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The Nature and Functions of Double Touch

—An Approach to Coleridge's Psychology—

Nobuo Takayama

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to study one of the psychological principle of Coleridge which he called "double touch". The double touch is a process of making supernatural poems through his feelings and visions in his dreams. It has been discussed so far chiefly on the extraordinary state of the inner feeling of the poet Coleridge as the ground and motive of his supernatural poems such as "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", "Kubla Khan", "Christabel" and other ones concerning dreams. However, when we study his *Notebooks* closely, we can find his attempt to analyse the ground of his visionary poems as a result of a mutual interaction of his inner feeling and the outer stimulus. He defines this phenomenon as double touch.

No critics had ever referred to the faculty of this double touch until 1976. In 1977, John Beer mentioned this subject in his *Coleridge's Poetic Intelligence*. In this work, he mentions that human consciousness has two poles; one for the outer world and the other for the inner life-force of the universe. In these cases the sense of touch is the final arbiter. Through the sense of touch, Coleridge could contact the waking life, and the other kind of touch would be more operative in states of dream, hypnotism, somnambulism, or trance.¹

There are two kinds of consciousness. They are called primary and secondary consciousness by Coleridge: one is above and beyond the usual consciousness, and the other exists in ordinary human being. There are some persons who have an ability to contact both consciousness. Double

touch operates between both consciousness. Thus double touch plays an important role in Coleridge's metaphysics and also his psychology.

Especially, at the creation of the supernatural poems of Coleridge, double touch operates as a tool to bring forth a source of an idea, and becomes a motive of the poem. When a poet gifted with poetic genius like Coleridge could make marvellous poems with the help of the action of double touch. In this article, I am trying to analyse the characters and functions of double touch along with single touch, and clarify the operations of both of them.

2. The Sense of Touch

When a poet makes a poem, there are motives to complete that poem. These are two kinds of motives to make poetry. They are external motives and internal ones.

In general, these motives are sometimes derived from past memories which the poet had experienced in his past days, and these memories were once real facts in his past life. They were visible or audible in his dreams. These motives were so stimulating that he could remember after many days or many months. From these materials, a poet can make his own poems. Therefore, these experiences, in other words, the external stimuli are indispensable to a poet to make a poem.

On the other hand, internal motives are obtained from poet's own inner world, but they are not always noticed by the poet himself. They sometimes come from his unconscious. This kind of motive is specially important to the poet who makes poems from his dreams.

The abilities of our senses to perceive an object through the distance between the object and us are quite different, and among the senses the sense of sight is most superior, and then we can see a distant celestial body of many light years away. Auditory sense is the second, and we can hear the sounds of hundreds meters away. The sense of smell confines its ability around us, and the sense of taste only works in the mouth. However,

these abilities of the senses for the distance are never in proportion to the strength of the stimuli. It seems to be reverse, for the stimulus is strongest in the case of taste, and next is the sense of touch.

Many romantic poets obtained their poetic motives from the sense of sight. The visions projected on his brain through the sense of sight activate his poetic imagination, which creates an art of poetry. This phenomenon might be fantastic, but it is sure that it originates from his eyes. We may call this type of poet "a poet of sight".

The other type of poet who makes use of his experiences acquired by his sense of touch might be called "a poet of touch". The sources of Coleridge's mysterious and grotesque visions are derived from these experiences of touch. During his dreams Coleridge often perceived wonderful and curious feelings accompanied with the sense of touch. Therefore, the sense of touch is an important element of his supernatural vision embodied in his mysterious poems.

3. The Meaning of Touch

There were various private experiences until Coleridge had recognised the relations of senses and mind. Among the senses, he weighs upon the sense of touch as the vehicle of perceiving poetic stimulus. His sense of touch often concerns nightmare which he describes as night-mair. His night-mairs were always accompanied by some figure of woman. Coleridge's night-mair is a kind of night hag who sometimes gives him pain. The sense of touch brings him something like a sense of pressure, when he is in a confused state of sleep with waking. Coleridge wrote thus in his *Notebook* of 1801 :

Prest to my bosom & felt there—it was quite dark. I looked intensely toward her face—& sometimes I *saw* it—so vivid was spectrum, that it had almost all its natural sense of *distance* & *outness*—except indeed that, feeling & all, I felt her as *part* of my being—twas all spectral—

But when I could not absolutely *see* her, no effort of fancy could bring out even the resemblance of her face.²

It was a figure of spectral induced by the sense of pressure, which occurred during his sleep. It is very important to note that his sense of touch could make an unreal scene very vivid as it was in his brain.

