts [Nothing]) assumed in that which is neither [Subject nor Object] because it is the Identity of Both" (CM 2.991). Seeking to avoid what he views as Hegel's relativization of the Prothesis, Coleridge proposes an alternative schematism that details "the truer Genesis of our primary notions":

Prothesis		
= The		
Identity of Sub: and Ob:ject		
= Reines Seyn [Pure Being].		
Thesis		Antithesis
=		=
Subject	⌘	Object
=		=
...		
Seyn	⌘	Existenz
=		=
Nichts	⌘	Etwas
=		=
Denken	⌘	Ding
Synthesis		

Das Werden [Becoming]. Anschauung [Intuition]. (CM 2.991)

In Coleridge's higher logic, polarities are generated not through the *immanent* unfolding of the thetical position under the pressure of its own contradictions made explicit, but as the emanation of the transcendent Prothesis, the "Identity" of Subject and Object. The contradistinctive relationships between Subject/Object, Being/Existence, Nothing/Something, and Thought/Thing are manifestations of a metaphysical descent whereby the Unconditioned or Absolute freely self-divides to achieve synthesis as Becoming, rather than moments in a logic through which the Unconditioned *comes to realize itself* through its mediation by the conditioned. Like God the Father in the Holy Trinity, the transcendent positivity of the Prothesis forms the foundation for the Coleridgean dialectic. As Coleridge notes, "[i]t is a general rule, that the Prothesis in its self-duplication, or polar divolution communicates its name to the Thesis," adding: "Prothescos Dignitas remanet in Thesi [the dignity of the Prothesis remains in the Thesis]." From this principle of the "polar divolution" of the Prothesis, he derives his formulation of divine self-duplication in the Trinity of God as Absolute Being, Son (Logos), and Holy Spirit:

το ον [Being] self-manifested in the Trinity
= το ον [Being] ———— ο Λογος [Logos]
=
το αγιον Πνευμα [Holy Spirit]. (CM 2.992)

What is evident, nonetheless, in Coleridge's analysis of Hegelian logic and his proposed solution to its terminological "confusion" is that it does not identify the

logical structure of *Aufhebung*. Hegel had already criticized the Kantian method of transcendental argument by presupposition in his first major work, *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's Systems of Philosophy* (*Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen Systems der Philosophie*) (1801). In his *Phenomenology of Spirit* (*Phänomenologie des Geistes*) (1807) he dismissed the foundational intellectual intuition postulated by Fichte and Schelling (in which subject and object, ideal and real, are unified) as a hypostatized presupposition that fails to account for its own intelligibility. If, alternatively, the Absolute is viewed not as a given, but as “essentially a *result*, that only in the *end* is it what it truly is ... the spontaneous becoming of itself,” then the structure of Truth emerges as the coming-into-being of the *whole*, as “nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development” (11). By the time he wrote *Logic* then, Hegel had abandoned the negative, Kantian picture of dialectic as the contradiction created by the pressures brought to bear upon thought by external critical reflection and replaced it with the conception of a movement that occurred *within* thought itself, such that “the immanent development of the concept, is the absolute method of the concept, the absolute method of cognition and at the same time the immanent soul of the content” (*Science of Logic* [hereafter *SL*] 10). As Stanley Rosen notes, by rejecting a transcendental logic of preconditions in favor of an immanent logic of presuppositionlessness, Hegel divests thought of everything but its conceptuality; thus, “[h]aving emptied the concept of all content, we have nothing to think but its being” (73). And as Hegel notes in his Preface to the first edition of *Logic*, this in turn means abandoning *all* method (even dialectical method itself) and simply *allowing* the logic of being (and the being of logic) to unfold itself to the thinker according to its own principles through “the immanent development of the concept” (*SL* 10). Only by so doing is the unity of the Absolute able to emerge through a process of sublation whereby apparently distinct categories (fundamentally, Being and Nothing) transform themselves into a whole (Becoming).¹⁷

