

Imagination Remix:
An Awakening Call for Modernity

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If to destroy the reality of all, that we actually behold, be idealism, what can be more egregiously so, than the system of modern metaphysics, which banishes us to a land of shadows, surrounds us with apparitions, and distinguishes truth from illusion only by the majority of those who dream the same dream? “I asserted that the world was mad,” exclaimed poor Lee, “and the world said, that I was mad, and confound them, they outvoted me.”

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*¹

Dualism and the Bifurcation of Nature

A crucial idea which became an accepted maxim of Western civilization in the 18th and 19th centuries and continues to infuse the Wittgensteinian backdrop of our collective psyche is the bifurcation of Nature... or what could also be referred to as the subject-object, mind-body, nature-culture divide. Such dualistic thought came as part of the scientific revolution and was first articulated by Galileo in *The Assayer* (1623) as primary and secondary qualities².

The objectification of nature was conflagrated by the ‘father of empiricism’ Francis Bacon who in the search for Knowledge spoke about “‘torturing’ nature’s secrets out of her”³ and who also started the Royal Society in London. Even in our current time, the disparagement of Nature continues. For example, in the early 1990s Reverend Billy Graham pronounced of a hurricane whipping its way across the Carolinas that “...if we do not have faith in God the Father, we are going to be at the mercy of Mother Nature.”⁴

¹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, prod. Tapio Riikonen and David Widger (Project Gutenberg, 2004), Chapter XII, 65, <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/6081>.

² Martha Bolton, "Primary and Secondary Qualities in Early Modern Philosophy", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2022 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2022/entries/qualities-prim-sec/>>.

³ Owen Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought* (Oxford: Barfield Press, 2014), 315n41.

⁴ Richard Tarnas, “Humanity’s Rite of Passage.” PARP-6060-01: Introduction to Philosophy, Cosmology, and Consciousness (class lecture at Antioch University, Seattle, WA, March 13, 2015), URL = <<https://youtu.be/h4Ji907EXvc>>.

Descartes, Newton, and Kant followed suit with the objectification of nature and body versus mind/soul diremption. Coleridge writes in the *Biographia Literaria*:

To the best of my knowledge Des Cartes was the first philosopher who introduced the absolute and essential heterogeneity of the soul as intelligence, and the body as matter. The assumption, and the form of speaking have remained, though the denial of all other properties to matter but that of extension, on which denial the whole system of Dualism is grounded, has been long exploded. For since impenetrability is intelligible only as a mode of resistance; its admission places the essence of matter in an act or power, which it possesses in common with spirit; and body and spirit are therefore no longer absolutely heterogeneous, but may without any absurdity be supposed to be different modes, or degrees in perfection, of a common substratum. To this possibility, however, it was not the fashion to advert. The soul was a thinking substance, and body a space-filling substance.⁵

Descartes placed animals and plants into what he termed the extra-mental realm. For Descartes, and increasingly for the world of scientific thought as a whole, the extra-mental realm “was and always had been, exclusively answerable to the laws of mechanical causality.”⁶ By example, Descartes judged animals to be irrational, and as such found them soul-less and without consciousness; to him they were mere automata.⁷ Kant expressed an indifference to their well-being:

“So far as animals are concerned, we have no direct duties. Animals are not self-conscious, and are there merely as a means to an end.”⁸

It should be noted here that anesthesia was not discovered until 1846, a horror attested to through Fanny Burney’s recounting of a mastectomy done without anesthesia in 1811.

⁵ Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, Chapter VIII, 57.

⁶ Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 65.

⁷ Mary Midgley, *Animals and Why They Matter* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1998), 11.

⁸ Midgley, *Animals and Why They Matter*, 51.

Dominique Larrey, her French military surgeon, had as his claim to fame that he worked fast.⁹ Dare we imagine the pain encountered by Novalis's fiancé who at age 14 had three liver surgeries within a series of days—all without anesthesia?¹⁰

Returning to the idea of animals as automata or as extra-mental *things*, it wasn't until 1876 that the Vivisection Act went into effect in England. It was legislated due to the public's horror at witnessing vivisection demonstrations on live animals without anesthesia, as well as the Royal Commission's own disdain with the cavalier attitude of some scientists. For example, a leading German bacteriologist, Emanuel Klein (1844-1925), admitted that he only used anaesthetics on animals for his own convenience in handling them. He is quoted as saying "I think with regard to an experimenter, a man who conducts special research, he has no time, so to speak, for thinking what the animal will feel or suffer."¹¹ A stanza from William Wordsworth's, *The Tables Turned*¹² (published in 1798) summarizes these times nicely:

Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;
Our meddling intellect
Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things:—
We murder to dissect.

⁹ Richard Holmes, *The Age of Wonder: How the Romantic Generation Discovered the Beauty and Terror of Science* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010), 977.

¹⁰ Novalis, and Friedrich von Hardenberg, *The Birth of Novalis: Friedrich Von Hardenberg's Journal of 1797, with Selected Letters and Documents*, trans. and ed. Bruce Donehower (New York: State University of New York Press, 2007), 57.

¹¹ John Vyvyan, *In Pity and in Anger: A Study of the Use of Animals in Science* (Marblehead, MA: Micah Publications, 1988), 87, quoted in AWH Bates, *Vivisection, Virtue, and the Law in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Palgrave Macmillian, 2017), Chapter 2, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK513716/> doi: 10.1057/978-1-137-55697-4_2.

¹² William Wordsworth, "The Tables Turned," Poetry Foundation, accessed December 3, 2023, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45557/the-tables-turned>.

Such was the dark nature of the late 18th century, which also included the carnage of the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror (1789-1799), as well as the distorted use of children as chimney sweeps who often died from the toxicity of their work.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge - Habituated to the Vast

From his earliest years, Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) was in touch with the metaphysical and cosmic nature of life. As he came of age Frederick William Herschel (who discovered Uranus in 1781) was beginning to write papers about an evolving universe.¹³ Herschel saw “the universe as a living, growing, organic entity, with all nebulae belonging to one enormous extended family.”¹⁴ Coleridge’s father loved these discoveries of the cosmos and shared his excitement with Coleridge who was then a young boy:

I remember, that at eight years old I walked with him [Coleridge’s father] one evening from a farmer’s house, a mile from Ottery — & he told me the names of the stars — and how Jupiter was a thousand times larger than our world — and that the other twinkling stars were Suns that had worlds rolling round them — & when I came home, he showed me how they rolled round. I heard him with profound delight & admiration; but without the least mixture of Wonder or incredulity. For from my early reading of Faery Tales, & Genii etc etc — my mind had been *habituated to the Vast*.¹⁵

It was during his eighth year that his father also passed away. Coleridge was sent to study at Christ’s Hospital, a charity school, where its “very severe master, the Reverend James Bowyer” exposed him to the Greek classics, the poetry of Milton and Shakespeare, and religious and philosophical thought.¹⁶ He wrote in the *Biographia Literaria* that “At a very premature age,

¹³ Holmes, *The Age of Wonder*, 670.