In 1801 Coleridge recorded his curious experience when he was sleeping.

Item/motion communicated to the object by any motion in any part of the body. ex. gr. of the hand moving to & fro the flesh of the Leg—
This important.³

This description suggests some phenomena of touch, which arises in him through the feeling of fear or pain or sometimes pleasure, and it affects some part of the body. The sense of touch often stimulates his nervous system, and brings him various visions modified with the feelings occurred in him.

Since he was in his youth, Coleridge sometimes thought the visions and feelings derived from the sense of touch. He mentions like this :

A tremulous warmth crept gradual o'er my chest,
As though an infant's finger touch'd my breast.⁴

He feels warmth during his dream, as if some little child touched his breast. The sense of it seems rather enjoyable, because the infant is pretty and lovely for him, and such sense affects his feeling softly and tenderly.

Touched by the enchantment of that sudden beam
Straight the black vapour melteth, and in globes
Of dewy glitter gems each plant and tree;⁵

Just like St. Paul who feels enchanted sudden beams from the heavens, Coleridge suddenly feels the beam from the sky seems touched the world around him. The word "touch" has serious meanings to him. Among the five senses, the sense of touch seems to him to bring the most serious feeling. The deepest and warmest relationship between mother and child is acquired in the first place through the sense of touch. Coleridge thinks that is the first education from mother to the child :

The first education which we receive, that from our mothers, is given to us by touch; the whole of its process is nothing more than, to express myself boldly, an extended touch by promise. The sense itself, the sense of vision itself, is only acquired by a continued recollection of touch.⁶

Coleridge affirms here that the sense of vision itself is acquired by a continued recollection of touch. From the repeated experiences of the sense of touch, we gradually obtain the familiar visions.

There are two kinds of poets: one makes poems chiefly through his sense of sight and the other feels his poetic Muse through the sense of touch during his sleep. Wordsworth is the former type of poet who recognize nature mainly by his eyes, and he projects the memory of the sight to his brain, and seriously considers it, then renders it with his poetic words. Coleridge wrote visionary poems such as "The Ancient Mariner" or "Kubla Khan" considering his experiences in dreams during his sleep. He had much feeling of fear or mysterious curiosity through the sense of touch in his dreams.

4. Single Touch and Double Touch

He had many experiences until he recognized a great important relations between the sense of touch and mind. He uses the words "single touch and double touch" which mean two kinds of the senses of touch.

To speak in brief, the former is a normal sense of touch with a plain feeling and obvious sight of the object. In this case the attributes of the object, that is, the colour, form, size, and distance to it, are all perceived by the sense of sight, and conveyed to the brain before a man begin to act. We can presume the pleasant feeling before touching it when it is some pretty flower or such like things. We can also confirm that the form and size of the object are all the same as we presume beforehand. Therefore, we can say that "single touch" is the act of touching the object when the character of it is already empirically memorized under the action of the sense of touch.

The stimuli obtained from single touch are able to be fully utilized by a poet, since the images derived from single touch have sufficient qualities for the materials of poetry. In the case of single touch, a poet can recognize the object as it is, and if it will give him a great deal of excitement he could make an excellent poem through his sensitivity for poetry. When he sees the object and it has an impact on his poetical spirit, then touching it makes his feeling much stronger. For instance, when a man see his sweetheart some tender feeling arises in him, but when he touches her hand or body, then his feeling becomes strong. If there were some mental relations between subject and object, we could have some great source of poetry.

