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# The Struggle for Reason: Early Development of Triadic Self-Consciousness in the *Opus Maximum*

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THE NATURE of the relationship between the subject and the object is one of the long-standing concerns of Western philosophy, and was one of the most deliberated upon in Coleridge's day. While the nativist position argued that the perceiving subject affects the understood reality of the external object, the empiricist camp maintained that the experience of external objects come to shape the way the subject perceives the world. Coleridge sided with the former, claiming that the subject comes before the object. The reverse would be to render the self passive and dependent upon the external world for its constitution, conceptualisation and affirmation. Asserting the freedom of the self, Coleridge wrote in 1832: "The pith of my system is to make the senses out of the mind—not the mind out of the senses, as Locke did".<sup>1</sup> Coleridge's contribution to the debate involves a specifically theological dimension, a position that he can be seen articulating in the *Biographia Literaria*, where he adumbrates the three-part formula that he would later expound: "We begin with the I KNOW MYSELF, in order to end with the absolute I AM. We proceed from the SELF, in order to lose and find all self in GOD."<sup>2</sup> In his *Essay on Faith*, Coleridge articulates this relationship between religion and psychology in a tripartite formula:

Now the third pronoun could never have been contra-distinguished from the first but by means of the second: no He without a previous Thou—and of course, no *I* without a previous *Thou*.<sup>3</sup>

Coleridge's claim is that an individual cannot distinguish himself as an *I*, nor can he distinguish the difference between his *I* and another person, without the presence of the *Thou*. In the context of the formula this *Thou* constitutes the absolute ground, the stable locus of reference, by which the perceiving subject is able to differentiate itself as separate from the object it perceives.

In the *Opus Maximum*, Coleridge uses his tripartite formula as a heuristic model to develop several phenomenologies of self that delineate this absolute ground.<sup>4</sup> In a chapter entitled 'Of the Origin of the Idea of God in the Mind of Man', Coleridge provides what is probably one of the most accessible articulations of this formula. How the *Thou* manifests itself in the developing individual, what its content is, and how it comes to form the conscious self is illustrated in the development of a child. In this development, humans come

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<sup>1</sup> TT II 179

<sup>2</sup> BL I 283

<sup>3</sup> This formula is first set out in the 'Essay on Faith' (SWF 837) here quoted. It is greatly elaborated upon in the *Opus Maximum* (OM. 75).

<sup>4</sup> For an examination on the triadic phenomenology of the self in the *Opus Maximum* see Alexander J. B. Hampton, 'Coleridge's Trinitarian Phenomenology of the Self: An Examination of the *Opus Maximum*' (unpublished MPhil dissertation, University of Oxford, 2004).

to have an idea of God through the parent, who forms the first experience of something greater than the self upon which it depends; a model for the experience of the absolute God.<sup>5</sup> What adds to the clarity of this specific rendering of the tripartite formula is both Coleridge's use of a familiar, less abstract model, and its contrast with its dyadic counterpart.

The reason for Coleridge's concern with the subject of consciousness can be seen when it is placed within its historical context. Coleridge argued that the distinction between reason and understanding had been obscured by the ascendant empiricist epistemology of his time. The consequence was that the rational intuitions, including the intuition of God, were dismissed. It was this rational intuition that formed the absolute anchor of Coleridge's tripartite formula and the content of the *Thou* address. The motivation for his formulation of a tripartite consciousness and for his critique of the period's philosophical tenets was more than a philosophical quarrel; for Coleridge it had the capacity to effect individuals at their most fundamental level.

### 1. Reclaiming Reason

Coleridge believed that some of the most fundamental principles—morality, religion, mathematics—came to man, not from experience, but through an intuitive faculty that he named reason. However, both in Britain and on the Continent, the so-called Age of Reason had used what it named reason as the primary tool to discredit the claims of religion, claims that could not be supported with empirical evidence or understood “rationally”. For Coleridge, this was nothing less than “usurping the name of reason”, the true nature of which proved God's very existence.<sup>6</sup> What the Age of Reason had employed in the place of its namesake was understanding, and it is the distinction between these two cognitive faculties that is central to understanding Coleridge's concern with self-consciousness.<sup>7</sup>

Understanding deals with our experience of the world, taking that which is furnished by the senses and classifying and generalising it into comprehensible impressions. It analyses and abstracts what would otherwise be the chaos of experience into cause and effect.<sup>8</sup> Understanding gives us a Newtonian conception of a mechanical universe, wherein the deity becomes the watchmaker of Paley's *Natural Theology*. It is “merely the power of imagining the shortest possible line between two points”, the logic of association or causal connection.<sup>9</sup>

