Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834)

“Essays on the Principles of Method” from *The Friend* (1818)*

ESSAY IV

(Translation.)---Hear then what are the terms on which you and I ought to stand toward each other. If you hold philosophy altogether in contempt, bid it farewell. Or if you have heard from any other person, or have yourself found out a better than mine, then give honor to that, which ever it be. But if the doctrine taught in these our works please you, then it is but just that you should honor me too in the same proportion.22

Plato’s: 2d Letter to Dion.

WHAT is that which first strikes us, and strikes us at once, in a man of education? And which, among educated men, so instantly distinguishes the man of superior mind, that as was observed with eminent propriety of the late Edmund Burke) "we cannot stand under the same arch-way during a shower of rain. without finding him out?" Not the weight or novelty a his remarks; not any unusual interest of facts communicated by him; for we may suppose both the one and the other precluded by the shortness of our intercourse, and the triviality of the subjects. The difference will be impressed and felt, though the conversation should he confined to the state of the weather or the pavement. Still less will it arise from any peculiarity in his words and phrases, [p449] For if he be, as we now assume, a well-educated man as well as a man of superior powers, he will not fail to follow the golden rule of Julius Caesar, *Insolens verbum, tanguam scopolum, evitare.*23 Unless where new things necessitate new terms, he will avoid an unusual word as a rock. It must have been among the

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22 Plato, *Epistles* 312b.

23 Julius Caesar, *De analogia.* (Coleridge’s translation follows in the text.)
earliest lessons of his youth, that the breach of this precept, at all times hazardous, becomes ridiculous in the topics of ordinary conversation. There remains but one other point of distinction possible; and this must be, and in fact is, the true cause of the impression made on us. It is the unpremeditated and evidently habitual arrangement of his words, grounded on the habit of foreseeing, in each integral part, or (more plainly) in every sentence, the whole that he then intends to communicate. However irregular and desultory his talk, there is method in the fragments.

Listen, on the other hand, to an ignorant man, though perhaps shrewd and able in his particular calling; whether he be describing or relating. We immediately perceive, that his memory alone is called into action; and that the objects and events recur in the narration in the same order, and with the same accompaniments, however accidental or impertinent, as they had first occurred to the narrator. The necessity of taking breath, the efforts of recollection, and the abrupt rectification of its failures, produce all his pauses; and with exception of the "and then," the "and there," and the still less significant, "and so," they constitute likewise all his connections.

Our discussion, however, is confined to Method as employed in the formation of the understanding, and in the constructions of science and literature. It would indeed be superfluous to attempt a proof of its importance in the business and economy of active or domestic life. From the cotter’s hearth or the workshop of the artisan, to the palace or the arsenal, the first merit, that which admits neither substitute nor equivalent, is, that every thing is in its place. Where this charm is wanting, every other merit either loses its name, or becomes an additional ground of accusation and regret. Of one, by whom it is eminently possessed, we say proverbially, he is like clock-work. The resemblance extends beyond the point of regularity, and yet falls short of the truth. Both do, [p. 450] indeed, at once divide and announce the silent and otherwise indistinguishable lapse of time. But the man of methodical industry and honorable pursuits, does more: he realizes its ideal divisions, and gives a character and individuality to its moments. If the idle are described as killing time, he may be justly said to call it into life and moral being, while he makes it the distinct object not only of the consciousness, but of the conscience. He organizes the hours, and gives them a soul: and that, the very essence of which is to fleet away, and evermore to have been, he takes up into his own permanence, and communicates to it the imperishableness of a spiritual nature. Of the good and faithful servant, whose energies, thus directed, are thus methodized, it is less truly affirmed, that He lives in time, than that Time lives in him. His days, months, and years, as the stops and punctual marks in the records of duties performed, will survive the wreck of worlds, and remain extant when time itself shall be no more.

But as the importance of Method in the duties of social life is incomparably greater, so are its practical elements proportionally obvious, and such as relate to the will far more than to the understanding. Henceforward, therefore, we contemplate its bearings on the latter.

The difference between the products of a well-disciplined and those of an uncultivated understanding, in relation to what we will now venture to call the Science of Method, is often and admirably exhibited by our great Dramatist.1 We scarcely need refer our readers to the Clown’s evidence, in the first scene of the second act of “Measure for Measure,” or the Nurse in “Romeo and Juliet.” But
not to leave the position, without an instance to illustrate it, we will take the "easy-yielding" Mrs. Quickley’s relation of the circumstances of Sir John Falstaff’s debt to her.

FALSTAFF. What is the gross sum that I owe thee?

Mrs. QUICKLEY. Marry, if thou wert an honest man, thyself and the money too. Thou didst swear to me upon a parcel-gilt goblet, sitting in my dolphin chamber, at the round table, by a sea-coal on Wednesday in Whitsun week, when the prince broke thy head for likening his father to a singing-man in Windsor—thou didst swear to me then, as I was washing thy wound, to marry me and make me my lady thy wife. Canst thou deny it? Did not goodwife Keech, the butcher’s wife, come in then and call me gossip Quickley?—coming into borrow a mess of vinegar: telling us she had a good dish of prawns—[p. 451] whereby thou didst desire to eat some—whereby I told thee they were ill for a green wound, &c. &c. &c. Henry IV. 1st. pt. act ii. sc. 1

And this, be it observed, is so far from being carried beyond the bounds of a fair imitation, that "the poor soul’s" thoughts and sentences are more closely interlinked than the truth of nature would have required, but that the connections and sequence, which the habit of Method can alone give, have in this instance a substitute in the fusion of passion. For the absence of Method, which characterizes the uneducated, is occasioned by an habitual submission of the understanding to mere events and images as such, and independent of any power in the mind to classify or appropriate them. The general accompaniments of time and place are the only relations which persons of this class appear to regard in their statements. As this constitutes their leading feature, the contrary excellence, as distinguishing the well-educated man, must be referred to the contrary habit. METHOD, therefore, becomes natural to the mind which has been accustomed to contemplate not things only, or for their own sake alone, but likewise and chiefly the relations of things, either their relations to each other, or to the observer, or to the state and apprehension of the hearers. To enumerate and analyze these relations, with the conditions under which alone they are discoverable, is to teach the science of Method.

The enviable results of this science, when knowledge has been ripened into those habits which at once secure and evince its possession, can scarcely be exhibited more forcibly as well as more pleasingly, than by contrasting with the former extract from Shakspeare the narration given by Hamlet to Horatio of the occurrences during his proposed transportation to England, and the events that interrupted his voyage.

HAM. Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting
That would not let me sleep: methought I lay
Worse than the mutines in the bilboes.

24 Shakespeare, Henry IV part I, II, I, 74-86 (with variations)
Rashly, And prais’d be rashness for it—Let us know,
Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well,
When our deep plots do fail: and that should teach us, [p.452]
There’s a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.

HOR. That is most certain.