On the contrary, "double touch" may be an action to perceive object without the help of the sense of touch. Coleridge theorized this in the early nineteenth century. It was developed into a principle of his poetry making, and it is believed that it was accomplished by the late 1810s at the latest.

In the spring of 1819, when Coleridge met John Keats in Highgate, he spoke of nightmare and the dream with the sense of touch. Keats describes the contents of the conversation with Coleridge in the letter to his brother George and his wife Georgiana. In this letter, Keats records Coleridge's explanation of double touch :

Last Sunday I took a walk towards Highgate and in the lane that

winds by the side of Lord Mansfield's park I met Mr. Green our Demonstrator at Guy's in conversation with Coleridge—I joined them, after enquiring by a look whether it would be agreeable—I walked with him at his alderman-after-dinner pace for near two miles I suppose. In those two Miles he broached a thousand things—let me see if I can give you a list—Nightingales, Poetry—on Poetical Sensation—Metaphysics—Different genera and species of Dreams—Nightmare—a dream accompanied with a sense of touch—single and double touch—a dream related—First and second consciousness—the difference between will and Volition—so many metaphysicians from a want of smoking the second consciousness—Monsters—the Kraken—Mermaids—Southey believes in them—Southey's belief too much diluted—a Ghost story—⁷

It was happened in April 1819. Coleridge referred to the idea of double touch at this meeting. Therefore, the idea of double touch was already formed in him in 1819. His idea of double touch might be formed in the early 1800s. He also established his definitions of the first and second consciousness and cleared the difference between will and Volition by this time.

In the *Notebook* of 1805, he records his observation on the function of touch with intense interest :

The imperfection of the organs by which we seem to unite ourselves with external things—the tongue, the palate, the Hand—which latter becoming more *organic* is less passionate/now take an organ as the highest exponent of passion with the least possible machinery of power, that is, the most Feeling, the least Touch, & no Grasp/it can only suit a universal idea/consequently dim—& one by the dimness/however complex it may or may not be. Observe that in certain excited states of feeling the knees, ankle, sides & soles of the feet, become *organic*/Query—the nipple in a woman's breast, does that ever

become the seat of a particular feeling, as one would guess by its dormancy & sudden awakings—⁸

Coleridge mentions here on the relations between the inner feelings of a man and the senses for perceiving outward things, and he thinks that the sense organs becomes organic in the state of excitement. The stimulus, which is transmitted to the brain, is different according to the kind and degree of feelings owing to the part of the skin. Therefore, if the area of the skin is smallest, on which the sense of touch works, but if it is the most sensitive part, the degree of sensation would be largest. In other words, in these circumstances smaller stimulus can obtain greater excitement of feeling for poetic creation :

Attention/from greater to lesser, explained by the Taste & Touch—i.e. fruition, so small in surface of Space, compared with the eye & ear.⁹

The word which Coleridge states here suggests the importance of the sense of touch. The sense of touch is never uniform throughout the human body. There are sensitive parts and insensitive parts on the surface of the body. The sensation of touch increases, then the impression increases. The excitement produced by the sense of touch is crystallized in a work of the poet with the help of poetic Imagination and through the medium of language, that is, the poetic words.

Thus Coleridge recognizes that the sense of touch has an effect to recollect of his own past experiences, and it is a medium which brings a kind of material or a vision for making poetry. Coleridge confirms, therefore, that the sense of touch should be an important metaphysical element in relation to the mind of a man after studying it from the first biological phenomenon of an infant feeling for the intimate mother to the restless feeling of nightmare.

Sometimes the strongest feeling is induced from the small sense of touch. During the sleep especially in the state of half sleep, what we call

REM sleep, the feeling is strongest. In this state, one can feel the sense of touch without the effects of eyes, and therefore there is no preoccupation at all, and one acquires uninhibited visions through it.