¹⁴ Holmes, *The Age of Wonder*, 671-672.

¹⁵ Caroline Herschel, *Caroline Herschel’s Autobiographies*, ed. Michael Hoskin (Cambridge: Scientific Publications Ltd., 2003), 66-67, quoted in Holmes, *The Age of Wonder*, 378.

¹⁶ Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, Chapter I, 9.

even before my fifteenth year, I had bewildered myself in metaphysics, and in theological controversy.”¹⁷

Coleridge was a man of his time who also lived and thought outside of it. He traveled in circles and was friends with the leading scholars of the day¹⁸, yet he opposed the ideas of his peers — many of whom had succumbed to a dualistic world view driven by causal mechanistic, non-teleological processes. Nature was viewed primarily as *natura naturata* or as completed “forms” that moved through mechanistic stages with no distinction given to its living and producing nature or *natura naturans*.

Coleridge abhorred this dualistic, reductionist perspective and spent his life trying to rectify it even though it meant going against the grain.¹⁹ He rejected the prevalent idea of the Materialists of his day that “Matter has no Inward.”²⁰ — a sentiment still being rejected in the writings of Teilhard de Chardin some one hundred years later.²¹ Coleridge himself continued making his case, and in 1830, four years before his death, wrote in his essay *On the Constitution of the Church and State*:

“Remember, that whatever *is*, *lives*. A thing absolutely lifeless is inconceivable, except as a thought, image, or fancy, in some other being.”²²

Yet among the scientists of his day, with their adherence to post-Cartesian methods, even the mere idea of *natura naturans* seemed absurd. Owen Barfield paraphrases Sir Herbert Reid’s

¹⁷ Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, Chapter I, 13.

¹⁸ The list includes people such as Sir Humphrey Davy, John Abernathy, William Wordsworth, Sir Joseph Banks, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, Thomas Poole, etc.

¹⁹ Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 59.

²⁰ Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, Chapter VIII, 58.

²¹ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, trans. Bernard Wall (New York: HarperPerennial, 1959), 56.

²² Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *On the Constitution of Church and State*, ed. H.N. Coleridge (London, 1839), 196, quoted in Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 59.

response when asked about *Natur-geist*: “How could that which is by definition not a phenomenon be recognized as a phenomenon by anyone?”²³ In sum, *natura naturans*, viewed as non-existent, could not even be considered a hypothesis for testing.

For Coleridge the living nature of life (*natura naturans*), or the producing nature of nature, was not pure abstraction, nor some kind of supernatural occultism, nor God, nor a phenomenon of the phenomena itself. Rather, it was “supersensuous”²⁴ — something real that fell outside the “despotism of the eye.” Its realness was similar in kind to gravitation and magnetism. He felt that like these two forces, it could be considered real even though it could not literally be seen.²⁵

Although Coleridge is known today primarily as a Romantic poet, Owen Barfield makes clear in his book *What Coleridge Thought* that Coleridge was a prescient thinker who originated a Dynamic Philosophy that has much relevance for modernity. His philosophical work offers guidance for heightened awareness and reconsideration of the “two errors”²⁶ that he felt resulted from scientism and Cartesian logic. Both fallacies are not only extant today but have fallen into such quotidian acceptance that they are regarded as common sense.²⁷

Coleridge refers to them as errors since they are the result of an illicit merging of speculation and empiricism:

It is of the highest importance in all departments of knowledge to keep the Speculative distinct from the Empirical. As long as they run parallel they are of

²³ Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 44.

²⁴ Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 31.

²⁵ Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 29-33.

²⁶ Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 183.

²⁷ Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 84.

the greatest service to each other: they never meet but to cut and cross.²⁸

The first error is the dichotomy between mind and matter, their mutual exclusivity, and how the observer (subject) looks out at and is separate from the objects of her gaze. Coleridge unequivocally saw this supposition as a speculation that became accepted as an unquestioned fact.²⁹ The second is the doctrine of the continuity of natural causes, also referred to as “uniformitarianism” typically referred to in geology. By extension it has a meaning that whatever is causing things now is the same as what has always caused them.³⁰ Its acceptance implies that mutational leaps are non-existent, as is the unexpected. The unexpected, extrapolated from the realm of geology, could include things like miracles, pandemics, stock market crashes, world ecological collapse, etc.

Coleridge’s Dynamic Philosophy

The cultivation of those sciences which have enlarged the limits of the empire of man over the external world, has, for want of the poetical faculty, proportionally circumscribed those of the internal world; and man, having enslaved the elements, remains himself a slave.

Percy Bysshe Shelley, *A Defense of Poetry* ³¹

In current times we are held captive by such error-laden common-sense beliefs that clearly merit revisiting. They have propagated, for example, the climate crisis, rampant racism, political and social schisms, and the lingering vestiges of colonialism. They also continue to limit

²⁸ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Inquiring Spirit (Anthology)*, ed. Kathleen Coburn (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 1951), 192, quoted in Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 182.

²⁹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, ed. H.N. Coleridge (Pickering, 1839), 304-305, quoted in Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 183.

³⁰ Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 184.

³¹ Percy Bysshe Shelley, “A Defense of Poetry” (37), The Harvard Classics, accessed December 3, 2023, <https://resources.saylor.org/wwwresources/archived/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/A-Defense-of-Poetry.pdf>.

