

5-12-2017

Anticipations of Kant in Coleridge's Rime of the Ancient Mariner

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ANTICIPATIONS OF KANT IN COLERIDGE'S *RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER*

A Thesis

by

RAUL Z. SALAZAR

Submitted to Texas A&M International University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

December 2016

Major Subject: English

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ABSTRACT

Anticipations of Kant in Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (December 2016)

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Immanuel Kant's moral philosophy resonates in the works of one of the most important Romantic writers in history, Samuel Taylor Coleridge. In chapter one of *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (1793), Kant diagnoses the human race as being *radically evil*; they raise selfish incentives of desire above the *moral law*. Kant also expresses that the human race cannot extirpate themselves of radical evil because they are *frail, impure, and perverse*. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, a follower of Kant, seeks to remedy Kant's diagnosis of radical evil in his works *Aids to Reflection* (1825) and *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798) by suggesting that the "human will," when tempered by *Reason*, awakens mankind's spiritual mind and safeguards him from sin.

This thesis closely examines the first chapter of Kant's *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* in order to familiarize readers with Kantian arguments and key terms. The thesis then examines the similarities between Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection* and Kant's *Religion*. These similarities make a Kantian interpretation of *Rime* possible, which is the heart of this thesis.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Jonathan W. Murphy for helping me every step of the way. I would also like to thank my committee members: Dr. Paul J. Niemeyer, Dr. Deborah M. Scaggs, and Dr. Stephen M. Duffy. Most importantly, I would like to thank my parents Raul Salazar and Zulema Salazar and my grandmother Catalina DelaRosa for their loving support and encouragement.

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INTRODUCTION

Published in 1793, Immanuel Kant's *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* was met with harsh criticism by many Enlightenment thinkers. Johann Wolfgang van Goethe and Friedrich Schiller found Kant's argument on the radical evil of human nature "appalling" because it "appears to be a simulacrum of original sin" (Sussman 154). Many others considered Kant's argument "to be the last thing one would expect from Kant" (Sussman 154). In *Religion*, Kant attempts to establish that some religious doctrines have rational cores, that the human race is radically evil, and that the doctrine of original sin "*explains* the contingent existence" of radical evil (Kant 6:43). Thirty-two years later, in *Aids to Reflection* (1825), Samuel Taylor Coleridge comes to the defense of Kant's argument in *Religion*. Scholar Elinor S. Shaffer mentions that in *Aids to Reflection*, Coleridge defends Kant's argument in *Religion* by explaining that Kant's "positions are compatible with every spiritual truth" (202). Furthermore, "*Aids to Reflection* follows the thread of the argument of Kant's *Religion*" (200). *Aids to Reflection* not only comes to the defense of Kant's argument on radical evil, it also provides a solution to the dilemma of the radical evil in human nature. In *Aids*, Coleridge sought to establish that religious truths were rational, that Reason was an aid to mankind, and that Reason can safeguard humanity from evil. Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798) is a poetical representation of his solution to the problem of evil.

Chapter 1 of this thesis focuses on a close reading of Kant's first chapter in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. An understanding of this work is crucial to the Kantian interpretation of Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. Kantian key terms such as "radical evil," "the moral law," and "incentives" are covered in detail. In the first chapter of *Religion*, "Concerning the Indwelling of the Evil Principle alongside the Good or of the Radical Evil in

Human Nature,” Kant diagnoses the human race as being radically evil; by this he means that mankind elevates selfish incentives above the moral law. To Kant, the human race is predisposed with three things: animality, humanity, and personality (6:26). Animality refers to mankind’s sensuous nature, humanity refers to their rational nature, and under the predisposition to personality, Kant argues that the human race is “*responsible*” to the moral law; personality is thus mankind’s responsible nature (6:26). The moral law is the original predisposition to the good, but mankind deviate from the moral law when making ethical decisions because he is irresponsible to his duty towards it. The human race is irresponsible because they are “frail,” “impure,” and “depraved.” They are frail because their “flesh is weak” and selfish sensuous incentives are made stronger than the moral law. They are impure because incentives other than the moral law in itself are needed for them to act on the moral spectrum of “the good.” They are also depraved because they “reverse the ethical order” (6:30). Frailty, impurity, and depravity are what Kant calls the human race’s “propensities to evil,” and they make the human race irresponsible to their spiritual morality (6:28). Humanity is inclined to elevate sensuous desire over their moral duty either by deliberately choosing to do evil, or by allowing themselves to be deceived into believing that they abide by the moral law when they are in fact led by immoral incentives. Kant explains that “this evil is *radical*, since it corrupts the grounds of all maxims; as natural propensity, it is also not to be *extirpated* through human forces” (6:37). He concludes that humanity cannot cleanse themselves of radical evil.

Chapter two of this thesis focuses on making Coleridge’s moral philosophy in *Aids to Reflection* clear in Kantian terms. In *Aids*, Coleridge creates a distinction between Reason and Understanding. Reason “is a direct aspect of Truth, an inward Beholding,” and it is related to the spiritual realm (1111). Understanding is “bound over to the service of animal nature,” and it is

related to the sensuous realm (1126). For Coleridge, the majority of the human race elevates Understanding above Reason and become irresponsible to their spiritual natures. The elevation of the sensuous over the spiritual fits the Kantian description of radical evil. Coleridge also mentions that human's subjugate Reason because they are "unreflecting" (1092). They do not reflect on their spiritual nature, and as a result, they lose their awareness of the moral good. Reason, however, can be elevated above the Understanding by reflecting on religious and rational truths. Coleridge argues that a responsible will is necessary if the human race is to become good or better in the moral sense, and that Reason tempers the human will like a hunter aims his bow. There is always a proper object to aim at, and Reason guides the hunter's aim towards the "ultimate good" (Coleridge 1017). With this said, there is no doubt that Coleridge's poetic writing also reflects a Kantian scheme.

Chapter two of this thesis is dedicated to a Kantian interpretation of Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798). While Coleridge's *Rime* is not necessarily informed by Kant's moral philosophy, it anticipates Coleridge's philosophy in *Aids to Reflection*; which is strikingly similar to Kant's moral philosophy in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. In *Rime*, Coleridge plays around with the ideas of sin, of the persecution of spirit, and of spiritual redemption; these ideas are later reaffirmed in *Aids to Reflection*. Coleridge's reaffirmation of some of the ideas in *Rime* in his moral philosophy opens up a Kantian interpretation of the poem if the terminology in *Aids* is applied to *Rime*. As a romantic writer, Coleridge uses symbolism as a means of conveying spiritual meaning in an imaginary world. In order to view *Rime* through a Kantian lens, Coleridge's characters must be broken down in Kantian terms. The Mariner stands as a symbol for the radical evil in human nature. In *Rime*, the radical evil that the Mariner commits is the slaying of the albatross. The Mariner, an "unreflecting" (*Aids* 1092) man, loses

his awareness of the moral law by subjugating Reason and elevating Understanding. In Kantian terms, he was irresponsible to his duty towards the moral law by subjugating the moral law to other incentives. In this sense, the Mariner is radically evil because he creates discord between himself and spirit. The Mariner is punished, and is set back on the path towards moral goodness by the supernatural entities in the poem.

The supernatural entities in the poem guide the Mariner away from his radically evil disposition by reminding him that he should be responsible to the moral law. They subject the Mariner to a living nightmare as a way of forcing him to “wake up” and realize that he must change. “Life-in-Death,” along with the other supernatural spirits in the poem, show the Mariner ghastly images, kill his fellow seamen, and starve him. The Mariner must learn to be responsible towards the moral law, and he must be made aware that he suffers from the disease of radical evil. After the Mariner is made aware of the evil that lurks inside of his heart, the supernatural spirits “guide” the Mariner towards moral goodness by awakening his spiritual mind. Through the “guidance” of the phantasmal entities, the Mariner learns to love, pray, and preach. After having learned how to love, the Mariner’s behavior changed for the better; instead of shooting the albatross, the Mariner learns to love the water snakes. After learning about the importance of prayer, the Mariner realizes that he must constantly engage himself with his spiritual nature so that he can safeguard himself from sin. After learning to preach, the Mariner becomes redeemed and becomes a source of redemption for others by telling his tale to them. The three Christian practices of prayer, love, and reflection battle frailty, impurity, and depravity. They also help to make the Mariner responsible to Reason and to the moral law. Once his ghastly boat ride is over, the Mariner walks the land preaching his tale to others who are willing to listen. Coleridge’s *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* deserves a Kantian interpretation because Coleridge is familiar with

Kant's moral philosophy, he actively engages with Kant's ideas in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, he applies Kant's arguments to Christianity in *Aids to Reflection*, and he applies a rationally refurbished Christian solution to Kant's diagnosis of the radical evil of the human condition.

CHAPTER ONE

IMMANUEL KANT'S MORAL DILEMMA

In the first chapter of Immanuel Kant's *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (1793), Kant argues that the human race is "radically evil" (6:37). Chapter One, "Concerning the Indwelling of the Evil Principle alongside the Good or of the Radical Evil in Human Nature," is divided into four sections that explicate Kant's argument: (1) Concerning the Original Predisposition to Good in Human Nature; (2) Concerning the Propensity to Evil in Human Nature; (3) The Human Being is by Nature Evil; (4) Concerning the Origin of Evil in Human Nature. In the first section of Kant's first chapter, "Concerning the Original Predisposition to Good in Human Nature," Kant reveals that there are three types of predispositions present in humankind at birth: Animality, humanity, and personality. Animality refers to the senses, humanity refers to the capacity of rational thought, and personality refers to responsibility towards the "moral law." In the second part of the chapter, "Concerning the Propensity to Evil in Human Nature," Kant examines humankind's propensity to evil. Kant explains that the human race is frail, impure, and depraved (6:29). These three innate faults in human nature "incline" the human race to choose evil rather than good because these three conditions elevate selfish incentives over the moral law. For example, wealth, pleasure, power, and fame may be chosen over the moral law because human nature values these incentives over it. In the third part of his chapter, "The Human Being is by Nature Evil," Kant reveals that the struggle between the sensuous and spiritual natures of rational beings is created by the opposition between desire and duty. Humankind is neither animal nor angel, they are stuck at a crossroads between the two. More often than not, the human race will act on desire while being conscious of their duty towards the moral law. The human propensity to elevate selfish imperative over the moral law is

called “radical evil.” In the fourth part of Kant’s chapter, “Concerning the Origin of Evil in Human Nature,” Kant seeks the origin of radical evil. He looks for this origin by examining its occurrence in time, and by explaining it through rational means. In the end, he concludes that the origin of evil will forever remain inexplicable to the human race, and that the human race does not have the power free themselves of evil by their own “wills.”