In Coleridge's composition of fantastic and visionary poems, double touch plays an important role. As described previously, in the case of single touch, we need some mental preparation before we perceive an object by touch with the help of the sense of sight. Generally speaking, a man has a feeling of security or familiar to the things he used to see, and has curiosity or cautiousness to the things which he has never seen before. If the object he sees is a human being, various feelings of respect, hate, and love arise in his mind before he touches him or her. But during his sleeping or when he was about to sleep, if something touches his skin, he could not be aware of its real substance. Coleridge mentions thus:

Of the not being able to know whether or no you are smoking in the Dark or when your eyes are shut, time, of the ignorance in that state of the difference of Beef, Veal, &c/it is all attention/your eyes being shut, other images arise, which you must *attend to*/it being the habit of a *seeing* man to attend chiefly to *sight*—so close your eyes, you attend to the ideal images—& attending to them you abstract your *attention*/and it is the same as when deeply Thinking in the reverie you no longer hear distinct sounds made to you. But what a strange inference that there were no Sounds!¹⁰

According to this description in his *Notebook*, when we close our eyes we can obtain different figures or visions by touch from the ones we see in our waking state. Coleridge interestingly observes this phenomenon very closely, and concludes that it is an important principle of the feelings and visions arisen from the sense of touch during the state of reverie. The word "reverie" means here a state of sleep in which the consciousness is clear but the senses are in confusion. That is the most suitable condition for the action of double touch.

The word "double touch" is not familiar to the common people. Thomas Wedgwood explains this from "the common experiment of a body seeming double when felt in the angle of the tips of the first and second fingers crossed."¹¹ Namely, he considers that double touch is originated from unreal feeling explained as an illusion of the sense of touch by crossing two fingers in a state of closing eyes. He continues thus :

A person is blindfolded, and desired to attend to the impression of touch from a body so placed; the bandage being removed, he is directed to look at his fingers, while the object is placed as before. He will say, that the first time he felt two bodies at a distance from each other, and that now he feels only one. ... As the sensations of touch from the same impressing body must have been the same in both cases, the supposed difference in them must have been owing to some circumstance of vision: in the first case, the experimenter was deceived by a visual idea; in the second he was rightly informed by a visual impression.¹²

This explanation partly suggests Coleridge's double touch theory. Double touch means, I think, to feel double with one touch without any help of the sense of sight. Under the condition of double touch in action, sensations including touch, smell, hearing, and taste bring force some conceptions, since all of them have some common characters.

In the physical world, like our own daily life, substances are recognized by the sense of sight, and the philosophical attributes like form, size, colour and so forth are clearly grasped by the brain through the eyes. In this case, the sense of touch only acts as an auxiliary measure. But when we perceive something by the sense of touch during the sleep, we have other concepts and presume their attributes. This act of recognition produces extraordinary visions and different figures from that of real ones.

Double touch, therefore, produces the visions which are totally different in forms from the real figures acquired by the eyes. The visions

obtained from double touch are developed and transferred to a different ones by the act of volition. In *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge mentions like this:

... the sensation of volition, which I have found reason to include under the head of single and double touch.¹³

Coleridge discovered that the sensation of volition must be included in the action of single and double touch, therefore this faculty of psychological phenomena should be greatly concerned with his metaphysics. He paralleled this double touch with the will, the faculty of choice which is one of the basic mental abilities. From this fact, he thinks it very important element in his system of metaphysics. Coleridge describes the effect of double touch in his 1805 *Notebook*:

In favour of Revelation, of the nature not logical but real—not what it ought to be but what it *is*—of historic faith/and of the necessary aid, which this lends to the wavering convictions of the Reason, in matters concerning God and Immortality. Is it not the same aid as that which the Double-touch lends to Sight and Hearing? Something may hereafter be found out to perform the same service, & yet to stand the severest test of Reason. Well! let that something be found out! Hitherto it has not been/and a Crutch may be an awkward Tool, but still the infirm want Crutches. Jan. 17. 1805. <Historic faith is evidently evolvable from double-touch.>¹⁴

Thus in Coleridge the functions of double touch provide a visionary scene or an acoustic effect for him. And moreover, double touch concerns much about the Reason which not only simply means the fundamental function of human reason, but the function of the highest Being, the God. Double touch operates under the influence of the Reason. The role and function of double touch are combined with reason which is the supreme

mental function of human beings. This fact proves nothing but the importance of the double touch which has an important faculty in the transcendental philosophy.