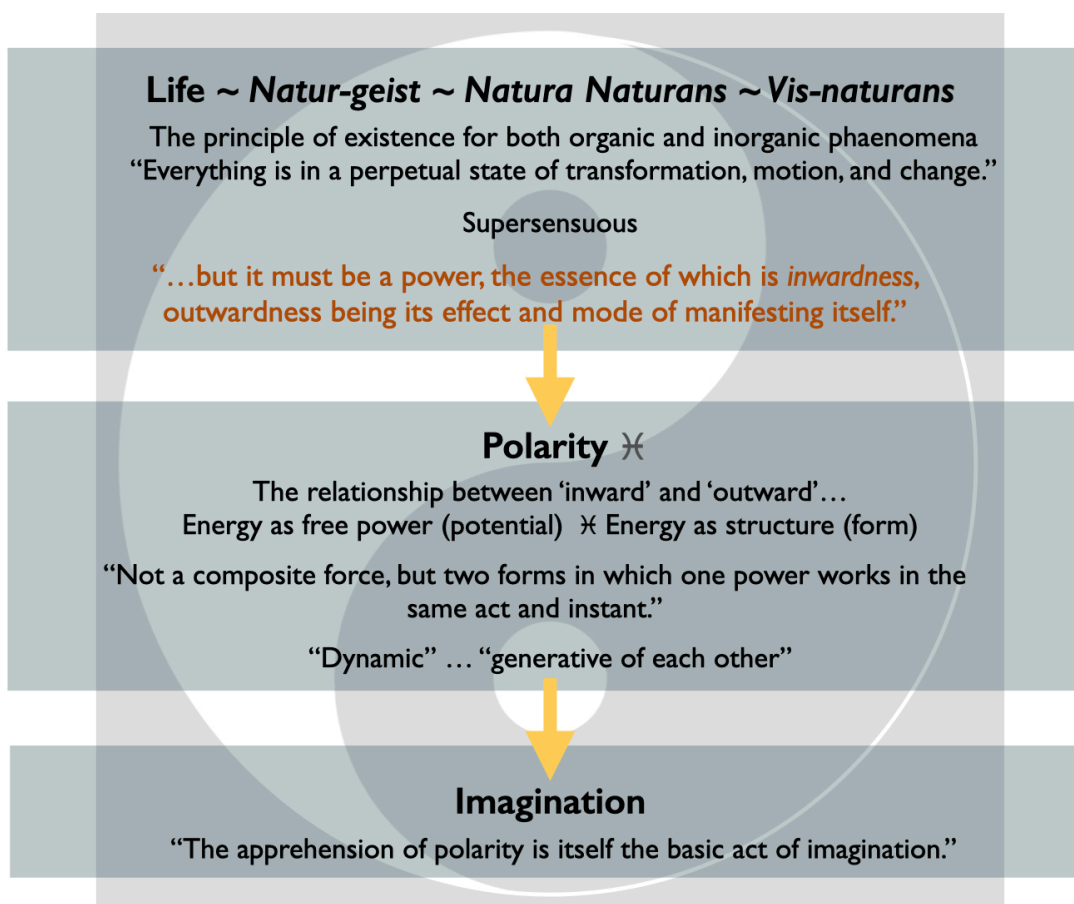


Figure 1. Summation of Critical Terms and Their Relationships

our approaches to problem solving and our embrace of ethical imperatives. Barfield points out that their reconsideration suggests that “physical process cannot be isolated from mental process, nor natural science from humans and ethical psychology.”³²

In order to apply Coleridge’s Dynamic Philosophy (a philosophy that includes a fair degree of nuanced complexity) to our modern dilemma, it is necessary to identify and elucidate his use of particular words, their meanings, and their interacting relationships. Owen Barfield has brilliantly undertaken this task which will enable the scope of this paper to be less about reiterating what Barfield has surmised and more about the implications and insights Coleridge’s

³² Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 185.

Dynamic Philosophy offers modernity. Nonetheless, a brief discussion of such terms and their relations is needed for this exposition to have ground and relevance. (Figure 1.)

As stated earlier, the living nature of life (*natura naturans*), the supersensuous reality that many people of Coleridge's time considered only pure abstraction or ignored as a murky middle in the Cartesian subject-object divide, was his *raison d'être*. He found it to be the principle of existence for both organic and inorganic phenomena. It was a "law" that governed throughout all of Nature³³, and that consisted of the interplay and the power between "inwardness" and "outwardness."³⁴ Nature itself (*natura naturata*) was part and parcel of it, in that it was "the productive power [*natura naturans*] suspended and, as it were, quenched in the product."³⁵

Inherent in the interplay of *naturata* and *naturans* is Polarity. Polarity acted as the relational dynamicism of these two forces or powers: one of which held the *potentia* of energy as free power; the other of energy as structure or form.³⁶ Coleridge said of Polarity that "...it is not a composite force... [but] two forms, in which a one Power works in the same act and instant."³⁷ As such, these two forces, which are a unity of one, are "dynamic" and "generative of each other" in "a living and generative interpenetration".³⁸

³³ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *S.T. Coleridge's Treatise on Method*, ed. A. D. Snyder (Constable, 1934), quoted in Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 47.

³⁴ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Collection of Numbered Manuscripts in the British Museum, 2801 n150, quoted in Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 277.

³⁵ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "On the Prometheus of Aeschylus," *Literary Remains*, vol. 4, 354, ed. H.N. Coleridge, quoted in Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 31.

³⁶ Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 45-46.

³⁷ Coleridge, Collection of Numbered Manuscripts, 2801 n128, quoted in Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 277. Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 278 n 24.

³⁸ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Complete World of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. W.G.T. Shedd (Harper Brothers, 1884), vol. I, 471, quoted in Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 48.

A symbol that best captures their definition and polar dynamicism is the yin-yang *tai-qi* symbol. (Background of Figure 1.) This symbol exemplifies how the two forces are inter-related with each present in the other, inseparable, and representative of all of life (quantum to cosmos, organic to inorganic, nature to culture). It is interesting to note that Alfred North Whitehead's process philosophy incorporates this same (di)polar dynamic and the continuous motion and change of unfolding life. Process philosophy's *concrescences*, which are the coming together of physical and mental poles of past and potential experiencing that morph into the super-ject³⁹, represent the same "pause" that Coleridge identified as the *coagulum spiritus* or "the pause, by interpenetration, of opposite energies"⁴⁰ — the productive power suspended in the form of the product.

Coleridge makes the connection between humans and nature that transcends the commonly held subject-object divide in several ways. One is through a parallelism of human mind or intelligence (the act of thinking) with the life-force or *naturans* of Nature. He writes:

...the productive power, or *vis naturans*, which in the sensible world, or *natura naturata*, is what we mean by the word nature, when we speak of the same as an agent, is essentially one (that is, of one kind) with the intelligence, which is in the human mind above nature.⁴¹

He viewed both intelligence and *natura naturans* as supersensuous⁴², i.e., we know when we are in the act of thinking even though we can't "see" it. It followed then that if the human

³⁹ Matthew David Segall, *Physics of the World-Soul* (United States: Sacra Sage Press, 2021), 41-43.

⁴⁰ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Collected Letters*, ed. E.L. Griggs (Clarendon Press, 1956-1959), vol. 4, 775, quoted in Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 44.

⁴¹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Friend*, ed. Barbara E. Rooke (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), vol. 14, 497-498, quoted in Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 82.

⁴² Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 83.

mind was of the same kind as *naturans*; and if *naturans* and *naturata* were equal through their polar unity; then the human mind had itself the same connection with *naturata* through association, i.e., we are not only one with Nature, but we are also Nature.⁴³ (See image examples in Appendix I.)

A second way in which he made this connection was through the law of polarity that exists throughout Nature. In this polarity, humans are active, and nature is passive. Via this polar interconnectivity humans and nature are, in essence, a unity of one. He deemed Imagination as the intermediary at play between these two poles. It was the dynamic, “in the middle” of the nature-human poles that played out across all facets of human existence (e.g., poetry, art, philosophy, including even science). As such, Barfield concludes that “the apprehension of polarity is itself *the basic act of imagination*.”⁴⁴

Imagination

In the *Biographia Literaria* (1817), Coleridge mentions how at age seventeen he was introduced to the sonnets of Bowles and then to the poems of Cowper. He found both poets to be “the first who combined natural thoughts with natural diction; the first who reconciled the head with the heart.”⁴⁵ He appears to mention this as an early recognition of Imagination which he later experienced first-hand through his friendship with William Wordsworth (and first reading of Wordsworth’s poem *Descriptive Sketches*⁴⁶) and sharing of poetry, including their joint collection

⁴³ Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 84.

⁴⁴ Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 48.

⁴⁵ Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, Chapter I, 17.