The purpose of this thesis chapter is to familiarize readers with Kant’s moral philosophy. Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s work *Aids to Reflection* (1825) mirrors Kant’s moral philosophy. To Coleridge, Reason, which is similar to what Kant calls responsibility or humanity’s spiritual nature, tempers the human race against evil inclinations; the elevation of Reason over the Understanding, or what Kant calls mankind’s sensuous nature, resolves Kant’s moral dilemma of the radical evil in the human race. Coleridge’s *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798) is a poetical representation of his resolution to Kant’s moral dilemma.

Before diving into an analysis of Kant’s moral philosophy in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, an explanation of Kant’s key terms is necessary. Kant often refers to “the moral law” and “incentives” in his moral philosophy; when the moral law is subjugated to selfish incentives when an individual is making an ethical decision, radical evil is the result. Kant argues that the moral law should be the only incentive needed to make a “good” decision, but incentives of selfishness can be used to fuel an individual’s choice to act against the moral law (6:26). The human race, for the most part, chooses selfish actions because of the incentives that the choice promises, this is why Kant deems human nature as radically evil. Mankind does this for various reasons, which will be explained further on, but in order to come to a better understanding of Kant’s argument, “the moral law” and “incentives” must be made clear in Kantian terms. Kantian scholar Jennifer K. Uleman explains that the moral law is “the ultimate

action guiding principle” (1). When the human race is stuck at an ethical crossroads, the moral law “tells” them what matters most and “how to act accordingly” (1). It is synonymous with the idea of the absolute moral good. The moral law is also universal, it “holds universally for all rational creatures” because it is predisposed in them (5). There is always a “right thing to do” when making an ethical decision; however, “the right thing to do,” or “the moral good,” doesn’t “appeal or motivate” the human race enough to always abide by it (18). Selfish incentives exist, and they often motivate mankind to act selfishly.

An “incentive” strengthens the power of choice in human reason and it can be “good” or “evil” (Kant 6:24). Kant explains that there is only one incentive that is considered a “good” incentive and that is the incentive of a moral feeling that dutifully obeys the moral law. The moral law should be an incentive in itself since it follows the absolute good. Kant mentions, “the moral law is itself an incentive in the judgement of reason, and whoever makes it his maxim is *morally* good” (6:24). A maxim is a self-made rule by which a human lives. For example, most people do not kill people. They have incorporated this rule into their maxim and live their life according to this self-imposed law. By incorporating the moral law into his/her maxim, a human is able to make decisions that are morally good. The moral law, however, is often deviated from. An incentive can also lead to moral evil. Kant argues that any incentive, other than the incentive of following the moral law, will lead humanity away from moral goodness and take them towards moral evil. For example, when wealth is used as an incentive that fuels an individual’s choice to steal from others, that incentive is selfish and evil. Evil incentives often motivate mankind more than good incentive of the moral law, even though the moral law is predisposed in human nature. Kant’s first section, “Concerning the Original Predisposition to Good in Human Nature,” reveals that mankind has three predispositions: animality, humanity, and personality. In

mankind's predisposition to personality, Kant reveals that the moral law is innate in human nature. Mankind has a duty towards the moral law, and he should strive to be responsible towards it.

The first predisposition of animality refers to a human's sensuous nature (Kant 6:26). The sensuous being acts based off of the information it receives through the five senses. The five senses are more closely related to instinct than reason, and Kant will go as far as to say that "reason is not required" in the predisposition to animality (6:26). The animal nature in the human being must then refer to the physical body separate from the capability of rational decision. The separation of body and spirit creates the juxtaposition between bodily desire and an ethical duty to obey the moral law. The moral law is based off of "pure practical reason," but a sensuous being does not contain reason (Engelhardt 317). They rely on instinct rather than reason. To animals, there is no such thing as right and wrong; there is only self-preservation and propagation of the species. What the predisposition of animality suggests is that a human's sensuous nature is amoral since it can neither adhere to the moral law nor deviate from it because it has no conception for it. The only thing the predisposition to animality is concerned with is the biological well-being of the species; however, mankind is not wholly animal.

The ability to think rationally makes the human race distinct from animals, but humankind still remains part of the animal kingdom because they have physical bodies that demand substance to survive. Whereas an animal is purely a "*living being*" (Kant 6:26), the human is a "*rational being*" (6:26). Humanity also suggests "rational reflection" (Sussman 163). Humans have a social drive, and they compare themselves to others and create moral concepts. In this sense, humanity is able to consciously view themselves in a way that animals cannot. In hedonistic terms, the human race considers happiness to be the result of good, they also consider

unhappiness to be the result of bad. The “*rational* being” is able to create happiness, sustain it, pursue it, and increase it; however, they must also temper themselves so that the pursuit of happiness does not come at the expense of others or at the expense of the moral law (Kant 6:26).

Kant defines our predisposition to personality by explaining that a “rational being” must also be “*responsible*” for his/her own morality since he/she is capable of making a choice that abides by the moral law (6:26). The “rational being” considers happiness the result of good, but what if that happiness comes at the expense of others? The “person” in “*personality*,” as opposed to the human in “*humanity*,” must be a responsible being (6:26). Happiness is indeed a good thing, but if it comes at the expense of others or at the expense of the moral law, the responsible thing to do would be to suffer for the benefit of others. Self-sacrifice and the moral law walk hand in hand. Kant argues that the moral law, or the absolute right, is a predisposition in humankind like the predispositions of animality (sensuous nature) and humanity (rational nature). Personhood, or personality, takes into account the universal good when making an ethical decision. The universal good may cause the individual to suffer, but in the end it is simply the right thing to do. For example, if a student were given the opportunity to cheat on an exam they did not study for, the moral law would suggest the student not cheat. Deciding not to cheat on the exam does not create happiness (relative to other students who got good marks), but it is the right thing to do. To a “responsible being,” the right thing to do should be considered happiness (6:26). As “responsible beings,” mankind is always conscious of the moral law when making an ethical decision because it always exists within him. He should be responsible towards obeying the moral law, or be held responsible when deviating from the moral law (6:26). Kantian scholar Burleigh T. Wilkins argues, “Kant might have held that having a moral personality is not a matter of degree, like, say, having a good character, but that it is a minimal

sort of thing not easily forfeited” (152). The predisposition of personality in a human does not determine moral degree in terms of what is “more good;” rather, it is a permanent reminder that the moral law always exists within humanity as a predisposition (however minimal it may seem), and that the human race has a duty to obey the moral law as an incentive sufficient in itself. Having a duty towards something, however, does not necessarily mean that the human will obey (especially if the duty seems minimal). Selfish desire, more often than not, contradicts moral duty. Kant argues, in conjunction to the three predispositions in human nature, that there exists three evil propensities that fuel selfish desire: frailty, impurity, and depravity. Frailty makes selfish incentives the “stronger” incentive and makes the moral law the subjectively “weaker” incentive, impurity refers to the instance when the moral law is not incentive enough for “good,” and depravity “reverses the ethical order” (Kant 6:30).

In section two of Kant’s first chapter in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, “Concerning the Propensity to Evil in Human Nature,” Kant suggests that humans move towards evil despite their predisposition to the moral law by making the moral law “minimal.” Kant explains that a propensity is not innate like a predisposition, but it can be “represented” as such (6:29). A propensity can be either “*acquired* (if it is good)” (6:29) or “(if evil) *brought* by the human being *upon* himself” (6:29). Kant focuses on the propensity that is “*brought* by the human being *upon* himself” (6:29). Kant argues that a propensity towards evil can only “attach [itself] to the moral faculty of choice” (6:30). When there are incentives other than the incentive of the moral law involved in making an ethical choice, the human will be inclined to deviate from the moral law in favor of those other incentives because they are frail, impure, and depraved.

When Kant speaks of frailty, he is referring to an individual’s decision to choose incentives that are made subjectively “stronger” than the moral law (6:29). The human, because

he/she is rational, will compare incentives. If an incentive is made stronger than the moral law, the rational thing to do would be to side with the “stronger” incentive. The moral law is then made the “weaker” incentive. The human race still incorporates the moral law into their maxims; however, selfish incentives become “irresistible” to them because the “flesh is weak” (6:29). When Kant argues that the human race is frail, he suggests that humanity can deliberately choose to act against the moral law because they are prone to give into selfish desire.

The second propensity is the “*impurity*” of human nature (6:29). Impurity refers to the instance when the moral law is not incentive enough for good. Whereas frailty makes selfish incentives stronger than the moral law, impurity makes an immoral incentive the condition to act on the moral law. The choice, however, merely appears to conform to the moral law. For example, if you see an old woman trying to cross a busy intersection, the moral law commands that you help her if you are able-bodied. This should be an incentive on its own; however, the impurity of the human heart will seek further incentive. Maybe you are in the company of your lover. Knowing that she/he is watching, you help the old woman cross the intersection. Helping the old woman cross the busy intersection is still the morally correct thing to do, but it was done out of an incentive other than the moral law. When Kant argues that the human race is impure, he is suggesting that the human race rarely acts out of a pure motive of moral duty. In this sense, the human race can deceive themselves into believing that they act with the moral law in their maxims when they actually are deviating from it.

The third propensity is the “*depravity*” of human nature (6:30). Depravity is also known as “*perversity*,” and it completely “[corrupts] the human heart” because it is the complete summation of frailty and impurity (6:30). Humans either deliberately choose to act selfishly because they are frail, or they choose to follow impure incentives that contradict the moral law.