We can now locate with greater accuracy the key principle in Hegel's logic that Coleridge's critique overlooks: the content-bearing method of “determinate negation” (*SL* 33). Coleridge's bafflement at the *Logic's* “overbuilding” of the Absolute stems from his assumption that in Hegel positivity precedes alterity; in reality, however, *Logic* turns this assumption on its head. Since determinate negation only ever negates determinations that are themselves negations, it liberates the hidden truth of mediation from ostensible givenness and immediacy. This is why, for Hegel, “Logic ... cannot say what it is in advance, rather does this knowledge of itself only emerge as the final result and completion of its whole treatment” (*SL* 23). Consequently, in Hegel's analysis, there is no positive position that could constitute a “Presuppositium,” no whole that is conceived as being prior to its parts, no transcendental principle that can serve as a foundation for the system of reason. Instead, it is in discourse, the realm of “pure thought,” and not some Platonic essence, that the unveiling of *truth as it is in and for itself* occurs. As Hegel puts it, “this method is not something distinct from its subject matter and content—for it is the content in itself, *the dialectic which it possesses within itself*, which moves the subject matter forward” (*SL* 33). When Hegel claims that “the beginning contains both, being and nothing; it is the unity of being and nothing,” (*SL* 51) he is not

making a metaphysical claim about the identity or “indifference” of subject and object; instead, he is making a logical (dialectical) point about the nature of being itself, viz. that as pure and *simple immediacy* (SL 47), without distinctions and determinations, it is *also* nothing, that is, “being which is at the same time non-being” (SL 51). The logic of the system does not emanate from God; instead, the system (negatively) determines God’s Being.

Coleridge, then, was right to suspect that he was not in Hegel’s camp, but not for the reasons he thought. At the end of his flyleaf note, he ponders the possibility that Hegel’s “confusion of Terms” might prove to be a second-order error with no further ramifications for his system of logic:

Whether the primary error of opposing Seyn to Nichts, instead of nicht seyn affects the work throughout, I have not yet read enough of it to discover. But I hope, that much may be retained by substituting for Nichts das relative Seyn, relative, I mean, to Existence the omneity in Each, the Infinity in the Finite. (CM 2.992)

Had Coleridge read and reflected further, he might have seen that, instead of being a terminological slip, the dialectic of *Seyn* and *Nichts* entail unity as sublation, not as indifference, and that Hegel establishes the cornerstone of his logical system in the *Aufhebung* of the infinite and the finite. This in turn takes him beyond the critical framework of transcendental argument by way of presuppositions to a critique of criticism itself, overturning the regressive logic of the “Presuppositium” with a progressive logic of immanent relatedness.

Although Coleridge did not fully grasp the significance of sublation, his comments on Hegel’s logic demonstrate an awareness of the threat it poses to established Christian doctrine and in particular to his own conception of God as the Prothesis (CM 2.991). The incomprehensibility of the Prothesis is for Coleridge the indispensable precondition of religious faith, and the ground of reason’s unity with the will. As he puts it in *The Friend*, “what is faith, but the personal realization of the reason by its union with the will?” (2.432). For Hegel, however, the terms on which faith and reason are unified must themselves be rational: since Being just *is* the becoming of the concept, there can be no corner or reserve of truth that is inaccessible to thought.¹⁸ As Robert Pippin observes, Hegel is in this respect at least “a logical monist. There are no incommensurable spheres of rational intelligibility—cognitive, moral, aesthetic—as there are, say, in Kant” (59). Hegel maintains that the realm revealed by the science of logic “*is truth unveiled, truth as it is in and for itself*.” It can therefore be said that this content is *the exposition of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and of a finite spirit*” (SL 29) From a Hegelian perspective, Coleridge’s faith in a transcendent Absolute Will betrays the yearning of the unhappy consciousness for a *bad infinite*, an infinite that, as the mere negation of the finite, has yet to find itself within the finite and the finite within itself (SL 111). The sublation of this bad infinite and the finite by a true (ideal and actual) infinite can in turn only be accomplished by philosophy:

Philosophy has the same content and the same purpose as art and religion, but it is the highest mode of apprehending the absolute idea, because its mode, that of the concept, is the highest. Hence it seizes those shapes of real and ideal finitude, as well of infinity and holiness, and comprehends them and itself. (SL 735)

Less than nothing

What Coleridge's reading of Hegel and Schelling reveals is something broader than his difficulties with the logic of sublation and the primordial void of the indivisible remainder. In both his rejection of Hegel's logic and his scandalized fascination with Schelling's philosophy of freedom we can detect his resistance to the transcendental ontology of German Idealism, in which philosophy reasserts its claim to the Absolute, but at the cost of grasping it as a real that is radically incomplete, a fractured remainder, a non-All. This rift is not a separation of opposites: by removing the assumption that experience depends upon the existence of some noumenal Thing-in-itself (*Ding an sich*) eternally just beyond our reach, transcendental ontology manifests the unconscious, disavowed logic of the Romantic Absolute, casting the "correlation" between Being and Truth postulated by the first thesis of *Biographia Literaria* in a new light. Instead of projecting an unrealized but presupposed entity whose consummation is temporized by art or religion (both of which hold out the promise of *having* it all without ever *quite* having it all), it affirms the true being of the Absolute in all its negativity. As Peter Cheyne notes, Coleridge's Prothesis is "an incipient All, a plenum beyond comprehension like the Parmenidean 'One'"; it is "'pregnant Indistinction'" (282). And yet, it is precisely the mysticism of the Absolute as a presupposed "plenum beyond comprehension" that Hegel's logic aims to overcome, thereby bringing philosophy "closer to the form of Science, to the goal where it can lay aside the title 'love of knowing' and be *actual* knowing..." (*Phenomenology* 3).

Having it all, however, comes at a price. In both Hegel and Schelling absolute identity depends upon a radical nonidentity as its condition of possibility (*SL* 81-82). As Žižek argues, Hegel's ontologizing of transcendental logic into a dialectic of being relocates the Kantian chasm from within the subject (between its phenomenal and noumenal identities) into being itself. The lacuna between the transcendental and empirical ego is now seen as simply a redoubling of the void created within being by its traumatic subjectivization. Regarding sublation, Hegel notes that "[t]he German '*aufheben*' ('to sublatare' in English) has a twofold meaning in the language: it equally means 'to keep,' 'to "preserve,"' and 'to cause to cease,' 'to *put an end to*.'" In signifying two opposed meanings, *aufheben* embodies and enacts the contradiction at the core of Being: every identification involves a non-identification. In other words, in every unification or reconciliation there is an uncanceled remainder, something "not come to nothing" (*SL* 81-82) (Žižek's "less than nothing"). In place of Kant's incommensurable divide between subject and object, Hegel's transcendental ontology locates a "gash" within the object. The eruption of freedom from nature, of the "for itself" from the "in itself," is made possible only through a kind of ontological "catastrophe," the creation of an unsublatable, unthinkable fissure within being.¹⁹ In this way, transcendental ontology reveals the Thing-in-itself (the sublime object of Romanticism) in its own radical negativity as ontological parallax, whereby the Absolute Being encountered by the subject in the experience of the sublime *is at the same time* "the pure Nothing of absolute negativity." Behind the ecstatic and recuperative epistemological sublime, then, lies a dejected and wasteful ontological sublime, forced upon us not by the limits of reason but by an endlessly festering wound in the real.²⁰ As Žižek observes:

In Kant, the feeling of the Sublime is evoked by some boundless, terrifying imposing phenomenon (raging nature, and so on), while in Hegel we are dealing with a miserable ‘little piece of the Real’—the Spirit *is* the inert, dead skull; ... God who created the world *is* Jesus, this miserable individual crucified together with two robbers ... (*Sublime Object* 234)

