IMAGINATION REDUX: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

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ABSTRACT

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The imagination has been enjoying an increase in popularity in recent years. Research on it now ranges from empirical studies of mental imagery to philosophical attempts to classify it. Although this research has generated valuable insights, most of it fails to pay sufficient attention to our intentional experience of imagination. As a result, misconceptions of imagination abound, and dimensions of our lived experience of it that are central to describe its nature adequately are often overlooked or treated very superficially. In what follows, I revisit the phenomenon of imagination and develop a better account of its intentional structure. On the basis of Husserl's writings, I will argue that imagination is a distinctive psychic act that differs from perception and memory in terms of its quasi-positional stance on objects, its freedom to alter pure possibilities at will, and in terms of how imagine objects relate to time. After developing a phenomenological description of these three essential differences, I describe three forms of imagination, and then use everything learned as the basis of an argument against pictorialism, an alternative theory that reduces imagination to a mere ability to form mental images. I will argue that, despite its influence, pictorialism misconceives what it is like to imagine something primarily by conflating the act of imagination with image-consciousness.

For Monica, my beloved friend and partner, for believing in me

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Introduction

Although imagination has always been of interest to philosophers and scientists, contemporary research on this topic has grown exponentially.[1] For instance, in science already an enormous body of literature exists on mental imagery and its cognitive value, as well as on the role that imagination may play in causing major psychological disorders, such as autism and schizophrenia. And, in contemporary philosophy, especially within the analytic tradition, debates abound on how to define and classify it, on whether it provides access to the metaphysically possible, on its methodological merits, as well as on its exact functions in art and literature. [2]

This research has resulted in valuable insights. From the empirical research on the cognitive value of mental imagery we have learned, for instance, that people often use imagination to solve certain types of cognitive problems, such as finding locations or ascertaining facts about physical appearance using visualizations.[3] Empirical research has also unveiled part of the brain areas and neural pathways implicated in visualization. From this accomplishment, we have learned that visualization and seeing use the same brain

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[1] For a recent review of much of this research and how phenomenology fits into it, see Julia Jansen, "Phenomenology, Imagination, and Interdisciplinary Research," in *Handbook of Phenomenology and Cognitive Science*, ed. Daniel Schimicking and Shaun Gallagher (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2010), 141-158.

[2] For a review of contemporary research on imagination within the analytic tradition, with an emphasis on the issues and debates that define it, see Tamar Gendler, "Imagination," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Fall 2013 edition), accessed December 14, 2013, http://plato.stanford.edu/.archives/fall2013/entires/imagination.

[3] For a review of most of the research that has been done on mental imagery since the 1970's, see Nigel J. T. Thomas, "Mental Imagery," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Fall 2014 edition). accessed February 12, 2015, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/mental-imagery.

mechanisms, which, among other things, explains the fact that we cannot simultaneously visualize and see the same object in the same respect.[4]

Moreover, due to psychological and philosophical research on the potential causal role of imagination in autism and schizophrenia, we may be closer than we have ever been before in uncovering one of their major causes: deficiencies in imagination.[5] Finally, it is also true that contemporary philosophers have identified important ways in which imagination differs from other "mental capacities", have developed useful classificatory schemes, and have proposed insightful explanations of how it may contribute to the creation and appreciation of art and literature.[6]

Yet, despite these valuable insights, some of which I use in this dissertation, most of these contemporary studies fail to pay sufficient attention to the intentional structure of our experience of imagination. As a result, inadequate conceptualizations of it are much too common in these studies, and dimensions of our experience of it that are central to describe its structure adequately are often overlooked or treated very superficially. For instance, cognitive

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[4] For example, in a now classic study, Goldenberg et al. showed that the occipital and inferior temporal regions are active during tasks that require visual perception, and during tasks that require visual imagery. See G. Goldenberg et al., "Cerebral Correlates of Imagining Colors, Faces and a Map," *Neuropsychologia*, 27, no. 11-12 (1989): 1315-1328. See Martha J. Farah, *The Cognitive Science of Vision* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 252-290, for a comprehensive and highly readable overview of the cognitive science of vision and its connection to mental imagery.

[5] See Gregory Currie and Ian Ravenscroft, *Recreative Minds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 134-184, for a discussion of what we have learned about the relation of imagination to Autism and Schizophrenia. See also James Phillips and James Morley, ed., *Imagination and Its Pathologies* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003), for a collection of articles exploring the possible roles and functions of imagination in psychopathology in general.

[6] For various attempts to classify different forms of imagination, see Currie and Ravenscroft, *Recreative Minds*, 5-46;Thomas Nagel, "What Is It Like To Be A Vat?" *Philosophical Review* 83, (October 1974): 435-50; Peter F. Strawson, "Imagination and Perception," in *Experience and Theory*, ed. L. Foster and J.W. Swason (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1970): 31-54;Kenneth Walton, *Mimesis As Make Belief* (Cambridge, MA, 1990); Alan White, *The Language of Imagination* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), and Stephen Yablo, "Is Conceivability A Guide to Possibility?" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 53, no.1 (1993): 1-42.

scientific studies assume it to be a capacity to have or form mental imagery. But this way of construing imagination is both too narrow, in that it reduces the phenomena to its sensory forms like visualization, and too broad, in that it cannot explain the difference between imagination and, say, memories and dreams. This definition also implies that imagination is about seeing mental images. But, as I will explain later, this misconstrues our lived experience.

In philosophy, the tendency to equate imagination with mental imagery is not as common as it is in science. After all, several important philosophers, such as Gilbert Ryle and Wittgenstein, developed very influential critiques of mental images. Yet the predominance of linguistic or conceptual analyses, especially within the analytic tradition, have produced for the most part very abstract definitions and classifications that often neglect important dimensions of our phenomenal experience of imagination, such as our experience of freedom, imaginary time, pure possibilities, and other defining dimensions that deserve to be properly described.