As above mentioned, the sensation of volition is included in the category of single and double touch. This provides the recognition that the sense of touch should be a kind of the sensation of the subject, the thinker. Coleridge does not retain the sense of touch only as a simple sense to detect outward phenomena but enhances to an attribute of the God, the supreme Reason.

Coleridge mentions a concrete example of double touch as follows :

Of the intimate connection of Volition, and of the Feeling & Consciousness of Volition, on the state of the Skin, I have noticed long ago in a former Pocket-book, occasioned by the curious Phenomenon experienced the Xmas of 1801 at Mr Howel's, No 10 King St, Covent Garden, my Skin deadened, the effect of violent Diarrhoea/My Speculations thence on double Touch—the generation of the Sense of Reality & Life out of us, from the Impersonation effected by a certain phantasm of double Touch, &c &c &c, and thence my Hope of making out a radical distinction between this Volition & Free Will or Arbitrament, & the detection of the Sophistry of the Necessitarians/as having arisen from confounding the two.¹⁵

As the above quotation, Coleridge experienced these curious state of mind or nervous system, in which double touch acted vigorously. Here he was trying to define the difference between volition and free will. Volition concerns double touch and free will acts in the ordinary daily world.

In the quotation above described, Coleridge experienced the state of double touch when he suffered from diarrhoea, feeling week sensation of his skin. In this condition, his skin had a different mode of sensation. This psychological state of skin arises from the state of seasickness or using narcotics, but in some kind of dream it is occasionally seen. From the

experience of this day, Coleridge found the embodiment of a vision, and felt a subjective sensation by double touch.

He analysed the action of double touch and thought this as having next contents :

Touch—double touch/¹Touch with the sense of immediate power
²with retentive power—³retentive power extinguishing the sense of
 touch, or making it mere feeling—& the gradations preceding this ex-
 tinction/⁴retentive power simply, as when I hold a thing with my
 Teeth/⁵with feeling not Touch in one part of the machinery, both in
 the other, as when I press a bit of sugar with my Tongue against my
 Palate/⁶with feeling & even touch but not specific *stimulari* (esse sub
 stimulo) as when I hold a quill or bit of fruit by my lips—¹⁶

Here, Coleridge classifies the sense of touch into six steps. The most important touch is described in the first place. The sense of immediate power is thought to be the touch with the sharpest feeling, and it occurs in a psychological state of rapture or trance. In this state, the feelings are sometimes clearly retained. There are six gradations in the states of touch, and the sixth one is the touch with the feeling just like holding a quill or bit of fruit without any stimulus from outer world.

The stage where double touch acts powerfully is in a kind of rapture or trance, which we often experience in a special state of the mind. Coleridge calls this “reverie” and it differs from mere dream. Reverie, I think, is a special mental state, which occasionally appears in the confusing state of dream with waking. Coleridge’s night-mair often concerns reverie, and it may be deeply related with the condition of his health. Therefore, we have to consider that relation in the next section.

5. Reverie and Night-mair

The relationship between dreams and reveries has an important

meaning. The sensations effect on feelings specially in reveries and not in dreams. The past experiences combine with the effect of touch and as a result it produces some grotesque or strange visions in the brain of the dreamer.

To proceed this theory, we have to define the definitions of dream and reverie. Coleridge had a dream with the feeling of terror which we usually call nightmare, but he called it night-mair as he mentioned in the note to the chapter eighteen of *Biographia Literaria* :

Though Shakespeare has for his own all-justifying purposes introduced the Night-Mare with her own foals, yet Mair means a Sister or perhaps a Hag.¹⁷

As he suggests here, mare means not merely a female horse but rightly a female human being who appears in his dreams. According to Coleridge's thought, night-mair is not a mere dream. It is more mysterious and horrible than ordinary dreams, because his sensations and feelings are all absorbed in his night-mairs. As he suggests above, night-mair is considered to be a night hag who is a horrible woman and appears in a hallucinatory images or in what we generally call a horrible dream. In his night-mair, the memories liberated from subconsciousness actively work, and by the action of the uninhibited imagination, various and curious visions are projected onto his brain :