In both cases, humanity is considered morally evil. The totality of this corruption leads Kant to believe that perversity “reverses the ethical order” (6:30). Perversity “reverses the ethical order” because the human race uses their power of free choice to elevate immoral incentives over the moral law. With regards to self-deception, humankind is satisfied when they appear to have the moral law in their maxims; however, having the appearance of the moral law is not the same as actually abiding by its spirit. In this state of mind, humanity considers their behavior to be morally good even though their behavior is led by immoral incentives. To Kant, this is worse than deliberately choosing to act against the moral law because, ironically, the human race must have freely and intentionally chosen to be deceived in the first place. In this sense, the human heart’s depravity seems to be a “feature” of humanity’s radically evil nature because it antagonizes the moral law deliberately, and it chooses to be deceived so that it remains “happy” despite its state of immorality.

In their depraved state, humans can either deliberately elevate selfish incentives over the moral law, or believe that they have good morals when they are led by immoral incentives. Kant describes the difference between a morally good human being and a human with good morals. A human with good morals does not have “the law as their sole and supreme incentive” (Kant 6:30). They choose other incentives over the incentive of the moral law, but they act in accordance to the law by the “*letter*” (6:30). By contrast, a morally good human being “*always*” has the moral law as their sole incentive (6:30). They choose the moral law as an incentive in itself, and they act according to the “*spirit*” of the law (6:30). Kant explains, “*Whatever is not of this faith is sin. [...] whenever incentives other than the law itself are necessary to determine the power of choice to lawful actions, it is purely accidental that these actions agree with the law*” (6:30-6:31). Kant’s argument here is that the human race may have good morals, but they are not

morally good human beings. Despite good actions, the human is still evil because his/her three propensities favor incentives other than the moral law. Scholar Evgenia Cherkasova adds that Kant's philosophy is about "the insuperable evil of our hearts" (571). Evil is so intimate with humanity that it manipulates them into believing that impure incentive that results in good action is considered moral goodness. Evil also is chosen intentionally by the human race when they are pursuing selfish desires. The appearance of good morals and how this appearance masquerades as the "good" is further explained in section three of Kant's first chapter in *Religion*.

In section three, "The Human Being is by Nature Evil," Kant suggests that the human race is "evil by nature" because they are completely corrupted by evil inclinations (Kant 6:32). The contrast between mankind's sensuous nature and spiritual nature sets the stage for Kant's argument that the human race is "by nature evil." Mankind's sensuous nature refers to the "animality" in him. Kant begins his argument on the premise that mankind cannot be "held responsible" for his sensuous nature (6:35). "Animality" is predisposed in him, and he cannot change that. He can, however, be held responsible for elevating selfish bodily incentives over the moral law. For example, mankind's sensuous nature has its natural ends in propagation of the species. This is amoral. Humanity can choose to elevate selfish incentives, like pleasure, and deviate from the moral law to create moral evil from something that was supposed to be amoral. This happens for two reasons: humanity deliberately and irresponsibly pursues selfish incentives, or they deceive themselves by claiming that the immoral incentive is "virtuous." Kant focuses his attention towards immoral incentives hidden behind the appearance of virtue. Kant writes, "[humanity] makes incentives of self-love and their inclinations the condition of compliance with the moral law [...] In this reversal of incentives, through a human being's maxim contrary to the moral order, actions can still turn out to be as much in conformity to the law as if they had

originated from true principles” (6:36). When incentives of self-love are the condition for the moral law, they corrupt the grounds of all maxims. For instance, most humans do not kill other humans. The moral law suggests that humans not kill humans because it is wrong; however, some humans do not kill humans for fear of getting caught. If they are caught, they will be severely punished. They do not want to make themselves “unhappy,” so they do not kill other humans for fear of getting caught. They still follow the maxim, but they follow it for the wrong reason. In this sense, the maxim is corrupt. The human also deceives himself/herself into believing that they are “good” people because they follow the maxim.

Another prevalent example of this deception appears in “warrior cultures.” Warrior cultures have “no other aim than mere slaughter,” but they hide this slaughter behind virtue (Kant 6:33). Warrior cultures use words like bravery, honor, and glory to replace death, violence, and pride. Oftentimes, these words have their roots in the “butchering of others.” For example, the Nazi regime disguised mass murder behind words like “glory and greatness.” It was every soldier’s duty to follow the commands of his superiors, even if it meant killing innocent children and unarmed men/women. Killing innocents takes on the appearance of the good because the “butchering of others” is replaced by “greatness, glory, and superiority.” The desire for superiority gave birth to the virtues of bravery and honor. Nazi soldiers were bound to the honor of the regime, and they adhered to the strict laws of the regime. These laws often included the willingness to torture others (moral evil is always willed/brought by the human upon himself/herself since it is a choice). Kant explains, “it is in the havoc that they [humans] wreak [...] that they place their good” (6:33). Nazi Germany is not the only group of people that does this; any country, man, and woman that places their good in the butchery of others “[reverses] the ethical order” (6:30). War, terrorism, and social upheaval are among the few things that have

roots in evil even though they are sometimes considered virtuous. Kant argues that because of the human race's three evil propensities there exists the possibility for vice "hidden under the appearance of virtue" (6:33). This vice arises from the conflict between sensuous desire and spiritual morality. Humans are "*responsible*" (6:26) for their own morality. In the case of the possibility for vice hidden under the appearance of virtue, they must be held responsible for that. There always exists the possibility to obey the moral law; however, humans are creatures of desire. Humans are inclined to act towards that desire because they deceive themselves into thinking that their desires hold virtue, they allow this into their maxim, and in the end their maxims become corrupt. This deception, along with intentionally elevating selfish incentives above the moral law, effects humanity as a whole, which is why Kant argues that the human race is "by nature radically evil."

With regards to evil in which deception is not involved, Scholar Joseph P. Lawrence mentions, "In his [Kant's] doctrine of radical evil he shows that evil can be willed. This remains the case even though evil involves a deep entanglement in, and self-surrender to, heteronomous forces" (320-21). Evil is not always a product of deception, it can also be intended. In the pursuit of self-love, the human race is prone to giving into their desires. They surrender to selfish incentives and "will" evil action. For instance, in the pursuit of wealth a human may choose to steal from a bank or to steal from others. Their desire to be wealthy overrules on the moral law. In this sense, selfish incentives are intentionally elevated above the moral law and deception is not involved.

To be "evil by nature" also means to be "radically evil" because evil involves a choice to make incentives of desire "*the supreme condition*" of the moral law (Kant 6:36). Radical evil does not lie within an inclination to selfish desire; it lies within choosing to follow that

inclination while being conscious of the duty towards the moral law. The human race must be “responsible” to the moral law; however, they choose to be irresponsible because they surrender themselves to selfish imperatives. If the human race is conscious of the moral law, but do not act on it because they are “evil by nature,” is there any way for the human race to rid themselves of evil? Kant states, “This evil is *radical*, since it corrupts the grounds of all maxims; as natural propensity, it is also not to be *extirpated* through human forces” (6:37). Since humans have a propensity to evil, this propensity can never be exterminated by their own hands. Mankind’s propensity to evil will always linger in him like a disease; it will take hold of him, guide him, and ultimately corrupt his choices. Section four of the first chapter in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, seeks the origin of the disease diagnosed by Kant. Kant attempts to explain the origin of radical evil by way of “*time*,” and by way of “*reason*” (6:39). In both cases, he concludes that the origin of evil will forever remain inexplicable.

In section four of the first chapter in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, “Concerning the Origin of Evil in Human Nature,” Kant investigates the origin of evil by way of “*time*” and by way of “*reason*” (6:39). Evil’s origin according to its occurrence in “*time*” must be traced back to its occurrence with the “first parents” (6:40). What Kant means by “first parents” is the scriptural version of Adam and Eve. In the doctrine of original sin, evil is represented as a “*spirit* of an originally more sublime destiny” and not “within the human being” at the beginning of time (6:44). Adam and Eve were in a state of “innocence” at the beginning of time (6:43) Evil must have then been a propensity that they brought upon themselves. In evil’s origin according to “*reason*,” Kant looks into the way a human makes a choice. Through rationalization, a human can elevate selfish incentives and downgrade the moral law. Kant argues that the human race has a predisposition to the good because they were born with “personality,” or the moral law, and

that evil is a propensity that the human race brought upon themselves (6:43). In both cases, scripture's version and reason's version, evil remains inexplicable to the human race, but both express this incomprehensibility in the same way.

An origin of evil by way of time will trace evil back to its first occurrence in time. Scripture suggests that time begins with Adam and Eve. According to scripture, Adam and Eve are the origin of evil because they gave into temptation (their selfish desires), and as a result the human race is also afflicted. Kant explains that it is "inappropriate" to imagine an "*inheritance*" of evil by the first parents by quoting the Roman poet Ovid "*genus et proavos et quos non fecimus ipsi, vix ex nostra puto*" (6:40). This roughly translates into "what we have not done, we cannot call our own." Ovid says this with regards to the good. The good that has been committed by others is not a good committed by you. Kant applies this saying to moral evil. The evil that has been committed by the first parents is not an evil committed by you. Kant argues that the human race continues to choose this same evil (giving into selfish desire) by choice. They continue to give into temptation because they are frail, impure, and depraved despite Adam and Eve's original collapse. Scripture also expresses the origin of evil in the serpent that deceived Adam and Eve. Kant argues, "for whence the evil in that spirit?" (6:44). How did this evil come to be? Where did the serpent come from? These questions will forever remain unanswerable. Scripture, however, does express that Adam and Eve "brought evil upon themselves" through sin.

Adam and Eve sinned by disobeying the divine command (the word of God). Kant argues that they chose to commit evil because they, like the rest of the human race, "looked about yet for other incentives [...] and thereupon to rationalize downgrading his obedience to the command [divine command] to the status of conditional obedience (under the principle of self-

love)” (6:42). Adam and Eve looked about for other incentives; in doing so, they subjugated the divine command of God. They had a predisposition to “innocence,” yet they chose to bring evil upon themselves by downgrading their obedience to God’s command (6:42). The rest of the human race acts in the same way. They have the moral law predisposed in them, yet they downgrade their responsibility towards the moral law by elevating selfish imperatives.