I do not believe that we can explain adequately imagination's nature and value unless we pay close attention to what our intentional experience reveals. Phenomenology, the effort within philosophy to do justice to subjectivity, has long recognized this. Accordingly, it is within this tradition that one finds the most detailed and insightful analyses of the nature of imagination from the perspective of how we actually live it.[7] For instance, Husserl developed the first rigorous account of how imagination in the form of the free variation of possibilities

[7] For a detail discussion of central phenomenological theories of imagination, see Richard Kearney, *Poetics of Imagining: Modern to Postmodern* (Fordham University Press: New York, 1998); See also, Edward L. Murray ed., *Imagination and Phenomenological Research* (Pittsburg, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1987).

contributes to the clarification of essences. He also recognized the mistake of reducing imagination to mental imagery, and developed a powerful critique of attempts to do so.[8] Moreover, he carried out extensive analyses of experiential differences between imagination, perception, and memory. Sartre is another example. Employing Husserl's method in his own way, he developed interesting descriptions of many different types of images, such as drawings, sketches, pictures, photographs, faces seen in clouds, in fire, etc., and highlighted imagination's power to negate actuality as a necessary condition for freedom.[9] And, in *Imagining*, Edward Casey makes a convincing case that imagined objects have the status of pure possibilities, that imagination and creativity are not the same, and that the nature of imagination's autonomy derives from its independence from context, content, and causal factors.[10]

Yet gaps in our understanding of the phenomena of imaginings exist even within phenomenology. For instance, Husserl correctly argues that imagination is about entertaining pure possibilities, that its contents are subject to our will, and that imaginary time has a different structure than the time of perception and memory. Yet Husserl succeeds in developing only cursory descriptions of these structures, leaving us wondering about their concrete significance. Likewise, Casey's work has little to say about imaginary time, even that

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[8] Husserl's critique of mental images is found as early as in *Logical Investigations* but developed more systematically in book number 8 of *Phantasy, Image-Consciousness, and Memory (1898-1925)*. See, Edmund Husserl, "Investigation V: On Intentional Experiences and Their 'Contents'," in *Logical Investigations Volume II*, trans. J.N. Findlay (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2000), 654-655; and Edmund, Husserl, *Phantasy, Image-Consciousness and Memory (1898-1925)*, trans. John B. Brough (Dordrecht: The Netherlands, 2005), 323-327.

[9] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Imaginary: A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination*, trans. Jonathan Webber (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 17-54 and 179-189.

[10] Edward Casey, *Imagining: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomigton and London: Indiana University Press, 1976), 103-124 and 175-234.

this dimension of our experience of imagination must be taken into account in defining it. And, unfortunately, Sartre's insightful classifications of the imaginary still assume that imagination is about forming images.

Accordingly, we must revisit the phenomenon of imagination once again and address these problems. I propose to do so by drawing on relevant insights from the phenomenological tradition (especially Husserl) in order to develop a phenomenological description of particular dimensions of our phenomenal experience of imagination that have not yet been given enough attention. I have in mind the kind of attitude or intentional stance that defines our imaginings, the seemingly unlimited or vast freedom that we experience in imagination, and its temporal structure. My claim is that it is these three features that define most what it is to imagine; therefore, we must develop a phenomenological account of them all. Accordingly, using a broadly Husserlian framework, I will develop and defend the thesis that imagination is a distinctive psychic act that differs from perception and memory in terms of its quasi-positional attitude towards objects, and in terms of its unique freedom to alter pure possibilities at will.[11] Besides these two distinguishing characteristics, I will also show how imagination also differs from perception and memory in terms of how its objects appear in time, and afterwards describe three central ways we can form or execute an imagining.

This phenomenological account of imagination (of the method I used develop it, of its quasi-positional attitude, of its freedom, of imaginary time, etc.) consists of four chapters. In Chapter One I offer a systematic exposition of those aspects of Husserl's phenomenology that frame the account of imagination I develop later. In the first section of this chapter I define the

[11] By "non-positional" I mean non-assertoric.

concept ‘phenomena,’ explain what it means to construe a psychic act as intentional, propose to differentiate psychic acts from each other in terms of the invariant ways they intend their objects, and end by reflecting on the factors that might constitute these invariant features. In the second section, I discuss the *Epoche* and the method of free variation. I present the *Epoche* as being primarily a devise meant to help us bracket naturalistic and other preconceptions that may stand in the way of accurate description. Afterwards, I introduce and explain how the method of free variation can help us clarify the essence of a phenomenon through the imaginative production of variants of it, and the overlapping coincidence that can arise among them. In essence, after dispelling an important source of skepticism about Husserl’s method, I hope that I have not only clarified my Husserlian approach to imagination, but have also made a cogent case that the *Epoche* and the method of free variation continue to have relevance for contemporary philosophy.

In Chapter Two I begin my account of imagination by explicating and defending the thesis that imagination differs from perception and memory in terms of its quasi-positional stance on objects and in terms of its distinctive freedom of mind. This account will proceed as follows: in the first section of this chapter I discuss various conceptions of imagination in order to distinguish them from the sense of imagination as “fantasy imaginings” that I seek to describe here. In the second section I describe Humean and causal attempts to demarcate imagination from perception and memory, and argue that these two approaches cannot explain how these three acts differ from each other in essence. In the third section, I explain how it is possible to differentiate imagination from perception and memory in terms of their different intentional stances on objects. I argue that, unlike the positional attitudes of perception and

memory, imagination is marked by a quasi-positional stance on its objects (an attitude I call "imaginableness") thus allowing us the freedom to entertain them in purely possible ways. In the fourth section, I describe the distinctive freedom of mind we enjoy in imagination. Concerning the nature of this freedom, I argue that it is essentially the freedom to transform any object whatsoever into a pure possibility, a freedom that makes it possible, within minimal constrains, to entertain and vary objects however one wishes. Following Husserl, I will called this freedom "unconditioned arbitrariness" and, after describing the ways in which imaginary freedom is unconditioned, I will reflect on some possible limits to it.