Alternately, reason is a faculty “bearing the same relation to spiritual objects, the Universal, the Eternal, and the Necessary, as the eye bears to

<sup>5</sup> OM 121-22

<sup>6</sup> LS 75

<sup>7</sup> The distinction between *Verstand* (understanding) and *Vernunft* (reason) is in a Kantian context, but Coleridge's definition of it is far closer to Jacobi, as McFarland notes, citing this passage: “Just as there is a sensible *intuition*, an intuition through sense, there is a rational intuition through *reason*” (Friedrich Henrich Jacobi. *Friedrich Henrich Jacobi's Werke*, ed. F. Roth, F Köppen, 6 vols. in 7 (Leipzig: G. Fleischer, 1912-25) vol. 2, p. 59, and OM lxiii).

<sup>8</sup> OM 86-7, F I, 156

<sup>9</sup> OM 6

material and contingent phænomena”.<sup>10</sup> That is to say, reason is concerned with that which an individual is conscious of in an intuitive, super-sensory manner, most notably moral intuition in contrast to the cause and effect of the understanding.<sup>11</sup> In this manner, reason is “the power of the universal [...] the Source and Substance of Truths above Sense,” possessing “evidence in themselves”. Furthermore, “it is an organ identical with its appropriate objects. Thus, God, the Soul, eternal Truth, &c. are the objects of reason; but they are themselves *reason*”.<sup>12</sup> In the sense Coleridge describes, reason is the “representative of the infinite” invested in the finite nature of man.<sup>13</sup>

The usurpation of reason, Coleridge wrote, was the elevation of the understanding to reason’s rightful place. By doing so, *Philosophes* such as Diderot, Holbach and D’Alembert could dismiss the truths of reason as mere fiction, while sensationalists, such as La Mettrie, Condillac and Helvétius could reduce the self-conscious human being to a mere machine. While the original aim of these thinkers had been to give autonomy to the self that had been made heteronymous by religious superstition and authoritarianism, the effect, Coleridge writes in *The Friend*, was the reverse:

[T]here will soon be a general tendency toward, an earnest seeking after, some ground common to the world and to man, therein to find the one principle of permanence and identity, the rock of strength and refuge, to which the soul may cling amid the fleeting surge-like objects of the senses.<sup>14</sup>

For Coleridge, the mistaken heightening of understanding leads to a mechanical view of man who finds “nowhere a representative of that free agency which yet is a *fact* of immediate consciousness”, because he had excluded the principles of reason.<sup>15</sup>

In response, the Romantic movement largely proposed an organic view of man in which the rational intuitions would be recovered and interpenetrate the knowledge of the understanding. The motivation for this approach was the desire to maintain the knowledge gleaned from the understanding without dismissing the rational intuition that provided the grounding for the self, that “rock of strength” which the Age of Reason had been unable to see through the eyes of understanding. Through an examination of the self from its foundations upwards, Coleridge illustrates how self-consciousness develops, how Reason is its seat, and how it was threatened by the thought of his day.

## 2. *Child, Mother and Divine Father*

This replacement of mechanism with the organic as the chief criterion for

<sup>10</sup> F I 155-56

<sup>11</sup> AR 26

<sup>12</sup> F I 155-56

<sup>13</sup> OM 87

<sup>14</sup> F I 508

<sup>15</sup> F I 509

interpreting nature can be seen at the beginning of Coleridge's argument. Coleridge writes that in nature there can be observed organs that exist in higher animals for a specific function which have an apparently ambiguous or non-existent function in lower ones. "Throughout all Nature", he continues, "there is seen an evolution from within; Her process is synthetic throughout".<sup>16</sup> This process is described as synthetic because nature brings things into being by the addition of features to organisms that do not at first necessarily form a useful part of their mechanism. For Coleridge, this process is not only physical, but psychical as well. This is, according to Coleridge, "the direct opposite to the analytic and reflective process of the mechanical understanding".<sup>17</sup> The mechanical understanding alone is static; it is merely descriptive. Thus anything that is not of immediate utility, but may serve a greater teleological purpose, cannot be circumscribed within its understanding. As a result, it is unable to recognise the observable evolutionary processes present within nature.<sup>18</sup>