HAM. Up from my cabin,
My sea-gown scarf’d about me, in the dark
Grop’d I to find out them; had my desire;
Finger’d their pocket; and, in fine, withdrew
To my own room again: making so bold,
My fears forgetting manners, to unseal
Their grand commission; where I found, Horatio,
A royal knavery—an exact command,
Larded with many several sorts of reasons,
Importing Denmark’s health, and England’s too,
With, ho! such bugs and goblins in my life,
That on the supervise, no leisure bated,
No, not to stay the grinding of the axe,
My head should be struck off!

HOR. Is’t possible?

HAM. Here’s the commission.—Read it at more
    leisure. Act v. sc. 25

Here the events, with the circumstances of time and place, are all stated with
equal compression and rapidity, not one introduced which could have been
omitted without injury to the intelligibility of the whole process. If any tendency
is discoverable, as far as the mere facts are in question, it is the tendency to
omission: and, accordingly, the reader will observe, that the attention of the
narrator is called back to one material circumstance, which he was hurrying by,
by a direct question from the friend to whom the story is communicated, "How
WAS THIS SEALED?" But by a trait which is indeed peculiarly characteristic of
Hamlet's mind, ever disposed to generalize, and meditative to excess (but which,
with due abatement and reduction, is distinctive of every powerful and
methodizing intellect), all the digressions and enlargements consist of
reflections, truths, and principles of general and permanent interest, either
directly expressed or disguised in playful satire.

I sat me down:
Devis’d a new commission; wrote it fair.

25 *Hamlet*, V, ii 4-26 (with variations)
I once did hold it, as our statists do,
A baseness to write fair, and laboured much
How to forget that learning; but, sir, now
It did me yeoman’s service. Wilt thou know
The effect of what I wrote?

HOR. Aye, good my lord. [p. 453]

HAM. An earnest conjuration from the king,
As England was his faithful tributary;
As lone between them, like the palm, might flourish;
As peace should still her wheaten garland wear,
And many such like As’s of great charge—
That on the view and knowing of these contents
He should the bearers put to sudden death,
No shriving time allowed.

HOR. How was this sealed?

HAM. Why, even in that was heaven ordinant.
I had my father’s signet in my purse,
Which was the model of that Danish seal:
Folded the writ up in the form of the other;
Subscribed it; gave’t the impression; placed it safely,
The changeling never known. Now, the next day
Was our sea-fight; and what to this was Sequent,
Thou knowest already.

HOR. So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz go to’t?

HAM. Why, man, they did make love to this employment.
They are not near my conscience: their defeat
Doth by their own insinuation grow.

’Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes
Between the pass and fell incensed points
Of mighty opposites.26

It would, perhaps, be sufficient to remark of the preceding passage, in
connection with the humorous specimen of narration,

Fermenting o’er with frothy circumstance,27

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26 Hamlet V ii 31-62 (var.; lines 42 & 44 omitted).
27 Source untraced.
in Henry IV.; that if overlooking the different value of the matter in each, we considered the form alone, we should find both immethodical; Hamlet from the excess, Mrs. Quickley from the want, of reflection and generalization; and Method, therefore, must result from the due mean or balance between our passive impressions and the mind’s own re-action on the same. (Whether this re-action do not suppose or imply a primary act positively originating in the mind itself, and prior to the object in order of nature, though co-instantaneous in its manifestation, will be here-after discussed.) But we had a further purpose in thus contrasting these extracts from our “myriad-minded Bard,” (μυριονους ανηρ.)

28 We wished to bring forward, each for itself, these two elements of Method, or (to adopt an arithmetical term) its two main factors.

Instances of the want of generalization are of no rare occurrence in real life: and the narrations of Shakspeare’s Hostess and the Tapster, differ from those of the ignorant and unthinking in general, by their superior humor, the poet’s own gift and infusion, not by their want of Method, which is not greater than we often meet with in that class, of which they are the dramatic representatives. Instances of the opposite fault, arising from the excess of generalization and reflection in minds of the opposite class, will, like the minds themselves, occur Jess frequently in the course of our own personal experience. Yet they will not have been wanting to our readers, nor will they have passed unobserved, though the great poet himself (ο την εαυτου ψυχην ωσει υλην τινα ασωματον μορφαις μορψωσας” * Translation.—He that moulded his own soul, as some incorporeal material, into various forms. THEMISTIUS) has more conveniently supplied the illustrations. To complete, therefore, the purpose afore-mentioned, that of presenting each of the two components as separately as possible, we chose an instance in which, by the surplus of its own activity, Hamlet’s mind disturbs the arrangement, of which that very activity had been the cause and impulse.

Thus exuberance or mind, on the one hand, interferes with the forms of Method; but sterility of mind, on the other, wanting the spring and impulse to mental action, is wholly destructive of Method itself. For in attending too exclusively to the relations which the past or passing events and objects bear to general truth, and the moods of his own Thought, the most intelligent man is sometimes in danger of overlooking that other relation, in which they are likewise to be placed to the apprehension and sympathies of his hearers. His discourse appears like soliloquy intermixed with dialogue. But the uneducated and unreflecting talker over-looks all mental relations, both logical and psychological; and consequently precludes all Method, that is not purely accidental. Hence the nearer the things and incidents in time and place, the more distant, disjointed, and impertinent to each other, and to any common purpose, will they appear in his narration: and this [P.455] from the want of a staple, or starting-post in the narrator himself; from the absence of the leading Thought, which, borrowing a phrase from the nomenclature of legislation, we

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29 The “Tapster” is Pompey the clown, in Shakespeare’s Measure for Measure.
30 Themistius, Paraphrase of Aristotle on the Soul 3.8.
may not inaptly call the INITIATIVE. On the contrary, where the habit of Method is present and effective, things the most remote and diverse in time, place, and outward circumstance, are brought into mental contiguity and succession, the more striking as the less expected. But while we would impress the necessity of this habit, the illustrations adduced give proof that in undue preponderance, and when the prerogative of the mind is stretched into despotism, the discourse may degenerate into the grotesque or the fantastical.

With what a profound insight into the constitution of the human soul is this exhibited to us in the character of the Prince of Denmark, where flying from the sense of reality, and seeking a reprieve from the pressure of its duties, in that ideal activity, the overbalance of which, with the consequent indisposition to action, is his disease, he compels the reluctant good sense of the high yet healthful-minded Horatio, to follow him in his wayward meditation amid the graves?

HAM. "To what base uses we may return, Horatio! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till he find it stopping a bung-hole?
HOR. It were to consider too curiously to consider so.
HAM. No, faith, not a jot; but to follow him thither with modesty enough and likelihood to lead it. As thus: Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth to dust—the dust is earth; of earth we make loan: and why of that loam, whereto he was converted, might they not stop a beer-barrel?