In chapter Three, I end my *eidetic* account of imagination by defending the thesis that imagination also differs from perception and memory in terms of how imaginary time differs from the actual or real time of perceived and remembered things and events. I also describe here what I consider to be the central ways we can carry out an imagining: *sensory*, *phenomenal*, and *intellectual* ways of doing so. My account proceeds as follows: Based on Husserl's undeveloped remarks about imaginary time, I explain in more detail how imaginary objects do not appear in actual time but appear merely *present as it were* or in fictional temporal worlds of their own, explain how their lack of positioning in actual time relates to the fact that they lack objectively specifiable temporal determinations, and that, because of this, imaginary times appear as self-contained, self-referential time frames that are potentially infinite in number, and subject to our creative will. In addition, I show how there is no reliable connection between time and becoming in imagination, as it is in perception and memory. I conclude this phenomenological description of imaginary time and its difference from actual time by mentioning briefly and in passing some interesting ways we can alter time in fantasy.

In the second section of this chapter, I explain how we are able to construct *sensory*, *phenomenal*, and *intellectual* acts of imagination. Doing so will enable me to talk about what I consider to be the central ways we can imagine something, but also discuss in some detail how these central ways of carrying out an imagining affect the way the object appears before consciousness. The central thesis that I will defend in this section is that what differentiates these three forms of imagination from each other has to do with the manner in which they achieve consciousness of their object: the sensory imagination by simulating *as if* perceptions of its objects, the phenomenal imagination by simulating in more complex ways what it is like to have or live through the target experience (usually with the use of the whole body), and the intellectual imagination by simulating abstract, intentional thoughts that make the object present to the imagining subject (although not in a direct perceptual or phenomena manner).

In the four and final chapter I use my account of imagination as the basis of a phenomenological critique of pictorialism. Pictorialism has a long history in philosophy and the empirical sciences, and continues to guide much contemporary philosophical and scientific thought on the subject.[12] It is perhaps the most important alternative account of imagination from the phenomenological account I defend in this project. It claims that imagination is a psychological capacity to form mental images. My central thesis is that this way of conceptualizing imagination conflicts in important ways with the data of experience;

[12] The following is a list of classic and contemporary proponets of this view of imagination: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. C. B. Macpherson (London: Penguin Books, 1968), 87-99;David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 11-14;Bertrand Russell, *The Analysis of Mind* (London and New York, 1961), 137-187;Alastair Hannay, *Mental Images: A Defense* (London and New York, 1971); Stephen Michael Kosslyn, *Ghosts in the Mind's Machine: Creating and Using Images in the Brain* (New York and London: W.N. Norton and Company, 1983); and Stephen Michael Kosslyn, William Lad Thompson, and Ganis Giorgio, *The Case for Mental Imagery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

that is, it confuses imagination with the intentional structure that defines our consciousness of pictures, and it defines imagination in a way that is simultaneously too broad and too narrow.

This critique of pictorialism will proceed as follows: in the first section of this chapter, I define precisely the claim that imagination is the capacity to form mental images, arguing that this claim does not imply the existence of literal pictures in the mind, but only mental representations that function as if they were actual pictures. After making this important point, I will proceed to describe the two most important arguments that pictorialists give in defense of their position; namely, that we need to posit mental images to explain how we can represent objects in imagination, and that empirical research on mental imagery actually shows that people use functional images to solve a variety of cognitive problems.

In the second section of this chapter I critique pictorialism and its arguments by first showing how this position conflates imagination with image-consciousness. Secondly, I argue that equating imagination with mental images includes and excludes too much. Thirdly, I offer an explanation of how we can achieve reference in imagination without positing mental images as the object of that reference. Finally, I argue that it is possible to interpret the research on imagery without assuming the existence of functional images. If this critique is successful, it should challenge the assumption that our imaginings are manifestly about forming and inspecting mental imagery. More importantly, it should demonstrate both: the value of my account of imagination, and the importance of phenomenology for science.

My overall aim in this dissertation is to show that classical phenomenology can make important contributions to our contemporary understanding of imagination in philosophy and science. I wish to demonstrate the importance of our phenomenal experience as necessary to

make sense of the nature and value of imagination in human life. I also see this dissertation as an opportunity to take seriously Husserl's call to "go back to the things themselves" and practice phenomenology. We still do not know how evolution equipped us with this wonderful capacity. What is clear is that imagination is at the heart of what it means to be human. I would consider this dissertation successful if I can do justice to this powerful truth.

Chapter One: A Husserlian Framework

Introduction

In this chapter I wish to explain clearly those aspects of Husserl's phenomenology that have most influenced the account of imagination that I defend later in this dissertation. Accordingly, in the first section of this chapter I define the concept 'phenomena,' explain what it means to construe a psychic act as intentional, propose to differentiate psychic acts from each other in terms of the invariant or essential ways they intend their objects, and end this section by reflecting on the factors that may reveal to us the essence of a psychic act.

In the second section of this chapter, I discuss the two aspects of Husserl's method that are essential to my approach to imagination: the *Epoche* and the method of free variation. I present the *Epoche* as being primarily a devise meant to help us bracket naturalistic and other preconceptions that may stand in the way of accurate description. Afterwards, on the basis of Husserl's writings, I explain in general how the method of free variation can help us clarify the essence of a phenomenon through the imaginative production of variants, and the overlapping coincidence that can arise between these variants.

Finally, I conclude this chapter on Husserl's framework with a reflection on the epistemic limits and possibilities of Husserl's method. Skeptics of Husserlian phenomenology often point out that this approach to philosophical problems relies on a misguided or impossible idea of philosophy as *presuppositionless* or apodictically certain knowledge. I try to dispel this skepticism by arguing that the ideal of presuppositionless knowledge functions in Husserlian phenomenology only as a regulative ideal, not a goal that Husserl ever claimed to be possible or achievable through his method, and that allowing our

phenomenological efforts to be guided by this regulative ideal can help us achieve a radical understanding of the most basic concepts and presuppositions informing our intentional life, which can in turn result in greater amounts of freedom and autonomy. I hope that after explicating Husserl's Framework, I have not only made evident the idea of phenomenology that guides the account of imagination I will later offer, but also argued convincingly that the *Epoche* and the method of free variation continue to be valuable for philosophy and science.

