

The “Polar Logic” in Barfield’s Coleridge

Michael Vincent Di Fuccia

“[A syllogism’s] validity depends on a relation of identity between a genus, ‘man,’ and a particular species of it, ‘Socrates.’ But on the other hand its meaningfulness depends on the relation being other or more than that of identity. It depends in fact on there being a distinctness within the identity . . . [otherwise] we are soon reduced to tautology . . . syllogism not only ends in tautology, but also starts from one. The logic that has developed since Coleridge’s day has spent a good deal of time and a good deal of ingenuity in scratching at this mortal wound.”
Owen Barfield

THE EPIGRAPH IS DRAWN FROM THE “APPENDIX” of Owen Barfield’s *What Coleridge Thought*, wherein Barfield attempts to show that Coleridge’s “Polar Logic” (PL) represents a marked development in the history of Christian Neo-Platonism.¹ For Barfield, the difference between the old logic, which tends toward tautology, and Coleridge’s “discourse of discovery,” in which there is “more than that of identity,” is that, in Coleridge’s scheme, terms “must have a potential of expansion;” they are potent with meaning. There is always already more there to be discovered—potentially, that is.² Barfield goes on to say that, “what is only potential is not on that account unreal.”³

At first glance Barfield’s remarks appear only to be about language, but upon closer examination they imply something novel about Barfield’s reading of Coleridge; that he understands the PL as a metaphysical analogate which links Coleridge’s philosophies of nature, mind, and language. This essay examines the PL in Barfield’s Coleridge and then reads the *Opus Maximum* as a subtle corrective to Barfield’s assumptions regarding the origins and ends of the PL, untangling the later Coleridge from Barfield’s Anthroposophical project.

The “Polar Logic” according to Barfield

Coleridge’s PL pervades Barfield’s own work at nearly every turn. Barfield’s fascination with the PL seems to lie in the connection he sees between it and the thought of Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Anthroposophy. Steiner developed what he deemed an “occult science,” a method by which to account for the qualitative dimensions of reality (spirit)—which he took to be equally as real as the quantitative dimensions of reality (matter)—through the use of the

¹ Owen Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 183. In the *Appendix* Barfield attempts to locate Coleridge’s PL in the thought of Giordano Bruno, Ramon Lull, and Cusanus, all of whom, he says, points “us back to the whole long line of ‘Christian Neo-Platonism’ . . . Pythagoras, Plato, Plotinus, Proclus and Porphyry, pseudo-Dionysius, Augustine, Scotus Erigena, the Florentine Academy and a host of others.” See also, Owen Barfield, “Either: Or,” in *Imagination and the Spirit: Essays in Literature and the Christian Faith Presented to Clyde S. Kilby* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), 25–42. Herein Barfield proposes Coleridge’s PL as the way to overcome the Cartesian cosmology.

² Barfield, *WCT*, 192. See also, “The Nature of Meaning,” *Seven: An Anglo-American Literary Review* 2 (1981): 32–43.

³ *Ibid.*, 193. Barfield here seems to touch on a theme he develops in his earlier *Saving the Appearances*, Ch. XX, “Final Participation.” In STA he uses the Aristotelian act/potency distinction as a way of describing the Anthroposophical endeavor to bring forth what is actual in the unconscious to the level of consciousness.

faculty of the imagination.⁴ Steiner's hope was that his occult science could overcome prevailing reductive empiricist philosophies. Barfield, a devout Anthroposophist himself, made a career critiquing these reductive philosophies and sought to develop a holistic philosophy that incorporated the imagination to overcome what he took to be an idolatrous outlook, one that ignored the "polar" (objective *and* subjective) essence of reality.⁵

What Barfield finds in Coleridge's polar logic could not be more fitting. The PL holds in tension the quantitative (sense perceptible) and qualitative (beyond or through the sense perceptible) dimensions of reality through a kind of spiritual apprehension achieved by the imagination. It is in this vein that Barfield hoped that Coleridge's PL's might assist him in overcoming the idolatrous age of materialism, ushering in Romanticism's "coming of age," a period which coincides with the epoch of "Final Participation" according to Steiner's "evolution of consciousness".⁶ Barfield also finds an integral link between this evolutionary vision and his own philological theory, which holds that, at its origin, language is metaphorical and over time, as human perceptions evolve, becomes increasingly "prosaic" or objective. It is these Anthroposophical and linguistic sensibilities that motivate Barfield's interest in Coleridge's own explorations of the PL. This is Barfield's Coleridge, the Coleridge whose PL serves as the basis of much of Barfield's own thought.⁷

In *What Coleridge Thought, Romanticism Comes of Age*, and "Either: Or" one finds Barfield's most lucid reflections on the PL. Barfield says that "the concept of polarity . . . was integral to [Coleridge's] thinking on every topic".⁸ According to Barfield, the philosophy of Coleridge's PL maintains that reality consists of opposing non-phenomenal forces, which remain suspended in their product (the object of perception) and only appear to form a fixed principle of unity or identity when abstract reason is applied. Barfield seems to say that, for Coleridge, polar forces do not actually exist in the abstract or apart from one another; they are instead constitutive of one another, existing together in and through space (hence, distinguishable in the abstract but not in reality).