⁴⁶ Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, Chapter IV, 38.

of poems published in *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). It was in this collection that *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* made its debut. He also wrote a number of other inspired poems around this time, including the *Aeolian Harp* (1796), *Kubla Khan* (1797), and *Frost at Midnight* (1798).

An important theme of the *Biographia Literaria* is his discussion in Chapter IV, XII, and XIII of the Imagination. In Chapter XIII, after a lengthy preamble where he caveats his entire undertaking of discussing it followed by a promise that he will discuss it in greater detail in some future publication (which he never does), he writes:

The Imagination then I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary Imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operations. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate...⁴⁷

The primary Imagination then is in the unconscious background as “the living power” that is behind all that we as humans perceive. Coleridge’s description of it as “the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM”⁴⁸ suggests, as Barfield notes, that its presence can only be witnessed in “the familiar face of nature herself.”⁴⁹ It is a primordial, supersensuous force that lacks the finality of Plato’s forms since it is dynamic and continuously creating. The secondary Imagination too is a dynamic force that is primary Imagination’s progeny made manifest through symbol, sound, metaphor — a kind of channeling of its inherent, ephemeral, forever morphing

⁴⁷ Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, Chapter XIII, 127.

⁴⁸ Note: In Chapter XII, 115 — Coleridge defines the I AM as “This principle, and so characterized manifests itself in the SUM or I AM; which I shall hereafter indiscriminately express by the words sprit, self, and self-consciousness.”

⁴⁹ Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 104.

beauty to earth through the human consciousness in some manifested form such as art, music, and poetry. It is elusive. “It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates” ...or as Shelley writes, “for the mind in creation is as a fading coal, which some invisible influence [Imagination], like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness...”⁵⁰

Secondary Imagination also encompasses two other qualities or principles. The first is captured in the idea of “unity in multiteity.”⁵¹ This seems best articulated as an ability to recognize the universal themes among the many, such as Jung’s archetypes, Shakespeare’s depictions of characters that represent every man, and poetic themes of emotion to which we all relate, such as the grief and sadness in Keats’ *Ode to the Nightingale*. A variation of this principle is found in the relationship between the whole and its part or *Totus in omni parte* (the whole is in every part). Coleridge writes, “...a work of art will be just in proportion as it adequately conveys the thought, and rich in proportion to the variety of parts which it holds in unity.”⁵² In other words, each part is a whole in and of itself, and yet also imperative to the completion of the larger whole to which it is a part.

The second principle is the ability the imagination facilitates to become (even if momentarily) the polar unity of self and world, the “both/and” simultaneity of nature and mind.

Coleridge writes:

⁵⁰ Shelley, “A Defense of Poetry,” 39.

⁵¹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “Theory of Life (Hints Towards a More Comprehensive Theory of Life)” in *Selected Poetry and Prose of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Donald Stauffer (New York: Random House, The Modern Library, 1951), 575n, quoted in Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 107.

⁵² Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “On Poesy and Art,” *Coleridge’s Literary Remains, Volume I*, ed. Henry Nelson Coleridge, Esq., prod. Jonathan Ingram, Clytie Siddall, David Widger (Project Gutenberg, 2005), 251, <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/8488>, quoted in Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 110.

A.

Reason
 Imagination
 Understanding
 —————
 Understanding
 Fancy
 Sense

B.

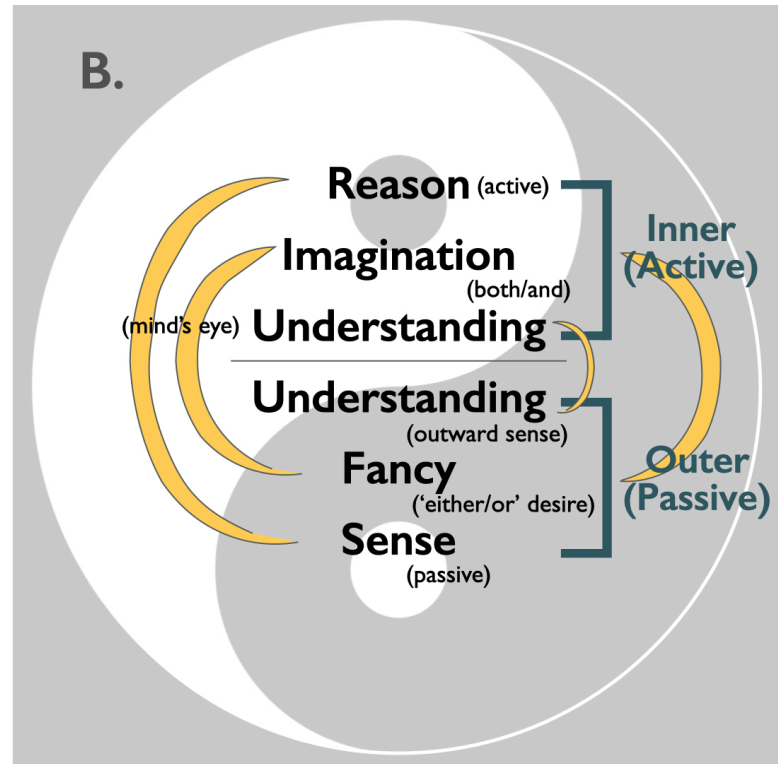


Figure 2. (A.) Coleridge's Order of Mental Powers as Originally Written
 (B.) With Elaboration

He [the poet] diffuses a tone and spirit of unity, that blends, and (as it were) fuses, each into each, by that synthetic and magical power, to which we have appropriated the name of imagination.⁵³

In this second principle of polar unity, there is a kind of fusion or blending of the polarities in such a way that the “two forces are working in harmony”⁵⁴. The union does not cause cessation or become static or frozen, but rather enacts an interweaving that generates additional movement and power in the whole. Barfield also contends that even within this balance there can be a slight predominance of one force over the other. He cites, for example,

⁵³ Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, Chapter XIV, 133.

⁵⁴ Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, Chapter XII, 118.

how both Coleridge and Wordsworth are “nature-poets” and “mind-poets,” yet that Wordsworth leaned more toward nature; and Coleridge, more toward mind.⁵⁵

‘Two Forces of One Power’ (2=1) Philosophical Model

To explore Coleridge’s Imagination as an awakening force for modernity, it seems important to discuss the role Imagination plays within what might be considered his Order of Mental Powers model.⁵⁶ (Figure 2.) Barfield points out that this model was drawn in Coleridge’s marginal notes. Yet it offers considerable meaning taken in the context his writings. It serves to fulfill the importance Coleridge found in making distinctions without division⁵⁷ to deepen one’s understanding of the whole. Further, it provides a way to explore Coleridge’s entire cosmology as reclaiming that which was lost through the development of scientism, the merging of speculation and empiricism, and the Cartesian dualistic mindset that has become so ingrained.

