**Imagination and Fancy**

*Biographia Literaria* is Coleridge’s “unplanned” masterpiece. It was one of Coleridge’s main critical studies. In this work, he discussed the elements of writing. The work is long and seemingly loosely structured, and although there are autobiographical elements, it is not a straightforward autobiography. Although the work is not written from Coleridge's poetic mind, it is still written with the qualities and rhythm of the poetic. Not only does he discuss literature itself he discusses the many variables that influence and inspire writers. Through this discussion, he makes many value judgments, leaving his audience with a clear understand of his stance on certain issues.

*Biographia Literaria* is a work on the literary aesthetics or literary theory. The first part of *Biographia Literaria* i.e., from chapter I-XIII deals with his philosophical and metaphysical theories and their and impact on Coleridge. Thereafter, he wrote preface to the book which now forms the second part of *Biographia Literaria* i.e., from chapter XIV-XXII—it deals with critical analysis of Wordsworth’s theory of poetry and poetic diction.

**Coleridge on imagination and fancy:**

Fancy and imagination differ in kind. These are activities of two different kinds. Fancy is not a creative power at all. It only combines what it perceives, but like imagination it does not fuse and unify. The difference between the two is the same as the difference mechanical mixture and a chemical compound. In a mechanical mixture a number of ingredients are brought together, they are mixed up, but they do not lose their individual properties. They still exist as separate identities. On the other hand, in a chemical compound the different ingredients combine to form something new. The different ingredients no longer exist as separate identities. They lose their respective properties and fuse together to create something new and entirely different. A compound is an act of creation; while a mixture is a bringing together of a number of separate elements.

For Coleridge, fancy is the drapery of poetic genius, but imagination is its very soul, which forms all into one graceful and harmonious whole.

**Imagination**

Imagination in its real sense denotes the working of poetic minds upon external objects or objects visible to the eyes. Imaginative process sometimes adds additional properties to an object or sometimes abstracts from it some of its properties. Therefore, imagination thus transforms the object into something new. It modifies and even creates new objects.

According to Coleridge, imagination has two types: Primary and Secondary.

***Primary Imagination:*** it is the nature and function of imagination which distinguishes it from fancy. According to Coleridge, imagination has two forms i.e., primary and secondary. Primary imagination is merely the power of receiving impressions of the external world through the senses. It is the power of perceiving the objects of sense, both in their parts and as a whole. It is an involuntary act of mind; the human mind receives the impressions and sensations from the outside world, unconsciously and involuntarily, it imposes some sort of order on those impressions, reduces then to shape and size, so that the mind is able to form a clear image of the outside world. It is in this way that clear and coherent perception becomes possible.

***Secondary Imagination:*** the primary imagination is universal it is possessed by all. On the other hand, the Secondary Imagination maybe possessed by others also but it is the peculiar and distinctive attribute of the artist. It is the secondary imagination that makes artistic creation possible. It is more active and conscious. It requires an effort of the will, volition and conscious effort. It works upon what is perceived by the primary imagination, its raw materials are the sensations and impressions supplied to it by the primary imagination. By an effort of the will and the intellect, the secondary imagination selects and orders the raw materials and re-shapes and remodels it into objects of beauty. It is an active agent which “dissolves, diffuses, dissipates in order to create”.

The secondary imagination is at the root of all poetic activity. It is the power which harmonies and reconciles opposites, and hence a “magical, synthetic power”. This unifying power of the imagination is best seen in the fact that it synthesizes or fuses the various the various faculties of the soul- perception, intellect, will, emotion – and fuses the internal with the external, the subjective with the objective, the human mind with external nature, the spiritual with the physical and material.

The primary imagination and secondary imaginations do not differ from each other in kind. The difference between them is one of degree. The secondary imagination is more active, more a result of volition, more conscious and more voluntary, than the primary one. The primary imagination, on the other hand is universal, while the secondary is a peculiar privilege enjoyed by the artists.

**Fancy**

Coleridge regards fancy to be the inferior to imagination. It is according to him a creative power. It only combines different things into different shapes, not like imagination to fuse them into one. According to him, it is the process of “bringing together images dissimilar in the main, by source”. It has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites. Fancy, in Coleridge’s eyes was employed for tasks that were “passive” and “mechanical”.

According to S.T Coleridge, Fancy is lower than the secondary imagination, which is already of the earthly realm. Fancy is the source of our baser desires. It is not a creative faculty but a repository for lust. Imagination is the faculty by which we perceive the world around us. It works through our senses and is common to all human beings; secondary imagination is the poetic vision, the faculty that a poet has to idealize and unify. Rejecting the empiricist assumption that the mind was a tabula rasa on which external experiences and sense impressions were imprinted, stored, recalled, and combined through a process of association, Coleridge divided the "mind" into two distinct faculties of fancy and imagination. During a state of ecstasy, in fact, images do not appear isolated, but associated according to laws of their own which have nothing to do with the data of experiences. The imagination is contrasted with fancy, which is inferior to it, since it is a kind of which enables a poet to aggregate and associate metaphors, similes and other poetical devices. He thinks it has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites. The Fancy is indeed no other than a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space; while it is blended with, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will, which we express by the word CHOICE. But equally with the ordinary memory the Fancy must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association. In nutshell, we can say that Coleridge has viewed or explored a good a good idea on fancy and imagination. Most critics after him who distinguishes fancy from imagination tended to make fancy simply the faculty that produces a lesser, lighter or humorous kind of poetry and to make imagination the faculty that produces a higher, more serious and a more passionate poetry.

**Conclusion**

Coleridge is the first critic to study the nature of imagination and examine its role in creative activity. While most of the critics use Fancy and imagination almost as synonyms, Coleridge is the first critic to distinguish between them and define their respective roles. He distinguishes between primary and secondary imagination. Coleridge’s treatment of the subject is characterized by greater depth and philosophical subtlety. It is his unique contribution to the literary theory.