Imperial Caesar, dead and turn’d to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away!" 33

But let it not escape our recollection, that when the objects thus connected are proportionate to the connecting energy, relatively to the real, or at least to the desirable sympathies of man-kind; it is from the same character that we derive the genial method in the famous soliloquy, "To be? or not to be?" which, admired as it is, and has been, has yet received only the first-fruits of the admiration due to it. [p.456]

We have seen that from the confluence of innumerable impressions in each moment of time the mere passive memory must needs tend to confusion—a rule, the seeming exceptions to which (the thunder-bursts in Lear, for instance) are really confirmations of its truth. For, in many instances, the predominance of some mighty Passion takes the place of the guiding Thought, and the result presents the method of Nature, rather than the habit of the Individual. For Thought, Imagination (and we may add, Passion), are, in their

32 Cf Francis Bacon, "initiative" in De augmentis scientarium, Bk VI, ch 2; Works I 165, Bacon “borrowing the term from the sacred ceremonies.” See below, I 458 (motto) which is a continuation of this Bacon passage.
33 Hamlet V i 191-202
34 Hamlet V i 56.
very essence, the first, connective, the latter co-adunative: and it has been shown, that if the excess lead to Method misapplied, and to connections of the moment, the absence, or marked deficiency, either precludes Method altogether, both form and substance: or (as the following extract will exemplify) retains the outward form only.

My liege and madam! to expostulate
What majesty should be, what duty is,
Why day is day, night night, and time is time,
Were nothing but to waste night, day and time.
Therefore—since brevity is the soul of wit,
And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes,
I will be brief Your noble son is mad:
Mad call I it for to define true madness,
What is't, but to be nothing else but mad!
But let that go.
QUEEN. More matter with less art.
POLL. Madam! I swear, I use no art at all.
That he is mad, tis true: tis true, tis pity:
And pity tis, tis true (a foolish figure!
But farewell it, for I will use no art.)
Mad let us grant him then! and now remains,
That we find out the cause of this effect,
Or rather say the cause of this defect:
For this effect defective comes by cause.
Thus it remains, and the remainder thus
Perpend!

Hamlet, act ii. scene 2\textsuperscript{35}

Does not the irresistible sense of the ludicrous in this flourish of the soul-surviving body of old Polonius’s intellect, not less than in the endless confirmations and most undeniable matters of fact, of Tapster Pompey or ”the hostess of the tavern” prove to our feelings, even before the word is found which presents the truth to our understandings, that confusion and formality are but the opposite poles of the same null-point? [p. 457]

It is Shakspeare’s peculiar excellence, that throughout the whole of his splendid picture gallery (the reader will excuse the confess inadequacy of this metaphor),\textsuperscript{36} we find individuality every where, mere portrait no where. In all his various characters, we still feel ourselves communing with the same

\textsuperscript{35}Hamlet II, ii, 86-105.

\textsuperscript{36}“Inadequate” because obvious: Coleridge is perhaps thinking of John Boydell’s Shakespear Gallery (of painting and statues illustrating the plays) . . .sold in 1805, following Boydell’s death. (Rooke)
human nature,\textsuperscript{37} which is everywhere present as the vegetable sap in the branches, sprays, leaves, buds, blossoms, and fruits, their shapes, tastes, and odours. Speaking of the effect, i.e. his works themselves, we may define the excellence of \textit{their} method as consisting in that just proportion, that union and interpenetration of the universal and the particular,\textsuperscript{38} which must ever pervade all works of decided genius and true science. For Method implies \textit{a progressive transition}, and it is the meaning of the word in the original language. The Greek \textit{Μεθοδος}, is literally \textit{a way}, or \textit{path of Transit}. Thus we extol the Elements of Euclid, or Socrates’ discourse with the slave in the \textit{Menon},\textsuperscript{39} as \textit{methodical}, a term which no one who holds himself bound to think or speak correctly, would apply to the alphabetical order or arrangement of a common dictionary. But as, without continuous transition, there can be no Method, so without a pre-conception there can be no transition with continuity. The term, Method, cannot therefore, otherwise than by abuse, be applied to a mere dead arrangement, containing in itself no principle of progression.

\textsuperscript{37} Copy D deletes “human” noting “\textit{muning, human}—how difficult it is for the most sensitive ear to avoid occasional \textit{Jingles of sound}”. . . .

\textsuperscript{38} Cf \textit{The Friend} (1809-10) 251, below II 217. . . . suggesting . . . Coleridge was recollecting not a passage from Aristotle but from Pomponatius on Aristotle, \textit{Tractatus de immortalitate animae}, ch 9 (1534) 59. Here it is likelier that he was using Tennemann IX 70-2 and nn.

\textsuperscript{39} Plato, \textit{Meno} 82b-85b.
ESSAY VII

Ταυτι τοινυν δταιρω χωρις μεν, ους νυν δη ελεγες, φιλοθεαμονας τε, και
φιλοτεχνους και πρακτικους, και κωρις αθ περι ων ο λογος, ους μονους αν τις
ορθως προσειποι φιλοσοφοθ, ως μεν γιγνωσκοντας,
τινος εστιν επιστημη εκαστη τουτων των επιστημων, ο τυχανει ον αλλο αθης της
eπιστημης.

ΠΛΑΤΩΝ.80

(Translation.)—In the following then I distinguish, first, those whom indeed you
may call Philotheorists, or Philotechnists, or Practicians, and secondly those
whom alone you may rightly denominate PHILOSOPHERS, as knowing what
the science of all these branches of science is, which may prove to be
something more than the mere aggregate of the knowledges in any particular
science.—PLATO.

FROM Shakspeare to Plato, from the philosophic poet to the poetic
philosopher,81 the transition is easy, and the road is crowded with illustrations
of our present subject. For of Plato’s works, the larger and more valuable
portion have all one common end, which comprehends and shines through the
particular purpose of each several dialogue; and this is to establish the sources,
to evolve the principles, and exemplify the art of METHOD. This is the clue,
without which it would be difficult to exculpate the noblest productions of the
divine philosopher from the charge of being tortuous and labyrinthine in their
progress, and unsatisfactory in their ostensible results. The latter indeed
appear not seldom to have been drawn for the purpose of starting a new
problem, rather than that of solving the one proposed as the subject of the
previous discussion. But with the clear insight that the purpose of the writer is
not so much to establish any particular truth, as to remove the obstacles, the
continuance of which is preclusive of all truth; the whole scheme assumes a
different aspect, and justifies itself in all its dimensions. We see, that to open
anew a well of springing water, not to cleanse the stagnant tank, or fill, bucket
by bucket, the leaden cistern; that the EDUCATION of the intellect, by
awakening the principle and method of self-development, was his proposed
object, not any specific information that can be conveyed into it from without:
not to assist in storing the passive mind with the various sorts of knowledge
most in request, as if the human soul were a mere repository or banqueting-