For Coleridge, man shares with the plant and the animal the "<Self-> unconscious" development of physiological potentialities. However, there are other potentialities that require the presence of another "human, in its full development, already there to meet and to protect it" for it to be actualized. Such is the case with the faculty of speech.<sup>19</sup> Coleridge provides the example of a child who is raised by wolves. This child will only develop his vocal capacity to the state of a wolf; he will only be able to make inarticulate sounds, and express himself in terms of his appetites. The case is even stronger for the faculty of reason, which is developed in the relationship between individuals. Coleridge writes that human society acts as "the prepared ladder by which the lower nature is taken up <into>, and made to partake of, the higher".<sup>20</sup> It is therefore human interaction that allows the individual to see and to actualise the reality of the objects of reason. Coleridge outlines this beginning at the earliest stage of life—infancy—in the interaction between the mother and the child.

The infant inhabits the tiny universe that consists only of it and its mother. In this earliest state, the child has no conception of its self as an individuated *I* the way a fully developed individual does. As a result there is no distinction between the perceiving subject and the perceived object. This initial

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<sup>16</sup> OM 120

<sup>17</sup> OM 120

<sup>18</sup> In *The Romantic Conception of Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), Robert Richards defends a similar position, arguing that Romantic thought played a fundamental rôle in giving shape to Darwin's conception of nature and evolution. However Coleridge's comments should not be seen as supporting evolutionary materialism, but rather a defence of Christian teleological redemption towards which he saw nature working (see John H. Muirhead, *Coleridge as Philosopher* (London: Macmillan, 1956) pp. 130ff.). Interestingly, John Zizioulas sees Darwinism as working in favour of the same end for which Coleridge argues, driving man back to his organic place in nature and thereby overcoming the discontinuity that allows the understanding to circumscribe out the rational intuitions (John D. Zizioulas, 'Preserving God's Creation. Three Lectures on Theology and Ecology. P, *King's Theological Review* 12 (1989), 1-5 (4)).

<sup>19</sup> OM 120

<sup>20</sup> OM 91

undifferentiated stage is exemplified by the infant who awakes in the night and cries out, entreating the mother, “Touch me, only touch me with your finger!” in order that its being might be confirmed through hers; or the playful child, who says to the mother, “I am not here, touch me, Mother, that I may be here!”<sup>21</sup> Such cases illustrate that the child’s own being can be suspended by the loss of the mother’s presence. To the child she is its whole world: sustenance and warmth, the place of its waking hours, and the source of all its emotional interaction.

The first dawnings of its humanity will break forth in the Eye that connects the Mother’s face with the warmth of the mother’s bosom, the support of the mother’s arms[...] Ere yet a conscious self exists, the love begins; and the first love is love of to another [sic]. The babe acknowledges a self in the mother’s form ~~one~~ yet years before it can recognize a self in its own. Faith, implicit Faith, the offspring of unreflecting love; is the antecedent and indispensable condition of all its knowledge[.]<sup>22</sup>

In these first stages of humanity the potentiality of faith in God is actualized in its nascent form. As there is yet no subject-object distinction, the infant experiences an “unreflecting love” towards its mother based on its absolute dependence. This love is unreflecting because the child has yet no individual self to reflect upon it. As such it has a kind of unconditional wholeness that admits no doubt or duplicity. Coleridge refers to this love as the antecedent and necessary condition for all knowledge because it gives birth to “implicit faith”. Faith is a belief that, like unreflecting love, is not conditioned upon proof or evidence, and that admits no doubt. The reason why this implicit faith has epistemic priority to knowledge is because faith in the rational intuition of God forms the absolute foundation for a stable and knowing self. Coleridge then describes how this occurs: First, in the movements from implicit faith to explicit faith in the child’s relationship with its mother; and second, how this faith grounds the self as it matures and interacts with the world in greater depth.

For Coleridge, the relationship between the mother and the newborn reflects that between the individual and God, for God’s love is absolute and unreflecting like the love that is prior to the subject-object distinction. Describing the mother’s perspective, Coleridge writes of how “the sweet innocent lies before <thee> on thy Arm, looks up towards thee, and towards thee stretches forth with all its limbs; has the[e] present and yet seeks thee”.<sup>23</sup> The child, small and dependent, stretching to the mother, is like the individual raising his arms heavenward in prayer, while the child’s seeking the mother already in her presence reflects the individual’s relationship with God, who is

<sup>21</sup> OM 132

<sup>22</sup> OM 121

<sup>23</sup> OM 121-22

ever present, but with whom a relationship must be sought. Here the absolute love that the child experiences, and the manner by which it precedes the absolute love of God, represents the inceptive actualisations of the potentialities that will become respectively the rational intuitions of morality and God, that is, what constitutes the addressing message in *Thou* and the addresser who is the *Thou*. As such they are “reason itself mutely prophesying of its own future advent”.<sup>24</sup>