I. The Study of Psychic Acts

Phenomenologists disagree about their practice. Because of this, it is not possible to provide a single definition of phenomenology. Accordingly, I will not attempt to provide one here. [13] Instead, I wish to explain my understanding of those aspects of Husserlian phenomenology that have most influenced my descriptive account of imagination: the concept of 'phenomena', intentionality, the *Epoche*, and the method of *eidetic* variation.

Husserlian phenomenology is the attempt to develop a transcendental account of the world and its contents as a phenomenon of consciousness. By "phenomenon of consciousness" we mean, to quote Dermon Moran, "all forms of appearing, showing, manifesting, making evident or 'evincing', bearing witness, truth-claiming, checking and verifying, including all forms of seeming, dissembling, occluding, obscuring, denying and

[13] For an overview of the history of the term 'phenomenology', see Karl Schuhmann, " "Phenomenology": a reflection on the history of the term," in *The Routledge Companion to Phenomenology*, ed. Sebastian Luft and Soren Overgaard (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 657-688.

falsifying."[14] In other words, whatever shows up or can be manifested to us in the course of our lived experience. Hence the term 'phenomenon' applies to any meaningful appearance whatsoever, whether it be material beings, possibilities, or psychic acts.[15] Now, the phenomena that concern us here are psychic acts like imagination. Accordingly, let me describe the general structure of psychic acts, as Husserlian phenomenology understands it.[16]

First, like all phenomena, psychic acts are *lived*. Pre-reflectively, i.e., before we turn them into objects of scientific or phenomenological reflection, as a person who has become puzzled by them does, such as a scientist or a phenomenologist, psychic acts are phenomena that we live through in ordinary life, the way that we live through an event in our lives, such an encounter with another person, an experience of love, or some action. As is the case with most lived experiences, we come to tacitly register their sense or significance, become

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[14] Dermot Moran, Editor's introduction to *The Phenomenology Reader*, ed. Dermot Moran, and Timothy Mooney (London and New York, 2002), 5. In addition to the main influence of Husserl's writings on my understanding of phenomenology, I have drawn much inspiration from the following sources: Rudolf Bernet, Iso Kern, and Eduard Marbach, *An Introduction to Husserlian Phenomenology* (Evanston, Ill, 1993); Martin Heidegger. *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie, and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper Perennial, 1962), 49-62; Adolf Reinach, "Concerning Phenomenology," in *The Phenomenology Reader*, ed. Dermot Moran and Timothy Mooney (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 180-196; Jean Paul Sartre, "Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Phenomenology," in *The Phenomenology Reader*, 382-385; and Robert Sokowloski, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[15] Phenomenology should not be confused with phenomenalism, the claim that the world and its entities are logical constructions out of directly given sense-data. It should also not be confused with the Kant's phenomenal/neumenal realm distinction. To be sure, phenomenology can distinguish between objects as they appear and as they are e.g. perceptual illusions, hallucinations and other semblances have this sense. However, this distinction is itself phenomenological, i.e., internal rather than external to experience itself. It is not meant be understood as a consciousness-independent, external relation between the object as an appearance and the object as it exists in itself behind the appearances. Phenomenology does not presuppose this later claim.

[16] The German term '*Erlebnis*' is variously translated as "experience"(see Findlay translation of Husserl's *Logical Investigations*), "lived experience" (see Churchill translation of Husserl's *Experience and Judgment*) and "intentive mental process"(see Kesrten's translation of *Husserl's Ideas I*). Here I will use the term "psych act" instead.

familiar with them, shape or are shaped by them; in other words, form a tacit understanding of their being before we objectivize it through a reflective act.[17]

Second, because psychic acts are lived, their phenomenal structure is available to phenomenological reflection. When we turn our reflective regard towards them, their intentional structure comes to the forth. Intentionality means directedness towards an object. Psychic acts are intentional in so far as they take up objects.[18] Put differently, psychic acts, like all intentional phenomena, have sense or exhibit meaningfulness. [19] For instance, a perception is a perception of something; a memory is a memory of something; an imagining is an imagining of something; and a judgment is a judgment of something (such as an actual or possible state of affairs).[20] This is not to say that psychic acts are disembodied, two-place relations between an isolated subject and an isolated object. On the contrary, for Husserl, intentional acts are embodied intentional processes. Their structure reflects the structure of our own bodies, as well as the world in which we exist, which constitutes a horizon of

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[17] Part of what Husserlian phenomenology tries to do is to make as explicit as possible this tacit understanding of a psychic act, so that we can project it into the realm of pure possibilities in order to determine how essential it is for the identity of the psychic act. The significance of this point will become more evident in our discussion on method.

[18] By an 'object' here we mean an act- transcendent unity of sense or significance standing over against the multiplicity of numerically distinct acts that may intent or manifest it. The German word is [*Gegenstand*], thus objects can range from physical things and their properties, to numbers, possibilities, and finger snaps. 'Object', then, in this sense of the term, should not be confused with [*Objeckt*] which stands for physical things in the world, such as chairs, tables, and galaxies.

[19] As Brentano says, "what is characteristic of very mental activity is, as I believe, I have shown, the reference to something as object." Franz Brentano, *Psychology From An Empirical Standpoint*, ed. Oskar Kraus, trans. Antos C. Rancurello, D.B. Terrell, and Linda L. McAlister (New York: Humanity Press 1973), 271.

[20] Brentano thought of intentionality as a way of demarcating mental from physical phenomena. Husserl is not committed to this thesis. For Husserl not all lived experiences are intentional (perhaps living through a confusing stream of disorganized, un-interpreted set of sensations that do not stand for anything in particular beyond themselves, or the subject's tacit awareness of them, may be a case in point). However, psychic acts (like perception, memory, and imagination) are indeed intentional i.e., they have sense or direct us towards an object.

intelligibility that contributes to their possibility as psychic acts.[21] Rather, it is to say that these psychic processes manifest something as we live through them.