Night-mair is, I think, always—even when it occurs in the midst of Sleep, and not as it more commonly does after a waking Interval, a state not of Sleep but of Stupor of the outward organs of Sense, not in words indeed but yet in fact distinguishable from the suspended power of the senses in true Sleep; —¹⁸

This fragment describes Coleridge's thought on reverie. Coleridge's night-mair sometimes arises in the middle of sleep, especially after waking

intervals, more often not from inaction but from confusion of the senses for outer word. He was afflicted by night-mairs in which what he call a night-hug or night-sister appears as a real but curious figure. It distresses him very much, however, it cynically encourages his poetic activity, and it gives him the motives and materials for his poetic mind. It is important for him as the world of his poetic experiences.

Dream and night-mair are quite different things for him. Coleridge's visions which he sees in his night-mair include many different women. They are sometimes tender girls, or occasionally familiar ladies, or more often terrible women.

The visions appeared in his night-mairs, which are brought forth by the action of double touch, have not real figures of his friends or acquaintances. His night-mair seems a state of half dream, in which his consciousness is clear but his senses are in confusion. In this condition, his unconsciousness is mingled and infused with outside reality in his sensory confusion. Therefore, it is an interwoven situation of half waking sensations and liberated unconsciousness which is free from time and space. Coleridge calls this confusing condition "reverie", and from this reverie state he produces fine poems.

Coleridge found that in this half-sleeping state the senses which detect the outer world stimulus are in confusion, then the mysterious visions are induced, but when the sensory organs are completely sleeping, no visions arise. He mentions thus :

This stupor seems occasioned by some painful sensation, of unknown locality, most often, I believe, in the lower Gut, tho' not seldom in the Stomach, which withdrawing the attention to itself from its sense of other realities present makes us asleep to them indeed but otherwise awake—and when ever this derangement occasions an interruption in the circulation, aided perhaps by pressure, awkward position, &c, the part deadened—¹⁹

Coleridge mentions here that this kind of stupor often occurs in the troubles of the stomach and other digestive organs with painful sensations. In this disorder state of organs, the realities he feels seem to be totally different ones from his waking state. His visionary dreams occur in this state of organs in which the senses are in confusion, especially the sense of touch is bewildering. But this confusion of sensation happens not only in the malfunction of digestive organs but in the other diseases of his teeth and limbs. He recorded this as follows :

—as the hand, or his arm, or the foot & leg, on this side , transmits double Touch as single Touch: to which the Imagination therefore, the true inward Creatrix, instantly out of the chaos of the elements <or shattered fragments> of Memory puts together some form to fit it
—²⁰

Thus in his states of sense organs and his health condition, the unusual sense of touch appears on the skin, and under this condition, the sensation by double touch is transmitted to his brain. At that moment, the inward goddess of creation works actively. He calls this power of creation "Creatrix". The Creatrix, that is, poetic Imagination, arranges the confused materials to a organic unity.

Coleridge mentions also that the conditions of the stomach greatly affects the condition of the skin, which is clear from his following description :

Mrs. C. told me, Monday Night, May 9th, that since she had had the Influenza, & her Skin had been evidently affected by the State of her stomach, that the Baby lying on her arm <often> seemed two Babies—she not <absolutely> asleep—both on the same side—& that she often seemed to have two Breasts on the same side.—²¹

Coleridge was convinced of the sense of double touch, because not

only he alone experiences his own but his wife Sara also experienced the sense of double touch through her baby. Now, double touch becomes a theory of his psychological and metaphysical principle. He believes that the double touch theory must be one of the universal principles for him.