An origin of evil according to reason takes into account evil’s “*being*” (Kant 6:39). Evil’s “*being*” can only be revealed by the way a human makes a choice. A “rational origin” considers the way in which a human organizes incentives into his/her maxim (6:43). While the moral law may be involved as an incentive, Kant argues that it should actually be the only incentive a human needs in order to act, but a combination of the human race’s three predispositions (animality, humanity, and personality) and the three propensities (frailty, impurity, and perversity) makes it virtually impossible for humans to act with the moral law as their only incentive. Kant argues that radical evil does not originate from “the limitations of our nature” because that would suggest that evil was “imputed” to us (6:43); it is not “imputed,” he reasons, humans have “adopted it” (6:43). Evil is then represented as something outside the human being, but that the human being has adopted. Mankind must have “made himself” evil by adopting evil into his maxims (Kant 6:44). Once this evil is adopted, mankind cannot “*extirpate*” himself of it (6:37).

In section one of the first chapter in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, “Concerning the Original Predisposition to the Good in Human Nature,” Kant argues, under the predisposition of personality, that the human race should be “*responsible*” towards the moral law because they have a duty towards it (6:28). In section two, “Concerning the Propensity to Evil in Human Nature,” Kant argues that the human race does not act on their duty. The human race’s

three evil propensities of frailty, impurity, and depravity makes them irresponsible to their duty by motivating them to act against it (6:29). In section three, “The Human Being is by Nature Evil,” Kant argues that the human race is irresponsible to the moral law because they favor selfish desires either by deliberately making selfish incentives “stronger” than the moral law, or by deceiving themselves into believing that they abide by the moral law when they are actually led by immoral incentives. Finally, in the fourth section, “Concerning the Origin of Evil in Human Nature,” Kant reveals that evil has no historical origin. Instead, in some timeless immemorial act the human race chose to adopt evil making them “responsible” for their “irresponsibility” towards the moral law. According to all of Kant’s arguments mentioned in the first chapter of *Religion*, radical evil is the choice to elevate selfish incentives over the moral law. Humanity’s moral/spiritual mind is subjugated, and their body and all of its inclinations to desire is made “king.” How then can the human race become “good or better” in a moral sense (6:44)? Samuel Taylor Coleridge believes he has the solution to Kant’s moral dilemma. In *Aids to Reflection*, Coleridge argues that, for the most part, the human race is irresponsible to their duty towards the moral law. In this sense, the human race’s spiritual mind is “not awake” because they do not engage with the moral law. Humanity should strive to be “responsible” towards the moral law because it is predisposed in them; they did not “adopt” it like they “adopted” evil. For Coleridge, humanity should actively engage with their spiritual mind and temper their responsibility with Reason by reflecting on Christian truths. In doing so, they can safeguard themselves against evil by elevating their spiritual natures, the realm of morality and of “pure practical reason,” above their physical natures, or the realm of the body (Engelhardt 317).

CHAPTER TWO

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE'S RESOLUTION

Written in 1798, just five years after Immanuel Kant's *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (1793), Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* was probably not informed by Kant's moral philosophy; however, it does anticipate Coleridge's own philosophical stance. In *Aids to Reflection* (1825), Coleridge's philosophical work, Coleridge "follows the thread of the argument of Kant's *Religion*" (Shaffer 200), and he creates a Christian resolution to Kant's moral dilemma of the radical evil in the human race; Coleridge suggests that when humanity becomes reflecting on their spiritual natures, they effectively safeguard themselves from sin. In *Aids*, Coleridge borrows heavily from Kantian moral philosophy: Coleridge makes a contrast between Reason, which is related to what Kant calls mankind's spiritual nature, and Understanding, which is related to what Kant calls mankind's sensuous nature; Coleridge explains that the human race subjugates Reason to the Understanding just like Kant explains that the human race subjugates the moral law to selfish incentives; Coleridge explains that the subjugation of Reason to the Understanding is a rational account of original sin just like Kant explains that the elevation of selfish incentives above the moral law is a rational account of original sin; and Coleridge stresses the importance of a responsible will if humanity is to become better in the moral sense just like Kant explains that the human race has a duty towards the moral law. In *Aids*, Coleridge's objective is to vindicate the Christian religion from a rational point of view, so it shares many of its ideas with Kant's *Religion*, where Kant seeks to establish that some religions have rational cores. Coleridge's *Rime* is an early poetical anticipation of his philosophical stance, and it is also an anticipation of his resolution to the Kantian dilemma of the radical evil of the human race.

Before diving into an analysis of *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* through a Kantian lens, an overview of *Rime's* plot is necessary for perspective. *Rime* begins with the character of the Ancient Mariner entering a wedding feast. The Mariner then approaches a wedding-guest and begins to tell his tale. The Mariner tells the wedding-guest that his ship sailed southward to escape a "STORM-BLAST" (41), and that the ship ended up in the land of ice and snow as a result. Ice surrounded the ship making it difficult for the ship to travel until "At length did cross an Albatross" (63). The Mariner and the rest of his crewmates "As if it had been a Christian soul, / We hailed it in God's name" (65-6) because "the ice did split with a thunder-fit; / the helmsman steered us through! / And a good south wind sprung up behind" (69-71). The albatross is a bird of good omen; however, the Ancient Mariner "with [his] cross-bow" (81) shoots the albatross. The act of shooting and killing the albatross is evil. Coleridge writes:

And I had done a hellish thing,
 And it would work' em woe:
 For all averred, I had killed the bird
 That made the breeze to blow.
 Ah wretch! Said they, the bird to slay,
 That made the breeze to blow! (91-6)

The Ancient Mariner recognizes that he had committed a hellish thing, and the supernatural spirit entities in the poem will punish the Ancient Mariner for his transgression against the albatross that represented Christian soul.

The Polar spirit punishes the Ancient Mariner by stopping the wind. Coleridge writes, "Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down" (107). Coleridge also writes, "All in a hot and copper sky, / The bloody-Sun, at noon, / Right up above the mast did stand" (111-13).

Furthermore, Coleridge adds, “The water, like witch’s oils, / Burnt green, and blue and white (129-130), and that the Ancient Mariner and his crew “had been choked with soot” (138).

Symbolic of hell, the Ancient Mariner’s punishment begins to grow more severe. The albatross was hung around the Mariner’s neck, and after a time the Ancient Mariner beheld “a something in the sky” (148). As it came closer, the Ancient Mariner and his crew become overjoyed, but horror soon followed. A skeleton of a ship “with a broad and burning face” (180) appears.

Aboard the ship are “The Night-mare LIFE-IN-DEATH” (193) and her crewmate “Death” (189). They play a game of dice, and Death wins the crew; Life-in-Death wins the Ancient Mariner.

Coleridge writes:

Four times fifty living men,
 (And I heard nor sigh nor groan)
 With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
 They dropped down one by one

 The souls did from their bodies fly,-
 They fled to bliss or woe!
 And every soul, it passed me by,
 Like the whizz of my cross-bow! (216-23)

Death claims the lives of the Mariner’s crew, but Life-in-Death claims the Mariner’s soul. The Ancient Mariner had thought of the life of his crew as “beautiful” (236), but now they are all dead. He likens himself to the “thousand slimy things” (238) of the sea because they “lived on” (239) and so did he, but he was ashamed of this fact. The Mariner then begins to reflect on what just happened: he looks upon the sea, he looks at the corpses of his crew, and he finally looks

upon heaven and tries to pray. Coleridge writes, “I closed my [the Ancient Mariner’s] lids, and kept them close (248). Prayer, however, was not enough to ease the agony in Mariner’s soul.

He continued like this for seven days and nights until he finally changed the way he looked at life. He used to be ashamed of his similarities with the creatures of the sea because he and they lived on while his crew did not; however, when the moon illuminates the creatures of the sea the Mariner changes his outlook. Coleridge writes:

O happy living things! No tongue

Their beauty might declare:

A spring of love gushed from my heart,

And I blessed them unaware:

Sure my kind saint took pity on me,

And I blessed them unaware. (282-87)

In this moment of blessing and prayer, the Mariner learns to love, and this is the beginning of his redemption. Coleridge writes, “The self-same moment I could pray; / And from my neck so free / The Albatross fell off, and sank” (288-90). When love reaches the Mariner’s heart through blessing and prayer, his suffering now becomes self-inflicted penance rather than a punishment. The Mariner’s soul begins a purification process; Coleridge writes, “Oh sleep! It is a gentle thing” (292), and he explains further, “she [the holy Mother] sent the gentle sleep from Heaven, / that slid into my soul (295-6). The Mariner’s soul is put to sleep and is then awoken by the rain in a sort of re-birthing/purifying manner. The Mariner’s crew comes back to life, “the dead men gave a groan” (330), and the ship continues on towards land; however, it moves without the force of the wind. The Polar spirit seems to be guiding the ship towards land. As the ship is traveling, the Ancient Mariner “heard the sky-lark sing” (359) and its “sweet jargonings” (362) sounds like

“an angel’s song” (365). The Mariner is now able to recognize that there is beauty in the birds of the sea; however, the Polar spirit is vengeful. Two nameless spirits discuss the evil action committed by the Mariner, and one spirit adds:

The spirit [Northern spirit] who bideth by himself
 In the land of the mist and snow,
 He loved the bird [the albatross] that loved the man
 Who shot him with the bow. (402-5)

The second nameless spirit responds, “The man [the Ancient Mariner] hath penance done, / And penance more will do” (408-9). The Mariner still owes penance, his soul will burn in agony until his tale is told. He only feels relieved when his tale is told to another.

In a side note next to line 425, Coleridge mentions, “The Mariner hath been cast into a trance; for the angelic power causeth the vessel to drive northward faster than human life could endure” (99). The Mariner is put into a trance and the ship moves northward towards land so that he can act on his new penance. Once the Mariner’s trance is broken, he awakes to find his native country in sight, and the souls of his dead crewmates turn into a “seraph-band” (492) and ascend to heaven; however, before he can reach land his ship begins to sink. He is saved by a passing ship, on board a pilot, the pilot’s son, and the Hermit of the Wood. The Ancient Mariner asks the Hermit to “shrieve” (574) him, but the only way for the Mariner to be free of his “woful agony” (579) is to travel the land and tell his tale. Coleridge writes, “And till my ghastly tale is told, / This heart within me burns” (584-85). The Mariner telling his tale to the wedding-guest is part of his penance, and the Mariner leaves the wedding-guest with words of wisdom:

He prayeth best, who loveth best
 All things both great and small;

For the dear God who loveth us,
 He made and loveth all. (614-17)

The Mariner preaches these words of wisdom in hopes that the wedding-guest does not commit the same error that he has made.