For Husserl, psychic acts are potentially innumerable.[22] Now, according to Husserl, what differentiates psychic acts from each other has to do with the character of their intention; in other words, the kind of consciousness they are of objects. For instance, to use Husserl's examples, "the character of an intention is specifically different in the case of perceiving, of direct 'reproductive recall, of pictorial representation (in the ordinary sense of the representation of statues, pictures, etc.), and again in the case of a representation through signs. Each logically distinct way of entertaining an object in thought corresponds to a difference in intention."[23] Thus, as I will show in subsequent chapters, the essential difference between imagination, perception, and memory cannot be given by their empirical causes, or in terms of purely mental contents (like impressions and ideas), or in terms of how these contents feel to the mind (as Hume argued), but in terms of intentional differences between them; or rather, in the way in which they give objects.

Thus far we have been discussing psych acts and pointed out the fact that they are lived, and are intentional, and that it is the character of their intention that holds the clue for understanding their essential differences. I wish to discuss now what determines in general the

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[21] For Husserl's treatment of perception as an embodied process, see Edmund Husserl, *Analysis Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis: Lectures on Transcendental Logic* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001); Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, Second Book*, trans. R. Rojcewicz, and A. Schuwer (Dordrecht: The Netherlands, 1989).

[22] In contrast, Brentano classified all psychic phenomena into either presentations, judgments, and phenomena of love and hate. For Brentano's explanation of the differences between these three classes of psychic phenomena, see Brentano, *Psychology From An Empirical Standpoint*, 194- 200.

[23] Husserl, *Logical Investigations Vol. II*, 568.

character of an intention. According to Husserl's theory of intentionality, we must make a fundamental distinction between the psychic act and its object.[24] The psychic act is the intentive mental process itself; for example, a perception, a memory, or a fantasy, or some other form of consciousness we may be experiencing at a certain time. Being an intentional modification of consciousness, the psychic act appears as a concrete, temporal occurrence, one of the many intentional states of mind unified by a single consciousness.[25] In contrast, the object is that which the psychic act is about: the perceived flower, the remembered event, the fantasized unicorn, or the abstractly conceived formula. In short, the object is what the person living through the psych act apprehends through that act, the appearing objectivity.

In addition to distinguishing the psychic act from its object, we must also distinguish between two ways of describing the appearing object. First, we can describe it simply as that "*which is intended*" by the act. Second, we can describe it "*as it is meant in the act*…the "object in the *How* of its determinations."[26] The object considered as "*that which is intended*" by the act is what Husserl formally refers to as "the determinable X"; in other words, the object as the identity running through the manifold of given appearances that manifest it in concrete yet partial or non-exhaustive ways. In contrast, the object "*as it is meant in the act*"

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[24] Husserl's theory of intentionality is more complex than the account I will offer. Here, I am only concerned with those aspects of Husserl's account of intentionality that will play a central role in my description of imagination.

[25] Husserl calls the act itself the *noesis*, which is meant to indicate the act philosophical considered rather than consider naturalistically, i.e., from the perspective of the natural attitude. I will discuss this attitude later.

[26] Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to A Pure Phenomenology and to A Phenomenological Philosophy. First Book: General Introduction to A Pure Phenomenology*, trans. F. Kersten (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1982), 312. In *Investigations V*, Husserl calls the *noema* "the act's matter." To quote: "The matter…is that element in an act which first gives it reference to an object meant in a general way, but also the precise way in which it is meant." Husserl, *Logical Investigation Vol. II*, 589.

is what Husserl calls the act's *noema*, and refers to the appearing object considered precisely in the way is being meant in the act. In other words, as Drummond says, "the object just as it is intended with its significance for us, in relation to our animating interests and concerns, and with certain *thetic* characteristics."[27]

To illustrate the difference between the object as the identity of its multiple appearings and the object in terms of the definite sense or significance it has in those appearings, consider the example of George Washington. This historical figure can be intended in different ways; for instance, as the First President of The United States, or as the general of the Continental Army, or as one of the framers of the Constitution, or as the man who imitated Caesar by crossing the Delaware. These are different ways of intending George Washington the person, which appears in all actual acts that have it as an object, as the identity unifying the different senses that all of these acts prescribe for it.

To return to our goal of explaining what determines the character of an intention, we are now in the position to say that it is a psychic act's *essential* ways of intending objects, i.e., the possible ways that objects can be given in that psychic act that hold the clue to its essence, i.e., that can show what makes the act a distinct form consciousness. The essence of a phenomenon, Husserl explains, . . . "proves to be that without which the object of a particular kind cannot be thought, i.e., without which the object cannot be intuitively imagined as such."[28] In other words, it is the features of a phenomenon that prescribe the purely possible

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[27] John J. Drummond, "The Structure of Intentionality," in *The New Husserl: A Critical Reader*, ed. Donn Welton (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press), 71.

[28] Edmund Husserl, *Experience and Judgment: Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic*, ed. Ludwig Landgrebe, trans. James S Churchill and Karl Ameriks (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 341.

ways that it can appear or be manifested to consciousness.[29] Husserlian phenomenology seeks to make intuitively clear the essence of psychic acts. As Sartre's puts it, "phenomenology is a description of transcendental consciousness founded on the intuiton of the essence of these structures."[30] For our purposes, Sartre's claim means that only those aspects of the *noema* that are revealing of essential structures will be given attention in our investigation of imagination.