80 Republic 475a-b (var), το φιλοσοφους, then 476d (var), flowed (from τινος) by Charmides 166a.
C is using Tennemann II 242-3 and n (where the Republic and Charmides are quoted, with C
following Tennemann’s omissions.
81 For other references by C to Plato as a poet, see Misc C 308=9; P Lects (1949) 158 and n (Lect
4).
room, but to place it in such relations of circumstance as should gradually excite the germinal power that craves no knowledge but what it can take up into itself, what it can appropriate, and re-produce in fruits of its own. To shape, to dye, to paint over, and to mechanize the mind, he resigned, as their proper trade, to the sophists, against whom he waged open and unremitting war. For the ancients, as well as the moderns, had their machinery for the extemporaneous mintage of intellects, by means of which, off-hand, as it were, the scholar was enabled to make a figure on any and all subjects, on any and all occasions. They too had their glittering VAPORS, that (as the comic poet tells us) fed a host of sophists-

\[\begin{align*}
\text{μεγαλαί θεαι ἀνδρασιν ἀργοῖς} \\
\text{Αὐτέρ γνώμην καὶ διαλέξειν καὶ νουν ἡμίν παρεχούσιν,} \\
\text{Καὶ τερατειαν καὶ περιλεξίν καὶ κρουσίν καὶ καταληψίν.}
\end{align*}\]

ΑΡΙΣΤΟΦ. Νεφ. Σκ. δ.\textsuperscript{82}

IMITATED

Great goddesses are they to lazy folks,
Who pour down on us gifts of fluent speech,
Sense most sententious, wonderful fine effect,
And how to talk about it and about it,
Thoughts brisk as bees, and pathos soft and thawy.\textsuperscript{83}

In fine, as improgressive arrangement is not Method, so neither is a mere mode or set fashion of doing a thing. Are further facts required? We appeal to the notorious fact that ZOOLOGY, soon after the commencement of the latter half of the last century, was falling abroad, weighed down and crushed, as it were, by the inordinate number and manifoldness of facts and phenomena apparently separate, without evincing the least promise of systematizing itself by any inward combination, any vital interdependence of its parts. JOHN HUNTER,\textsuperscript{84} who appeared at times almost a stranger to the grand conception, which yet never ceased to work in him as his genius and governing spirit, rose at length in the horizon of physiology and comparative anatomy.\textsuperscript{85} In his printed works, the one directing thought seems evermore to flit before him, twice or thrice only to have been seized, and after a momentary detention to have been again let go: as if the words of the charm had been incomplete, and it had appeared at its own will only to mock its calling. At length, in the astonishing preparations for his museum, he constructed it for the scientific

\textsuperscript{82} Aristophanes Clouds 316–18 (var), Socrates speaking.

\textsuperscript{83} Imitated from Aristophanes: PW (EHC) II 1008.

\textsuperscript{84} See below, I 493-4n and 493 n5; P Lects (1949) 97 (Lect 2); and TL (1848) 17-19, 62.

\textsuperscript{85} Except for the first two sentences, and a few words of the third sentence, most of this paragraph appears in a ms fragment in BM MS Egerton 2800 f 78. The ms continues at this point: “Still did he seem to miss the compleating WORD that should have reflected the Idea, and have placed it at the disposal of his own conscious and volutary Contemplation, for the Word is the first Birth of the Idea, and its flexible Organ” (strikeouts removed. LS)
apprehension out of the unspoken alphabet of nature. Yet notwithstanding the imperfection in the annunciation of the idea, how exhilarating have been the results! We dare appeal to ABERNETHY, to EVERARD HOME, to HATCHETT, whose communication to Sir Everard on the egg and its analogies, in a recent paper of the latter (itself of high excellence) in the Philosophical Transactions, we point out as being, in the proper sense of the term, the development of a FACT in the history of physiology, and to which we refer as exhibiting a luminous instance of what we mean by the discovery of a central phaenomenon. To these we appeal, whether whatever is grandest in the views of CUVIER be not either a reflection of this light or a continuation of its rays, well and wisely directed through fit media to its appropriate object.**

* Since the first delivery of this sheet, Mr. Abernethy has realized this anticipation, dictated solely by the writer's wishes, and at that time justified only by his general admiration of Mr. A.'s talents and principles; but composed without the least knowledge that he was then actually engaged in proving the assertion here hazarded, at large and in detail. See his eminent "Physiological Lectures," lately published in one volume octavo. [See Abernethy Physiological Lectures (1817) 239-40, where he asserts that fluid and semi-fluid substances have a principle of life suffused through them. It was then generally believed that only solids had such a principle. Friend (1837) III 146n substitutes Abernethy's "eminent Treatise on Physiocolgy (1821)", probably meaning his Reflections on Gall and Spurzheim's System of Physiognomy and Phrenology, a copy of which Abernethy presented to C (it is now in the BM). (Rooke).]

** Nor should it be wholly unnoticed, that Cuvier, who, we understand, was not born in France, and is not of unmixed French extraction, had prepared himself for his illustrious labors (as we learn from a reference in the first chapter of his great work, and should have concluded from the general style of thinking, though the language betrays suppression, as of one who doubted the sympathy of his readers or audience) in a very different school of methodology and philosophy than Paris could have afforded. [n: "The Handel of French Physiology" (CN III 4357), Georges Cuvier (1769-1832), was born at Montbéliard, a town then in the duchy of Württemberg, where his

86 See below I 493 n 7. (The museum, containing models and illustrations depicting all phases of health and disease, was housed temporarily in Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1806, moved to permanent quarters in 1812, and opened to the public in 1813. There was considerable controversy about the government's donating the funds necessary for its purchase and housing.

87 John Abernethy (1764-1831), the surgeon, a pupil of John Hunter; his Physiological Lectures had recently been published (1817). C's admiration for Abernethy was publicly reciprocated in a Hunterian Oration. See P Lects (1949) 24-5, 28-9, 422n; CL IV 809; TL [1848] 65.

88 Sir Everard Home (1756-1832), the eminent surgeon, pupil of John Hunter (whose ms he used and destroyed), delivered several of the Hunterian Orations.

89 See above I 471 n2. Home's paper “On the Formation of Fat in the Intestine of the Tadpole, and on the Use of the Yolk in the Formation of the Embryo in the Egg” Phil Trans CVI 1816) 301-310 contained a report (306-10) contributed by Hatchett of his experiments with the yolk of eggs of various animals, leading to the conclusion that “in all ova, the embryos of which have bones, there is a certain portion of oil, and in those ova whose embryos consist entirely of soft parts, there is none”. In ms. C wrote and then cancelled the remark that Hatchett's communication “may be among the most seminative Ideas of the Age, one of the most scientific as well as essential Births”: BM MS Egerton 2800 f 78. “Most seminative” for C perhaps because Hatchett’s experiments supported C’s view of life as the principle of individuation.