Coleridge comments that the loving mother-child relationship causes the mother to reflect on her relationship with God: “[D]o not thy hands close as it were of themselves? Thy Eyes, can they turn from that infant face elseward than to heaven, and does not the whole heart utter, as with an innate prayer, ‘our Father that art in Heaven’?”<sup>25</sup> What Coleridge means is that men have faith in God in the same manner in which the child has faith in the mother. When both cast an upward glance they find the very source of themselves, earthly mother and heavenly Father. Coleridge goes on to explain that this faith in God is reflected back to the child through its total identification with its mother. In this manner the child that recognised its whole self in the mother comes to be transferred up to God:

[...] so surely is it elevated to the universal Parent. The ~~the~~ child on the knee of its mother gazing upward to her countenance marks her eyes averted heavenward, while yet it feels the tender pressure of her embrace, and learns to pray in the mother’s prayers and knows this alone, that they mean love and protection, and that they are elsewhere, and that the mother and itself are included in the same Words.<sup>26</sup>

In this moment the child comes to a simple understanding of God as “the something, to which my [mother] looks up, and which is more than my mother”.<sup>27</sup> In arriving at a greater principle that underlies both itself and its mother the child begins to achieve what Coleridge calls *alterity* from its mother and therein the possibility of referring to itself as *I*. This allows Coleridge to conclude that “for the infant the mother contains his [the child’s] own self, and the whole problem of existence as a whole; and the word ‘GOD’ is the first and one solution to the problem”.<sup>28</sup> For Coleridge, it is in the process of realising the mother’s faith that the child’s implicit faith comes to be explicitly realised in God and, furthermore, that its self-consciousness is first achieved. It is in the actualisation of the self, not in a formal proposition, that faith is first communicated to the individual: “That which the mother is to her child, a someone unseen and yet ever present is to all”.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>24</sup> OM 122

<sup>25</sup> OM 121-22

<sup>26</sup> OM 126

<sup>27</sup> OM 131

<sup>28</sup> OM 131

<sup>29</sup> OM 126

Coleridge writes of how at about one year of age an infant's attention comes to be directed towards the objects of the senses that are beyond its mother. The experiences of this outwardly directed self come to be connected with the bodily organs appropriate to them, and in this manner the appetites that entreat gratification, and the organs that receive it, lead the infant towards self-awareness, as they come to "find their last unity in the self".<sup>30</sup>

At this stage of interaction with the world the self-awareness of the child begins to develop as it directs its love outward. Coleridge offers two contrasting examples of how this occurs. The first is what he calls the healthful child of the cottage, whose first playthings are the mother's lap and the father's knee, and who interacts with playmates and siblings. In this circumstance the outward love of the child is reciprocated by other loving individuals, and in this manner its sense of self is confirmed. This is contrasted with the "denaturalised"<sup>31</sup> child that grows up insulated from the human world, for reasons of its social class or its parents' sullen pride. This child has no contact with its mother, only with an unsolicitous wet nurse, who does not provide the loving affection that a mother would offer; it is provided with many playthings, but with no playmates. When the child turns its love outward in such a circumstance it finds no reciprocation and its self remains unconfirmed. The objects towards which it directs itself either do not have the depth of the loving bond of maternity or they are inanimate, both of which are incapable of reciprocation.

In the case of the denaturalised child, this stable structure cannot develop because it lacks the loving maternal relationship. As a result, the potentiality of faith, necessary for the grounding of the self, never comes to be. The child turns outwards, but without the mother-child dyad, without the second person point of reference that made possible self-distinction for the naturalised child. As a result of this outward movement, a malformed dyad appears between the first person and the third instead of the naturalised child's triadic self. It searches for an absolute anchor in the finite third, but always finds itself unsatisfied, never establishing its alterity. Since the individual was never able to form the original implicit faith that led it to the absolute in which it grounds itself, the result is a kind of oscillatory state in which an incomplete self is forever searching for itself:

Every moment is the creature of the preceding: had there been in the preceding moment aught, the least circumstance other than it was, that which now is could not be—it hath no strength in itself, yea, and the strength which made it that which it is no more, is nothing.<sup>32</sup>

Here, the self looks back to an endless regress, finding nothing but the declaration of that which has passed and no principle of permanence. What