Let me give a hint about what these aspects may be before moving into a discussion of the method Husserl developed to describe the essence of psychic acts. Consider again the case of George Washington. As we illustrate before, there is a manifold of definite ways George Washington the person can be meant, for example, as "the first U.S. General that crossed the Delaware." However, George Washington can be intended in ways that are more relevant to us, for example, as something perceived, remembered, or more importantly, as something imagined. Suppose that we were perceiving George Washington crossing the Delaware. This event would have a different sense in this psychic act than it would have in a memory or a fantasy. If we were perceiving it, it would have the sense of something perceived; if we were remembering it, it would have the sense of something remembered; if we were imagining it, it would have the sense of something imagined. Other kinds of act-constitutive senses are also possible. Now, although this claim might sound trivially obvious, the factors that determine the intentional differences between imagination, perception, and memory are not self-evident

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[29] For Husserl, essences are not entities existing in their own realm of being, somehow independently of the particular facts or instances that manifest them in our experience. Rather, the term refers to the purely possible ways an object of a certain type can be experienced. Essences become present to consciousness only through the individual objects that embody them. They are pure universals in so far as we have succeeded in apprehending them in imagination free from any connections to contingent matters of fact, or "free from metaphysical interpretations".

[30] Jean- Paul Sartre, *The Imagination*, trans. Kenneth Williford, and David Rudrauf (London and New York: Routledge: 2002), 126.

at all. In the next chapter, I will propose that imagination can be differentiated from perception and memory in terms of essential differences in their intentional attitude, freedom to vary objects, and in terms of how their objects appear in time. These essential differences constitute fundamentally different ways of intending objects. I will explain what they mean in future chapters. For now, let me turn to a discussion of Husserl's method.[31]

II. Method

Thus far I have clarified the concept of a 'phenomenon', described the intentional character of a psychic act, proposed to distinguish them in terms of their intentional structure, and argued that this means focusing on the essential ways objects appear in those acts. In this section, I discuss the *Epoche* and the method of free variation, both of which represent two aspects of Husserl's phenomenological method that have most influenced the description of imagination defended in future chapters. I hope that after this systematic explosion, I have not only succeeded in elucidating the methodological framework of this study, but also shown the potential of the *Epoche* and the method of free variation for elucidating significant structures of human life.[32]

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[31] In the next chapter I explain in detail what I mean by an act's *thetic* structure. However, let me provide here a brief characterization. The act's *thetic* structure refers to how we understand or take the being of an object in an act. For instance, in perception we take the object to be real and present in the flesh. In imagination, we regard appearing objects to be purely possible. Thus the *thetic* character of a psychic act reflects the intentional attitude towards objects constitutive of that act. Besides the aforementioned *noematic* features, I will also describe different forms that imaginings can take, and the way they affect our experience of imagined objects in the third chapter of this dissertation. These are *noetic* features of our experience of imagination in the sense that they reflect how an imagining is being carried out; for example, whether it is a sensory, a phenomenal, or a purely abstract imagining.

[32] My understanding of the Epoche is heavily indebted to the following sources: H. L. Van Breda, "A Note on Reduction and Authenticity According to Husserl," in *Husserl: Expositions and Appraisals*, ed. Fredrick A. Ellison, and Peter McCormick (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame press, 1977), 124-125; Guido Kung, *The Phenomenological Reduction as Epoche and as Explication*," in Husserl: Expositions and Appraisal, 338-349.

Husserlian phenomenology investigates imagination as a psychic act or intentional experience whereby we apprehend the imagined in ways that are unique to this act. The motivating insight of this approach to imagination is that all abstract or purely conceptual theorizing on imagination (as we see in science and linguistic approaches to philosophy) are mere empty intentions that often lack intuitiveness or a clear and adequate connection to the phenomena it supposedly aims to explain. Hence, if our aim is to make intuitively clear the essence of a given phenomenon, or " . . . re-achiev [e] a direct and primitive contact with [its distinguishing characteristics]", as Merleau-Ponty says, we must go back to concrete manifestations of it in order to describe its universally valid structures faithfully, i.e., "precisely in the manner in which they are given" to an attentive subject seeking understanding of them.[33]

For us, this means reducing, i.e., tracing back imagination to " . . . the source of its meaning", i.e., to the original acts or lived experiences that manifest it for what it is.[34] Ultimately, achieving this reduction requires a purified understanding of the concrete examples of the phenomenon we choose as the starting point of our descriptions. By a "purifying understanding" I mean an intuitive awareness of the pure possibilities that define the phenomenon rather than an awareness of contingent matters of fact about it. In other words, as Husserl explains, a purified understanding of a phenomenon " . . . can have no extension consisting of facts, of empirical actualities which bind it [to experience], but only

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[33] As Merleau-Ponty eloquently puts it, "[phenomenology's] efforts are concentrated upon re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world, and endowing that contact with a philosophical status." Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), vii.

[34] H. L. Van Breda, *A Note Reduction*, 124.

an extension of pure possibilities."[35] In short, a pure understanding of imagination is nothing less than a description of the possible ways the phenomenon could show up to consciousness.

The first step on this reduction begins with a shift from the world and its objects taken as simply being there to the world and its objects taken as experienced phenomena. Now, since we need to remain faithful to the phenomena, we need a devise that can help us stay within the bounds of what is given. The *Epoche* is meant to help us do this. Broadly speaking, it is a devise that allows us to "bracket" naturalistic and other preconceptions that may stand in the way of an accurate description of the phenomena.[36]

Let me explain. More than anything else, the *Epoche* allows us to suspend our naïve or unreflective reliance on the natural attitude and its detrimental consequences for our understanding of the relation of the world to our lived experience. For instance, one of the defining tendencies of naively (unreflectively) living within the natural attitude is our sole preoccupation with the objects themselves, their empirical constitution, and the causal interactions between them that we wish to understand for practical or theoretical reasons.[37] If our experience of these objects is considered at all within this attitude, it is assumed to be a property of factually existing beings; for example, real human beings, and is often conceived as either a mere epiphenomenal after-effect of real causal relations or, at the very least, as

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[35] Husserl, *Experience and Judgment*, 352. In fact, this is how Husserl defines phenomenology. As he says in the following passage, "phenomenology is, in fact, a purely descriptive discipline, exploring the field of transcendentally pure consciousness by pure intuition." Husserl, *Ideas I*, 136.