To take in the power of Coleridge’s philosophy, we need to open fully to his overarching principal of polarity as symbolized by Nature and its inner/outer dynamic of *Naturata-Naturans*. Thus, in everything there is dynamic polarity at play. In the model then, reason and sense are in polar relation; as are imagination and fancy; and as is understanding with its Janus-faced nature. If there is sensing, which comes to us as a gift which we passively receive, then there is reason as its polar extreme. Reason is active and of the inner realm just as pure sensing is passive and of the outer realm. The scaling of the model is deceptive. It needs to be kept in mind that as

⁵⁵ Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 122-123.

⁵⁶ Note: Coleridge did not label this marginal note. I am using Barfield’s label for it found on page 173 of *What Coleridge Thought*.

⁵⁷ Coleridge, *The Complete World*, vol. I, 460, quoted in Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 158.

polarities, reason and sense are octaves of the same melody and are closer in relation than reason is with understanding. Coleridge explains in *Aids to Reflection*:

Reason indeed is much nearer to Sense than to Understanding; for Reason (says our great Hooker) is a direct aspect, an inward beholding, having a similar relation to the intelligible or spiritual, as Sense has to the material or phenomenal.”⁵⁸

In addition, the “octave nature” of reason and sense underscores their great affinity with one another. In Coleridge’s model the sensing of the body is not separate from the thinking mind. Mind and body are connected. Coleridge attests to this in the *Treatise of Logic*, as well as in a letter to Thomas Poole where he wrote that “...deep thinking is attainable only by a man of deep Feeling.”⁵⁹

Reason as discussed by Coleridge has many facets. But what is most important about reason is that Coleridge considers it quite distinct and different from understanding. Reason appears to human understanding in two modes: 1) dreaming (i.e., reason present without being realized) and 2) waking (i.e., reason present and consciously realized). Reason is supersensuous and superindividual. It accounts for individuation since the light of reason is “refracted” differently through each person. Simultaneously it is universal, in the sense of *totus in omni parte* —entire in each and one in all.⁶⁰

Coleridge also describes reason as the “unconscious.” As such, it requires an act of thinking, contemplation, or meditation to bring it into conscious realization. Thus, reason portends a constant unfolding with the potential to move from its negative (*lumen a luce*)

⁵⁸ Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, 163, quoted in Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 175.

⁵⁹ Coleridge, *Collected Letters*, vol. 2, 708, quoted in Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 319 n73.

⁶⁰ Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 148.

existence into its positive mode of presence (*lux intellectus*). It also holds an element of the divine. In Coleridge's conception of tri-unity, reason is the light of *logos*, or God within us which is the light of reason.⁶¹

Positive reason brings humans into the realm of ideas since reason, as thinking itself, "is the ground and source of ideas."⁶² Yet we cannot know it with our understanding. It speaks to us only in symbols.⁶³ We can only meditate to awaken it within us or contemplate metaphysical ideas to "develop our capacity for 'inward beholding' which is our only access to the ideas of reason..."⁶⁴

Understanding which is the mid-point of the model acts as an intermediary between reason and sense which Coleridge describes as "in all respects a medial and mediate faculty."⁶⁵ Similar to the other polarities in the model, understanding also exhibits polarity and as such has both active and passive sides. The passive, lower understanding on the side of fancy and sense that is "unirradiated" by reason has a pure "animal inference" and denotes our instinctual capabilities. For example, if we consider sexual activity, as Barfield suggests we consider in light of the model, pure sense would be copulation, which when elevated through the lower order of understanding would become mating.⁶⁶ This lower order of understanding also holds our inherited traits.⁶⁷

⁶¹ Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 155.

⁶² Coleridge, *The Complete World*, vol. I, 460n, quoted in Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 158.

⁶³ Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, Chapter IX, 65.

⁶⁴ Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 166.

⁶⁵ Coleridge, *The Complete World*, vol. V, 286, quoted in Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 132.

⁶⁶ Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 141.

⁶⁷ Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 133.

Despite some ambiguity on Coleridge's part in discussing the lower and higher orders of understanding, in *The Friend, Volume I* he describes its two poles as distinct organs:

In short, the human understanding possesses two distinct organs, the outward sense [of the lower passive side], and "the mind's eye" [of the upper active side] which is reason.⁶⁸

Understanding gives humans the power of abstraction including "that of generalizing the notices received from the senses in order for the construction of names."⁶⁹ Its abstraction also affords it — when elevated — access to the power of reason.⁷⁰ Yet, it is in the domain of understanding and the nuanced distinction found between its irradiated by reason or unirradiated form that the Cartesian drama of the 18th and 19th centuries played out, and continues to this day. Understanding unirradiated by reason "falls under the despotism of the eye" resulting in what Coleridge summarizes as "*De rebus non apparentibus et non existentibus eadem est ratio*—The same applies to things that do not appear and do not exist."⁷¹ Thus, if we can't see it then it doesn't exist. Furthermore, when understanding falls under the despotism of the eye "the faculty of abstraction, which affords access to the ideas of reason, is turned back, in its search for content, upon the impressions of sense."⁷² With abstraction turned back in a search for content there is no longer truth infused imagination and reason, but only hypotheticals and fancy.

⁶⁸ Coleridge, *The Friend*, vol. I, 157, quoted in Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 304, n 13.

⁶⁹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, 169, quoted in Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 135.

⁷⁰ Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 140.

⁷¹ Coleridge, *The Complete World*, vol.V, 459, quoted in Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 140. Translated using Google Translate.

⁷² Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 140.

Thus, as Bjørn Ekeberg discusses in *Metaphysical Experiments: Physics and the Invention of the Universe*, we find ourselves today with a Standard Model of Cosmology wherein we are lost in an array of abstractions built upon abstractions. Things like theories of dark energy and dark matter have been added to explain that which scientists are unable to explain — which is roughly 96% of the cosmic picture. We have stepped outside the cosmos via depths of abstractionism to try and know it. Ekeberg asks:

“In spite of the many advanced forms of calculation and our near infinite galactic probing with limitless data sets, is our understanding of the cosmos today really so much more profound than that of our ancestors?”⁷³

As discussed earlier, for Coleridge the imagination, positioned in the mental ordering model between reason and understanding, is the “living power and prime agent of all human perception.” It is active and dynamic and “the very power of growth and production.” It is a power at play in the act of thinking:

Now let a man watch his mind while he is composing; or, to take a still more common case, while he is trying to recollect a name; and he will find the process completely analogous... There are evidently two powers at work [in the mind’s self-experience in the act of thinking], which relatively to each other are active and passive; and this is not possible without an intermediate faculty, which is at once both active and passive. In philosophical language, we must denominate this intermediate faculty in all its degree and determinations, the IMAGINATION.⁷⁴

The imagination alone, not the understanding, has the capability of apprehending the dynamicism of polarity. The apprehension of polarity is the imagination. It is the relational

⁷³ Bjørn Ekeberg, *Metaphysical Experiments: Physics and the Invention of the Universe* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2019), 156.

