

## Implications of Solipsism in Samuel Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight" and "Dejection: An Ode"

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### Abstract

**Objectives:** This research aims to examine Samuel Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight" (1798) and "Dejection: An Ode" (1802). It explores the implications of solipsism in these two poems.

**Methods:** To achieve this purpose, the research reviews some major works in philosophy that dwell on solipsism, briefly traces the evolution of solipsism, how some philosophers and literary critics define and employ the concept in literature, and how solipsism specifically features Coleridge's thought. Through a critical and an analytical reading of the two chosen poems, the research highlights solipsistic inclinations. Additionally, the research valorizes how Coleridge uses poetry to negotiate his own philosophy and highlight his skeptical view of the world.

**Results:** This analysis eventually manifests how the existence of the external world becomes merely a reflection of the poet's mind, and surroundings acquire their meanings according to his state of mind.

**Conclusions:** By examining the relationship between solipsism and Coleridge's two poems, the research suggests a more comprehensive revision of Coleridge's poetry on the one hand, and introduces new possibilities for exploring the affinity between romantic literature and solipsistic philosophy on the other hand.

**Keywords:** Samuel Coleridge, solipsism, imagination, existence, poetry, philosophy.

### انعكاسات المذهب الذاتي في "تجمد عند منتصف الليل" و"الكأبة: قصيدة" لصموئيل كوليردج

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#### ملخص

**الأهداف:** يهدف هذا البحث إلى تحليل قصيدتي صموئيل كوليردج "الصقيع عند منتصف الليل" (1798) و"الكأبة: قصيدة" (1802): حيث يتم التركيز على انعكاسات "المذهب الذاتي" في هاتين القصيدتين.

**المنهجية:** تستند منهجية البحث إلى استعراض بعض أهم المؤلفات في علم الفلسفة والتي تتناول هذا المفهوم وتطوره، وكيف عرفه عدد من الفلاسفة وكيف وظفه النقاد الأدبيين. يبرز البحث أيضًا الكيفية التي تُظهر ارتباط فكر كوليردج بالمذهب الذاتي على وجه التحديد. تعتمد المنهجية على قراءة نقدية وتحليلية للقصيدتين المختارتين على نحو يسلط الضوء على الانعكاسات الذاتية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يُبرز البحث كيفية استخدام كوليردج للشعر لطرح فلسفته وإبراز نظريته المتشككة للعالم.

**النتائج:** من خلال تحليل القصيدتين يخلص البحث إلى أن وجود العالم الخارجي هو مجرد انعكاس لفكر الشاعر: حيث أن الوجود يكتسب معانيه وفقًا لحالته الذهنية.

**التوصيات:** إن تحليل العلاقة بين "المذهب الذاتي" وقصيدتي كوليردج يفتح آفاقًا لمراجعة أكثر شمولاً لشعر كوليردج من ناحية، ويقدم فرصًا جديدة لاستكشاف العلاقة الوثيقة بين الأدب الرومانسي وفلسفة "المذهب الذاتي" من ناحية أخرى.

**الكلمات الدالة:** صموئيل كوليردج، المذهب الذاتي، الخيال، الوجود، الشعر، الفلسفة.



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## Introduction

Generally, and at a cursory glance, one can always perceive some philosophical dimensions in the literary works of the romantic poets, and this is principally highlighted in *Natural Supernatural: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* as “the spirit of the age” (Abrams, 1971). This phrase, quoted from Percy Shelley, described “a comprehensive intellectual tendency which manifested itself in philosophy as well as in poetry” (11). Among many questions that can emerge from such a generalization is solipsism, and, I believe, two of Coleridge’s poems manifest interesting implications of this philosophical concept. On a broad level, “Frost at Midnight” (1798) and “Dejection: An Ode” (1802) show how the interaction between philosophy and literature can potentially provide insights into an interdisciplinary dialogue between the two spheres. On a narrower level, the study raises the questions: to what extent do Coleridge’s poems lend themselves to a solipsistic reading, and how does this relate to Coleridge’s interest in philosophy?