[36] "The "phenomenological [epoche] will deserve its name only by means of this insight; the fully conscious effecting of that epoche will prove itself to be the operation necessary to make "pure" consciousness, and subsequently the whole phenomenological region, accessible to us." Husserl, *Ideas I*, 66.

[37] "In the natural attitude nothing else but the natural world is seen." Ibid.

some non-reducible set of physically grounded functions supervening on the physical properties of factually existing beings having those experiences (like the software in a computer). As a result, the natural attitude takes for granted the constituting, or sense-revealing function of consciousness and the embodied structures that shape this constitution. To say it differently, under the sway of this attitude and the web of beliefs that define it, such as the positing of actuality, little effort is given, if any effort at all is given, to understanding the character of our lived experience of the world and the way it correlates with the very way we encounter and think about that world—from the most passive ways of experiencing and thinking about it to the most active, abstract, theoretical ones. In sum, the natural attitude presupposes the experiential conditions that make it possible without being able to account for them.[38]

Hence the introduction of the *Epoche* allows us to bracket, suspend, or put out of action our natural reliance on this dogmatic (philosophically unreflective) attitude, and the web of beliefs that define it, in order to clarify its sense and understand its intentional origins. However, it is important to emphasize that, in introducing the *Epoche*, we are not doubting or rejecting the natural attitude, or the specific beliefs we form about the world and its objects based on this attitude. This would imply that this attitude was somehow questionable or in need of defense against skepticism, which is not. In fact, certainty about the existence of the surrounding world is part of the essence of this attitude, a certainty that is thoroughly

[38] This is why Husserl refers to any science that presupposes the natural attitude as a "dogmatic" science. Here is what Husserl says about dogmatic sciences: " there is a good reason for calling all the sciences that have undergone reduction "dogmatic": For it can be seen, by virtue of the own peculiar essence of the sources, on the one hand, that they and they alone are the sciences which require "criticism" – and, indeed, a criticism, which they themselves are essentially incapable of effecting." Husserl, *Ideas I*, 141.

grounded in our lived experience of this world. It is true that we often doubt and reject the existence of individual things or states-of-affairs within this world when we realize, on the basis of new experiences, that they are mere illusions or hallucinations. This doubt and negation; however, always occurs against the background of our certainty about the surrounding world, which makes this doubt and negation possible in the first place. It is only when philosophers go on holiday, as Wittgenstein says, that they can pretend that the being of the world is doubtful on the basis of unmotivated skeptical scenarios about the possible non-being of the world (like the logical possibility of there being Cartesian Demons fooling us, or the logical possibility of being just a Brian-in-a-Vat in an otherwise empty world).[39]

But, as Husserl correctly points out, pretending or attempting to doubt or reject the being of the world is not the same as doubting it or rejecting it. At most, these acts, if we make use of them, allow us to alter our relationship towards the certainty that permeates our natural attitude towards the being of the world without denying or changing it to something less certain. This is precisely the intended function of the *Epoche*, to alter our naïve relation towards the natural attitude, without doubting or negating its certainty, or modifying its contents; so that we can gain the sufficient distance that we need to reflect on the sense of this certainty and its origins. Moreover, although Husserl often speaks of the *Epoche* as if it required us to exclude the natural attitude, this should not be interpreted to mean that we should ignore it, leave it behind, or bar it from phenomenological description. On the

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[39] In *Ideas I* and *Cartesian Meditation*, Husserl does argue that the idea of coming to doubt the existence of the physical world is logically conceivable, and he uses this possibility to argue for the independence of consciousness from metaphysical questions about the existence of the physical world. However, this is an empty, purely logical possibility that is not motivated or grounded in experience, and, when Husserl appeals to it, it is not to call the being of the world into doubt; but rather, to achieve a phenomenological attitude towards it. See, for example, Husserl, *Ideas I*, 109-112, for his discussion of what he calls there: "The Annihilation of The World Hypothesis."

contrary, the point is simply to set aside our tendency to take it for granted precisely so that we can thematize it, i.e., make it an object of sustained phenomenological reflections. Husserl underscores this point when he says that the natural attitude, " . . . still there, like the parenthesized in the parentheses, like the excluded outside the context of inclusion."[40]

Furthermore, the bracketing of the natural attitude and the realistic metaphysic that defines this attitude—which includes any empirical beliefs or contingent truths about the world—is not a single move that can be accomplished all at once or that can be considered ever definitely achieved. Rather, it is a constant, ever renewable commitment to purifying our understanding of the phenomena from any natural assumptions, beliefs, or theoretical constructs that may distort it, cover it up, or prevent it from being rediscovered precisely as it is given to us in experience, not more and no less. Hence we should distinguish between the introduction and the performance of the *Epoche*. The introduction represents the initial step of putting out of action the natural attitude and its commitment to actualities. It marks a shift from an attitude that takes the world so conceived for granted to one that takes our lived experience of that world and its constitutive conditions as the aim of our investigations. In contrast, the performance of the *Epoche* demands a constant effort to remain within the brackets placed by the *Epoche* until purification or reduction of phenomena to its essential characteristics and constitutive origins has been fully completed, or if this turns out to be impossible, at least approximated more and more through ever more refined descriptions. It may become necessary, then, to reenact the *Epoche* constantly yet "never considering it definitely achieved"—a reenactment that must be performed not just by individual researchers

[40] Husserl, *Ideas I*, 59.

overtime; but also by the community of interested researchers as a whole.[41] It is only when this communal reenactment of the *Epoche* is carried out overtime that the hope of more secured phenomenological descriptions becomes possible.