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<sup>30</sup> OM 123

<sup>31</sup> OM 125

<sup>32</sup> OM 137

came to be regarded as Hume's damning indictment of empiricism is repeated here: "[W]hen I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other [...] I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception."<sup>33</sup> In this case the first person is not the active agent; rather the active agent becomes the motive for the self's searching. All outward objects represent possible places where the self can finally find rest, but they never suffice, since only the absolute can act as this foundation. When love is reciprocated self-awareness is actualized; for the child whose love is not reciprocated, however, it can only continue to search for its self outside of its self, and this is the self-alienated condition of the denaturalised child. As a result, Coleridge explains, "things are invested—unconsciously indeed, but for that very cause more intensely—with the attributes of life and power".<sup>34</sup> The result is what Coleridge describes as a "middle and ambiguous state"<sup>35</sup>, where the denaturalised person comes to search for fulfilment in the finite things of the world, in achievement, in material possessions, in power or prestige or in physical satisfaction.

These two examples become clear when referred back to the triadic model. In the case of the naturalised child, in the state previous to outward self direction, the relationship of the child with the mother is dyadic, and therefore there is no differentiation between the self and the other. However, the outward turn allows for self-differentiation. The naturalised child may be said to locate the first person (the *I*) through interacting with the third (the other beyond itself) by virtue of the second (the mother). Whereas the external world beyond the mother is always in flux, the mother is always there. In her loving relationship is the constant loving locus of reference the child can always return to. This stable loving relationship precedes the same stable and loving relationship that the individual will also come to associate with God, whose resolute love and moral dictates, communicated in rational intuition, constitute the absolute values that the individual will continue to return to in facing the outside world.<sup>36</sup>

### 3. Practical Implications

The empiricist epistemology that had come into fashion by Coleridge's day through the writings of thinkers such as Locke, Hartley, Priestley, Richard and

<sup>33</sup> David Hume. *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. E. C. Mosser (London: Penguin, 1969), p. 300.

<sup>34</sup> OM 126

<sup>35</sup> OM 126

<sup>36</sup> It is in this context that Coleridge's use of the archaic second person singular informal pronoun becomes clear: First, as opposed to the use of the group addressing plural you, the *Thou* establishes a singular relationship between two individuals. Second, it takes a form appropriate to the moral content it communicates, conjuring in the mind of its reader the language of the King James Bible, particularly the Decalogue. Davidson provides a different and equally valuable interpretation of the meaning of the three-part formula in the *Essay on Faith*. He argues the third person is the self considered as the ideal, and consequently the perfected being towards which the individual has duty. The *Thou* is the other person towards which an individual acts in a moral manner, therein recognising them as equivalent, and actualising the conscious *I* (Graham Davidson. *Coleridge's Career* (London: Macmillan, 1990) p. 158)

Maria Edgeworth, advocated a position that was opposed to Coleridge's. In *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), Locke aims to provide a guide for the moulding of the moral and social being of their child. For Locke, the discursive manner by which scientific understanding is arrived at serves as a model for how the human mind should be constructed. In the physical sciences, "all progression is to go from the place one is then in, to that which joyns and lies next to it; and so it is in the Mind, for the knowledge it stands possessed of already, to that which lies next, and is coherent to it".<sup>37</sup> Since the natural temper of children disposes their minds to wander, Locke argues for controlling the amount of information that they receive at any one period of time in order that the filling of the blank slate of their minds may be done in an orderly and correct manner.<sup>38</sup>

Locke's ideas were taken up by followers such as Thomas Wedgwood, who in his desire to undertake "grand improvements in Education"<sup>39</sup> follows them to absurd conclusions. Outlining an education similar to that which Dickens describes the anemic Louisa Gradgrind as having undergone, Wedgwood proposes the proper "administering of impressions" to counter the confusion of the manifold of impressions. "Should not the nursery, then", Wedgwood writes, "have plain grey walls with one or two vivid objects for sight & touch". Under the pedagogy of the understanding nature itself presents a threat to the development of the mind: "[T]he child must never go out of doors, or leave his own apartment [...] for if supplied too rapidly with impressions, the end [of education] is frustrated".<sup>40</sup> All experience must be connected with rational objects, and therefore "romping, tickling & fooling [...] are objectionable on th[is] account".<sup>41</sup>

Coleridge's concern with early childhood development is clear in light of these remarks. He describes the pedagogy of the understanding as both hateful and pernicious because it wilfully promotes the dyadic self.<sup>42</sup> Since there are no principles in the empiricist epistemology other than those gained through the individual's subject-object relationship with the world, the result is that objects acquire a worth foreign to their nature. For Coleridge, the dissipated dyadic self comes to be represented in the structure of society itself, which becomes a kind of simulacrum in which all forms of activity bear a vague semblance of their actuality but have no relation to their real function.