To put it in the simplest of terms all reality exists as a tension between the sensible ("matter") and supersensible ("spirit," to use Barfield's terms). Certainly, the intellect can abstract the supersensible (spirit) from the sensible (matter), but this intellectual abstraction does not then mean that spirit is actually divided from matter. This is the "idolatrous" fallacy that Barfield wants to correct. In other words, for Barfield, the method of abstraction or categorization of the supersensible (the forms or ideas in the Platonic sense) is merely intellectual, it is not actual. The method of intellectually abstracting, categorizing, or dividing spirit and matter, however useful it may be, cannot then be read back into reality. Reality will not be parsed. To do so would be to confuse a method with an ontology. Such confusion is what leads to the sorts

⁴ Rudolf Steiner, *Occult Science: An Outline* (East Sussex: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2005).

⁵ Owen Barfield, *Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1988).

⁶ Owen Barfield, *Romanticism Comes of Age* (London: Anthroposophical Publishing Company, 1944).

⁷ Michael Di Fuccia, *Owen Barfield: Philosophy, Poetry, and Theology*, (Eugene: Wipf and Stock: Cascade, 2016), Ch. 2.

⁸ Barfield, "Either: Or," 30.

of idolatrous outlooks about which Barfield is deeply concerned.⁹ Because the intellect can only abstract and divide its overemphasis has led to the assumption that reality is divided. The intellect must be tempered by “an act of the imagination” if one is to apprehend properly the polar essence of reality. In holding the poles in tension, the imagination sees reality more clearly plumbing the endless depths meaning, which lies in and through the phenomenal surface of things. For Barfield meaning lies in this imaginative tension and is lost when the intellect divides and is left to fixate on either pole (idolatry).

In the epigraph, Barfield sees this divisive “old logic” as a pervasive paradigm that must be overthrown. He appears to locate certain origins of the “old logic” in Aristotle’s reduction of knowledge to the senses and intellect, which he says can only apprehend quantities.¹⁰ This method eventually culminates in Descartes’s ontological division of mind and matter.¹¹ It is helpful to imagine Barfield’s critique of the Cartesian philosophy in terms of the aforementioned philosophy of nature, mind, and linguistics. That is, the Cartesian philosophy is the analogate that links a mechanistic natural philosophy, an abstract philosophy of mind (mere logic), and linguistic nominalism, dividing reality and depriving her of meaning. Coleridge’s PL “scratches at this mortal wound” by acting as a metaphysic of meaning. This metaphysical analogate counteracts the Cartesian vision by maintaining the polar essence of reality which insists on a natural philosophy wherein qualities and quantities “intermingle,” a philosophy of mind in which the mind “participates” in the polarity of nature, and a linguistic paradigm that speaks to this symbolic reality, whose fullest expression is found in poetry—Romanticism proper. For Barfield, the meaning lost to the “old logic” that begins with Aristotle and culminates in the Cartesian vision is thus “re-discovered” in Coleridge’s PL.

What seems most novel about Barfield’s Coleridge is that the PL serves as an analogate that links Coleridge’s philosophies of nature, mind, and language. Throughout his corpus, Barfield details how Coleridge envisages the polar logic (1) in nature (*spirit and matter*), (2) in the mind (the mind does not merely represent, mirror, or abstract from reality; rather, as an image of reality, the ideas in the mind “participate” in the real ideas in the world), and (3) in language (also as an image of reality, language “participates” in this polar reality, and its highest expression is poetry which speaks to both poles—inner and outer, subjective and objective). The following analysis examines how Barfield sees the PL as an analogate which links these three distinct philosophies in Coleridge.

Philosophy of Nature

In his exposition on Coleridge’s natural philosophy, Barfield notes that in the

⁹ Much of Barfield’s fiction and many of his lectures speak to the cultural and natural devastation caused by this idolatrous gaze.

¹⁰ Barfield, *WCT*, 183. See also, Barfield, *Poetic Diction*, 60–61.

¹¹ Barfield, *WCT*, 187.

inorganic and organic worlds there is evidence that polar forces are indeed "real".¹² To explicate what he calls "the essential duality of nature",¹³ Barfield draws on Coleridge's example in chemistry found in *The Friend*: "water is neither oxygen nor hydrogen, nor is it a commixture of both; but the synthesis or indifference of the two . . .".¹⁴ What one calls a molecule of water is actually a suspension of the polar forces of hydrogen and oxygen. Hence, with reference to the epigraph, the distinctness of hydrogen and oxygen yields the identity of the water molecule. But one must also be aware that each water molecule is never made up of the exact three atoms. While in language or logic one may speak of water molecules as identical, this is only in the abstract, for water molecules are naturally distinct instantiations (*phaenomena*) that share in the universal idea (*eidos*) of water, which we might say, is identically yet distinctly ("distinctness within the identity") present in each particular water molecule.¹⁵

Barfield also sees the PL in the organic world. In *Romanticism Comes of Age*, he writes, "Nature must strive to reproduce itself and in the same act and moment it must strive to overcome that detachment, to overcome that individuation, thus maintaining the unity."¹⁶ He goes on to say that, "it has long been known from direct observation of nature that the individuals of every species, as they come to birth, recapitulate the history of the species itself".¹⁷ That is, in nature the species is identically yet distinctly present; in the unity of each organism one discovers a polarity of distinctness and identity, i.e., we are able to say "this" bird rather than "that" bird, because there is a distinctness in polarity with the identical or universal species of "bird" which together constitutes each particular bird.