As he mentioned, the body condition which is caused by double touch must be a confused state of his sensory organs, particularly of the sense of the skin. But it sometimes occurs in the state of seasickness. Coleridge mentions thus about this :

Sea sickness, the Eye on the Stomach, the Stomach on the Eye/—Eye
 + Stomach + Skin—Scratching & ever after in certain affections of the
 Skin, milder than those which provoke Scratching a restlessness for
 double Touch/Dalliance, & at its height, necessity of Fruition—Fruition
 the interest single Touch, &c &c &c; ²²

When a man is in seasickness, he sometimes has a unusual feeling for the skin sense, because of his painful situation during that stomach condition. At that state, he feels as if the stomach has another eye to see or feel the outer or inner world.

In Coleridge's night-mairs, the objects or things are thought to be real, but in our ordinary dreams they are not. He explains thus :

It is a general, but, as it appears to me, a mistaken Opinion, that in our *ordinary* Dreams we judge the Objects to be real. I say, our *ordinary* Dreams: because as to the a night-mair the opinion is to a considerable extent just. But the Night-mair is not a mere Dream, but takes place when the waking State of the Brain is re-commencing, and most often during a rapid alternation, a *twinkling* as it were, of sleeping and waking, while either from Pressure, or from some derangement in the Stomach, or either digesting Organs acting on the external Skin (which is <still> in sympathy with the Stomach & Bowels) and benumbing it, the sensations sent up to the Brain by double Touch (ex.

gr. when my own hand touches my side or breast) are so faint as to be merely equivalent to the sensation given by single Touch (when another Person's Hand touches me)—²³

As Coleridge mentions here, his night-mair concerns the sense of touch greatly. He explains here double touch and single touch rather plainly as the physical phenomena of the senses of touch during his sleeping. According to his explanation, the double touch is considered to be originally a physical response to a physical action of the limbs and the body. When we are in a special stupor state, there is a confusing state of understanding, in which the senses are slow or dull, but the conscious and volition are rather clear and active. Coleridge thought in the first place that the double touch is the sense of double or twofold to the skin, and after that, it becomes to have philosophical meanings.

Coleridge studies psychological phenomena with the greatest interest on various subjects, and the problem of double touch is one of his profound discovery in the field of psychology. In addition to this, he discovers many other psychological phenomena including subconsciousness, the stream of conscious, and collective consciousness in the modern senses. In his same lecture, he continues :

—the mind therefore, which at all times, with and without our distinct consciousness, seeks for and assumes some outward Cause for every Impression from without, and <which> in Sleep by aid of the Imaginative Faculty converts its Judgements respecting the Cause into a present Image, as being the Cause, —the mind, I say, in this case deceived by past experience attributes the painful sensation received to a correspondent Agent—An assassin, for instance, stabbing at the Side, or a Goblin sitting on the Breast, &c—²⁴

When he was in a night-mair, Coleridge sees images which he himself creates by the active works of the imaginative and creative faculty which

we usually call Imagination. His mind is deceived by past experiences caused by the painful sensation, and it feels or really sees frightful images that it makes by itself. The images, derived from past experiences and outward sensations, sometimes manifest as fearful assassin or goblin and so on. He mentions moreover as follows :

Add to that the Impressions of the Bed, Curtains, Room &c received by the Eyes in the half-moments of their opening blend with, & add vividness & appropriate distance to, the Dream-Image <which returns> when they close again: and thus we unite the Actual Perceptions, or their immediate Reliques, with the phantoms of the inward Sense—and thus so confound the half-waking, half-sleeping Reasoning Power, that we actually do pass a positive judgement for the reality of what we see & hear: tho' often accompanied by doubt and self-questioning, which, as I have myself experienced will at times become strong <enough> even before we wake, to convince us, that it is what it is—the Night-Mair.²⁵

As Coleridge describes above, he considers his night-mair as a vision appeared in the half-waking and half-sleeping condition. This state of sleep seems to be a very strange but interesting state of mind. It is thought to be a great discovery of the field of psychology of the day.

In these days, the half-dreaming but half-waking state which Coleridge discovered is understood as a stage of the REM sleep. Coleridge noticed that there are two kinds of the dreams: ordinary dreams and night-mair. The former corresponds to the non-REM stage, and latter REM stage. The REM stage is a stage of sleep in which the body is sleeping soundly but the brain is awaking to a degree and the eyes move quickly. It is a source of fantastic images.

