S GILES-IN-READING

SOUTHAMPTON STREET

URBANABBEY PUBSTUDY

A SACRED DIVE INTO: OWEN BARFIELD'S WHAT COLERIDGE THOUGHT,

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CH. 2: NATURATA AND NATURANS

CENTRAL ARGUMENT: In this chapter, Barfield explores Coleridge's concept of nature, contrasting his "natura naturans" (productive nature) with "natura naturata" (observable phenomena). Coleridge argued that understanding nature requires acknowledging a productive force beyond observable phenomena, a concept he differentiated from both Aristotelian notions and the limitations of his era's physics. He criticizes the tendency to reduce nature to observable phenomena alone and emphasizes the need to consider the underlying generative principles. Coleridge's perspective contrasts with the purely mechanistic view of nature prevalent in modern physics. His concept of "natura naturans" is presented as a non-supernatural, supersensuous force.e nature, the unseen forces underlying phenomena).

KEY THEMES:

Distinction between Natura Naturata and Natura Naturans: Coleridge draws heavily on the distinction between "Natura Naturata" (produced nature, the realm of phenomena) and "Natura Naturans" (producing nature, the underlying productive power). He criticizes Aristotle for blurring this line and resorting to a "Goddess Nature" to explain the world.

Critique of Materialistic Science: Coleridge argues that a purely materialistic science, focused solely on phenomena, cannot adequately explain the origins of phenomena or the "productive power" behind them. He believes science in his time was fixated on "unproductive particles" and "the despotism of the eye."

Supersensuous, Not Supernatural: Coleridge's Natura Naturans is not a mystical or supernatural force, but a "supersensuous" principle. He rejects "occult qualities" and posits that "spirit" is the antithesis to "nature," allowing for a deeper understanding of the world.

KEY QUOTES:

"Everything comes from other things and gives rise to other things."

"The solution of phenomena can never be derived from phenomena."

"The productive power suspended and, as it were, quenched in the product."

"We have not yet attained to a science of nature." "Such men, and their name is legion—consequently demand a Matter as a Datum. As soon as this gross prejudice is cured by the appropriate discipline and the Mind is familiarised to the contemplation of Matter as a product in time, the resulting Phenomenon of the equilibrium of the two antagonist Forces, Attraction and Repulsion, that the Negative and this the Positive Pole . . . the idea of Creation alone remains."

SUMMARY: The chapter highlights Coleridge's critique of a purely materialistic understanding of nature. He emphasizes the need to recognize a "productive power" behind observable phenomena, a concept he terms Natura Naturans. His ideas offer a philosophical framework for understanding nature as a dynamic process driven by underlying forces, while rejecting mystical explanations.