In context with *Aids to Reflection*, Coleridge mentions, “Few [men] are so obdurate, few have sufficient strength of character, to be able to draw forth an evil tendency or immoral practice into distinct consciousness” (1008). The majority of the human race is unable to draw forth immoral practices into distinct consciousness because they do not constantly reflect on their spiritual natures, and as a result they may commit an evil action for no reason. Coleridge further asserts that “it is the being made fully aware of the diversity of Reason and Understanding” that the human race can interpret the mysteries of Christian faith, and they can also become reflecting on their spiritual natures (1106). In this sense, the being made fully aware of the diversity between Reason and Understanding helps mankind strengthen his moral character and safeguards him from immoral practices. Understanding is “bound over to the service of animal nature [...] dependent on the senses” (1126). Empirically speaking, Understanding is related to an *a posteriori* type knowledge that focuses on mankind’s sensuous nature. Mankind’s sensuous nature, however, suffers from evil propensities according to Kant. In this sense, Coleridge explains that Understanding is not an intellect of “natural clearness” (1092). Human rationality is no longer pure because it is chained to evil propensities that elevate sensuous incentives above the command of God. Reason belongs to the spiritual, moral, and supernatural realms. Reason “is a direct aspect of Truth, an inward Beholding, having a similar relation to the Intelligible or Spiritual, as SENSE has to the Material or Phenomenal” (1111). Reason is the human race’s spiritual mind and their respect for God. To Coleridge, Reason always abides by the moral law, it

is free from the clouding nature of sensuous desires, and it is an intellect of “natural clearness” (1092). Coleridge’s contrast between Understanding and Reason borrows heavily from the Kantian contrast between sensuous desire and spiritual morality.

In *Religion*, Kant contrasts the sensuous with the spiritual. Mankind’s sensuous nature may cause him to elevate selfish incentives over the moral law. Mankind’s spiritual nature respects the moral law and does not subjugate it to selfish desires. Kant argues, however, that radical evil is born from the struggle between a human’s sensuous nature and their spiritual morality because humanity is neither animal nor angel. Kant writes that humans are “conscious of the moral law and yet [have] incorporated into [their] maxim the (occasional) deviation from it” (6:32). The human race is always conscious of the moral law because they have a spiritual nature, but they do not always act on their duty towards it because they also have a sensuous nature. Humans may choose to elevate selfish incentives over the moral law when they make a choice. When the human race chooses to elevate selfish imperatives over the moral law, they also betray their spiritual morality.

For Coleridge, the majority of the human race “do not think at all” in the spiritual sense (*Aids* 1093). As a result, they are ignorant of the spiritual realm and ignorant of their own depravity. The human race subjugates Reason to the Understanding like they subjugate the moral law to selfish incentives. In this sense, the human race is radically evil. Humanity, however, can remedy this dilemma through reflective thinking. For Coleridge, reflective thinking results in self-knowledge. Coleridge writes, “it becomes a duty of conscience to form the mind to a habit of distinct consciousness. An unreflecting Christian walks in twilight among snares and pitfalls! He entreats the heavenly father not to lead him into temptation, and yet places himself on the very edge of it” (1008). Every Christian has a moral duty to reflect and discover “religious truth”

for themselves. An unreflecting Christian is irresponsible to Reason because he/she willingly allows himself/herself to remain by the “pitfalls” by elevating Understanding over Reason. On the other hand, a reflecting Christian develops a stronger awareness of the distinction between Reason and Understanding, they become aware that they subjugate Reason to the Understanding, and they become aware of the evil that lies in their hearts. Once a reflecting Christian becomes aware of his/her moral state they can make a change for the better. Furthermore, Coleridge writes, “faith is the duty of a faithful subject to a rightful governor” (1325). The faithful subject is humanity, and the rightful governor is Reason. Religious reflection strengthens faith because it awakens humanity’s spiritual mind and makes them responsible to Reason. Through Reason, humans become aware of the existence of their spiritual nature, of the existence of God’s dominion over man, and of the evil that deters them from good. In this sense, Reason with a capital “R” is synonymous with spirit. Coleridge, however, mentions that the human race “[does] not think at all” in the spiritual sense (*Aids* 1093), and this stems from Coleridge’s reception to original sin.

In many ways, Coleridge’s reception to original sin is very Kantian. Whereas most would believe that original sin is the inheritance of evil from Adam and Eve, Coleridge redefines this definition while adhering to Kant’s rational view of original sin. For example, Coleridge writes that original sin is “not the origin of Evil, not the chronology of sin, or the chronicles of the original sinner, but Sin originant, underived from without, and no passive link in the adamantine chain of Effects, each of which is in its turn an instrument of Causation, but no one of them a Cause” (*Aids* 1125). To Coleridge, original sin is not the origin of evil, it should not be seen as the chronology of sin, and it should not be seen as the chronicle of Adam and Eve. As a matter of fact, Coleridge rejects “the monstrous fiction of Hereditary Sin” (1146) just like Kant rejects it.

Kant mentions that it is “inappropriate” to imagine an “*inheritance*” of evil by the first parents (*Religion* 6:40). What Coleridge does suggest, however, is that original sin is the subordination of Reason to the Understanding; the subjugation of the spirit to the sensuous. This subjugation is born from an irresponsible human will. Coleridge writes that an irresponsible human will is “the ground, condition, and common Cause of all Sins” (*Aids* 1129). Similarly, Kant writes that mankind “[downgrades] his obedience to the command [moral law] to the status of the merely conditional obedience as a means (under the principle of self-love), until, finally, the preponderance of the sensory inducements over the incentive of the law [moral law] was incorporated into the maxim of action, and thus sin came to be” (*Religion* 6:42). Humanity’s irresponsibility to their duty towards the moral law and their upgrading of the incentives of self-love above it create sin; it is also the definition of radical evil. In this sense, when Coleridge states that mankind “[does] not think at all” (*Aids* 1093) in the spiritual sense, he is referring to mankind’s radically evil nature; the human race’s ability to elevate the Understanding over Reason.

Coleridge also believes that there is a universal “law of conscience” that dictates “the good” to the human race in any given situation (*Aids* 1066). In the law of conscience also lies the existence of the human will. The human will may be “responsible” towards the absolute good (God) by constantly reflecting and allowing Reason into the conscience, or it may act contrary to the absolute good either by favoring desire or by not allowing Reason into the conscience (1066). For Coleridge, Reason tempers the human will like a hunter aims his bow. According to Coleridge’s metaphor of the hunter, there is always a proper object to aim at, and Reason guides the hunter’s aim towards the “ultimate good” (1017). The hunter, however, may choose to aim at other objects because he/she is given the power of choice. He/she can choose to be unreflecting

and “unthinking,” or he/she can choose to intentionally shoot an object that he/she should not. The fact that the human will may or may not follow the command of God also proves that radical evil exists within human nature. Similarly, according to Kant’s argument concerning the human race’s predisposition to personality, there exists a universal moral law. Humans are susceptible to “respect” the moral law, but there exists the possibility for humans to act antagonistically towards the moral law when their will is not responsible (*Religion* 6:27). Antagonizing the moral law by directly opposing it in favor of sensuous incentives, or by being ignorant and thereby allowing a deviation from it into their maxims, is what constitutes the radical evil of the human condition.

As a Romantic deeply influenced by religion, Coleridge uses symbolism as a means of conveying spiritual meaning in an imaginary world, like the one in *Rime*. An Anglican apologist later in his life, Coleridge’s faith in the symbols of the Church of England strengthened over time. The Church of England itself stood as a symbol of divinity; it was not just a mere establishment. To Coleridge, the Church stood as a reminder that the human race has a duty towards intellectual life (Reason). In his book, *On the Constitution of the Church and State* (1830), he argues that the Church should be provided for by the state in order to enrich the intellectual lives of its people. Furthermore, the Church has the potential to open up a sense of “responsibility” in society because it stands as a representation of the dominion of God (qtd. in Allen 90). If God’s presence is seen and felt by society, then their actions are more likely to coincide with the moral law. With this said, Kant also had a deep influence on Coleridge’s reception to Anglicanism. Scholar Gary Dorrien mentions that Coleridge “mediated Kantian idealism to British and American theology” (3). Coleridge seeks a rational vindication of the Christian religion, and he uses Kant’s moral philosophy to justify it; so, there are many

similarities between “Coleridge’s Christian religion” and Kant’s moral philosophy. Coleridge’s personal life was deeply influenced by the symbols of the Church of England, so a Kantian interpretation of *Rime* can be made by deciphering the poem’s characters as symbols that act in accordance with Coleridge’s rational version of the Christian religion found in *Aids to Reflection*.

Coleridge’s and Kant’s moral philosophies are strikingly similar; Coleridge’s intent in *Aids to Reflection* is to establish Christian truths as rational, and Kant’s intent in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* is to establish that religions have rational cores. Coleridge stays within the parameters of Kant’s moral philosophy in *Aids to Reflection*, and he effectively establishes a case for Christianity; his case being, Christianity conceived in accordance with Kant’s moral philosophy can redeem the human race if the human race is willing to allow Reason into their conscience. Coleridge’s *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* seems to anticipate his moral philosophy in *Aids to Reflection*. The Ancient Mariner can be seen as a man who does not reflect on his spiritual nature when he slays a bird that represents a Christian soul for no reason. Coleridge writes in *Rime*, “as if it had been a Christian soul, / We hailed it [the albatross] in God’s name” (65-6). Coleridge later adds, “with my cross-bow / I [The Mariner] shot the albatross” (81-2). In this sense, the Mariner, like the majority of the human race, “[does] not think at all” in the spiritual sense, and his will is not tempered by responsibility towards Reason (*Aids* 1093). The Mariner’s subjugation of Reason to the Understanding results in his unreflecting state, or what Kant calls radical evil, and the Mariner is punished by the supernatural entities in the poem because of it. The Mariner needs to be responsible to Reason, his spiritual nature, so he is subjected to a nightmare voyage by the supernatural spirits in the poem; however, the voyage impacts the Ancient Mariner’s moral character for the better. Coleridge writes in *Rime*:

He prayeth best, who loveth best
 All things both great and small;
 For the dear God who loveth us,
 He made and loveth all. (614-17)

The nightmare forces the Mariner to become aware of his lack of moral character, and to become aware of his inability “to draw forth an evil tendency or immoral practice into distinct consciousness” (*Aids* 1008). The nightmare awakens the Ancient Mariner’s spiritual mind, and the Mariner reflects on the importance of love and prayer. In this sense, the Mariner’s redemption story closely coincides with Coleridge’s resolution, found in *Aids*, to the Kantian dilemma of radical evil.