Moreover, the concepts of change, progress, or evolution necessarily involve a sort of intermingling of distinctness within the identity, and/or discontinuity in continuity. Elaborating on Coleridge's theory of natural "change," Barfield reiterates this paradigm analogously as follows,

The change of an A into a B . . . involves the total disappearance of A and the appearance of B, but it also involves the persistence, through the change, of a somewhat which A and B have in common . . . What persists through the event of change of one body into another cannot itself be a 'body'; if it were, there would in fact be no such thing as change, but only a macroscopic illusion of it . . . The idea of change requires total disappearances as well as appearances. It requires discontinuity as well as continuity.¹⁸

In Barfield's Coleridge we discover a natural philosophy that holds in tension

¹² Barfield, *WCT*, 30 and 32.

¹³ Barfield, *RC4*, 156.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 157. See also, Barfield, *WCT*, 31. In both cases Barfield is here citing the same passage from Coleridge's, *The Friend*.

¹⁵ Barfield, *WCT*, 41–3.

¹⁶ Barfield, *RC4*, 156.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 159.

¹⁸ Barfield, *WCT*, 43.

identity and distinctity. This vision is very much akin to hylomorphism, wherein the transcendent "idea" (participated identity) subsists or is mediated through each finite distinctity, which thereby constitutes each thing's nature mysteriously. The irreducibility of the PL to either pole in the natural philosophy of Barfield's Coleridge beholds a symbolic or romantic vision of nature with unfolding depths and meaning which cannot be reduced to a mere materialism or logical abstraction.

Philosophy of Mind (Logic)

The way in which Barfield's Coleridge seeks to overcome the dialectic of identity and distinctity in his natural philosophy has analogous implications for the philosophy of mind. If in nature there is nothing truly mimetic or identically repeated, then logic must follow suit. To apply formal logic is to abstract from nature, reducing the polarity of nature to an "either: or," an equivocal distinctity (where there is no relation between particulars) or univocal identity (where all are the same). To parse nature in this way is again to impose an aberrant Cartesian vision upon reality; it is to render the shared or participated "idea" as immanent or merely regulative (abstract), not transcendent or constitutive of reality. It undercuts the real polar relation that paradoxically distinguishes and unites particulars, and it makes syllogism possible, but ironically so. Barfield is not alone in recognizing that, for Coleridge, the "idea" or *logos* by which one apprehends, say, a particular species of a flower is not merely nominal.¹⁹ For Barfield's Coleridge, the "idea" is real (constitutive) in the most Platonic of senses. In the PL reality consists not in the mind/matter division, but in a polar tension between objective and subjective, outer and inner. The truly imaginative mind renegotiates the Cartesian territory, apprehending qualities and quantities which exist in polar tension in nature.

What is most important to Barfield's Anthroposophical endeavor is here Coleridge's attempt to overcome the "passivity of the mind," the "lazy onlooker," in order to show that the mind is active, not merely representative. It is capable of creatively bringing forth meaning. When Barfield quotes Coleridge that the imagination is "a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I Am," he couples the living creative element in Coleridge's natural philosophy with his creative philosophy of mind. That is, in the apprehension of nature, the mind "participates" in a nature constituted in and through the *logos*.

Barfield stretches Coleridge when he implies that, in apprehending nature, humans actually share in the crafting of reality (more specifically, the crafting of "meaning").²⁰ As it relates to his philosophy of mind, this means that subjectivity is not something that exists merely in the abstract, merely in one's

¹⁹ Although Coleridge admired Kant, he breaks with him on the constitutive nature of the ideas. While Kant took the ideas to be merely regulative, Coleridge took them to be constitutive of reality. See James Vigus, *Platonic Coleridge* (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2009), Chapter 2. See also, Di Fuccia, *OB*, Ch. 2.

²⁰ Di Fuccia, *OB*, Chapters 2 & 5.

mind as something that can be shorn off of reality for certainty's sake, but is rather something in which our minds participate (again, here it is important not to confuse a method for an ontology). For Barfield, subjectivity is in reality, "semi-objective" (this is why Barfield refers to himself paradoxically an "objective-idealist").²¹ What he seems to imply about the logic of the PL is that the mind is *both* informed passively and informs actively in the act of imaginative apprehension through an inspired participation in a sort of infinite depth or word (logos) that is the uncreated origin of all things (an "Unancestral Voice").²² For Coleridge, this uncreated origin was nothing other than the Trinitarian God, a realization that would seem to come a bit later for Barfield.²³ For Barfield, humans take up in their imaginative posture "a directionally creator relation" to phenomena,²⁴ i.e., human beings actually "make conscious"²⁵ or "rediscover" a more original reality (for better or worse). In terms of the evolution of consciousness, Barfield believes that one's conscious perceptions can either reduce nature to the tautological or expand its meaning. Barfield's explorations of the middle voice are worth noting as they represent an attempt to tease out a creative medial posture between active and passive.²⁶