90 The ms fragment continues: “and to the Zealous Pupil of John Hunter, to whom, as his announced Biographer, we entrust the detail of the evidence;--”: ibid. The “Zealous Pupil” was Joseph Adams (1756-1818), the surgeon who sent C to Dr Gillman (see above, Introduction, I lxxxi n4); the passage was probably cancelled because the biography was published before The Friend: see Memoirs of the Life and Doctrines of the Late John Hunter, Esq. (1817).
French Protestant ancestors had sought refuge in the sixteenth century. He studied at Stuttgart. The “first chapter of his great work” could refer to *Recherces sur les ossmens fossils de quadrupeds* (4 vols Paris 1812) 18-19n, in which Cuvier writes that he took his terminology from the “famous school of Freiburg”; or to his *Lectures on Comparative Anatomy* tr William Ross and James Macartney (2 vols 1802), where in an introductory letter Cuvier writes of the encouragement he received in Paris, doubly appreciated because he was a foreigner, and in terms of such modesty and generosity as C would find un-French. For C’s reading of this work see CN III 4358. Closest of all, and most important if C read it soon after it appeared, is Cuvier’s *Le Règne animal distribué d’après son organisation* (4 vols Paris 1817). The introduction to this work is an essay on the methods of various scientific disciplines, to which C was perhaps indebted, not so much for specific points as for his general approach to the “Essay on Method”. (Rooke)]

>We have seen that a previous act and conception of the mind is indispensable even to the mere semblances of Method: that neither fashion, mode, nor orderly arrangement can be produced without a prior purpose, and "a pre-cognition *ad intentionein ejus quad quaeritur,"* though this purpose may have been itself excited; and this "pre-cognition" itself abstracted from the perceived likenesses and differences of the objects to be arranged. But it has likewise been shown, that fashion, mode, ordonnance, are not Method, inasmuch as all Method supposes A PRINCIPLE OF UNITY WITH PROGRESSION; in other words, progressive transition without breach of continuity. But such a principle, it has been proved, can never in the sciences of experiment or in those of observation be adequately supplied by a theory built on generalization. For what shall determine the mind to abstract and generalize one common point rather than another? and within what limits, from what number of individual objects, shall the generalization be made? The theory must still require a prior theory for its own legitimate construction. With the mathematician the definition *makes* the object,92 and pre-establishes the terms which, and which alone, can occur in the after-reasoning. If a circle be found not to have the radii from the center to the circumference perfectly equal, which in fact it would be absurd to expect of any material circle, it follows only that it was not a circle: and the tranquil geometrician would content himself with smiling at the *Quid pro Quo* of the simple objector. A mathematical *theoria seu contentplatio*93 may therefore be perfect. For the mathematician can be certain, that he has contemplated *all* that appertains to his proposition. The celebrated EULER,94 treating on some point respecting arches, makes this curious remark, "All experience is in contradiction to this; sed potius fidendum est analysi; *i.e.* but this is no reason for doubting the analysis." The words *sound* paradoxical; but in truth mean no more than this, that the properties of space are not less

certainly the properties of space because they can never be entirely

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91 “To the investigation of the point at issue”: source untraced.
92 C is expanding a remark of Giovanni Battista Vico: see Vico *De antiquissima italorum sapientia* (1710) bk I ch 3; also Vico *Opere* (Milan & Naples 1854) 267-8 and n. Cf TL (1848) 36. As M. H. Fisch has, however, shown—"The Coleridges, Dr. Prati, and Vico" *M Phil* XLI (Nov 1943) 111-22—C’s source for this Vico quotation is Jacobi *Von de Göttlichen Dingen: Werke* III 351-3 and n.
93 “philosophical speculation or survey”.
94 Leonhardt Euler (170-7-83), the famous Swiss mathematician and physicist; the locus of the remark not found. Cf AR (1825) 171n.
transferred to material bodies. But in physics, that is, in all the sciences which have for their objects the things of nature, and not the entia rationis 95—more philosophically, intellectual acts and the products of those acts, existing exclusively in and for the intellect itself—the definition must follow, and not precede the reasoning. It is representative not constitutive, and is indeed little more than an abbreviation of the preceding observation, and the deductions therefrom. But as the observation, though aided by experiment, is necessarily limited and imperfect, the definition must be equally so. The history of theories, and the frequency of their subversion by the discovery of a single new fact, supply the best illustrations of this truth.*

* The following extract from a most respectable scientific Journal contains an exposition of the impossibility of a perfect Theory in Physics, the more striking because it is directly against the purpose and intention of the writer. We content ourselves with one question, What if Kepler, what if Newton in his investigations concerning the Tides, had held themselves bound to this canon, and instead of propounding a law, had employed themselves exclusively in collecting materials for a Theory?

"The magnetic influence has long been known to have a variation which is constantly changing; but that change is so slow, and at the same time so different in various (different?) parts of the world, that it would be in vain to seek for the means of reducing it to established rules, until all its local and particular circumstances are clearly ascertained and recorded by accurate observations made in various parts of the globe. The necessity and importance of such observations are now pretty generally understood, and they have been actually carrying on for some years past; but these (and by parity of reason the incomparably greater number that remain to be made) must be collected, collated, proved, and afterwards brought together into one focus before ever a foundation can be formed upon which any thing like a sound and stable Theory can be constituted for the explanation of such changes." Journal of Science and the Arts, No. vii. p. 103.96

An intelligent friend, on reading the words "into one focus," observed: But what and where is the lens? I however fully agree with the writer. All this and much more must have been achieved before "a sound and stable Theory" could be "constituted"—which even then (except as far as it might occasion the discovery of a law) might possibly explain (ex plicis plana reddere),97 but never account for, the facts in question. But the most satisfactory comment on these and similar assertions would be afforded by a matter of fact history of the rise and progress, the accelerating and retarding momenta, of science in the civilized world.

As little can a true scientific method be grounded on an hypothesis,98 unless

95 "intelligible realities".
96 The Journal was published quarterly by the Royal Institution of Great Britain. No VII is the first number for 1818, and the article quoted is a review of William Bain An Essay on the Variations of the Compass (Edinburgh 1817): Journal (1818) IV 102-3 (var; C's italics and brackets).
97 Either "to make plain the obscure" or "to make plain the obvious", reading ex plicatis or explicitis for "ex plicis".
98 Cf the following entry in CN III 3587: "Hypothesis: the placing of one known fact under others as their ground or foundation—Not the fact itself but only its position in a given certain relation is
where the hypothesis is an exponential image or picture-language of an idea which is contained in it more or less clearly; or the symbol of an undiscovered law, like the characters of unknown quantities in algebra, for the purpose of submitting the phenomena to a scientific calculus. In all other instances, it is itself a real or supposed pha:nomenon, and therefore a part of the problem which it is to solve. It may be among the foundation-stones of the edifice, but can never be the ground.

