

A Study concerning the Distinction
between Imagination and Fancy
with Special Emphasis on S.T. Coleridge

Noboru YAMASHITA

In this world, the first person who made the distinction between Imagination and Fancy, thereby clarifying the meaning of such a distinction, and enunciating it as a fundamental principle in artistic creations was S.T. Coleridge. The distinction between Imagination and Fancy is a product of the age of Romanticism, free and unrestricted.

In the age of Classicism, more emphasis was placed on the terms of *imitation* and *talent*, but in the age of Romanticism, much importance was attached to the distinction of Imagination and Fancy, together with the words of *originality*, *creation* and *genius*. Thus, the tradition of placing emphasis on such distinction has been handed down to those writers faithful to Romanticism, including William Wordsworth, Leigh Hunt, William Hazlitt, John Keats and John Ruskin, etc.

On the other hand, however, there were some writers who opposed to this tendency in these days from the very outset.

To cite a few instances, John Ruskin pronounced scepticism about distinguishing Imagination from Fancy, or Edgar Allan Poe definitely proclaimed an opposition to such a distinction.

More recently, John Livingston Lowes expressed his opposition to distinguish Imagination and Fancy in his work of "*The Road to Xanadu*" and T.E. Eliot, in his work of "*The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*". These two well-known critics. They did this by viewing the principle of literary creations from the standpoint of

psychology. Coleridge established a distinction between Imagination and Fancy backed up by the background of philosophy and aesthetics. Now, it is noted, however, that psychology and aesthetics have an opposing stand to each other.

Psychology interprets both Imagination and Fancy as a talent or function concerned with memory, while it is pointed out that Imagination and Fancy should be clearly distinguished from each other from the viewpoints of aesthetics and literature, the conception being traditional. How to dispense with the controversy is posed as a problem still to be solved now.

The present paper purports to examine the history of distinction between Imagination and Fancy, with Coleridge as the center and, at the same time, is in substance a study pertaining to how such distinction between Imagination and Fancy is appraised at present.