A philosophy of mind that abstracts ideas or concepts from nature ends in tautology (the collapsing of difference—as in syllogism). While a useful method, it is not ultimately true to the polarity of nature.²⁷ In formal logic, meaning is jettisoned for the sake of clarity. While subjectivity can be abstracted from objectivity in the mind, in nature subject and object exist in polar tension, i.e., they are never actually divided. To say that nature is "potent" with meaning, is to say that the creative mind participates in the *logos* through nature drawing out and perhaps even co-creating her meaning.²⁸

Philosophy of Language

Where Barfield's reading of the PL seems most novel is the connection he makes with his own philosophy of language. It is this same point at which Barfield appears most keen to stretch Coleridge's vision to fit his own philological and Anthroposophical sensibilities. Indeed, much of Barfield's

²¹ Owen Barfield, *Worlds Apart: A Dialogue of the 1960s* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), 211.

²² Owen Barfield, *Unancestral Voice* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965). Barfield also plays with the idea of the origin of language in his "The Nature of Meaning." Seven: An Anglo-American Literary Review 2 (1981): 32–43, "The Concept of Revelation." Journal of the American Academy of Religion 47.2 (1979): 221–33, and "Meaning, Revelation and Tradition in Language and Religion." *The Missouri Review* 5.3 (1982), 117–28.

²³ See Barfield, "Meaning, Revelation and Tradition in Language and Religion," 117–28. Herein we find that although Barfield is aware of the importance of the Trinity in the work of Coleridge, he doesn't employ properly trinitarian theological language to develop his philological theory until later.

²⁴ Barfield, *STA*, 156.

²⁵ To "make" in a Barfieldian sense is to discover or "rediscover" the unconscious or potential realities, which are surrendered to the abstract or nominal world of representation.

²⁶ Di Fuccia, *OB*, Chapter 5. For Coleridge and Middle Voice see, Peter Larkin's, "Repetition, Difference and Liturgical Participation in Coleridge's 'The Ancient Mariner,'" *Literature and Theology* 21, no. 2 (2007): 146–59 and Blake Allen, "The Eolian Harp: Coleridge's Middle Voice?" *Literature and Theology*, Vol 34, 1, March, 2020, 101–119.

²⁷ One might say that what Barfield means is that while the *method* of formal logic is valid, the corresponding *ontology* is not.

²⁸ Di Fuccia, *OB*, Chapter 5.

later work appears to build upon Coleridge's PL based on where he imagined Coleridge might take it.

Barfield's own philosophy of language is most clearly spelled out in his *Poetic Diction*, later in *Speaker's Meaning*, and in the essay, "The Nature of Meaning." Barfield's philological focus is on meaning's origin and derivation. According to Barfield, as with logic, language must properly represent nature. Barfield is critical of the sort of reductive languages employed by the hard sciences and formal logic because he feels they do not adequately represent nature in her polar form, and as such, deprive her of meaning. By linking "prose" to "prosaic" Barfield suggests that prose envisages the world in objective terms, creating idols in an attempt to "save the appearances." A prosaic language coincides with a contracted consciousness open only to an objective world, a world from which all quality has been abstracted, while poetic diction represents an expansion of consciousness capable of holding in tension subject and object, the space in which meaning is made manifest.

It is in this way that Barfield indicates that language says a great deal about our perceptions of reality. Barfield believes that tautology, although a successful methodology, is not representative of nature and therefore not able to speak of her meaning. The further language tends toward prose, the further it speaks of an idolatrous perception of nature. Because, for Barfield, nature consists of a polarity of distinctness and identity, the language which best speaks of nature's symbolic form is poetic. It is this philological vein in which Barfield reads Coleridge's oft cited remark, "Prose = words in their best order; — poetry = the best words in the best order." As it relates to the epigraph, symbolic or poetic language actualizes (or makes conscious) the meaning otherwise potent in tautology. It brings forth latent meanings in nature that reductive philosophies of language, mind, and nature are wont to trim away for the sake of clarity, saving the appearances. Whereas Barfield the philologist sees poetry as unveiling (actualizing) the "meaningfulness" potent in syllogism. In his early work *Poetic Diction* Barfield downplays what he calls "repetition" or "mimetic" poetry preferring instead words such as "strange" and "recreate" as acts of the creative mind.