But in experimental philosophy, it may be said how much do we not owe to accident? Doubtless: but let it not be forgotten, that if the discoveries so made stop there; if they do not excite some master IDEA; if they do not lead to some LAW (in whatever dress of theory or hypotheses the fashions and prejudices of the time may disguise or disfigure it): the discoveries may remain for ages limited in their uses, insecure and unproductive. How many centuries, we might have said millennia, have passed, since the first accidental discovery of the attraction and repulsion of light bodies by rubbed amber, &c. Compare the interval with the progress made within less than a century, after the discovery of the phenomena that led immediately to a THEORY of electricity. That here as in many other instances, the theory was supported by insecure hypotheses; that by one theorist two heterogeneous fluids are assumed, the vitreous and the resinous; by another, a plus and minus of the same fluid; that a third considers it a mere modification of light; while a fourth composes the electrical aura of oxygen, hydrogen, and caloric: this does but place the truth we have been evolving in a stronger and clearer light. For abstract from all these suppositions, or rather imaginations, that which is common to, and involved in them all; and we shall have neither notional fluid or fluids, nor chemical compounds, nor elementary matter,—but the idea of two—opposite—forces, tending to rest by equilibrium. These are the sole factors of the calculus, alike in all the theories. These give the law, and in it the method, both of arranging the phenomena and of substantiating appearances into facts of science; with a success proportionate to the clearness or confusedness of the insight into the law. For this reason, we anticipate the greatest improvements in the method, the nearest approaches to a system of electricity from these philosophers, who have presented the law most purely, and the correlative idea as an idea: those, namely, who, since the year 1798,99 in the true spirit of experimental dynamics, rejecting the imagination of any material substrate, simple or compound, contemplate in the phenomena of electricity the operation of a law which reigns through all nature, the law of POLARITY, or the manifestation of one power by opposite forces: who trace in these appearances, as the most obvious and striking of its innumerable forms, the agency of the positive and negative poles of a power essential to all material construction; the second, namely, of the three primary principles, for which the beautiful and most appropriate symbols are given by the mind in the three ideal dimensions of space.100

imagined. Where both the position and the fact are imagined, it is Hypopoeesis not Hypothesis, subfication not supposition”. See also Abernethy An Enquiry into the Probability and Rationality of Mr. Hunter’s Theory of Life (1814 [1815]) 8-9 for a similar discussion of “theory” and “hypothesis”.

99 The year of the discovery of electricity by Volta and La Place. William Gilbert (1540-1603) had been the first to experiment with it (De magnete 1600), but Volta the first to produce it.

100 Cf TT 15 Jun 1827: “... I am in the habit of realizing to myself Magnetism as length; Electricity as breadth or surface; and Galvanism as depth”, and TL (1848) 91.
The time is, perhaps, nigh at hand, when the same comparison between the results of two unequal periods; the interval between the knowledge of a fact, and that from the discovery of the law, will be applicable to the sister science of magnetism. But how great the contrast between magnetism and electricity, at the present moment! From remotest antiquity, the attraction of iron by the magnet was known and noticed; but, century after century, it remained the undisturbed property of poets and orators. The fact of the magnet and the fable of the phoenix stood on the same scale of utility. In the thirteenth century, or perhaps earlier, the polarity of the magnet, and its communicability to iron, were discovered; and soon suggested a purpose so grand and important, that it may well be deemed the proudest trophy ever raised by accident* in the service of mankind—the invention of the compass. But it led to no idea, to no law, and consequently to no Method: though a variety of phænomena, as startling as they are mysterious, have forced on us a presentiment of its intimate connection with all the great agencies of nature; of a revelation, in ciphers, the key to which is still wanting. We can recall no incident of human history that impresses the imagination more deeply than the moment when Columbus,** on an unknown ocean, first perceived one of these startling facts, the change of the magnetic needle!

In what shall we seek the cause of this contrast between the rapid progress of electricity and the stationary condition of magnetism? As many theories, as many hypotheses, have been advanced in the latter science as in the former. But the theories and fictions of the electricians contained an idea, and all the same idea, which has necessarily led to METHOD; implicit indeed, and only regulative hitherto, but which requires little more than the dismission of the imagery to become constitutive like the ideas of the geometrion. On the contrary, the assumptions of the magnetists (as for instance, the hypothesis that the planet itself is one vast magnet, or that an immense magnet is concealed within it; or that of a concentric globe within the earth, revolving on its own independent axis) are but repetitions of the same fact or phenomenon looked at through a magnifying glass; the reiteration of the problem, not its solution. The naturalist, who cannot or will not see, that one fact is often worth a thousand,101 as including them all in itself, and that it first makes all the others facts; who has not the head to comprehend, the soul to reverence, a central experiment or observation (what the Greeks would perhaps have called a protophenomenon); will never receive an auspicious answer from the oracle of nature.

* If accident it were: if the compass did not obscurely travel to us from the remotest east: if its existence there does not point to an age and a race, to which scholars of highest rank in the world of letters, Sir W. Jones. Bailly, Schlegel102 have attached faith! That it was known before the aera generally assumed for its invention, and not spoken of as a novelty, has been proved by Mr. Southey and others.103

101 Cf Method 20, which adds: “the important consideration so often dwelt upon, so forcibly urged, so powerfully amplified and explained by our great countryman Bacon.

102 Sir William Jones (1746-94), Jean Sylvain Bailly (1736-93), and K. W. F. Schlegel (1772-1829), all wrothe on the ancient Orient. See CN I 32n, 302n II 3130n. For details, see Rooke’s note in The Friend.

103 See Southey Omniana I 210, quotes a passage from Las siete Partidas about the mariner’s needle.
** It cannot be deemed alien from the purposes of this disquisition, if we are anxious to attract the attention of our readers to the importance of speculative meditation, even for the worldly interests of mankind; and to that concurrence of nature and historic event with the great revolutionary movements of individual genius, of which so many instances occur in the study of History —how nature (why should we hesitate in saying, that which in nature itself is more than nature?) seems to come forward in order to meet, to aid, and to reward every idea excited by a contemplation of her methods in the spirit of filial care, and with the humility of love! It is with this view that we extract from an ode of Chiabrera’s the following lines, which, in the strength of the thought and the lofty majesty of the poetry, has but “few peers in ancient or in modern song.”

** COLUMBUS **

Certo dal cor, ch' alto Destin non scelse,
Son l' imprese magnanime neglette;
Ma le bell' alme alle bell' opre elette
Sanno gioir nelle fatiche eccelse:
Ne biasmo popolar, frale catena,
Spirto d' onore it suo cammin raffrena.
Così lunga stagion per modi indegni
Europa disprezzo l' inclita speme:
Scherendo it vulgo (e sect) i Regi insieme)
Nudo nocchier promettitor di Regni; Ma per le sconosciute onde marine
L' invitta prora ci pur sospinse al fine.
Qual uom, the tomi al gentil consorte,
Tal ei da sua magion spiego l' antenne;
L' ocean corse, e i turbini sostenne,
Vinse le crude imagini di morte;
Poscia, dell' ampio mar spenta la guerra,
Scorse la dianzi favolosa Terra.
Allor dal cavo Pin scendc veloce
E di grand Orma it nuovo mondo imprime;
Ne men ratio per l'Aria erge sublime,
Segno del Ciel, insuperabil Croce;
E porse umile esempio, onde adorarla
Debba sua Gente.