Solipsism in the poems at hand is a philosophical position that triggers a metaphysical reading of Coleridge’s thought where the poet’s mind becomes the sole knowable reality, and his imagination is the source of a self-created existence. Through Coleridge’s skeptical perception, we see that the external world is substantially confined to the individual’s image of the world. In other words, existence becomes a reflection of the poet’s mind, and surroundings acquire their meanings according to his mood and whim. These two chosen poems are charged with solipsistic implications which feature Coleridge’s ideas about existence outside the mind, thus enable a new understanding of the romantic moment in Coleridge’s writing.

In most of his literary production, Coleridge sought to discover the mysteries of the world at large, and many critics agree that he developed a philosophical appreciation of the world from an early age. Nicholas Reid states in his “Coleridge, Form and Symbol, Or The Ascertaining Vision” that “Coleridge’s interest in a broadly Platonic world view was evident from his school days” (Reid, 2006). Throughout his work, Coleridge showed a particular attachment to German idealism. Kant, Schelling and Schlegel are the names usually associated with Coleridge’s sources from German idealism. A. C. Dunstan in his “The German Influence on Coleridge” traces the influence of Schiller on Coleridge’s thought and production. He does also emphasize the influence of Kant whom he believes to be Coleridge’s “teacher” (Dunstan, 1922). In fact, Anya Taylor asserts in her detailed chapter “Coleridge’s Self-Representations” that Coleridge participated in an “ongoing debate with eighteenth century philosophers” (Taylor, 2009).

In the poems discussed in this study, one can perceive how the workings of Coleridge’s mind and imagination invite a revision of both internal and external worlds. Such revision is never divorced from the epistemological question of existence and the self-created image of the world and surroundings becomes the only source of meaning and reality. In other words, Coleridge’s outlook, as manifested in the present poems, is basically characterized by skepticism and a solipsistic focus on the self.

## Related Literature

As an interdisciplinary investigation, the current study explores philosophical intersections in the poems of Coleridge. Hence, a comprehensive overview of solipsism is an essential point of departure. In *Key Concepts in Literary Theory*, solipsism is defined as a philosophical belief that “one can only ever have proper evidence of one’s own existence” (Wolfreys et al., 2002). In light of this definition, the common perception of existence as consisting of “me” and “others” is challenged and revised. *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary* clarifies this view of solipsism as a “theory” of the self where it “can know nothing but its own modifications and that the self is the only existent thing” (“Solipsism”). This means that the existence of “others” is not certain since what is perceived by the individual self is what makes surroundings come into existence. In other words, such belief leads to the consequence of perceiving the external world and others as merely representations of the individual self, having no independent existence of their own, and might in fact not even exist. It is the power of the mind that rules in this theory.

Although the previous definitions offer a clear idea about the concept, investigating the origin of solipsism reveals that it is a controversial issue. In the study “Solipsism- An Extreme of Rationalism”, Pavao Hrsak proposes that solipsism as a notion can be associated originally with Rene Descartes (Hrsak, 2011). Hrsak explains that Descartes “enabled such

possibility, for the simple reason that his *res extensa* was a product of his thinking, *res cogitata*" (8). In his historical account of Western philosophers *History of Western Philosophy*, Bertrand Russell attributes the evolution of solipsism basically to George Berkeley (1685-1753) and David Hume (1711-1776) (Russell, 1945). Berkeley's philosophy is based on a "denial of the existence of matter" and the sensible, and insists that material objects can only exist through being perceived, for instance, a tree "would cease to exist if no one was looking at it" (1945, 647). Obviously, Berkeley believes that there is a logical evidence supporting the idea that only minds and mental events can exist. Russell states that this view was adopted by Georg Hegel and his followers (Ibid).

Hume is considered by Russell the most significant among philosophers "because he developed to its logical conclusion the empirical philosophy" of Berkeley and some other philosophers (Ibid). Hume expels the idea of substance from psychology, and refuses any impression or idea of self and replaces it with perception (Ibid). To clarify this, Russell quotes him: "when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception" (Ibid). In his analysis of different solipsistic notions of the previously mentioned philosophers, Russell seems more inclined to accept Hume's line of thought.

