

Research Proposal

Limited to 1500 words including references. Please paste your research proposal in the box below using your word processing program.

The Romantic Medicine of Joseph Henry Green and Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Student: Noah Hoonhout- OMS1, NYIT College of Osteopathic Medicine

Mentor: Michael P. Stanley, M.D.

The philosophical and literary legacy of Samuel Taylor Coleridge is wide-ranging, but as of yet its incorporation into the medical profession is much less clear. His connection to the field of medicine has been clearly shown. While much scholarship has dealt with the influence medicine had on Coleridge's language and philosophy,¹ little work has aimed to elucidate the mark Coleridge left on the medical profession in return. This legacy can be found most succinctly in the figure of Joseph Henry Green, a widely renowned physician and close confidant of Coleridge.² Green, born in 1791, had a remarkably successful career in medicine and surgery, holding professorships at King's College, St. Thomas Hospital, and the Royal College of Surgeons and serving in leadership roles for a number of professional bodies.³ Green was also however a highly studied man of letters, and as such gained the respect of and deep friendship with Coleridge though he was 20 years younger.⁴ Coleridge appointed Green the executor of his entire corpus of literary and academic works, to which Green dedicated the latter portion of his career by publishing and systematizing Coleridge's thought. Scholarly work on Green's role in either the medical field or in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's philosophical legacy is remarkably sparse. The aim of this project is to explore both subjects, with a particular focus on illuminating how Coleridge's thought, mediated through Green, left a mark on the medical profession in its understanding of life, disease, and the role of the physician.

The corpus of Joseph Henry Green's published works is fairly small relative to that of Coleridge, and thus the majority of the project's focus will be on a close reading of these texts. Two lectures, or "Hunterian Orations," he gave to the Royal College of Surgeons in 1824 and 1828, "Vital Dynamics" and "Mental Dynamics, or Groundwork of a Professional Education," stand out as key texts that incorporate his influences from Coleridge and his understanding of the medical field.⁵ There are also a number of academic and popular publications and personal correspondences that deal with a range of topics, some of which are publicly available, while the rest are archived largely at the Royal College of Surgeons Library Archives. There are a few select texts of Coleridge, and related scholarly work, that are crucial to understanding his thinking on topics related to medicine. A number of his notes for Green's lecture are available. His treatise "Hints Towards the Formation of a More Comprehensive Theory of Life" offers a comprehensive vitalist understanding of the principle of life and can be seen to influence Green's own work. An analysis of his poetry and other philosophical works are warranted to understand more completely Joseph Henry Green's influences. After a thorough analysis of Coleridge's and Green's works, the project would finish with an exploration of subsequent figures who followed and incorporated their ideas, most notably Sir John Simon, an apprentice and biographer of Green and major medical reformer as London's Chief Medical Officer. The

Bean Award's funding would cover travel expenses to gain access to these collections and would be a great benefit to the comprehensive nature of the project.

1. See Neil Vickers, *Coleridge and the Doctors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). See also R. Guest-Gornall, "Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the Doctors," *Medical History* 17.4 (1973): 327
2. John S. Scheldrake, "Joseph Henry Green (1791-1863): surgeon, philosopher and Coleridgean transcendentalist," *Journal of Medical Biography* 13.3 (2005): 136-141.
3. "Plarr's Lives of the Fellows," (London: Royal College of Surgeons, 2005)
4. Tim Fulford, "Coleridge and J.H. Green: The Anatomy of Beauty," in *The Coleridgean Connection*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990).
5. See Joseph Henry Green, *Vital Dynamics*, ed. William Pickering (London, 1940). See also *Mental Dynamics or Groundwork of a Professional Education*, ed. William Pickering (London, 1847).

Supplemental Information

Faculty Sponsor First Name

You may have more than one faculty advisor, but we require a single person who will take responsibility for your completion of the proposed project.

Michael

Faculty Sponsor Last Name

Stanley

Suffix, e.g., Jr, III

(No response)