CHIABRERA, V01. 1

Trans. by Dr. D. E. Rhodes of the British Museum.

Certainly by the heart, which high Destiny chose note,
Magnanimous enterprises are neglected;

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104 Canzone XII: *Opere* (1757) I 22-3 or *Poesie liriche* (1782) I 22 (var. with errors: il for in, line 6; porse for porge, line 23). C copied this poem in N 21 ½ ; cf. CN III 3318).
But fine souls chosen for find deeds
Know how to rejoice in lofty work;
Nor does popular blame, frail chain,
Hold in check the spirit of honour.
So for a long season by unworthy means
Europe despised the famous hope:
The common people (and the Kings with them) scorning
That naked pilot, promiser of Kingdoms;
But through the unknown waves of the sea
The unconquerable prow he drove on to the end.
Just as a man, returning to his gentle wife,
So he, from his home, spread his wings;
Coursed o'er the ocean, endured the whirlwinds,
Conquered the harsh images of death;
Then, when the war of the broad sea was o'er,
He perceived before him the fabulous Land.
Then from his hollow ship he quickly descends
And imprints the new world with a great Footstep;
And no less quickly through the Air rises sublime,
Sign of Heaven, the insuperable Cross;
And offers a humble example, for that
His people must adore it.
BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA (1818)

by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA

CHAPTER XII

A chapter of requests and premonitions concerning the perusal or omission of the chapter that follows.

In the perusal of philosophical works I have been greatly benefited by a resolve, which, in the antithetic form and with the allowed quaintness of an adage or maxim, I have been accustomed to word thus: until you understand a writer's ignorance, presume yourself ignorant of his understanding. This golden rule of mine does, I own, resemble those of Pythagoras in its obscurity rather than in its depth. If however the reader will permit me to be my own Hierocles, I trust, that he will find its meaning fully explained by the following instances. I have now before me a treatise of a religious fanatic, full of dreams and supernatural experiences. I see clearly the writer's grounds, and their hollowness. I have a complete insight into the causes, which through the medium of his body has acted on his mind; and by application of received and ascertained laws I can satisfactorily explain to my own reason all the strange incidents, which the writer records of himself. And this I can do without suspecting him of any intentional falsehood. As when in broad day- light a man tracks the steps of a traveller, who had lost his way in a fog or by a treacherous moonshine, even so, and with the same tranquil sense of certainty, can I follow the traces of this bewildered visionary. I understand his ignorance.

On the other hand, I have been re-perusing with the best energies of my mind the TIMAEUS of Plato. Whatever I comprehend, impresses me with a reverential sense of the author's genius; but there is a considerable portion of the work, to which I can attach no consistent meaning. In other treatises of the same philosopher, intended for the average comprehensions of men, I have been delighted with the masterly good sense, with the perspicuity of the language, and the aptness of the inductions. I recollect likewise, that numerous passages in this author, which I thoroughly comprehend, were formerly no less unintelligible to me, than the passages now in question. It would, I am aware, be quite fashionable to dismiss them at once as Platonic jargon. But this I cannot do with satisfaction to my own mind, because I have sought in vain for causes adequate to the solution of the assumed inconsistency. I have no insight into the possibility of a man so eminently wise, using words with such half-meanings to himself, as must perforce pass into no meaning to his readers. When in addition to the motives thus suggested by my own reason, I bring into distinct remembrance the number and the series of great men, who, after long and zealous study of these works had joined in honouring the name of Plato with epithets, that almost transcend humanity, I feel, that a contemptuous
verdict on my part might argue want of modesty, but would hardly be received by the judicious, as evidence of superior penetration. Therefore, utterly baffled in all my attempts to understand the ignorance of Plato, I conclude myself ignorant of his understanding.

In lieu of the various requests which the anxiety of authorship addresses to the unknown reader, I advance but this one; that he will either pass over the following chapter altogether, or read the whole connectedly. The fairest part of the most beautiful body will appear deformed and monstrous, if dismembered from its place in the organic whole. Nay, on delicate subjects, where a seemingly trifling difference of more or less may constitute a difference in kind, even a faithful display of the main and supporting ideas, if yet they are separated from the forms by which they are at once clothed and modified, may perchance present a skeleton indeed; but a skeleton to alarm and deter. Though I might find numerous precedents, I shall not desire the reader to strip his mind of all prejudices, nor to keep all prior systems out of view during his examination of the present. For in truth, such requests appear to me not much unlike the advice given to hypochondriacal patients in Dr. Buchan’s domestic medicine; videlicet, to preserve themselves uniformly tranquil and in good spirits. Till I had discovered the art of destroying the memory a parte post, without injury to its future operations, and without detriment to the judgment, I should suppress the request as premature; and therefore, however much I may wish to be read with an unprejudiced mind, I do not presume to state it as a necessary condition.

The extent of my daring is to suggest one criterion, by which it may be rationally conjectured beforehand, whether or no a reader would lose his time, and perhaps his temper, in the perusal of this, or any other treatise constructed on similar principles. But it would be cruelly misinterpreted, as implying the least disrespect either for the moral or intellectual qualities of the individuals thereby precluded. The criterion is this: if a man receives as fundamental facts, and therefore of course indeemonstrable and incapable of further analysis, the general notions of matter, spirit, soul, body, action, passiveness, time, space, cause and effect, consciousness, perception, memory and habit; if he feels his mind completely at rest concerning all these, and is satisfied, if only he can analyse all other notions into some one or more of these supposed elements with plausible subordination and apt arrangement: to such a mind I would as courteously as possible convey the hint, that for him the chapter was not written.

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CHAPTER XIII

On the imagination, or esemplastic power

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Thus far had the work been transcribed for the press, when I received the following letter from a friend, whose practical judgment I have had ample reason to estimate and revere, and whose taste and sensibility preclude all the excuses which my self-love might possibly have prompted me to set up in plea against the decision of advisers of equal good sense, but with less tact and feeling.

"Dear C.

"You ask my opinion concerning your Chapter on the Imagination, both as to the impressions it made on myself, and as to those which I think it will make on the Public, i.e. that part of the public, who, from the title of the work and from its forming a sort of introduction to a volume of poems, are likely to constitute the great majority of your readers.

"As to myself, and stating in the first place the effect on my understanding, your opinions and method of argument were not only so new to me, but so directly the reverse of all I had ever been accustomed to consider as truth, that even if I had comprehended your premises sufficiently to have admitted them, and had seen the necessity of your conclusions, I should still have been in that state of mind, which in your note in Chap. IV you have so ingeniously evolved, as the antithesis to that in which a man is, when he makes a bull. In your own words, I should have felt as if I had been standing on my head.