According to the modern theory of the brain science, in the REM stage, the right brain works actively, and the left brain works only a little. The left brain works in the waking state to analyse and classify the

objects into special kinds and degrees according as the categories by the help of understanding. The right brain works to recognize the objects by the action of reason. If the works of the left brain weaken, the categories of objects would become ambiguous, and visions are liberated from the restriction of understanding. In this case, the visions are deformed by a strong sensation of threat or obsession owing to some inward or outward stimulus. The real nature of the visions appeared in a reverie is the visions liberated from time and space. They are not three dimensional objects but four dimensional visions beyond time and space, and they are free as phantoms. Coleridge mentions about the works of understanding and reason in night-mair :

In short, this Night-mair is not properly a *Dream*; but a species of Reverie, akin to Somnambulism, during which the Understanding & Moral Sense are awake tho' more or less confused, and over the Terrors of which the Reason can exert no influence because it is not true Terror : i.e. apprehension of Danger, but a sensation as much as the Tooth-ache, a Cramp—i.e. the Terror dose not *arise* out of a painful Sensation, but is itself a specific sensation=terror corporeus sive materialis.—²⁶

In his reveries or night-mairs, understanding is confused and cannot operate as in the waking conditions, but reason works rightly because it works without any relation to the feeling that the reverie brings forth. In his night-mair, the terror arises out of a specific sensation which is derived from corporeal or material pressure or something like that. The sensation of touch, then, greatly affects the feelings of the dreamer in the reveries. The touch should be an outward stimulus, and it works as double touch since the sense of sight does not work on that moment. This condition of sleep sometimes manifests a great vision with the help of double touch.

6. Conclusion

As mentioned above, Coleridge discovered a principle of psychology named double touch, and he utilized it in his own theory of poetry. Double touch has a physical meaning at first, and then, it developed into a meta-physical theory in his philosophy.

Coleridge observed that there are two kinds of sleeping states which we recognize as REM and non-REM sleeps by the modern theory of psychology. He discovered them almost two hundred years before a modern psychologist discovers them. He defined a half-sleeping and half-waking state, which was sometimes derived from reveries that differ from ordinary dreams. He experienced double touch during the stupor which was not considered to be an ordinary sleep. His interest in sleep was combined with the sense of touch, and it developed into the study of what we call depth psychological phenomena.

Coleridge classified his dreams in two categories : i.e. ordinary dream and night-mair. In his night-mair he often saw deformed women who brought him pain or anguish, but it also gave him poetical activation. Through his own experiences, he watched the functions of double touch in his reveries.

He established a new theory concerning the sense of touch during reveries. He introduced it into the poetry making process as a new theory. His theory led us to the most interesting field of modern psychology.

Notes

- 1 John Beer, *Coleridge's Poetic Intelligence* (London : Macmillan Press Ltd., 1977), p. 86.
- 2 *CN* I, 985.
- 3 *CN* I, 1039.
- 4 *PW* I, 478.
- 5 *PW* I, 113.
- 6 *P. Lects (1949)* p. 115.

- 7 *The Complete Works of John Keats* (New York: AMS Press, 1970), ed. H. Buxton Forman, vol. 5, p. 44.
- 8 *CN II*, 2399.
- 9 *CN I*, 1399.
- 10 *CN II*, 2486.
- 11 *CN I*, 1827 n.
- 12 *CN I*, 1827 n.
- 13 *BL (CC) I*, 293.
- 14 *CN II*, 2405.
- 15 *CN I*, 1827.
- 16 *CN II*, 2399.
- 17 *BL (CC) II*, 70.
- 18 *CN III*, 4046.
- 19 Loc. cit.
- 20 Loc. cit.
- 21 *CN I*, 1188.
- 22 *CN I*, 1827.
- 23 *Lects 1808-1819 (CC)*, I, 135-136.
- 24 *Lects 1808-1819 (CC)*, I, 136.
- 25 Loc. cit.
- 26 *CN III*, 4046.