*A Common Sky: Philosophy and the Literary Imagination* is A. D. Nuttall's endeavor to sketch and delve deep into what he calls throughout the book "the absurdity" of solipsism (Nuttall, 1974). He coins the term "solipsistic fear" to capture the way this idea was approached by both philosophy and literature (Ibid). Nuttall commences his book by asserting that although solipsism as an idea that appeared early in the literature of the sixteenth century, it can be perceived in the poetry of Sir John Davies and Donne. He claims that the eighteenth century marks a significant spread of solipsism. In his examination of the term, Nuttall describes it as "a picture of the mechanics of knowledge" or "a picture of the mind" (Ibid). However, he thinks that the real application of solipsism necessarily entails "subversion of common sense" (Ibid). Nuttall portrays the different debating views of philosophers over the "real and nominal essence" or the "outer world and inner world of ideas," where Nuttall seems to embrace the view that "reality [is] slipping through our fingers, escaping our direct observation," thus adopting a Lockean analysis of solipsism (19).

In the same year, Nuttall's work is reviewed by Robert L. Arrington in his "Solipsism and Literature". Arrington believes that Nuttall fails in his mission of narrating the story of solipsism (Arrington, 1974). He asserts that Nuttall does not "provide a theory of poetry or literature which shows how the imaginative writer can illuminate or communicate the inner experience, and he does not have a theory of literature which allows him to position, to evaluate, and to understand the various writers he studies" (Ibid).

The article "The Spectre of Solipsism in Western Literature" by Reino Virtanen offers a survey of various illustrations of solipsism in the Western canon. Yet, the article seems to eschew any conclusions that may assist further comprehension of the term or the nature of its occurrences in Western literature. Towards the end of this article, Virtanen concludes that "the various examples cited indicate that the problem of solipsism cannot be regarded as purely eccentric or merely marginal in Western consciousness" (Virtanen, 1986). Before it had its name, Virtanen asserts, solipsism actually confused many thinkers in the Western canon (Ibid). He adds that the "intersubjective" nature of the human experience was explained by several philosophers, yet remained an "epistemological enigma" (Ibid).

Generally, earlier work in both literature and philosophy tended to take a sharply critical approach to solipsism focusing on its limited theoretical realization. Tracing this philosophical concept and its application in more recent and contemporary literary works proves that this concept is still a topic of research, denying a definite articulation or representation. For example, in "Who's Solipsistic Now? The Character of Chaucer's Troilus," Marilyn Reppa Moore traces the implications of solipsism in Chaucer's epic poem *Troilus and Criseyde*. In this example, solipsism is investigated in the character of Troilus, initially in his actions then in his day dreams. Troilus' "arrogance, pride, and lack of devotion" Moore argues, is what prepares for his isolation from community and solipsism (Moore, 1998). Contemporary critics whom Moore quotes consider Troilus excessively absorbed in "self-involvement" (Ibid). This is agreeably what can be diagnosed as one of the earliest traces of solipsism in literature. Troilus is "in love with the image of his own self" (Ibid). Moore's application of

solipsism focuses on it as a result of a psychological temperament rather than a perception of the self and existence at large. Yet, in her analysis of Troilus' character, she asserts that there are "tensions and intersections" between the commonly approved analysis of character in our contemporary view and the classical view of the Middle Ages (Ibid). Thus, her article is an attempt to reconcile the two perspectives in order to provide a contemporary analysis of Chaucer's work in light of the character's solipsistic implications.

In the chapter "Solipsism and Utopia: Fredric Brown, Charles Yu, Ludwig Wittgenstein," Frank Cioffi applies the concept to American fiction. These authors, in his view, offer an "excellent definition" of this slippery concept (Cioffi, 2015). The main characters in the works of these writers create worlds which are nothing but figments of their imaginations to "reinforce a solipsistic worldview" (). Nevertheless, when these characters meet real world and "living entities" the encounter is characterized by "perpetual uncertainty" (Ibid). Cioffi asserts that the imagined worlds of those characters still remain their "utopias" (Ibid)! Cioffi concludes his article by giving a groundbreaking explanation for the question: Why are some writers obsessed with the idea of a solipsistic character creating their own utopias (Ibid)? It is merely "a utopia that 'begins at home,' in the mind of a single person -may be, now that I think of it, of a writer" (Ibid). In effect, writers, by the very nature of their oeuvre, Cioffi believes, are solipsistic in the worlds they produce.