Even in its relentless becoming, Hegel’s all-conquering Absolute bears with it its abjected and indivisible remainder, the “bone” of spirit that forms its condition of possibility. As Duque notes, despite Hegel’s claims to the contrary, “the wounds of the Spirit do not necessarily heal without leaving any scars” (x).²¹ By rendering Being as an act of retroactive positing, as a reflex of the non-All, Hegel’s logic leaves an element of indeterminacy that is fatal to the notion of God as a primordial, Prothetic unity. Indeed, for Žižek “[t]his is how one should understand Hegel’s term ‘absolute recoil’: it is not just that a substantial entity ‘recoils’ from itself, divides itself from itself, it is that this entity emerges through recoil, as a retroactive effect of its division” (*Sex* 23)

By revealing both the necessity of contingency and the contingency of necessity, transcendental ontology pushes Coleridge’s Romantic, tetradic logic to its dialectical conclusion. In Coleridge’s symbolic order, God as inviolable Prothesis (All, One) emanates or *descends* into the polarities of Logos (Thesis) and Spirit (Antithesis). Since, however, Christ as Logos is conceived within Protestantism as a God who freely identifies himself with his own waste, the Prothesis itself cannot be sequestered from the moments of its becoming.²² In Hegelian terms, the process of expelling and yet acknowledging a contingent non-All (the excremental human) is one that God *must* undergo if he is to achieve Synthesis as Father and exist as communicative love. In this way, Coleridge’s chiasmic philosophy of/as life is shadowed by a darker relationship between the idealized symbolic exchange of the Divine Tetractys and the abjected remainder (Žižek’s miserable, crucified individual) without whose wasteful divisiveness such relationships would be impossible. What the Schellingian *prius* and the Hegelian less-than-nothing expose, then, is not pantheistic identity, but the void over which Coleridge suspends his higher logic. The lesson of both Schelling’s indivisible remainder and Hegel’s absolute recoil of retroactive, self-positing substance is that without rupture, there can be no dialectic; without the non-All, there can be no difference-in-unity.

The necessity of this remainder is, for Žižek, the last, dirty secret of dialectical speculation: the fact that negativity, “to attain its ‘being-for-itself’, must embody itself again in some miserable, radically contingent corporeal leftover” (*Sublime Object* 234). Forever contaminated with this ineliminable remnant of contingency, the ontological parallax of the sublime object presents a prodigal excessiveness that is the condition of possibility for the real. From this perspective, what is revealed by Coleridge’s rejection of Hegel’s “overbuilding” of the Prothesis is not just the resistance summoned by his philosophical Romanticism to the dialectical consummation of its asymptotic relation to the Absolute, it is also his *rejection of the ontological priority of rejection*. What Coleridge senses in Hegel’s “overbuilding” is a threat to the “dignity” and unity of the Prothesis as absolute presupposition. By introducing negativity into the Absolute ground itself, both Hegel and Schelling expose the underlying logic behind Coleridge’s tetradic order as one in which the very being of the Prothesis depends upon the excretion of indivisible remains: the sublime offal (*Abfall*) of the void within God.