In *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Coleridge mentions that the albatross came through the fog, and the sailors “As if it had been a Christian soul, / hailed it in God’s name” (65-6). When the albatross flew above them, “The ice did split with a thunder-fit / The helmsman steer’d us through! / And a good south wind sprung up behind” (69-71). Empirically, the albatross’ presence brought fortunate circumstance; the path cleared for the boat to travel freely, the wind caught the sails and sped the boat up, and all seemed to be going smoothly for the sailors. The albatross also brought “the fog and mist,” but the fog and the mist did no harm to the voyage (100). In *Aids to Reflection*, Coleridge creates a distinction between the human realm and the spiritual realm. The human realm is the realm of Understanding, and the spiritual realm is the realm of Reason. The Mariner lives in the realm of Understanding because he is human; however, he should be responsible to the realm of Reason because he also has a spiritual nature. The albatross, a Christian spirit, has done nothing but help the sailors travel through the land of ice and snow. In this sense, the albatross can only bring about the “good,” but the Mariner shoots

it down because he is not responsible to his spiritual nature. If he were responsible to his spiritual nature, Coleridge contends, “that there is a proper object to aim at” (*Aids* 1017). The object is definitely not the albatross because it represents Christian spirit; nevertheless, the Ancient Mariner slays the albatross. For Coleridge, the only way this could have been prevented is by allowing spiritual reflection to act as a guide that helps humanity aim at the proper object. The Mariner could have tempered his will under God’s hammer if he had been more reflecting on his decisions; however, this is not the case.

The Mariner’s will is not tempered by rational reflection upon the spiritual truths of religion, and he betrays his spiritual nature because of it. The fact that the Mariner was completely ignorant of the moral law, because he does not constantly reflect on his spiritual nature and thereby elevates the Understanding over Reason, as he shoots down the albatross fits the Kantian definition of radical evil. In this sense, the Mariner is elevating Understanding, incentives other than the incentive of the moral law in itself, over Reason, the incentive of the moral law in itself, because he failed in his duty towards the moral law. He also creates a discord between himself and spirit by remaining ignorant of the importance of his spiritual nature when making an ethical decision. With this in mind, it would be very difficult for any human to be made aware of their spiritual natures without the help of some supernatural force. For example, the other sailors condemn and praise the Mariner for his evil action. They condemn him for taking the wind away, “Ah Wretch! said they, the bird to slay, / that made the breeze to blow!” (95-6). They also praise him for clearing the fog, “’Twas right, said they, such birds to slay, / That bring the fog and mist” (101-2). They should condemn the Ancient Mariner for destroying a part of the world created by God, but they only condemn him because he took the wind away. Furthermore, despite the crew recognizing the albatross “as if it had been a Christian soul,” (65)

they also praise its death because they empirically believed that the bird's death cleared the fog and mist.

Kant argues that it can be easy to forget what the absolute good is, and that humans can be deceived into thinking that "the good" lies within violence and the slaying of others. In *Religion*, Kant explains, "[Mankind] is evil *by nature*," meaning that humans are evil through their own fault (6:32). Humankind always contains the possibility to be morally good, but they choose to either act on evil deliberately or to let evil happen out of ignorance or deception. When evil is born out of deception, the human race believes that they act in accordance with the moral law because they act on something that they perceive to be virtuous. In *Rime*, the sailors and the Mariner are examples of evil born out of deception and ignorance. When the Mariner slays the albatross he not only offends the animal's natural role in the world, he also offends the divinity the animal represents. The albatross stands as a symbol of spiritual divinity because the sailors hailed it "as if it had been a Christian soul" (Coleridge, *Rime* 65), and this is further strengthened by the fact that the Mariner wore its carcass around his neck like a cross, as Coleridge indicates, "Instead of the cross, the Albatross / About my neck was hung" (*Rime* 141-2). The other sailor's force the Mariner to hang the albatross around his neck as "penance" for causing the wind to stop blowing. They believe that this is a virtuous action. It should have, however, been hung around his neck as a reminder that he killed another living creature for no reason. What this suggests is that the sailors are acting in accordance with the moral law, but they do not abide by the moral law's spirit because they only think about the albatross in the empirical sense. They are unknowingly repressing their spirit due to their "unthinking" spiritual natures. From this perspective, the Mariner and the sailors are complete failures to their spiritual natures; however, the truly terrifying thing about their failure is the ease with which they failed and the potential in

all humans to fail in the same way. To the sailors, the albatross' death "was a good thing" because the fog and mist cleared. In this sense, death is synonymous with good. It was also a "bad thing" because the wind stopped blowing. It should have, however, been a "bad thing" because the bird died. The sailors, like the Mariner, betrayed their duty towards the moral law by creating a discord between themselves and spirit because they are "unreflecting" on their spiritual natures (Coleridge, *Aids* 1093).

The discord between mankind's sensuous nature and spiritual nature is an important Kantian aspect to consider in *Rime*. As a contrast to *Rime*, Coleridge's poem, "The Eolian Harp" (1796), presents a world of spiritual harmony. Heavy symbolism is used in this poem, and its true meaning can be discovered by religious interpretation. Coleridge writes:

A light in sound, a sound-like power in light,
 Rhythm in all thought, and joyance every where-
 Methinks, it should have been impossible
 Not to love all things in a world so fill'd. (28-31)

The harp stands as a symbol of peace and order in the natural world. Its sounds "becomes its soul" and creates a peaceful light that makes it impossible to hate anything (27). The harp's music is especially illuminated in scenes of nature. The harp's sounds symbolize "gentle gales" (21) and its melodies symbolize the "birds of paradise" (23). The harp is a symbol for things of the sublime nature. The harp exists in an empirical sense, but it also serves as a transport to a spiritual experience that the narrator can reflect upon.

"The Eolian Harp" shows that Coleridge ascribes qualities that are difficult to explain in plain writing by poetizing a simple object and making it more than it appears to be. The harp has

a soul of its own and its soul creates a harmony between humanity and spirituality. This harmony leads to the revelation of the divine. Coleridge writes:

The Incomprehensible! Save when with awe
I praise him [God], and with Faith that inly *feels*;
Who with his saving mercies healed me,
A sinful and most miserable man.” (59-62)

When humanity and spirituality unite behind the sounds of the harp that led them to this spiritual experience, peace fills the land. Humanity holds God in “awe” like they should respect the moral law, they become aware of their “sinful” nature, and they want to be redeemed. Through the harp, humanity becomes reflecting, and they become aware of the evil in their hearts. On the other hand, what happens when there is a disharmony between man and spirit? *Rime* seems to be answering this question, and the answer involves evil and terror. In *Rime*, Coleridge is attempting to reveal “the dark underside of human nature” (Davidson 88). *Rime* anticipates Coleridge’s moral philosophy in *Aids to Reflection*, and in *Aids*, humanity is radically evil because they do not reflect on their spiritual natures; however, they would much rather live in ignorance of their moral state. This ignorance is exactly what the Mariner is punished for in *Rime*. This leaves the question: How can the Mariner, a symbol for the radical evil in the human race, set himself on the track towards goodness? Reflection is needed, but how does one reflect?

The Mariner has failed in his duty to his spiritual mind, and he cannot change what he is by his own hands. The Mariner has made himself morally evil, he is ignorant of religious good, and he is responsible for the path that he chose. Despite the radical evil in his constitution, God has given him free choice to choose the good. He can choose to be reflective or he can choose to be ignorant to his spiritual mind. Similarly, Kant writes in *Religion*, “The human being must

make or have made himself into whatever he is or should become in a moral sense, good or evil” (6:44). Humankind constantly chooses against what is morally good because they are ignorant, led by desire, and innately corrupt. They do, however, have a predisposition to the good. The good is always a possibility for humanity, but they choose to act against it. The important take away from Kant’s explanation is “choice.” Humans choose to do evil. If humanity is to break away from evil, they would need a supernatural force to remind them of their duty towards their spiritual morality. Kant explains that “supernatural cooperation” is needed to break the chain of evil, and this cooperation may consist of “the diminution of obstacles” or of “positive assistance” (6:44). In *Aids to Reflection*, Coleridge writes, “I assert that there is such a thing as human happiness, as *summum bonum*, or ultimate good [the moral law]. What this is, the bible alone shows clearly and certainly, and points out the way that leads to the attainment of it” (1017). For Coleridge, the spiritual experience that comes from reading and reflecting on the moral lessons found in the bible, and in the conscience, awakens humanity’s responsibility to Reason and leads them to the “attainment” of the ultimate good. The redemption story of Paul in Acts 9:1-22 is the same type of redemption story found in *Rime*.

In the Book of Acts, “He [Paul] fell to the ground and heard a voice saying ‘Paul! Paul! Why are you persecuting me? (9.4)’ Furthermore, “The men with Paul stood speechless with surprise, for they heard the sound of someone’s voice” (9.7). The voice of God then commands Paul to go to Damascus where Paul is without water, food, and sight for three days. Paul must tell others that he had been wrong in persecuting God and God’s believers. The others are then “amazed” that a man who “so bitterly persecuted Jesus’ followers” now preaches his story about how he has sided with Jesus’ believers (9.21). Preaching is what ultimately redeems Paul for his sins committed against the divine. Preaching gave Paul an aura of grace. Jesus’ voice called out

to Paul and commanded him to tell his story, to preach divine laws, and to share his wisdom with others so that they would not commit the same error. Coleridge is seemingly adapting Paul's redemption story to fit his philosophical agenda in *Rime* that seeks to unify mankind, morality, and spirituality.