Given that romanticism led to great transformations in Western thought and literary articulations as well, it is relevant to discuss its philosophical dimensions. Despite the fact that romanticism, in its beginnings, was not necessarily affiliated to philosophy, the period from late eighteenth century have been impacted by "the romantic movement" (Russell, 1945). What established this bond with philosophy is the "Revolt of solitary instincts against social" institutions and collectivity (Ibid). Under the influence of German idealism, romantic literary production became solipsistic and self-centered (Ibid). A similar premise is shared in Stephen Bygrave's *Coleridge and the Self: Romantic Egotism*. The book traces the influence of German idealist philosophy on Coleridge's thought, where the poet focuses on the representation of the self by establishing a concern with egotism to a number of writers of the German Idealist tradition, most notably, Fichte and Schelling. As shall be explored in the next section, "the representations of the self" which Bygrave valorizes in Coleridge are related to what I propose as solipsistic implications in Coleridge (Bygrave, 1986).

### **Solipsistic implications: "Frost at Midnight" and "Dejection: An Ode"**

A romantic verse monologue, "Frost at Midnight" is a poem that presents some of Coleridge's philosophical notions about the self and surroundings. It celebrates the power of imagination to construct a picture of the world in what I can describe as an existential revolt of the mind. It, additionally, poses questions about the value of these surroundings and credibility of their existence. The poem reflects the poet's meditative mood, and the ability to demarcate the self and the world. Skillfully, the poet-philosopher manipulates time and place to challenge our conceptions and perceptions.

In context analysis, it is claimed that the source of inspiration for this poem is the birth of Coleridge's son, Hartley (Reed, 2010). However, as reading the poem shows, the son introduced at the beginning of the poem is only one of the inmates who share a residence with the speaker. This son is part of a portrait of silence that the speaker reflects on, and "slumbers peacefully" in the lap of stillness (Coleridge, 1798). At a frosty midnight, the speaker admits that solitude would "suit" his philosophical inclinations (Ibid). Commenting on this, Frederick Burwick, in "Coleridge's Conversation Poems: Thinking the Thinker," suggests that "the modulation of the active and passive is nowhere more exquisitely wrought among the Conversation poems than in this poem" (Burwick, 2009). Burwick detects the details of the first stanza to discover what lies behind a scenery of silence that Coleridge creates. He relates these details to the poet's "psychological projection" and asserts that through "insisting upon absolute silence and calm, the slightest activity gains in portent" (Ibid). Based on this analysis, one can see that the introductory lines of the poem establish a distance between what is "active," (i.e., the speaker's mind) and what is "passive" (i.e., his surroundings).

Yet, the speaker in Coleridge's poem seeks inspiration through nature, which never occurs. Nature does not only remain silent to the wishes of the poet-philosopher, it "... disturbs /And vexes meditation with its strange/And extreme silentness" (Coleridge, 1798). Describing the "silentness" of nature as "strange" and "extreme" draws attention to the power of the

speaker's mood where things gain new epithets generated from his individual perception thus making this "silence" powerful and haunting. This scene introduces a solipsistic position that develops gradually throughout the poem.