The arrangement and rearrangement of such univocal terms in a series of propositions is the function of *logic*, whose object is elucidation and the elimination of error. The poetic has nothing to do with this. It can only manifest itself as *fresh meaning*; it operates essentially *within* the individual term, which it creates and recreates by the magic of new combinations.²⁹

To be clear, this is not to fold to a merely subjectivized or relativistic vision of reality. No, at the same time, Barfield warns against the sort of equivocation of which logicians are rightly critical: "The new meaning," he states, "must be strange, not incomprehensible; otherwise the poetry of the whole passage is killed and the fresh meaning itself will be still-born."³⁰ He goes on to say that it

²⁹ Owen Barfield, *Poetic Diction: A Study in Meaning* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), Chapter VIII, Part 4. Italics original

³⁰ Ibid., Chapter VII, Part 4.

is this creative ability that separates the greater poet from the minor. The minor, he says, "imitates," the greater poet "creates."³¹ And in a much later reflection on meaning he reiterates the same linguistic sensibility, "if all words had and retained identical meanings every time they were uttered and heard . . . it is not much use having a perfect means of communication if you have nothing to communicate except the relative positions of bodies in space—or if you will never again have anything new to communicate."³²

As with nature and logic, Barfield stresses the importance of the role of the imagination in his linguistic scheme. The imagination is not merely an "organ of meaning,"³³ but it moreover allows the mind to see the world as it is. The imagination is the faculty of the mind that holds things in tension, allowing a more original meaning to shine forth. Without the imagination, the intellect can only break down and parse the polarities into subject/object, form/matter, univocal/equivocal, etc.

Barfield's novel reading of the PL combines Coleridge's Romantic stress on the imagination as the highest faculty (as in Wordsworth's *Prelude*, "reason in her most exalted mood"), Coleridge's suggestion of the imagination as "a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I Am," and his "Prose: words in their best order; poetry: the best words in the best order," to make a noteworthy and novel case for the polar logic in Coleridge's philosophy of language.

In linking the PL to language, Barfield stretches Coleridge in ways that coincide with his own his philological reading of Steiner's "evolution of consciousness." In so doing, he reads into Coleridge a philosophy of language that Coleridge never makes explicit, and he hopes that this is the direction Coleridge would have gone based on the trajectory of the *Biographia Literaria*. Nevertheless, Barfield's attempt to link polarity to Coleridge's philosophy of language appears unique to Coleridgean studies.³⁴ Barfield's reading of the PL not only establishes Coleridge within an alternative modernity, an enduring stream of Christian Neo-Platonism, but in his turn to language Barfield also situates Coleridge in dialogue with contemporary Cambridge Platonists who have coined the phrase "non-identical repetition" to stress the Platonic and analogical structure of reality in an attempt to recover what they see as an

³¹ Ibid., Chapter X, Part 3.

³² Owen Barfield, *Speaker's Meaning* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1967), 37.

³³ C.S. Lewis, "Bluspels and Flansferes: A Semantic Nightmare." *Rehabilitations and Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939).

³⁴ Larkin's, "Repetition, Difference and Liturgical Participation in Coleridge's 'The Ancient Mariner,'" is the first to implicitly link something like the polar paradigm to Coleridge's literature in his reading of Coleridge's "The Ancient Mariner." Larkin acknowledges postmodern readings of repetition in "The Mariner," which see the mariner's dreadful narrative as a sort of abysmal repetition of sameness (e.g. Nietzsche's "eternal return"). However, Larkin shows that throughout the poem such repetition is interrupted by a difference found in the momentary glimpses of the walk to the "kirk." This allows the mariner's abysmal repetition (absence) to be transformed by a positive difference (presence) in the paradoxical encounter with a transcendent horizon, which Larkin reads as a liturgical "de-secularising" of postmodern versions of repetition explicitly following the below mentioned work of Christian Platonists Catherine Pickstock and John Milbank who use "non-identical repetition" to point to this tension between sameness and difference and in their attempt to link language and metaphysics as detailed below.

integral connection between language and metaphysics, not unlike Barfield's Coleridge.³⁵ In this way, Barfield's novel linking of language and metaphysics in Coleridge and in his own work can now be seen as a sort of forerunner to these 20th century Cambridge Neo-Platonists.³⁶

In summary, Barfield sees the PL as the analogue of Coleridge's philosophy of nature, logic, and language. In Barfield's Coleridge the PL is found in (1) the polarity of nature (e.g. in the participation of species and individual), in (2) the polarity of logic (i.e., the mind participates in the real formal structures within nature, and only logically abstracts), and in (3) language (e.g. poetry, in balancing subjective and objective, inner and outer, speaks of the symbolic meaningfulness of nature). Put simply, the polarity of reality is best represented in a romantic vision of nature, a participatory logic, and a poetic language.

³⁵ The paradoxical notion of "non-identical repetition" emerges in the late 20th century as a theological response to postmodern philosophies of immanence that want to favor a dialectical account of reality which shuttles from sameness (univocity) to difference (equivocity). In response, certain philosophical theologians, such as John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, John R. Betz, David Hart, Johannes Hoff, and William Desmond view the postmodern dialectic of immanence as a "violent" aberration of a more original, peaceable, and actual Christian Trinitarian ontology founded upon analogy, wherein sameness and difference are said to co-exist harmoniously. For these, reality is not to be conceived of as a static immanent repetition of sameness (e.g. "eternal return") that longs for violent rupture and/or difference (e.g. Zizek), but instead immanence is always already peaceably "moved" (to borrow from a particular reading of Kierkegaard) by and towards proper transcendence (wherein sameness and difference peacefully co-exist). For these, to insist on immanence over against transcendence (or vice versa) is to forcibly rupture the peace of a more real primordial analogical account of being.