In *Rime*, the Mariner is punished by the supernatural spirits in the poem like Paul is punished by God. Whereas the Mariner stands as a symbol of the radical innate evil in human nature, the spirits in the poem stand as symbols of Reason. The Northern Polar spirit punishes the Mariner by denying him water and food. Coleridge writes, "Water, water everywhere / Nor any drop to drink" (*Rime* 121-2). Coleridge also writes, "With throats unslaked, with black lips baked, / We could not laugh nor wail" (*Rime* 157-8). Surrounded by undrinkable ocean water, the Mariner and his fellow sailors are left so parched that they cannot speak, the boat has stopped moving, and they are all stranded in the middle of the ocean. They are being punished for persecuting the Christian spirit that the albatross represented just like Paul is punished for persecuting God's believers. The sailors are punished because they believe that there is some amount of good achieved in the slaying of the albatross. Coleridge writes, "Twas right, said they, such birds to slay, / That bring the fog and mist" (101-2). The Mariner is also being punished because he was the one that killed the albatross. After his ghastly boat ride is over, the Mariner goes on to warn others of the evil in their hearts like Paul goes on to warn others of the consequences of persecuting God's believers. In this sense, *Rime* is an adaptation of Paul's redemption story in Acts. Admittedly, Coleridge seems to struggle with the way redemption is carried out through biblical means. Perhaps it was too harsh? Should retribution be nightmarish? *Rime* had been revised several times each with a seemingly changing stance on redemption. Scholar Russell M. Hillier writes, "Coleridge shifted his position of faith from that of a Unitarian

to a Broad Church Anglican, and, in the Catholic worldview of the ballad [*Rime*] itself” (9). Coleridge struggles with the way God redeems mankind because he shifts his position of faith during the writing and re-writing of *Rime*; however, this does not change the fact that Coleridge credits Christian spiritual reflection as a method of “bettering” human morals.

The poem’s nightmarish qualities leads to its dramatic effect, but the symbolism that these nightmarish qualities reveal is what is important when figuring out the Kantian echoes in *Rime*. One of the supernatural entities that really encompasses a Kantian aspect is the spirit Life-in-Death. She symbolizes the life of the spirit, and the death of the body. Since she wins the Mariner’s soul in a game of dice, the Mariner is subjected to a metaphysical nightmare that reawakens his spirit. Coleridge writes:

The naked hulk alongside came,
And the twain were casting dice;
‘The game is done! I’ve won! I’ve won!’
Quoth she, and whistles thrice. (195-200)

Death and Life-in-Death play a game of dice. Death claims the lives of all the Mariner’s crewmates, and Life-in-Death claims the Mariner for herself. The Mariner’s soul is forced to witness the atrocity of his crewmates’ death. By punishing the Mariner and subjecting him to this nightmare, the Mariner realizes the quality of his evil action; the slaying of the albatross.

Coleridge writes:

Four times fifty living men
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan),
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
They dropped down one by one.

The souls did from their bodies fly-
 They fled to bliss or woe!
 And every soul, it passed me by
 Like the whizz of my cross-bow!' (215-22)

The nightmare forces the Mariner to recognize the quality of his evil action by demonstrating that the taking of life is a grievous experience. The Mariner can see the souls of his dead crewmates fly from their bodies like the whizz of his cross-bow, but he also notices that the bodies of his crewmates lay in a perpetual state of dying when they are without their spirits. The crew members neither “rot nor reek,” (254) they lay on the ground with their eyes staring up at the Mariner, they are “death-in-life.” The Ancient Mariner realizes that he is not actually living when he does not reflect on his spiritual nature. To Kant and Coleridge, humanity is supposed to encompass two things: the physical and the spiritual. The Mariner, however, is irresponsible to his spiritual nature. Like the corpses of his crewmates, the Mariner is without spirit. The Mariner’s spiritual mind is not awake, and he may have never realized this without the intervention of the supernatural spirits in the poem. The nightmare’s fatal demonstration is a spiritual experience that serves to shock the Mariner out of his unreflective state; however, this is only the beginning of the Mariner’s journey towards becoming good or better in the moral sense.

The Mariner reflects on the lives of his crewmates, and he concludes that his men were “beautiful” creatures while they were living (*Rime* 236). This revelation is only brought about after his nightmare, and it reveals a romantic ontological “truth” that he would have never been able to reach without the aid of the spirits. The Mariner describes his men as “beautiful”

creatures, and he realizes that there is a beautiful quality in life, and that is love. The Ancient Mariner loved his crewmates, he was just unaware of it while they were living. Coleridge writes:

O, happy living things! No tongue
 Their beauty might declare:
 A spring of love gushed from my heart,
 And I blessed them unaware:
 Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
 And I blessed them unaware. (282-87)

The Ancient Mariner blesses the water snakes after reflecting on their beauty when they are illuminated by the moonlight, and he later learns that he should love “all things both great and small” (614). At this moment of blessing, the albatross that was hung around the Mariner’s neck “falls like lead into the sea,” and blends in with the trails of light that the sea-snakes created (290). It also begins to rain and the Mariner is allowed to drink, his men rise from the deck of the ship, and the ship moves onward. Perhaps if he had loved and blessed the albatross prior to its death by his hands, he wouldn’t have had to suffer. Loving others, as opposed to self-love, is something that the Mariner comes to after he reflects and prays, and it is the first step towards the Mariner’s becoming good or better in the moral sense. Coleridge’s poem “Love’s Apparition and Evanishment” (1834) shares many similarities with the Mariner’s struggle. In “Love’s Apparition and Evanishment,” Coleridge presents his readers with an image of “hope.” Hope is described as a woman, “Drest as a bridesmaid, but all pale and cold” (19). Hope lies dead at Coleridge’s narrator’s feet. Then enters “love.” Like “hope,” “love” is described as “a sylph in bridal trim” (22). Love kisses the lips of hope and “woke [hope] just enough of life in death” (27). Without love, the Mariner cannot dream of hope for redemption. He experiences a

metaphysical nightmare, that serves as a spiritual experience, and what is revealed to him is that loving all creatures is an important part of personhood, it creates harmony between mankind and their spiritual natures, and it is an important part of Reason; however, hope is only revived so that she can “die anew” (Coleridge, “Love’s Apparition and Evanishment” 28).

When the Mariner learns to love God’s creatures, like he should have loved the albatross, he is given hope. He learned that by subjugating Reason, his spiritual nature, to the Understanding, his sensuous nature, he becomes “unreflecting,” and he persecutes his own spirit; however, he has earned some retribution when he blesses and loves the sea-snakes. This retribution is short lived. Two unnamed spirits converse with one another on the topic of the Mariner’s penance. The first nameless spirit claims:

“‘Is it he?’ quoth one, ‘Is this the man?

By him who dies on cross,

With his cruel bow he laid full low

The harmless Albatross.” (398-401)

The second spirit responds, “The man hath penance done, / And penance more will do” (408-9).

The Mariner’s spiritual experience is over. He has been subjected to a nightmare, and he learned that love is an important part of humanity’s spiritual nature. His ship is moving towards land, and he must now apply what he has learned. The Mariner must preach this lesson to others. Coleridge writes:

Since then, at an uncertain hour,

That agony returns:

And till my ghastly tale is told.

This heart within me burns.” (582-5)

The Mariner is constantly reminded of the nightmare that he suffered through, and the only way to ease his heart is to preach his ghastly tale. In doing so, he can make others aware of the distinction between Understanding and Reason, he can awaken their spiritual natures, and he can warn others of the radical evil inherent in their hearts.

The Mariner must tell his tale to preach his message of love in hopes that others become aware of the evil in their hearts, but how are others supposed to believe in his story? In a side note in the 1798 version of *Rime*, Coleridge writes that the Mariner tells his story “by his own example, love and reverence to all things that God made and loveth” (24), but with the addition of the spirits, the living corpses of his crewmates, and the supernatural, how are others supposed to believe and trust in his wisdom? Scholar Leslie Brisman mentions that “Coleridge borrows the term *Reason* from Kant, but all his own in association with the Holy Spirit over and against the Understanding and the ‘natural’ faculties of the mind” (125). Reason, for Kant, is both logical and transcendental. It is logical in that it is an arbiter of understanding empirical truths (*a posteriori*). Reason is also transcendental in that it can create meaning without an empirical source (*a priori*); intelligible experiences can be born from within the human being through reflection. In *Aids*, Coleridge explains that Reason is an “inward Beholding” as opposed to an empirical observation (1111). In this sense, the Mariner’s tale is to be taken as transcendental Reason. The Mariner’s tale is empirically impossible to believe in, but there are lessons and morals in it that are rational if the tale is reflected upon.

Coleridge is asking those who listen to the Mariner’s tale to take a “leap of faith” and accept the Mariner’s tale because it reflects Christian reality. In his tale, the Mariner reveals that he became aware of the radical evil in his constitution, he learned that he must love all creatures in order to combat this evil, and he learned that he should be responsible to his spiritual morality

so that he can safeguard himself from sin. Through this spiritual experience, the Mariner came out a wiser man and others can learn from him. In this sense, the Mariner is offering a very personal exegesis of Christian guilt, remorse, penance, and punishment. The wedding-guest is one that accepts the Mariner's tale, and he therefore stands as a symbol for a hopeful future. The Mariner preaches his tale as if it were scripture, and those who listen to him seem transfixed on his words. Coleridge writes, "He [wedding-guest] went like one that hath been stunned" after the Mariner finishes his tale (*Rime* 622). The wedding-guest reflects on the Mariner's tale, and is stunned to find "truth" in the Mariner's words. Coleridge is definitely suggesting that the spiritual growth involved in reflection is a method to solving Kant's problem of the innate radical evil in the human race; however, there is more to it than that.