The following lines extend and underscore the speaker's wonder at such sight where sea, hill, wood, and the village with all of its human elements are "Inaudible as dreams" (Ibid)! Only a fluttering flame, amid this "hush of nature" can show some sympathy to his loneliness (Ibid). The flame's dim capricious gesture is celebrated by the speaker who finds in it his inspiration. Here, Coleridge uses language that creates immediacy of the scene, and the fluttering sound can match the spark of imagination generated in the mind of the poet-philosopher. This fire calls into the reader's mind another influential fire in literature; the fire of Prometheus in Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound*. This myth of the Promethean fire is extensively explored by Manfred Beller in "The Fire of Prometheus and the Theme of Progress in Goethe, Nietzsche, Kafka, and Canetti," where he declares that this fire (stolen from Zeus) symbolizes both a supernatural power and a "progress" (Beller, 1984). Similarly, the meditating speaker in Coleridge's poem is affiliated with the dim film of a flame that refreshes his faculties and stimulates progress. But does it really have the power to do so? Or is it the speaker's imagination that gives the dying fire its power? Perhaps the clue lies in the final lines of this stanza: "By its own moods interprets, everywhere/ Echo or mirror seeking of itself/ And makes a toy of Thought" (Coleridge, 1798). Here, the poem shows one of its obvious solipsistic implications. The source of thoughts can only come from the self not the surroundings. A "mirror" of the self is the only possible medium of communication in such a frosty existence. The Promethean fire of mind and imagination becomes the source of life in the poem.

The following stanza makes a striking shift into the past in a highly sensory experience. Past images that the speaker summons indulge his private perception of events and objects around him, thus, giving them meaning in accordance with his appreciation. This is, on the one hand, very much relevant to a romantic experience where the senses are a necessary medium to communicate with nature. On the other hand, the speaker in these lines seems to be giving life and immediacy to an ordinary scene at school through his wandering thoughts rather than communicating with them. This may suggest that the speaker felt then detached from the real details of school, hence, a substitute existence was created with different details. It, additionally, valorizes a solipsistic implication manifested in the speaker's power of generating or reducing a particular reality from memories. Bygrave asserts that memory in the poetry of Coleridge "can re-present experience with its sensory force abated; and random present experience may discover itself retrospectively" (Bygrave, 1986). Reflecting on his childhood memories, the speaker not only underscores his detachment from school which he dreamily perceived as a fluttering scene, he also "re-present[s]" and re-discovers a state of loneliness and alienation in a city-setting that he could hardly comprehend and articulate then.

A further detachment from surroundings is suggested by introducing dreams in those memories:

From morn to evening, all the hot Fair-day,  
So sweetly, that they stirred and haunted me  
With a wild pleasure, falling on mine ear  
Most like articulate sounds of things to come!  
So gazed I, till the soothing things, I dreamt,  
Lulled me to sleep, and sleep prolonged my dreams! (Coleridge, 1798)

The whole stanza is a glimpse of fragments and dreams that emerge essentially from the "most believing mind" (Ibid). Commenting on this, Burwick emphasizes that only childhood recollections is what seems to animate the atmosphere throughout this frosty poem (Burwick, 2009). One can argue that these lines accentuate Coleridge's skeptical view of the world and highlight the significance of the "believing mind." In other words, these are early symptoms of solipsism that can be said to mark the philosophy of Coleridge.

The third and fourth/ final stanzas present a striking shift in tense towards the future. The speaker expresses a vision of his son and enjoys this vision which his imagination creates. Strikingly, in this vision, the son shall be away from the city and its "cloisters dim" (Coleridge, 1798). In the speaker's futuristic vision, the son is a wanderer "like a breeze" (Ibid). It seems that the son is a reflection of the speaker's self where from this son a new life is initiated to compensate wasted

moments in the city and its dimness. The vision of a wandering free self reflects the speaker's desire to be set free. In the same vision, nature appears welcoming and willing to communicate with this self in an "...eternal language, which thy God/ Utters, who from eternity doth teach/ Himself in all, and all things in himself" (Ibid). The vision portrays a heavenly existence that never bears a resemblance to the world around the speaker. In fact, the words "eternal" and "eternity" elevate the scene into a divine world. In the same way, one may argue that the father-son relation here is more than a parental linkage. It is a divine-like affinity with God himself where even nature becomes a reflection of God. Specifically, the existence of the son reiterates the father as an originator where originating acquires a Divine power.