Notes

1. Since Thomas McFarland's contention in *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition* that Coleridge's thought was defined by his inability to either accept or wholeheartedly reject pantheism the perception that Coleridge struggled to reconcile his theological principles with Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* has assumed axiomatic status. Raimonda Modiano, for instance, noted that "unlike Schelling, Coleridge could not regard nature as self-subsistent, for this conflicted with the biblical account of the creation of the world" (139). Similarly, Mary Ann Perkins argued that Coleridge's Platonic distinction of difference-in-unity from identity (sameness) lay behind what he came to regard as "the chief error in Schelling's philosophy, namely, that the Absolute is the identity of *identity* and distinction rather than of *unity* and distinction" (63), while for Douglas Hedley "Coleridge's critique of Schelling's speculative Trinitarian theology is exactly what one would expect from a Christian (Neo)Platonist: the great weakness of Schelling is the 'establishment of Polarity in the Absolute'" (85). More recently, Peter Cheyne cites Coleridge's Christian neo-Platonism as the insurmountable obstacle to accepting Schelling's system; thus, "[w]hile Schelling sees indifference as the attribute of the Absolute, Coleridge finds indifference only ... in nature and history, not as characterizing the Absolute itself" (284). A different perspective is offered by Paul Hamilton, who argues that Coleridge's engagement with Schelling was limited by the former's prioritization of friendship and community, for which ends he adapted Schelling's ideas rather than absorbed them, aiming "to map a model of relationship, and of communication, on to Schelling's Absolute grounding of knowledge" (*Coleridge and German Philosophy* 92). Greg Ellerman and Tilottama Rajan have highlighted the potential of Schelling's theory of life to disrupt Coleridge's conception of unity. Ellerman claims that for Coleridge, Schelling's vision in the *Freedom* essay of "a cosmos torn between the light of God and the darkness of his material ground, must be resisted" (41). This chimes with Rajan's perspective. As she succinctly puts it, Schelling presents Coleridge with a world in which "unity of plan and biodiversity are incompatible" ("Immunitary Foreclosures" 40).
2. Nonetheless, the view that the core principles of Coleridge's philosophy are broadly consonant with Hegel's has proved surprisingly durable. It can be traced back to the revival of interest in Coleridge among the British Hegelians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and was most clearly expressed by J. H. Muirhead, who likened Coleridge's "Idea" to Hegel's concrete universal (98). M. H. Abrams's broad assessment of the dialectic of British Romanticism spurred a renewed interest in Hegel among Romanticists such as Geoffrey Hartman and Paul de Man. A more specific verdict on the matter was delivered by Kathleen Wheeler, who argued that Coleridge agreed with Hegel that truth is a matter of coherence rather than correspondence and that "[t]he Subjectivity of Reason is the great error of the Kantian system" (22). Recent scholars have been more circumspect. Paul Hamilton's "Hegelian portrait of Coleridge" in *Coleridge and German Philosophy* (25) is based on the dialectics of Coleridge's life and career, not his thought. Thomas Simons claims that Coleridge's aesthetics "parallels, and moves beyond, elements of Hegel's" (465), while Ayon Roy opines that "Coleridge's critique of Schelling is ... almost, but not quite Hegelian—in that Coleridge never seems willing to take the final step of rejecting Schelling's premise of intuition altogether" (292). More recently, a monograph on Hegel and English Romanticism by Wayne Deakin has made the case for seeing Hegel as engaged in a "common romantic purpose" (1) with writers such as Coleridge, a struggle to exercise "a generative tension between an absolute idealism and an empirical-realism or between imaginative autonomy and receptivity to the external world" (35).
3. Like Žižek, Gabriel sees transcendental ontology's investigation of "*the ontological conditions of our conditions of access to what there is*" as occupying a "middle ground" between the transcendental epistemology of Kant and his linguistically pragmatic Anglo-American descendants on one hand and the speculative ontological realism of recent French thinkers such as Quentin Meillassoux on the other (ix).