³⁶ Linking Aquinas' use of analogy with the metaphysical concept of the "analogy of being," these theologians prompted a Thomistic squabble regarding whether Aquinas' use of analogy was merely a heuristic device for avoiding idolatrous talk of God or whether his use of analogy says something of the metaphysics of creation. Of the above mentioned, Milbank, Hoff, and Pickstock in particular, have utilized the phrase "non-identical repetition" as a way of articulating this analogical metaphysic integrally linked to a kind of language which represents this reality.

As with Barfield's Coleridge, these theologians have strong roots in Christian Neo-Platonism. For these, the phrase "non-identical repetition" is simply a postmodern iteration of the Platonic One and the Many, wherein each finite particular (difference) participates in its universal form (sameness); hence, one might say that reality consists in the "non-identical repetition" of universal forms in all their distinct particular instantiations. Hence, relations between finite creatures are actually analogous. As such, it would be unreal to imagine finite particulars shuttling between sameness and difference, a view characteristic of modern and postmodern metaphysical accounts of reality. Similar to Barfield's reading of Coleridge these thinkers argue for an integral coherence between this proposed ontology, logic, and language. For "non-identical repetition" see, Catherine Pickstock, *Repetition and Identity: The Literary Agenda* (The Literary Agenda, 2013); Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford; Malden, Mass: Wiley-Blackwell, 1997); John Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order: The Representation of Being and the Representation of the People*, (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), Preface; John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*, 2nd ed. (Wiley-Blackwell, 2006), Part IV; John Milbank, *Being Reconciled: Ontology and Pardon* (London: Routledge, 2003); John Milbank 'The Sublime in Kierkegaard' in Philip Blond (ed.), *Post-Secular Philosophy: Between Theology and Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1998), 131-156; John Milbank, 'The Double Glory,' in Creston Davis (ed.), *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009), 110-233. Johannes Hoff, *The Analogical Turn* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), 161.

For theological critiques of immanence that prefer analogy over dialectic see, David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004); David Bentley Hart, "The Offering of Names: Metaphysics, Nihilism, and Analogy," in *Reason and the Reasons of Faith* (New York: T & T Clark International, 2005), 255-91; John R. Betz, "Beyond the Sublime: The Aesthetics of the Analogy of Being (Part One)," *Modern Theology* 21, no. 3 (2005): 367-411; John R. Betz, "Beyond the Sublime: The Aesthetics of the Analogy of Being (Part Two)," *Modern Theology* 22, no. 1 (2006): 1-50; William Desmond, *God and the Between* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 123-125.

For language, see John R. Betz, *After Enlightenment: The Post-Secular Vision of J. G. Hamann* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008). For logic, see John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2000); Robert C. Miner, *Truth in the Making: Creative Knowledge in Theology and Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2003).

For a more recent studies on Coleridge's philosophy of language, see Douglas Hedley, *Coleridge, Philosophy and Religion: Aids to Reflection and the Mirror of the Spirit* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) and Di Fuccia, *OB*, Chapters 2 and 5.

Without the mediatory imaginative vision of the polar logic, perceptions tend toward Cartesianism. Too much abstraction of the mind on the one hand or too much materialism on the other are really themselves two sides of the same coin. In both extremes, meaning fades without polarity. This appears to be philosophy's "mortal wound." The PL brings systemic coherence to Barfield's Coleridge and meaning to all of reality through the faculty of the imagination.

Coleridge after Barfield

The connection Barfield sees between Coleridge's PL, Steiner's theory regarding the "evolution of consciousness," and his own philological theory is that they all seek to reestablish the supremacy and import of the imagination to overcome the either/or of Cartesian philosophy. Barfield imagined that Coleridge's later philosophy of the imagination (which he had left unfinished in Chapter 13 of the *Biographia Literaria*) would assist his efforts in ushering in the sort of future state of consciousness that Anthroposophy has in mind ("Final Participation").³⁷ It is in this way that Barfield's aspirations for the later Coleridge are somewhat muddled with his own Anthroposophical hopes that through a full-blown metaphysic of the imagination (polarity proper) Romanticism might "come of age."³⁸

A reading of Coleridge's *Opus Maximum* assists in distinguishing particularly the later Coleridge from Barfield's Anthroposophical proclivities. The publication of the *Opus Maximum* (OM) in 2002³⁹ came nearly 30 years after Barfield's detailed exposition in *What Coleridge Thought* and 5 years after his death. Barfield dedicated *What Coleridge Thought* to Kathleen Coburn, whose editorial efforts to compile Coleridge's unpublished literary remains and correspondence with Barfield left a fond impression upon him.⁴⁰ Barfield initially agreed to, but never completed (due to failing health), editing the "Philosophical Lectures" to be included in the *Collected Works*. In 1986, both Barfield and Coburn stepped away from the project. The "Lectures" assigned to Barfield were passed on to James Robert de Jackson,⁴¹ while Coburn's responsibility for editing the *Collection* was entrusted to Thomas McFarland. It is here that Barfield appears a bit perturbed that McFarland had already begun editing the OM manuscript and was apparently intent on keeping it to

³⁷ Coincidentally, it is toward this same Anthroposophical end that Barfield understands his own philological theory.