⁷⁴ Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, Chapter VII, 56.

inference at play in self and world; man and nature; man and God.⁷⁵ It is the ‘both/and’ power, the *naturata/naturans* of all. It is apprehending unity in multiteity.⁷⁶ Coleridge saw imagination as closely connected with reason, since the apprehension of polarity is a move toward the apprehension of reason: two forces of one power. As he concludes in the *Theory of Life*... it is the tendency “at once to individuate and to connect, to detach, but so either to retain or to reproduce attachment.”⁷⁷

Imagination and fancy are polarities each of which serves as an intermediary between Understanding and Sense (Fancy) and Understanding and Reason (Imagination). Yet only imagination, irradiated by reason, has the power of apprehending “unity in multiteity” wherein it comes “to know itself in the object”⁷⁸. With Imagination there is an underlying harmony in the polarity “without any undue predominance of one [force] over the other” whereby with fancy “there is an undue predominance of the (centripetal) force that seeks to apprehend or find itself by ‘objectizing’.”⁷⁹

Imagination, irradiated by reason from above (or by the senses from below), and its inherent interplay within and as synonymous with polarity — the instantaneous flash of both/and at the same time — imbues it with beauty and truth.⁸⁰ It accesses “the existence of life” which is

⁷⁵ Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 103.

⁷⁶ Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, Chapter XIV, 131.

⁷⁷ Coleridge, “Theory of Life,” 601, quoted in Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 92.

⁷⁸ Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, Chapter XII, 118.

⁷⁹ Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 121.

⁸⁰ Keats writes in a letter to Benjamin Bailey (22 November 1817): “I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart’s affections and the truth of Imagination—What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth—whether it existed before or not—for I have the same Idea of all our Passions as of Love they are all in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty...”

“the correlative of truth.”⁸¹ Yet, the existence of life, beauty, and truth are not pure positivism and happiness. Imagination also dances with the negative. Keats expresses his esteem for extraordinary men whose achievement stems from their possession of Negative Capability:

I mean *Negative Capability*, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without an irritable reaching after fact & reason—Coleridge, for instance, would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetrarium of mystery, from being incapable or remaining content with half knowledge.⁸²

We see the beauty and transformative power of negative capability played out in the life of Novalis and his poetry (e.g., the *Hymns to the Night*); the fortitude of Mary Wollstonecraft and the insight and depth of her letters; Coleridge’s own dark and mysterious depictions of the ancient mariner which seems to represent a perpetual holding of this capability.

Imagination as polarity in action is also deeply embedded in symbol and metaphor. A symbol is, after all, a unity in multitude.

It [a symbol] always partakes of the reality which it renders intelligible and, while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that unity of which it is the representative.⁸³

A metaphor, by contrast, is yet another expression of polarity in action as it is “to experience likeness as a *polarity* between sameness and difference.”⁸⁴ Or as Iain McGilchrist

⁸¹ Coleridge, *The Friend*, vol. I, 36, quoted in Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 151-152.

⁸² John Keats, “Selections from Keats’s Letters—Keats’s Letter to George and Tom Keats (27 December 1817),” Poetry Foundation, accessed December 3, 2023, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/69384/selections-from-keatss-letters>.

⁸³ Coleridge, *The Complete World*, vol. I, 437-438, quoted in Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 308 n38.

⁸⁴ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Treatise on Logic*, Manuscript in two bound volumes in the British Museum, vol. I, 25-27, quoted in Owen Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 307 n37.

writes about it in his discussion on reason and the right hemisphere of the brain, metaphor is a way of understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another that we already know because it's embodied and we've experienced it.⁸⁵

Before moving to the final section of this paper, it is important to highlight the three major reasons why Coleridge's Order of Mental Powers model has been included and discussed. First, the model exemplifies "unity in multiteity," by illustrating reason and imagination in form (the model) and in action (the polarity interplay within it). As such, it is a product of the imagination that is irradiated by reason. Coleridge attempts to direct us toward wisdom through the distinctions he makes between the parts of it that make up its whole.

Second, it calls out the extremely important distinction between reason and understanding. This distinction, as well as Coleridge's commitment to polarity and the *natura naturata* and *natura naturans* of Nature and Life, are major facets of his philosophy and his self-proclaimed *raison d'être*.

And lastly, as a living, breathing model of "unity in multiteity," it makes clear the erroneous nature of isolating or being in denial of one half of it versus the other, i.e., the upper half of reason-imagination-understanding versus the lower half of sense-fancy-understanding. Understanding that denies the irradiation of reason and imagination is in essence the bifurcation of nature that leaves us at the merged speculation-empiricism doorstep of the subject-object divide. At the same time, living only in the land of reason and imagination might be likened to a perpetual state of dreaming, or perhaps an ongoing opium trip, where it is difficult to realize consciousness of that which is dreamed — resulting in a lived state of chaos.

⁸⁵ Iain McGilchrist, *The Matter with Things*, 2nd ed. (London: Perspectival Press, 2022), 410.

Imagination Remix

If we accept Coleridge's Order of Mental Powers model as sound, and hold, as he did, that the living nature of life (*natura naturans*) is a supersensuous reality that forms the principle of existence for both organic and inorganic phenomena, then it must be applicable to all facets of life even in our current time. So where does it appear? And how might it inform and guide us? The closing portion of this paper will explore iterations of the model across contexts.

Context 1: Business Paradigms

In the realm of business there appear to be two scenarios of interest. One of which is an illustration of Coleridge's model flowing in action; and the other, in which the company seems to have bifurcated into the lower half of the model.

Through the course of a TED talk⁸⁶, Hamdi Ulukaya, the founder and CEO of Chobani yogurt tells the story of how he came to start the company. One day he received a flyer for a yogurt plant that was for sale in upstate New York. He throws it in the trash, but then is "called" to retrieve it, i.e., reason and imagination infused understanding. He has the "negative capacity" to embrace the "Dead end" sign that marks the rural road to the factory, a price so low the sellers think the place "worthless," and a lawyer who reminds that he has no money nor experience. From that vantage point, the plant (as *natura naturata*) seems dead. Yet, when he visits the factory, he meets its fifty-five surviving and "silent" employees who are closing the factory "with grace." Through them, he feels the *natura naturans* that runs through the walls of this soon-to-be shell. He buys it.

⁸⁶ Hamdi Ulukaya, "The Anti-CEO Playbook," filmed April 2019 at TED2019, Vancouver, British Columbia, video, 17:09, https://www.ted.com/talks/hamdi_ulukaya_the_anti_ceo_playbook?language=en.

His working style is of the ever-intwining and activating, passive and active poles of the imagination. For example, he hires immigrants and refugees along with translators and buses to transport them. He creates jobs and gives employees partial ownership in the company. Philanthropy and support (i.e., local community, school children, veterans) are major facets of the business. The company's good works are reciprocated by increases in revenue which lead to expansion.⁸⁷ Mr. Ulukaya's work with refugees and immigrants became so successful that in 2016 he launched the Tent Partnership for Refugees. The consortium of businesses in the partnership ensured that when Afghan refugees arrived in the U.S. in 2021 20,000 jobs were immediately created. The company's operating principle which captures the essence of *naturata-naturans* is "do well [revenues, product in more stores] by doing good [giving to employees, community, etc.]."⁸⁸

The Chobani example is contrasted with the recent upsets at OpenAI, the company that introduced the ChatGPT chatbot. The company exemplifies a business bifurcated between the two sides of Coleridge's model. OpenAI's company mission is "to build artificial general intelligence (AGI) that is safe and benefits all of humanity."⁸⁹ Yet its structure is dirempted into two arms: a non-profit board who's beneficiary is humanity; and a for-profit subsidiary that is funded by Microsoft and venture capital firms.⁹⁰ It is as if the poles of imagination (humanity) and fancy (fantasies about lots of money) are not in harmony, but striving one over the other. The

⁸⁷ Ulukaya, "The Anti-CEO Playbook."