Coleridge's complete answer to Kant's diagnoses of radical evil in the human race lies within a Christian prayer solution. This is a product of Coleridge's era and a product of his faith. In Coleridge's "Gutch Notebook," he describes prayer as a process in which progression is measured in five stages. The first stage is calamity; without some sort of guidance in life the human race cries out to the "Invisible" to help them. The second is solitude; when humans are not one with the natures within them (spiritual and physical) they are left alone in the world. The third is repentance; solitude creates repentance in that humans have chosen to be alone. Through this comes the recognition that they need supernatural help. The fourth is ardent prayer; the human race grows impassioned with moral feeling after they have recognized that they made themselves what they are. The fifth is self-annihilation; the human race recognizes that they are guilty of sin and must be ready and willing to repent by whatever means necessary (Ware 303). The Mariner follows each of these steps: He kills the albatross and brings about calamity, his crewmates die and he is left alone, he feels guilty because he chose this fate for himself, he is

then redeemed when he blesses the water snakes, he grows impassioned and discovers the absolute beauty of the creatures illuminated by the moonlight, and finally he is forced to walk the land and tell his story in order to ease his agony. The five stages of prayer are reflected by the Mariner, and they are involved in Coleridge's resolution to Kant's dilemma of radical evil.

The wedding-guest takes the Mariner's tale, believes in it, and comes out "A sadder and wiser man" (*Rime* 623). The Mariner left the wedding-guest with some choice words. Coleridge writes:

He prayeth best, who loveth best
 All things both great and small:
 For the dear God who loveth us,
 He made and loveth all." (614-17)

The Mariner tells his tale to the wedding-guest and reveals Coleridge's Christian resolution to the dilemma of the radical evil in the human race. First, the ability to love all creatures both great and small is absolutely needed in order for mankind to become better in the moral sense. This echoes the Kantian argument on mankind's predisposition to the moral law. The moral law is "the ultimate action guiding principle" (Uleman 1). When the human race is stuck at an ethical crossroads, the moral law "tells" them what matters most and "how to act accordingly" (Uleman 1). Mankind has a predisposition to the moral law, and he should respect the moral law even if it comes at the expense of his own happiness; he should love the ultimate good. Second, reflection is needed to temper the human race's will into becoming responsible to their spiritual natures. This echoes the Kantian argument on the responsible will. A responsible will respects the dominion of the moral law (*Religion* 6:26). Finally, through prayer, humankind is able to constantly remind themselves that they have a duty to their spiritual natures. In this sense,

Reason is no longer subjugated to the Understanding because humanity is constantly engaged with their spiritual morality. Coleridge recognizes that humans derive pleasure from the things that they love, like the incentives of selfish desire, so by learning to “love” the absolute good, they become “morally good” human beings (Kant, *Religion* 6:24). Whereas Kant claims that humans often deviate from the moral law because they have three propensities that incentive selfish desire above it (frailty, impurity, and depravity), Coleridge claims that these propensities can be combatted by prayer, reflection, and loving others. These three Christian practices are “inward [Beholdings],” and they awaken mankind’s duty to his spiritual nature (*Aids* 1111). If humans have a reason to love the absolute good, as opposed to loving the pleasure derived from sensuous desire, then why would they ever chose to act against it? Coleridge follows Kant’s incentive rule, makes God (the moral law) and all of his creatures the incentive to love, and effectively creates a case for Christian truths to be rational. In this sense, *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* echoes some of Kant’s moral philosophies because it anticipates Coleridge’s philosophical stance in *Aids to Reflection*.

Immanuel Kant’s dilemma of radical evil is solved by Coleridge’s philosophy as evident in the *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. The evil in the Mariner, an innately corrupt individual, is brought to light by the supernatural elements in the poem. The Mariner is made aware of the evil in his heart, is set on the path of retribution, and comes out a better man. He learns a lesson about the concept of love, something that he lacked prior to his action of evil, and this lesson is brought to him by spirits outside of his comprehension. Prayer, reflection, and love can combat frailty, impurity, and perversity. With this said, in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, Kant agrees that Christianity, when taken as a guide to morality, contains “reason” (6:157). It is natural for humankind to adopt religion as a moral compass. Coleridge seems to expand on this

idea even further, in *Aids to Reflection*, by implying that Christianity does more than act as a moral compass; it is moral reality. By allowing Reason into their conscience, the human race, like the Mariner, can be made aware of the distinction between Understanding and Reason, and of the necessity of a responsible will if they are to become better in the moral sense. Coleridge infuses Romantic ideas and philosophies, with accounts from a phantasmal cosmos, as a way of curing Kant's diagnoses of the radical evil in human nature.

CONCLUSION

In the first chapter of *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, “Concerning the Indwelling of the Evil Principle alongside the Good or of the Radical Evil in Human Nature,” Immanuel Kant expresses that radical evil is the elevation of selfish incentives above the moral law. Mankind is neither animal nor angel, he is stuck at an ethical crossroads between the two. While the human race has the capacity to be responsible to their spiritual natures, they also have the capacity to be influenced by bodily desires and inclinations. Kant argues that the human race is often motivated more by desire than duty. Kant writes, “the *perversity* of the human heart reverses the ethical order as regards the incentives of a *free* power of choice; and although with this reversal there can still be legally good (*legale*) actions, yet the mind’s attitude is thereby corrupted at its root (so far as the moral disposition is concerned), and hence the human being is designated as evil” (*Religion* 6:30). Perversity reverses the ethical order because it motivates mankind to act in favor of his sensuous desires; the incentives of desire are placed above the moral law. If incentives were to be put in a list, the moral law would be subjugated towards the bottom of the list, while incentives such as pleasure, fame, and power rise above it. In this sense, the elevation of incentives above the moral law is deliberate. Furthermore, humanity sometimes “accidentally” abides by the moral law when they are led by immoral incentives (6:31). In this sense, there can still be legally good actions, but the action is born from a corrupt mind that made a selfish incentive the condition to act on the moral law. In both cases, the human race is radically evil because they subjugate the universal moral law to other sensuous and selfish inclinations.

In *Aids to Reflection*, Samuel Taylor Coleridge mirrors Kant’s argument. Coleridge expresses that Christian philosophy asserts “three ultimate facts; namely, the Reality of the Law

of Conscience; the existence of a Responsible Will, as the subject of that law; and lastly, the existence of Evil” (1066). A responsible will is a subject to the law of conscience, and in the law of conscience lies the existence of the ultimate good. A responsible will is dutiful towards the ultimate good, however, evil exists. When humanity chooses to ignore their spiritual natures when making ethical decisions, their will is not responsible towards the ultimate good. For Coleridge, the majority of the human race deviates from their duty towards the ultimate good. Coleridge writes, “the greater part of mankind live at hazard. They have no certain harbor in view, nor direct their course by any fixed star” (1016). The human race is living in hazard because they are unreflecting and unaware of their spiritual natures when making ethical choices; they act based on empirical observation and selfish calculation. Humanity does not act in accordance with the ultimate good, and they are evil because of it. In this sense, they fit the definition of Kantian radical evil; they subjugate the ultimate good (the moral law) to other incentives.

In *Aids*, Coleridge further asserts that “it is the being made fully aware of the diversity of Reason and Understanding” that one can begin to reflect on their spiritual natures (1106). When the human race is made aware that they elevate Understanding, their “animal nature” (1126), above Reason, their “spiritual” nature (1111), they can make a change for the better. Reason is the “star” by which humanity can direct their course (1016). Coleridge’s poem, *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, is a poetical anticipation of his solution to the Kantian dilemma of the radical evil of the human race. In *Rime*, the Mariner’s evil action is the slaying of the albatross. The Mariner was unthinking of the effects that his action would have on his spiritual nature, and he shot down the albatross for no reason. The sailors and the Mariner hailed the albatross “As if it had been a Christian Soul” (*Rime* 65). In this sense, the Mariner is a persecuting spirit. In order

for him to be made aware of the moral quality of his evil action, he is punished by the supernatural spirits in the poem. He is first subjected to starvation and dehydration, he is then subjected to a living nightmare that impacts his moral character for the better, he is then forced to travel the land and tell his tale to those who will listen in order to ease the pain in his heart. Through this ordeal, the Mariner learns that prayer, reflection, and loving others awakens his spiritual nature, and it also makes him responsible to God. Coleridge writes, “While to each his great Father bends, / Old men, and babes, and loving friends / And youths and maidens gay! (*Rime* 607-9). The Ancient Mariner now respects the dominion of God over man, and he safeguards himself from falling further into sin. He tells his tale so that the rest of humanity would no longer have to “live in hazard,” and commit the same error he did (Coleridge, *Aids* 1016). Once humanity reflects on their spiritual natures, bodily desires would no longer take precedence over the moral law, and they can become “good or better” in the moral sense (Kant, *Religion* 6:44).

A Kantian interpretation of Coleridge’s *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is important because it anticipates the rational and theological model that Coleridge sets up in *Aids to Reflection*. A Kantian interpretation also gives *Rime* a moral lesson; if humanity is to become good or better in the moral sense, they must reflect on their spiritual natures and be responsible to the moral law. In a famous conversation that Coleridge had with Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Mrs. Barbauld tells Coleridge that *Rime* had two faults in it: “it was improbable, and had no moral” (Lowes, *The Road to Xanadu* 276). For the most part, *Rime* is improbable in the empirical sense. There is no way that supernatural spirits exist and subject the human race to nightmares. The poem, however, has a moral, especially if it is read as an anticipation of Coleridge’s moral philosophy. Coleridge responded to his critic, “the poem had too much [moral]; and that the only, or the chief

fault, if I might say so, was the obtrusion of the moral sentiment so openly on the reader” (276). In *Rime*, Coleridge means for readers to reflect on the moral lessons that the Mariner learns through his nightmarish experience; the Mariner learns to love, pray, and reflect once he becomes aware of the evil in his heart. The moral lessons that the Mariner has learned are later reaffirmed in Coleridge’s *Aids to Reflection* when Coleridge argues that the “greater part of mankind live at hazard” because they do not reflect on their spiritual natures when making ethical decisions (1016). The only way for mankind to be reflecting on his spiritual nature is by being responsible to Reason.

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