³⁸ See, *RCoA*, "From East to West."

³⁹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Volume 15: Opus Maximum*. For the earliest scholarship resulting from the publication of the *Opus Maximum*, see Jeffrey W. Barbeau, ed., *Coleridge's Assertion of Religion: Essays on the "Opus Maximum"* (Dudley: Peeters Publishers, 2006).

⁴⁰ In his acknowledgements in *What Coleridge Thought*, Barfield reveals his indebtedness to Kathleen Coburn referring to her as a "truly illustrious editor" and a source of "inner support." See also, Barfield, *Owen Barfield on C.S. Lewis* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1989). Chapter 4. Here again he mentions the fruit of Coburn's efforts, referring to the "ongoing Princeton/Bollingen complete Coleridge edition edited by Kathleen Coburn." See also the "Introduction" to *Romanticism Comes of Age* for more praise of Coburn.

⁴¹ The records are housed in The Victoria University Library at the University of Toronto:

https://library.vicu.utoronto.ca/collections/special_collections/f58_collected_works_samuel_taylor_coleridge/series_1

himself,⁴² which may explain his sympathy for Coburn and not her editorial successor McFarland. So, while it seems Barfield knew the *OM* manuscript existed, judging from this correspondence, the lack of any clear reference to the *OM* in Barfield's work, and the obvious intellectual gaps that the *OM* would surely have supplemented in Barfield's corpus,⁴³ it is highly unlikely that Barfield read the *OM* manuscript.

What in hindsight one can now glean from the *OM* is that Coleridge moved almost entirely away from the emphasis on the imagination found in Chapter 13 of the *BL* and instead develops what one might call a theology of the will (or morality) as a sort of third principle of his triune (trichotomy) philosophy.⁴⁴ Throughout the fragments of the massive *OM* manuscript the imagination is rarely mentioned, and when it is, it is never with reference to polar logic. It does not appear that the later Coleridge took the imagination to be as important to his philosophy as Barfield had hoped. Indeed, a comprehensive review of Coleridge's corpus indicates that the PL and the imagination are ultimately subservient to a Christian theological vision, whereas for Barfield's they serve Anthroposophical ends.⁴⁵

Moreover, in the appendix of *What Coleridge Thought* Barfield fails to locate the intellectual origins of the PL, and it does not appear this is resolved anywhere in his later writings. Had Barfield read the *OM*, he would have discovered that Coleridge attributes the intellectual origins of the PL to Aristotle's act/potency distinction,⁴⁶ not to the "aggressively anti-Aristotelian" thinker Bruno and his influences as Barfield supposed.⁴⁷ It is rather ironic that Aristotle, who for Barfield appears to have played a part in inflicting the "mortal wound," is the same person who for Coleridge has the panacea.⁴⁸

While Barfield may have felt some relief to finally bring his search of the origins of the PL to rest, his challenge would lie in reconciling Coleridge's high view of Aristotle with his constant critiques of the Greek philosopher. That Barfield excludes Aristotle from the annals of Christian Neo-Platonism is not uncommon. There is, however, a whole host of scholars who read Aristotle in

⁴² Simon Blaxland De Lange, *Owen Barfield: Romanticism Come of Age - a Biography* (East Sussex: Temple Lodge Publishing, 2006). In a letter to Prof Craig Miller Barfield remarks that MacFarland had "decided that the *Opus Maximum* is enough for one labourer in the vineyard."

⁴³ Barfield, *Owen Barfield on C.S. Lewis* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1989). Published in 1989, Chapter 4 mirrors the structure, content and assessment of Coleridge in Barfield's much earlier Chapter 3 of *What Coleridge Thought*. Thus, Barfield never wavered in his reading of Coleridge, which he would have almost certainly revised had he read the *OM*. More on this below.

⁴⁴ See Coleridge, *OM*, Fragment 1, especially 72–3. Here in the *OM* the will seems to take the place of the imagination as the third term, irreducible to, or transcending, subject and object. Coleridge, in prioritizing the moral over the "will," indicates that this precondition of the "ought" can be seen as "groundless," coming from beyond outside, and hence cannot be described using syllogism or logic.

⁴⁵ This is not to say that one can separate Anthroposophy and theology, but rather to delineate the ends towards which Barfield and Coleridge employed the polar logic and sought to bolster the faculty of the imagination. Barfield tends to read the Christian theological tradition and Coleridge only when and where they serve Anthroposophical ends. Barfield's reading of Aristotle as explicated below shows something of his tendency to cherry-pick certain thinkers in ways that serve his Anthroposophical ends.

⁴⁶ Coleridge, *OM*, Fragment 2, 226–8. Unbeknownst to Barfield, in the *OM* Coleridge indicates that the PL is based upon Aristotle's act/potency distinction. See especially, fn. on page 227. See also, 299–300.

⁴⁷ Barfield, *WCT*, 190.