4. See *CM* 4.344.
5. As his translators note, Schelling attempts to overcome Leibniz's equation of evil with lack of being by constructing a "dynamic theodicy [that] eschews closure" (*Philosophical Investigations* x).
6. For an insightful analysis of this problem, see Hedley 28.
7. For a revealing discussion of this issue in relation to Coleridge's theory of life, see Ellerman, who notes that although Coleridge was convinced that Schelling's "vision of an internally divided cosmos ... torn between the light of God and the darkness of his material ground, must be resisted," he found to his discomfort that "an absolute *life* cannot be isolated from its deformed or diseased manifestations" (41).
8. See Hamilton's *Coleridge and German Philosophy*, in which he claims that the absence of "relationship" in Schelling's system led Coleridge to "distort Kantian philosophical architecture" by insisting that "Practical reason must become cognitive"; thus, "[i]f we think of the Absolute as itself practical, as a will, then, contra Schelling's will that wills nothing, we can identify with its purposes" (94).
9. Coleridge never had the opportunity to read *Ages of the World*, which was published only after Schelling's death in 1856.
10. As Jacobi's English translator astutely observes, "[t]he problem with Jacobi, as Hamann had complained from the beginning, was that, while inveighing against the philosophers for not respecting the individuality of existence, he had himself adopted their mode of thought. He had treated existence, sensation, and reason as abstractions" (115).
11. For the influence of common-sense philosophy upon late-eighteenth-century German thought, see Manfred Kuehn.
12. Modern philosophical Romanticists such as Stanley Cavell and Richard Eldridge draw parallels between aspects of Romantic *Lebensphilosophie* and Wittgenstein's conception of philosophical thinking as a "form of life." Cavell credits the Romantics with using aesthetic means to redeem philosophy by contesting the latter's ability to recover its quotidian or "ordinary" voice on its own terms.
13. It should be added that Christensen sees this promise of dialectic in Coleridge as "merely the enabling presupposition of a rhetorical practice ... " (27).
14. It bears mentioning here that this hierarchy harbored a political significance for Coleridge. As Hamilton notes, it was Coleridge's undemocratic impulse that lay behind his objection to the leveling pantheism he detected in Wordsworth. Consequently, for Coleridge "[t]he 'child philosopher' of [Wordsworth's] Ode is implausible as a representative of 'Spirit,' pretending to an authority it could only possess in a democracy beyond Coleridge's political sympathies" (*Coleridge and German Philosophy* 97).
15. See Coleridge, *Biographia* 2.11: "[I]t is the privilege of the philosopher to preserve himself constantly aware, that distinction is not division. [The first] ... is the technical *process* of philosophy. But having so done, we must then restore them in our conceptions to the unity, in which they actually co-exist; and this is the *result* of philosophy."
16. In a notebook entry dated August 1818 Coleridge applies tetradic logic to a systematic reading of Genesis, in which the divine "state of Indistinction, or Fluidity," is interpreted as the "Prothesis of Inwardness and Outwardness," which is "neither a whole nor Parts, but a Mere Allness—all without an each." To achieve the organization necessary for existence (the subordination of parts to whole), the Prothetic All emerges from this state of fluid indifference, through the thesis and antithesis of darkness and light respectively, into a synthetic "Whole" (*CN* 3.4418).
17. See Houlgate: "although Hegel does not presuppose that speculative thought should be dialectical, such thought does in fact prove to be dialectical of its own accord" (129).
18. See also Taylor: "the Hegelian ontology itself in which everything can be grasped by reason because everything is founded on rational necessity is ultimately incompatible with Christian faith" (494).
19. See Žižek, *Disparities*: "There is ... a 'catastrophe' which always-already occurred ... the 'catastrophe' that is the emergence of subjectivity, of the human mind, out of nature"

- (185). Joseph Carew analyses Žižek's connection of the Freudian death drive (*Todestrieb*) with German Idealism's idea of the catastrophe of subjectivity, and thus the "the auto-disruption of reality into a painful not-all" (*Ontological Catastrophe* 27).
20. Tilottama Rajan is one of the most perceptive analysts of this abjected sublime. See, for example, "The Work of the Negative," in which she uses Hegel's theory of "symbolic" art to account for the way in which the malformed and disfigured shape of the Gothic exposes "Romanticism to its own in(di)gestion of the work of the negative" (6).
 21. In a similar vein, Geoffrey Hartman denies that Hegel succeeds in "envisioning history as a ... scene in which the agency of spirit leaves no scars" (43).
 22. See Žižek, *Parallax* 187.

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