Coleridge, the poet-philosopher, creates a platonic ideal existence for the self where the idea in the mind can wander freely away from the city and its associations. It is only the mind that creates existence and everything inside this existence is a reflection of the mind. Implications of solipsism in these stanzas can be additionally traced through the analogy summoned by the speaker between the poet and God who "Himself in all, and all things in himself" (Ibid). In his book, Reid comments on this idea as he discusses "the Platonic Tradition" in Coleridge. Specifically, the solipsistic linkage to God where ideal/platonic reflections is associated to "the function of imagination" (Reid, 2006). He explains:

Here then we have an early exploration of what Coleridge was to define as the function of imagination, as the agent of the inspired act of reading by which the Creator and the Creation, the I AM and the it is, are reconciled. Moreover, it prefigures Coleridge's when he spoke of viewing Nature as somehow a process of 'seeking, as it were asking, a symbolic language for something within me that already and forever exists.' (Ibid)

Basically, these lines highlight the affinity of solipsism with idealism where reflections of the mind establish reality. On a deeper level, Reid's thesis underscores Coleridge's philosophical position of existence where through the elevated power of imagination, boundaries between "Creator and the Creation, the I AM and the it is" dissolve.

Richard Eldridge's "On Knowing How to Live: Coleridge's 'Frost at Midnight'" speculates implications of moral philosophy in this poem. The poem, Eldridge argues, raises fundamental philosophical questions about the "general subjunctive features of human life" and sheds some light on Coleridge's skeptical approach towards nature and its transcending impact (Eldridge, 1983). One can see how Coleridge's poem, in a solipsistic approach, generates worlds from the meditative and imaginative mind of the speaker, and moves from present to past to future in a clash of tenses that complicates the moment and blurs identities.

"Dejection: An Ode," a poem that is written some years later, in 1802, expresses strong feelings of sadness and despair due to a loss of the creative powers of imagination and inability to compose poetry. Although it is believed that this poem was dedicated to the poet's love, Sara Hutchinson (she is his addressee "Lady"), the speaker in this poem communicates more sophisticated and solipsistic notions. The poem depicts a moment when the poet-philosopher is lamenting fading powers of imagination, thus a loss of meaning. In a dejected tone, the speaker commences his poem by introducing a nightly scene of a moon and bright stars which he can only see but not feel. The demarcation between the two capacities of seeing and feeling creates many solipsistic implications in this poem. Sensation does not aid feeling, thus, the poet-philosopher loses his poetical genius. This is a decreased self that cannot create a complete existence, and if power would not spring from inside the self, natural surroundings could never provide the self with this needed power. This idea is extensively explicated in J.C.C Mays' *Coleridge's Dejection Ode*. Labeling Coleridge as the "philosopher of feeling," Mays asserts that this poem marks Coleridge's desire to reach "Full understanding – the head catching up with the heart" (Mays, 2019). By extension, generating a full existence requires both powers of seeing and feeling.

The poem shares with "Frost at Midnight" the same notion of nature as lacking power and life in itself. Again, it is the human mind and its power of imagination that bestow life upon nature. In "this wan and heartless mood," nature loses its beauty (Coleridge, 1802). Seeing and feeling, in a Coleridgean philosophy, constitute the complete self that generates existence. It is the poet-philosopher oneness that Coleridge desires. Strikingly, this oneness that Coleridge advocates lends itself to solipsism as one of its manifestations. In other words, harmony of senses and capacities establishes a more accurate perception of surroundings which is necessary for a solipsist. Through these lines, it can be inferred that Coleridge contributes to our understanding of solipsism.

Moving on across the following lines, the poem presents itself as a solipsistic sad song sung from the self to the self. With a dying imagination, the poet-philosopher laments his lost poetic self. The speaker seems only left with a philosophical appreciation of existence that is not satisfactory to him. To see and not to feel establishes a minus existence. The speaker confesses:

And still I gaze - and with how blank an eye!  
And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,  
That give away their motion to the stars;  
Those stars, that glide behind them or between,  
Now sparkling, now bedimmed, but always seen:  
Yon crescent Moon, as fixed as if it grew  
In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue;  
I see them all so excellently fair  
I see, not feel, how beautiful they are! (Ibid)