"The effect on my feelings, on the other hand, I cannot better represent, than by supposing myself to have known only our light airy modern chapels of ease, and then for the first time to have been placed, and left alone, in one of our largest Gothic cathedrals in a gusty moonlight night of autumn. 'Now in glimmer, and now in gloom;' often in palpable darkness not without a chilly sensation of terror; then suddenly emerging into broad yet visionary lights with coloured shadows of fantastic shapes, yet all decked with holy insignia and mystic symbols; and ever and anon coming out full upon pictures and stone-work images of great men, with whose names I was familiar, but which looked upon me with countenances and an expression, the most dissimilar to all I had been in the habit of connecting with those names. Those whom I had been taught to venerate as almost super-human in magnitude of intellect, I found perched in little fret-work niches, as grotesque dwarfs; while the grotesques, in my hitherto belief, stood guarding the high altar with all the characters of apotheosis. In short, what I had supposed substances were thinned away into shadows, while everywhere shadows were deepened into substances:

If substance might be call’d that shadow seem’d,
For each seem’d either!
"Yet after all, I could not but repeat the lines which you had quoted from a MS. poem of your own in the FRIEND, and applied to a work of Mr. Wordsworth's though with a few of the words altered:

------An Orphic tale indeed,
A tale obscure of high and passionate thoughts
To a strange music chanted!

"Be assured, however, that I look forward anxiously to your great book on the CONSTRUCTIVE PHILOSOPHY, which you have promised and announced: and that I will do my best to understand it. Only I will not promise to descend into the dark cave of Trophonius with you, there to rub my own eyes, in order to make the sparks and figured flashes, which I am required to see.

"So much for myself. But as for the Public I do not hesitate a moment in advising and urging you to withdraw the Chapter from the present work, and to reserve it for your announced treatises on the Logos or communicative intellect in Man and Deity. First, because imperfectly as I understand the present Chapter, I see clearly that you have done too much, and yet not enough. You have been obliged to omit so many links, from the necessity of compression, that what remains, looks (if I may recur to my former illustration) like the fragments of the winding steps of an old ruined tower. Secondly, a still stronger argument (at least one that I am sure will be more forcible with you) is, that your readers will have both right and reason to complain of you. This Chapter, which cannot, when it is printed, amount to so little as an hundred pages, will of necessity greatly increase the expense of the work; and every reader who, like myself, is neither prepared nor perhaps calculated for the study of so abstruse a subject so abstrusely treated, will, as I have before hinted, be almost entitled to accuse you of a sort of imposition on him. For who, he might truly observe, could from your title-page, to wit, "My Literary Life and Opinions," published too as introductory to a volume of miscellaneous poems, have anticipated, or even conjectured, a long treatise on Ideal Realism which holds the same relation in abstruseness to Plotinus, as Plotinus does to Plato. It will be well, if already you have not too much of metaphysical disquisition in your work, though as the larger part of the disquisition is historical, it will doubtless be both interesting and instructive to many to whose unprepared minds your speculations on the esemplastic power would be utterly unintelligible. Be assured, if you do publish this Chapter in the present work, you will be reminded of Bishop Berkeley's Siris, announced as an Essay on Tar-water, which beginning with Tar ends with the Trinity, the omne scibile forming the interspace. I say in the present work. In that greater work to which you have devoted so many years, and study so intense and various, it will be in its proper place. Your prospectus will have described and announced both its contents and their nature; and if any persons purchase it, who feel no interest in the subjects of which it treats, they will have themselves only to blame.

"I could add to these arguments one derived from pecuniary motives, and particularly from the probable effects on the sale of your present publication; but they would weigh little with you compared with the preceding. Besides, I
have long observed, that arguments drawn from your own personal interests more often act on you as narcotics than as stimulants, and that in money concerns you have some small portion of pig-nature in your moral idiosyncrasy, and, like these amiable creatures, must occasionally be pulled backward from the boat in order to make you enter it. All success attend you, for if hard thinking and hard reading are merits, you have deserved it.

Your affectionate, etc."

In consequence of this very judicious letter, which produced complete conviction on my mind, I shall content myself for the present with stating the main result of the chapter, which I have reserved for that future publication, a detailed prospectus of which the reader will find at the close of the second volume.

The Imagination then I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary Imagination I hold 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. The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate: or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead.

FANCY, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites. 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 phaenomenon of the will, which we express by the word Choice. But equally with the ordinary memory the Fancy must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association.
FROM STATESMAN’S MANUAL the “TAUTEGORICAL”

--A hunger-bitten and idea-less philosophy naturally produces a starveling and comfortless religion. It is among the miseries of the present age that it recognizes no medium between Literal and Metaphorical. Faith is either to be buried in the dead letter, or its name and honors usurped by a counterfeit product of the mechanical understanding, which in the blindness of self-complacency confounds SYMBOLS with ALLEGORIES. Now an Allegory is but a translation of abstract notions into a picture-language which is itself nothing but an abstraction from objects of the senses; the principal being more worthless even than its phantom proxy, both alike unsubstantial, and the foremer shapeless to boot. On the other hand a Symbol (ο εοπν αει ταθηγορικον [tautegorical ] ) is characterized by a translucence of the Special in the Individual or of the General in the Especial or of the Universal in the General. Above all by the translucence of the Eternal through and in the Temporal. It always partakes of the Reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that Unity, of which it is the representative. The other are but empty echoes which the fancy arbitrarily associates with apparitions of matter, less beautiful but not less shadowy than the sloping orchard or hill-side pasture-field seen in the transparaten lake below. . . . [p 30-31 Lay Sermons, 1972]

FROM ON THE CONSTITUTION OF CHURCH AND STATE: ON “IDEAS”

By an idea, I mean, . . . that conception of a thing, which is not abstracted from any particular state, form, or mode, in which the thing may happen to exist at this or at that time; nor yet generalized from any number or succession of such forms or modes; but which is given by the knowledge of its ultimate aim.

Only one observation I must6 be allowed to add, that this knowledge, or sense, may very well exist, aye, and powerfully influence a man’s thoughts and actions, without his being distinctly conscious of the same, much more without his being competent to express it in definite words. This, indeed, is one of the points which distinguish ideas from conceptions, both terms being used in their strict and proper significations. The latter, i.e., a conceptions, consists in a conscious act of the understanding, bringing any given object or impression into the same class with any number of other objects, or impressions, by means of some character or characters common to them all. Concipimus, id est, capimus hoc cum illo—we take hold of both at once, we comprehend a thing, when we have learnt to comprise it in a known class. On the other hand, it is the privilege of the few to possess an idea: of the generality of men, it might be more truly affirmed, that they are possessed by it. [p. 12-13, Constitituion of Church and State, 1976]