<sup>37</sup> John Locke. *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, ed. John W. Yolton and Jean S. Yolton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), p. 252.

<sup>38</sup> Locke. *op. cit.*, p. 221.

<sup>39</sup> Letter: Thomas Wedgwood to William Godwin, 31 July 1797. Quoted in David Erdman, 'Coleridge, Wordsworth and the Wedgwood Fund', *The Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, 60 (1956), pp. 425-443 and 487-507, here p. 430. (Cited in OM 130, n. 177). Wedgwood, though not a philosopher in the manner of Locke or Hartley, represents the considered opinion of an educated and scientifically active lay person, and therefore indicates the influence of the empirical school upon the everyday opinions of the educated public. Probably most curious in Wedgwood's scheme is the fact that he proposes Coleridge and Wordsworth as possible candidates for running such a school

<sup>40</sup> Erdman, *op. cit.*, p. 431.

<sup>41</sup> Erdman, *op. cit.*, p. 432.

<sup>42</sup> OM 130

Activity then becomes a kind of idolatry where the representation is worshipped rather than that for which it stands. Coleridge's objection to the wrongly-heightened understanding's unnatural outwardness is no mere disagreement over the principles of abstract philosophy. Rather this dysfunction can be used to diagnose the state of Europe in his age:

It is the dire epidemic of man in the social state to forget the substance in the appearance, the essence in the form. Hence almost everywhere we behold religion degraded into ceremonies [...] Hence for state policy we have statecraft and the mockery of expedience; for the fine arts, a marketable trade; for philosophy, a jargon of materialism; and the study of nature conducted on such principles as to place it in doubtful rivalry with the art and theory of cooking.<sup>43</sup>

Coleridge here argues that human institutions and activities become alienated from their purpose through the singular use of the understanding, the product of the ungrounded self performing ungrounded activities. The internal reason to which religion appeals is no longer recognised, and as a result it retains its value only in ceremony. In politics the end of a greater good is replaced with expediency and power for its own end. The arts cannot have the function of cultivating or evoking internal intuitions; rather they must serve only as forms of entertainment, education, or subsistence. The project of philosophy is not to articulate the human condition but to be a branch of science whose task is merely descriptive. Finally, the study of the natural world, having no sense of an end, can only proceed by dissection, merely listing the ingredients of the things cooked up by nature. Thus Coleridge argues that the malformed individual creates a malformed society.

#### 4. Coleridge's *Insight*

Coleridge illustrates his tripartite formula of the self-conscious and the central function of the *Thou* by examining the development of the individual's earliest stage. The mother is the place wherein the child first experiences the absolute in its total dependence and selfless love. Then, through the reflexive act of observing the mother's own faith, the child recognises a greater absolute in the mother's relationship to the divine. As the child matures and begins to interact with the outward world, this incipient faith can act as a principle of permanence to ground the self, or its absence can result in the dyadic oscillatory condition.

Coleridge's argument is not without its problems, the most immediate of which is the fully developed individual who did not have the fortune of a loving mother, yet who has regardless developed a fully formed sense of faith. Yet at the same time it is important to note that this argument is set within the much larger articulation of the three-part self that forms the *Opus Maximum*.

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<sup>43</sup> OM 126

Moreover, Coleridge's critique of the elevation of understanding to the position of reason lends strong credibility to his argument for an absolute grounding for the self. The fact that his diagnosis of his own age can be applied equally, if not with more justice, to the present age illustrates the sagacity of his insight: an age where politics is reduced to a tool of personal ambition without a greater end, where the arts are forced to justify their utility, where philosophy is used as an analytic tool to aid the language of science rather than eternal questions, and where the natural world, including man, is seen as no more than an amalgam of genetic material. Furthermore, his description of the dyadic individual who forever searches unsuccessfully for satisfaction in material and finite things is a fitting description of modern man and reveals the depth of his psychological comprehension. Coleridge's reclamation of reason, and his assertion of the necessity of God for a coherent self-conscious, argues that the individual must always go further than his own powers of understanding can carry him, wherein space is made for the attributes of reason, and where the finite human's humility of understanding is rewarded with intuition into the absolute that is the ground of being.