⁸⁸ John Simons, "Capitalism and Humanitarianism Can Coexist. Chobani's CEO is Trying to Prove It," *Time*, February 21, 2023, accessed on December 16, 2023, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/capitalism-humanitarianism-can-coexist-chobanis-ceo-trying-prove?trk=pulse-article>.

⁸⁹ "Our Structure," OpenAI, last modified June 28, 2023, <https://openai.com/our-structure>.

⁹⁰ Andrew Ross Sorkin, et al., "Does A.I. Have an Inherent Governance Problem?," *The New York Times*, November 21, 2023, last modified November 22, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/21/business/dealbook/openai-corporate-governance-altman-board.html>.

recent ouster of OpenAI's CEO, Sam Altman, by the Board based on their concerns of a violation against or endangering humanity was quickly overturned. The Board was fired and Sam Altman re-instated.⁹¹ In this scenario, it feels as if imagination and reason are at great risk of being denied which in Coleridge's model portends a disengaged and nihilistic outcome.

Context 2: Art

With the increasing prevalence of ChatGPT and other versions of AI where everything, including works of art, can be generated with a keystroke, the wisdom of Coleridge's model is exceedingly relevant. If we consider a "good" work of art to be a visual manifestation of the Imagination (and not just the unirradiated-by-reason product of Fancy alone), then can an image generated by AI be considered a work of art? Couple this question with Coleridge's thought that "...a work of art will be just in proportion as it adequately conveys the thought, and rich in proportion to the variety of parts which it holds in unity,"⁹² then where are we?

For example, Pablo Picasso's painting, *Card Player* (Figure 3.), seems a vivid example of secondary imagination where the fragmentary nature of the parts (each complete in and of itself) are also necessary for the aesthetics of the painting as a whole. Participating in the painting and using imagination (and it lures us to do both), one is witness to a card player. He is sitting across the table in a salon with *fleur de lis* - Greco designed walls. He holds his cards close to his chest. Using imagination, we can also slip inside the card player himself — looking straight ahead at the man playing across the table with occasional side glances to the player at one side. The setting comes alive through the painting: climbing up stairs to the room, a special pass card

⁹¹ Cade Metz, et. al., "Five Days of Chaos: How Sam Altman Returned to OpenAI," *The New York Times*, November, 2023, accessed December 16, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/22/technology/how-sam-altman-returned-openai.html>.

⁹² Coleridge, "On Poesy and Art," 251, quoted in Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 110.



Figure 3. Pablo Picasso, Card Player
(Paris, winter 1913-14)



Figure 4. AI Generated Picasso Paintings

needed for admittance. It is dark, clandestine, and somewhat bohemian. One is transported into a dynamic unfolding that is neither static nor frozen.

Artificial intelligence (AI) generated replicant Picasso paintings (Figure 4.), compiled from hundreds of online images of Picasso's paintings programmed into a neural network⁹³, appear digitized, flat, and do not seem to have the same "lure" for drawing the viewer into the painting and into her own imagination. On judgment, they seem more the product of unirradiated Fancy than reason-infused Imagination.

⁹³ Tyler Hayden, "UC Santa Barbara Doctoral Students Build Neural Network to Paint Like Picasso," *Santa Barbara Independent*, January 19, 2023, accessed December 15, 2023, <https://www.independent.com/2023/01/19/uc-santa-barbara-doctoral-students-build-neural-network-to-paint-like-picasso/>.

But what of Refik Anadol's, *Unsupervised - Machine Hallucinations*, 2023, a recent digital exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art?⁹⁴ (Figure 4.) The artist has taken over 200 years



Figure 4. Refik Anadol, *Unsupervised*, MoMA 2023

of art from MoMA's collection and has programmed artificial intelligence "to interpret and transform the Museum's data set—to create new forms that *could* exist in the archive but don't..."⁹⁵ *Unsupervised* is dynamic, alive, undulating, and forever creating (Watch video here). Yet, despite its ability to mesmerize, one is not led, on judgment, to an experience of deeper meaning. It is a symbol of everything and nothing. Thus, it too seems Fancy unirradiated by

⁹⁴ Refik Anadol, "Refik Anadol Supercut," filmed 2023 at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York, video, 1:51:44, accessed December 16, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ts7fQB3K_M.

Hamdi Ulukaya, "The Anti-CEO Playbook," filmed April 2019 at TED2019, Vancouver, British Columbia, video, 17:09, https://www.ted.com/talks/hamdi_ulukaya_the_anti_ceo_playbook?language=en.

⁹⁵ Refik Anadol, "Refik Anadol on AI, Algorithms, and the Machine as Witness," *MoMA Magazine*, December 20, 2022, accessed on December 16, 2023, <https://www.moma.org/magazine/articles/821>.

Reason. Yet, this is a substantial and metamorphic area that merits considerably more attention than can be included in this paper.

Context 3: Activism

Joanna Macy's *The Work That Reconnects* that guides effective and realistic activism recognizes and utilizes all facets of Coleridge's order of mental powers model. It is a living, to be lived process that is continuous and unfolding, as is found in *naturata naturans*. Her book *Active Hope*, written in partnership with Chris Johnstone, provides daily practices to "be with" and to process the potentially imminent planetary crisis. It concludes with examples and steps to take, personally and collectively, that can make a difference and enact change. The whole process is described as "a transition from a doomed economy of industrial growth to a life-sustaining society committed to the recovery of the world."⁹⁶

Macy's process leverages "negative capability" in a Coleridgean transformative way. It is recommended as an important step to "honor our pain for the world" which has as its intention the honoring of that which is negative and difficult, and of cultivating an ability to be with that pain. This is perhaps the most difficult turn in the spiral of the process. Ms. Macy explains that although we think such blocks help keep us safe and removed from suffering, such avoidance only consumes our energy...energy that could be used in a more proactive way.⁹⁷

A final note about Macy's process which also calls to mind Coleridge's model is that it opens with a practice of "coming from gratitude." This step is recommended as a daily meditative and reflective practice upon which everything rests. We are reminded of Coleridge's

⁹⁶ Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone, *Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We're in with Unexpected Resilience and Creative Power*, rev. ed. (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2022), 27.

⁹⁷ Macy & Johnstone, *Active Hope*, 66-67.

description of reason as the unconscious and how it requires an act of contemplation and meditation to bring it into conscious realization.