⁴⁸ Barfield, *WCT*, 184, "Aristotelian logic and all developments from it, being grounded on the understanding and the senses, inevitably ends in admitting only quantities as real." See also, *Ibid.*, 189. See also, Barfield, *PD*, 60–1.

the Platonist and Christian stream, as Coleridge appears to have done.⁴⁹ Even the casual reader will recognize Aquinas' constant reference and indebtedness to Aristotle. Indeed, it could be argued that much of Coleridge's thought in the *OM* and the terms he uses follow from the Thomistic theological tradition (particularly Coleridge's references to the act/potency distinction, which is central to Aquinas' metaphysics of creation and in his distinguishing of God and creation). Throughout his own body of work, Barfield cites Aquinas favorably and employs him readily. So along these lines, it is not a stretch to imagine that in discovering the PL's origins that Barfield might have shifted to a more favorable, and perhaps even theological, reading of Aristotle.

In fact, in *Saving the Appearances* Barfield himself draws favorably on Aristotle's act/potency distinction. He indicates that over time the actual/potential distinction came to mean something that in Aristotle it did not, existence and non-existence, respectively. Against this view, and in favor of Aristotle, Barfield says that "the potentially phenomenal is not the same as nothing."⁵⁰ Barfield seems to imply that for Aristotle what is potential is actual, but non-phenomenal (unconscious), until it is actualized (i.e., raised to conscious awareness by an act of the creative imagination). Employing Aristotle toward Anthroposophical ends, he argues that the mind's active participation in the reality of the unconscious realm (i.e., the process by which the mind makes the potential actual) is essential to ushering in the epoch of "Final Participation." Moreover, he makes the same favorable reference to the act/potency distinction in his much earlier chapter, "From East to West" in *Romanticism Comes of Age*, and in *What Coleridge Thought* he goes so far as to say that the Greek *to poiein* and *to paschein* are "allusions for Coleridge to the two forces on which his whole system was based").⁵¹ Thus, in breaking script from his customary critique of Aristotle, Barfield's references to the act/potency distinction are consistently favorable.

In returning to the epigraph, one is immediately struck by Barfield's choice of words regarding the "potentiality" of meaning and his statement that "what is only potential is not on that account unreal"⁵² It is not a stretch to see how the above remarks, which draw favorably on Aristotle's act/potency distinction, follow the logic of the epigraph. Barfield's remarks really aren't much more than a linguistic iteration of the language and philosophical sensibilities of the act/potency distinction. Might the discovery of the origins of the PL have been an "*ah ha*" moment for Barfield? Might he see that through the very language and logic he employed to articulate Coleridge's thought he was subconsciously alluding to the origins that he so desperately sought?

⁴⁹ Lloyd P. Gerson, *Aristotle and Other Platonists*. New Edition (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006). Not to mention, when Aristotle's writings are recovered in the Middle Ages, the Christian scholastic theologians are keen to graft him into the neo-Platonic lineage.

⁵⁰ Barfield, *STA*, 136–7.

⁵¹ Barfield, *WCT*, 193. See reference to endnote 3 on page 216–7 in which he stretches *to poiein* and *to paschein* to mean subject and object, respectively.

⁵² Barfield, *WCT*, 193.

With hindsight, one is left now only to speculate what shape Barfield's project might have taken had he read the *OM* manuscript. As previously mentioned, Barfield had hoped that Coleridge was working toward a thoroughgoing metaphysic of the imagination, which we now know is not the case. Of the two revelations this would seem to have been the more difficult pill for Barfield to swallow. For Steiner, the training and development of the faculty of the imagination is central to man's evolution of consciousness; in moving humanity out of the age of materialism, to Romanticism's coming of age. Again, it was toward this Anthroposophical end that Barfield hoped a mature Coleridge might provide him with further insights into the intellectual and creative powers of the imagination.

On the one hand, that Coleridge turned away from the imagination and located the origins of the PL in Aristotle might have pushed Barfield to focus more on Steiner and Anthroposophy in his later quest to assert the primacy of the imagination in his quest to participate in the evolution of consciousness. And, at the very least, this discovery might have caused him to rethink and perhaps even rescind some of his high praise of Coleridge. As it stands, there does not appear even the slightest critique of Coleridge in Barfield.

On the other hand, perhaps Barfield may have followed Coleridge on this theological trajectory. Surely, Coleridge's undeniable theological commitment and the furthering of this project in the *OM* would have assisted the later Barfield who continued to refine his theory on language and of inspiration late in life (the *OM* provides plenty of content toward this end).

Perhaps it would have been a bit of both, as in his 80's and 90's Barfield continued to fervently promote the views of Anthroposophy and the integral importance of the imagination. At the same time, he went on to developed further iterations of his theory of language's origin mining theological resources to do so.⁵³

In the end, what is novel about Barfield's reading of Coleridge is that he identified the PL as a metaphysical analogate that links Coleridge's philosophy of nature, mind, and language. While Barfield's hope that a mature Coleridge would develop further his metaphysic of the imagination was wrong as were his assumptions regarding the origins of the PL, his own descriptions of Coleridge's philosophy are presciently ripe with Aristotelian undertones, which readers of the *OM* now know undergird Coleridge's entire philosophical system. One is left only to imagine what it would have meant for Barfield to discover that his own descriptions of Coleridge's philosophy seem to have been unconsciously pointing to the origins of the PL all along.

⁵³ See, fn. 23 above.