

Phil 107: Second Short Essay (Coleridge, Emerson, Fuller)
Winter, 2020

Instructions

Due, as an attachment, via the “Assignments” tool on Canvas, by 11:55pm Wednesday, March 4 (in PDF or any format easily converted to PDF, e.g. MSWord, OpenOffice, L^AT_EX, RTF, plain text).

Respond to any *one* of the prompts listed below in 2–3 pages (double spaced).

The questions are keyed to different sections of the reading, with the idea that each question is raised most centrally in a certain section. However, you can and should use material from anywhere in the text where it’s relevant to the answer.

Some of the prompts are in the nature of suggestions for the topic of a very short original essay; others are more like questions which just required an answer. Even in the latter case, however, the answer can never simply be read out of the texts, nor is it clear that there is just one “correct” answer (although there are certainly incorrect ones). And, of course, as usual, your answer must be “original” in the sense that it is your own work. (If you use any outside source — which I *don’t* recommend — you must cite it.)¹ To cite any of the texts assigned for class, just provide enough information for me to find the source (page number, short title and/or author if not clear from context).

There is no need for a title page or bibliography. Keep introductions and conclusions to a minimum.

You can find answers to some commonly asked questions about my assignments and grading in my FAQ (<https://people.ucsc.edu/~abestone/courses/faq.html>).

¹If you have any questions about policies on plagiarism and related issues, please see https://www.ue.ucsc.edu/academic_misconduct.

Questions

1. In *The Friend*, Essay IV in “Essays on the Principles of Method” (p. 449–50), Coleridge compares a methodical person to “clock-work.” Of course, a methodical person and a clock are both *regular*, but, Coleridge says “the resemblance extends beyond the point of regularity.” In what other way does a methodical person resemble a clock, according to Coleridge? (Hint: how does a clock mediate between time and space, or in other words between the internal and the external?). Coleridge adds, however, that this comparison “yet falls short of the truth” about the methodical person. What does the methodical person — a person with a “leading thought” (p. 455) — do that a clock does not? (Hint: what does it mean for time, or thought or speech, to be “organized”? What is an “organ”?)
2. In *Aids to Reflection*, Introductory Aphorism XXIII (pp. 15–16), Coleridge states that the truth of Christianity is to morality what morality was to the “rites, ceremonies and ceremonial vestments” of Old Testament religion. In other words, according to him: morality is an outward symbol of something higher, namely faith, “the faith that *looks down into* the perfect law of liberty” (p. 16). Then he comments, however, that this means Christianity has a certain “distinguishing excellence,” namely that “the ritual is of the same kind (*ὁμοούσιον*), though not of the same order, with the religion itself” (17). In what way is the idea of something “looking down” into (what is the same as) *itself* reminiscent of Schelling? (See also Introductory Aphorism X, p. 5: “Self-superintendence! that any thing should overlook itself! Is not this a paradox, and hard to understand?”) Explain how this makes morality, for Coleridge, analogous to the work of artistic genius in Schelling: a finite, external thing which nevertheless can serve to represent the unity of the finite and the infinite. In particular: how is *election* (the divine grace that acts within the will and enables the will to be *perfect*: “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” [Matthew 5:48]) similar to the “dark unknown force” of genius in Schelling (*System of Transcendental Philosophy*, p. 222)?
3. Explain what Coleridge means when he says that “original sin” actually means the same thing as just “sin” (“the phrase, Original Sin, is a Pleonasm, the epithet not adding to the thought, but only enforcing it. For if it be Sin, it must be original” [Comment to Aphorism X on Spiritual Religion, p. 261]). Why, in what sense, are there no *origins* in nature, that is, in the object of

the understanding? (See p. 257.) Explain how this means that neither of the following two people can sin: (1) a “maniac,” that is, someone who has lost the power of “reason” — the power in us that is higher than the understanding (see p. 262); (2) someone whose will is “uncorrupted,” that is, whose will is not distinct from their reason (see Comment to Aphorism of Spiritual Religion XV, p. 295). Why does this make corruption of the will, according to Coleridge, analogous to the act of “separation” that begins transcendental philosophy, according to Schelling? (See *System of Transcendental Idealism*, pp. 8–9.)

4. How is the theme of “self-reliance” in Emerson’s essay of that name, or in other words the theme of “self-trust” (“Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string,” p. 49) related to the concept of “self-consciousness” in Schelling and/or of “reflection” or “self-superintendence” in Coleridge (*Aids to Reflection*, p. 5)? There is obviously more to be said about this than you could say in a 2–3 page paper; just point to a thing or two that seem especially striking or unexpected. You may want to think about the concept of *origin*, *originality*, the *original* (or “aboriginal”) self, which turns up importantly in all three, but in somewhat different ways. (See especially the first sentence of “Self-Reliance,” p. 47, and also p. 64; *Aids to Reflection*, p. 257 and thereabouts; *System of Transcendental Idealism*, top of p. 24; p. 31; p. 36.) In Emerson “original” is opposed to “conventional.” To what is it opposed Coleridge see and/or in Schelling? But you needn’t focus on “originality” if you have another idea.

5. Assuming that Fuller’s contrast between “man” and “men” (in “The Great Lawsuit”) is a version of Schelling’s contrast between the infinite, representing self and the finite (limited), represented self (see *System of Transcendental Philosophy*, around p. 40, and compare “the Great Lawsuit,” p. 1: “It is known that his [i.e., man’s] inheritance consists in no partial sway, no exclusive possession, such as his adversaries desire”) — what is the effect (1) of making this a contrast between singular and plural and (2) of suddenly bringing out (on p. 7) the implied contrast between “man” and “woman”? Must we at that point take back the claim that “man’s” inheritance is unlimited — because, after all, he will have to share it, not with men (or women) but with “woman”? Or is there some other way to understand what “man” is supposed to learn, upon reading the passage on p. 7?

6. Compare Fuller’s treatment of Hamlet, via her characters Laurie and

Aglauron (in the “Dialogue containing Sundry Glosses on Poetic Texts,” pp. 158–63) to Coleridge’s treatment (*The Friend*, Essay IV in “Essays on the Principles of Method,” pp. 451–5). Note that both allude to Horatio’s line (quoted in full by Coleridge, p. 455): “It were to consider too curiously to consider so,” and both apparently agree that Hamlet has a problem *something* like this: “The moment he is left alone, his thoughts revert to universal topics” (Fuller, p. 160). Are there nevertheless crucial and revealing differences? (Note I don’t have anything specific in mind here. See what you can come up with.)

7. Try to describe, as carefully as you can in 2–3 pages, the difference in “style” or “sound” between two of our authors (e.g., between Schelling and Coleridge, or between Emerson and Fuller, or between Coleridge and Fuller, etc.). Give examples if possible. There isn’t room here probably to try explaining *why* these differences exist, but still try to focus on differences that you suspect may have philosophical implications or motivations. If you think an author actually describes some feature of their own style, you can note that, as well.