Context 4: Ecology and Environmentalism

A final example of a context in which Coleridge's Dynamic Philosophy is at play in modernity is in the realm of ecology. There are more and more examples of Nature (in the general sense) being perceived and treated as pan-psychic and alive. Not only is there greater realization of the participatory feelings and sense of community that nature exhibits (e.g., the ways that trees and mycelium networks work together), but humans are beginning to realize that Nature too has rights. One only need visit the "Rights of Nature Law Library" to witness the large number of local, national, and international legal actions taking place in protection of Nature itself.⁹⁸ A current *New York Times* article, "Nature Lawyers Up," highlights how the "rights of nature" legal movement is gaining momentum. However, its author, Manuela Andreoni, points out that such legal precedence is happening more in locations where people have, in Coleridge's terms, understanding irradiated by reason and imagination:

It's about how we think of the natural world, how we feel about it. It's not a coincidence that these laws have caught on so much more deeply in countries such as Ecuador and Bolivia, where Indigenous nations and communities have a spiritual relationship with nature and see themselves as part of it.⁹⁹

Returning to this paper's introductory quote from Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* (1817): "If to destroy the reality of all, that we actually behold, be idealism"...and the world

⁹⁸ "Rights of Nature Law Library," Center for Democratic and Environmental Rights, accessed December 15, 2023, <https://www.centerforenvironmentalrights.org/rights-of-nature-law-library>.

⁹⁹ Manuela Andreoni, "Nature Lawyers Up," *The New York Times*, May 5, 2023, Accessed December 15, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/05/climate/legal-rights-of-nature.html?searchResultPosition=5>.

said, that I was mad, and confound them, they outvoted me,"¹⁰⁰ it is safe to assume, that undoubtedly, who is "mad" and who is "sane" in our modern world will continue to be questioned. Yet perhaps there will be more and more who acknowledge all that Coleridge tried to convey some 200 years ago about the Imagination (Polarity), Life (*naturata~naturans*), and humans' humble place as part of and within Life's unfolding. May the many, who some still consider "mad" around such issues, which also pose the most significant challenges of our times, at least not be outvoted.

¹⁰⁰ Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* (1817), Chapter XII, 65.

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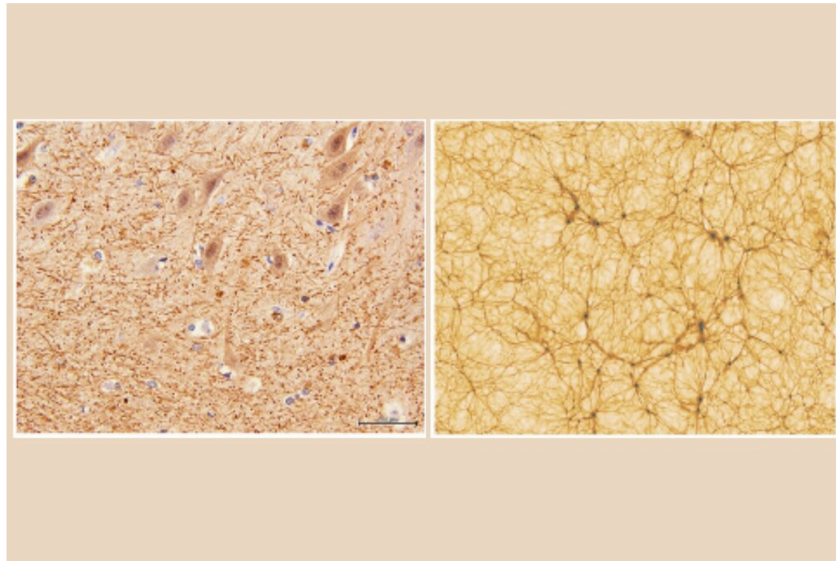
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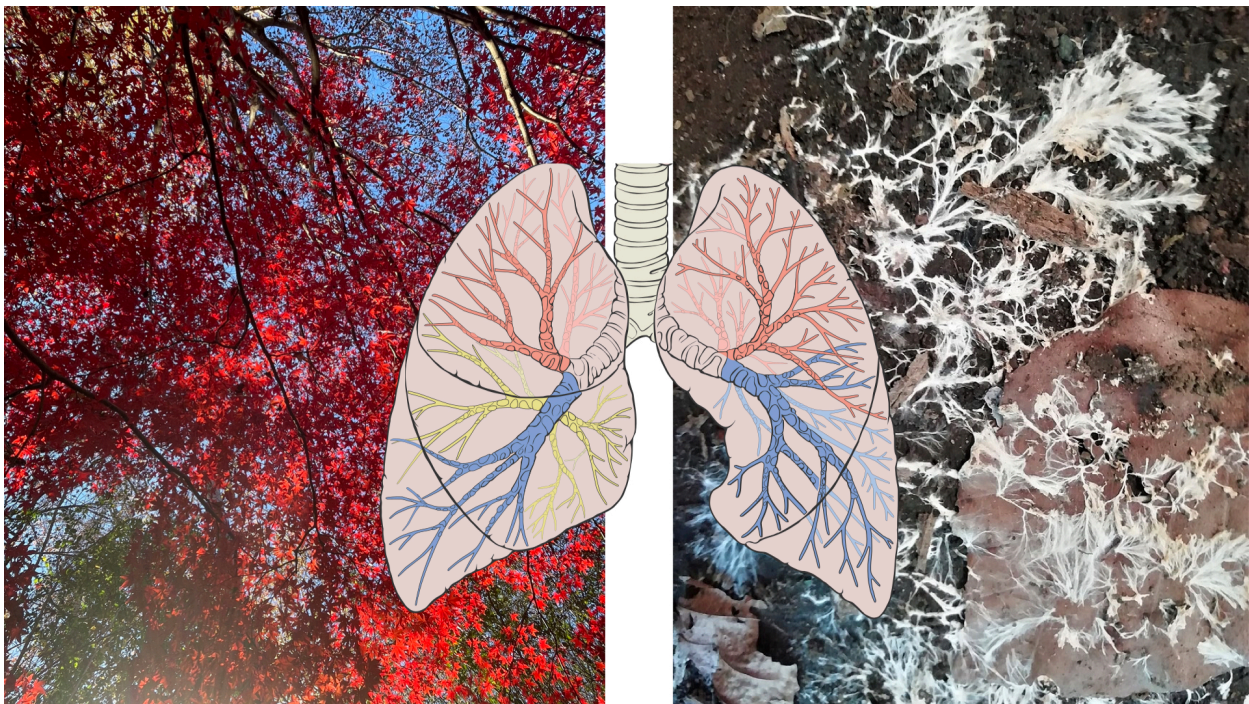
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Appendix



The Brain and the Cosmos. Left: section of cerebellum, with magnification factor 40x, obtained with electron microscopy (Dr. E. Zunarelli, University Hospital of Modena); Right: section of a cosmological simulation, with an extension of 300 million light-years on each side (Vazza et al. 2019 A&A). University of Bologna. Source: <https://phys.org/news/2020-11-human-brain-resemble-universe.html>



Left: Tree Branches; Middle: Human Lungs; Right: Mycelium Network