What is striking about these lines is the fact that nature is not capable of stimulating the romantic moment in Coleridge. In a romantic creed, poets find solace and escape in nature, where the natural scene initiates feelings and sensations, thus prompting poetic expression. This of course brings William Wordsworth to the discussion, whose poems, mostly, celebrate the impact of nature and its elements on the self. Rainbows, daffodils, water brooks...etc. create the romantic moment for the speakers in this major romantic poet, where he confesses: "My heart leaps up" (1807) at such sights. For John Keats, a further romantic instance, nature does not only arouse feeling, but also soothes and rejuvenates the sick soul as manifested in the lines of his poems "Ode to a Nightingale" (1819) and "On the Grasshopper and the Cricket" (1816). It seems that the above lines of Coleridge's poem establish a turning point regarding nature's impact on the romantic poet and his ability to express feelings. The romantic moment in Coleridge comes from within. It is only the complete self (seeing and feeling) that creates meaning. Yet, the speaker's dejection, though painful, is revealing and full of wisdom. The philosophical part of the poet-philosopher is at work, and his inner moods are reflected on nature and surroundings: "... we receive but what we give/ And in our life alone does Nature live:/ Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud" (Coleridge, 1802)! Apparently, with no poetical powers, the poem then becomes highly philosophical. The dejected poet presents his philosophy of the relationship between the human mind and the outward forms of nature.

In the same philosophical tone, the poet presents the storm as one of nature's forms. The ominous fierce storm is welcomed and celebrated by the speaker. Indeed, he believes that the storm shall restore his imaginative power and save his poetic self. It "Might startle this dull pain, and make it move and live" (Ibid)! Celebrating this storm emphasizes the speaker's distinct view of nature and its components. What is considered a destructive form of nature is rehabilitative and therapeutic for the speaker. This divergent perspective of the storm implies a solipsistic view. Charles Ngiewih Teke's "The Romantic Self as Transmuting and Progressing: A Critical Appraisal of S T Coleridge's Poetic Expression" examines Coleridge's philosophical and psychological articulations and comments on the therapeutic experience. Initially, Teke points out that this poem shares with "Frost at Midnight" the same "recuperative attempts to restore unity in his split self" (Teke, 2014). However, "Dejection" captures a moment of sadness and agony which is the result of "loss of imaginative potential" (Ibid). Based on Teke's reading of the poem, Coleridge, though overwhelmed and lamenting this loss, seems willing to adopt a "psycho-aesthetic therapy through self-mirroring and self-textualising" (Ibid).

Dreams are also introduced in this poem - as the case in "Frost at midnight." The speaker remembers happy times when "This joy within me dallied with distress/ And all misfortunes were but as the stuff/ Whence Fancy made me dreams of happiness" (Ibid). This underscores the significance of personal experience to initiate an existence for a broken self. It also underscores the solipsistic tendency of the speaker by relying on dreams to generate life. In other words, dreams acquire an inevitable association with solipsism as one of the myriad representations of the self.



### Conclusion

Through a metaphysical reading of the two poems, "Frost at Midnight" and "Dejection: An Ode," the study attempted to reveal implications of solipsism in the two poems. By establishing a distance from nature and the surroundings, and by focusing on the mind and its meditative power, Coleridge created what is coined in this study as "the poet-philosopher's complete self." This completeness triggered solipsistic implications and stimulated an investigation of Coleridge's philosophy as articulated in his poetry. Despite the fact that Coleridge did not compose a single philosophical work, his representations of the self and the world as shown in this study document his philosophy. Coleridge's skepticism encodes solipsistic implications where the complete self of the poet-philosopher is the source of meaning and feeling, thus, existence.

Poetry, in this case, lends itself to serve a revision of solipsism. Similarly, tracing solipsism in the two poems facilitates literary appreciation of Coleridge's romantic moment. Both poems are autobiographical and confessional which supports a psychological reading and draws attention to their solipsistic features. The implications of solipsism, indeed, become stronger and more powerful by emphasizing the philosophical and poetical dimensions of the self that Coleridge seeks to unite in order to achieve an idealized existence. Better perception of solipsism as a philosophical concept can be deduced through Coleridge's representations of the self. In a Coleridgean view, solipsism is a state of mind that employs imagination, feelings, dreams, memories and visions as conduits into an existence that simultaneously reflects the self. People (if there any) turn out to be mere reflections of the self where even loved ones dissolve into a solipsistic God-like self.

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