Samuel Taylor Coleridge
(1772 – 1834)
Biographia Literaria is a critical work by Coleridge which is contained in 24 chapters.

- Biographia Literaria is one of his significant theoretical works.
- Biographia Literaria is concerned with the form of poetry, the genius of the poet and relationship to philosophy.
In his 1817 work *Biographia Literaria*, Samuel Taylor Coleridge distinguished between "fancy" and "imagination." He saw fancy as a logical way of organizing sensory material without really synthesizing it and preferred imagination, which he defined as a spontaneous and original act of creation.
Coleridge breaks imagination still further into primary and secondary types. While primary imagination is shared by all, allowing people to unconsciously understand the structure of the world, secondary imagination belongs purely to the poet, who can consciously shape new worlds in addition to the given one.
IMAGINATION

- Coleridge focused mainly on an imagination as the key to poetry. He divided it into two main components: primary and secondary imagination.

- His most contribution to Literary Theory, literature and criticism is his ‘POETIC IMAGINATION’

- For Coleridge, imagination was responsible for acts that were truly creative and inventive.

- The imagination, on the other hand, was vital and transformative.
4. Coleridge's imagination

- **Imagination**
  - Primary
    - Creative, original, used unconsciously
    - Human individual power to produce images
    - The power to give chaos a certain order
  - Secondary

- **Fancy**
  - A kind of logical faculty: the mechanical ability the poet has to use devices, like metaphors, alliterations in poetry in order to blend various «ingredients» into beautiful images
  - Poetic faculty, which not only gives shape and order to a given world, but builds new worlds.
Primary Imagination

- It acts dependently of human will.
- It represents the basic agency of human awareness.
- Primaty imagination is something that is there in every human being because it is the living power of human perception.
- It is the common faculty of every human being.
- It enable us to separate, divide and order in order to make perception possible.
- And to understand the unity of object.
- The primary imagination is a spontaneous creation of new ideas and they are expressed perfectly.
Primary Imagination

Living power

Eternal act of creation in the infinite IAM

Prime agent of all human perception

Repetition in the finite mind
Secondary Imagination

- It acts in dependently of human will.
- It represents the conscious use of human power.
- The creative gift possessed by the poet.
- Secondary imagination is rather symbolic, it produces a form of its own.
- It helps understanding the unity of universal, like good, divinity, truth, moral..
- It is more active and conscious in its working.
- Secondary imagination selects and orders the raw material and reshapes and remolds it into objects of beauty.
SECONDARY IMAGINATION

Echo of the former

Co-exists with
the conscious will

Differs in the
Degree & Mode of operation
Coleridge distinguishes secondary imagination, with fancy.
Fancy is the lowest form of imagination because it has no other
counters to play with but fixities and definites.
Fancy; mechanical, imitative.
It constructs images out of new combination conceptions and
memories.
For Coleridge, fancy is the attribute of poetic genius, but
imagination is its soul. Fancy is equated with a mechanical mixture
and imagination is equated with a chemical compound.
Fancy is a limited or false parallel of Secondary Imagination. The
parallel between the creativity of the poet and that of the cosmos
makes us think of Schelling, but in Coleridge’s account there is on
consciousness on deliberation of the cosmic creativity, so that the
word ‘God’ is perhaps more appropriate here.
Fancy was employed for tasks that were Passive Mechanical

The accumulation of fact and documentation