The act of bracketing the natural attitude, then, can be thought of as preparing the way for reducing phenomena to the set of pure possibilities that define it by effecting a shift from our naïve immersion in this attitude towards a reflective attitude that focuses on our intentional experience; in other words, on the world and its determinations as phenomenon of consciousness. To quote Husserl, " . . . my whole life of acts—experiencing, thinking, valuing. Etc.—remains, and indeed flows on; but what was before my eyes in that life as "the" world, having being and validity for me, has become a mere "phenomenon," and this in respect to all determinations proper to it."[42]

From now on we must attempt to describe the intentional sense of the phenomenon we are investigating "simply as what it is presented as being, but also only within the limits in which it is presented there."[43] After we have introduced the *Epoche* and resolved to stay within the limits of what is given within this phenomenological attitude, the second step on the way to the essence of the phenomenon is the careful selection of concrete examples of it, the identification of commonalities between them, and, finally, the purification of these

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[41] "The reduction must always be repeated and it can never be considered definitely achieved." H.L. Van Breda, *A Note On Reduction*, 124.

[42] Edmund Husserl, *Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 78.

[43] This quote describes what Husserl calls The Principle of All Principles, which Husserl introduces in *Ideas I*. According to this principle, we says that, "*everything . . . offered* to us *in "intuition" is to be accepted simply as what is presented as being*, but *also within the limits of what is presented there*." Edmund Husserl, *Ideas I*, 44.

commonalities from any contingent matters of fact. The latter is meant to determine whether the general properties associated with a certain phenomenon are essential to it by projecting the concrete examples that embody these general properties into the realm of imagination in order to vary them systematically with the aim of registering intuitively, i.e., directly and with evidence, their necessary character.

This is the purpose of Husserl's method of free variation. For instance, with the aid of this systematic use of imagination, we can presumably "bring to direct presence and registration" (make intuitive) the eidetic fact that perception is perspectival (comes in profiles), thus that it would contravene its sense to claim that it could present the entire object directly, i.e., without any apperceptive surplus left.[44] Likewise, with this method we can determine *eidetic* facts about any other type of psychic act; for example, imagination, or any other type of phenomena, like numbers, possibilities, or moral values. Based on Husserl's writings, let me describe next the general workings of this method in order to bring out in more detail how it can facilitate the project of elucidating phenomena.[45]

As said before, we begin our *eidetic* investigations of a phenomenon with carefully chosen examples. Now whether the chosen instances are real or purely contrived particulars is of no importance. After all, we are not interested in empirical but necessary truths, and, from the point of view of imagination, actual instances of a phenomenon are, and should be seen as

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[44] Robert Sokolowski, *Husserlian Meditations: How Words Present Things* (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1974), p. 58.

[45] The following reconstruction of Husserl's method is based on a careful exegesis of Husserl's exposition of it in part III, section 2, of *Experience and Judgment*, 339-363. See also, Robert Sokolowski, *Husserlian Meditations*, 57-88, and Edward S. Casey, "Imagination and Phenomenological Method," in *Husserl: Exposition and Appraisals*, 70-82.

nothing more than "possibilities among other possibilities, in fact as arbitrary possibilities of the imagination."[46] Put differently, actual instances are "indifferent points of departure of a series of [purely possible] variants."[47]

Once concrete examples of the phenomenon have been selected, the next step is to imaginatively produce as many conceivable variations of them as one could possibly imagine without destroying their identity as instance of their type. To ensure this, we generate "instances that are similar to the original" but differ in the property varied; for instance, color, size, orientation, or any other determination that we may have added, subtracted, or modified in the quest to sort out those changes that are compatible from those that are incompatible with their type, i.e., that destroy it. Changes that are compatible with their original type indicate non-essential properties, while changes that are incompatible with their original type indicate the presence of essential properties.

To give a concrete example, we come to explicitly grasp through *eidetic* variation that changes in size, color, and orientation preserve the identity of a triangle qua triangle but not adding or subtracting sides and angles. Similarly, it may become evident to us that three-sidedness is a necessary but insufficient condition for something to count as a triangle. In other words, that the three sides of a given shape must form three angles if is to be an instance of triangularity rather than an instance of a different *eidos* or pure type. Hence, through the method of producing possible variations of triangularity in the realm of fantasy, *eidetic* facts

[46] Husserl, *Experience and Judgment*, 350.

[47] Ibid., 349.

about triangles that would remain otherwise implicit in our understanding of their being, or vague and ambiguous, come to be intuitively registered.

It almost goes without saying that generating variants calls for the systematic use of the imagination. Let me describe three ways this can be done. First, one may systematically remove traits from our initial example, i.e., contrive new variants without those traits in order to determine which can be dissociated and which cannot be dissociated from the given type. The idea is that if "the removal of certain moments in a variant, or the addition of certain moments to it, destroys the individual, either totally, as being, or at least as an instance of the *eidos* we are trying to isolate," then we are justified in claiming (through a kind of negative insight) that these moments or traits have proven to be essential to what it means to be a purely possible instance of the given type.[48] For example, if removing sides from a triangle changes its identity qua triangle; or if removing sensations from perception changes its identity qua perception; or if removing temporality from a melody changes its identity *qua* melody; these traits are constitutive of their essence. Likewise, if color cannot be imagined without extension, or consciousness without intentionality, or matter without geometrically describable properties, there is an essential connection between them, so that they cannot be given apart from each other or the whole of which they are parts (according to the method of removal).

Second, we may generate variants through substitution. Substitution works by replacing original traits with different ones. This is not simply removing original traits but, rather, imagining different ones replacing those that are initially given as characterizing the

[48] Sokolowski, *Husserlian Meditations*, 80.

phenomena. Suppose, for instance, that our initial model of tri-angularity was a black, right triangle with the following additional characteristics: a spatial orientation presenting the hypotenuse as its base, and two inches in height. So, besides trying to imagine replacing its tri-sidedness, we could also imagine changing its color, orientation, and size in place of the one initially given. Now, if we were to do this and failed to substitute any of these properties with different ones, it would indicate that they are indeed essential to the identity of the phenomenon in question. In contrast, a successful substitution of any of these properties with different ones would indicate, according to the method of substitution, that the substituted properties are just contingent.

Finally, one can also try to produce variants by adding properties to those originally given as characterizing the phenomena. "These extra traits," Casey (1977) observes, "act to fill up an example that is incomplete or ambiguous as first presented. But their imaginability is not, as such, a definite indication of their essentiality; it is only an aid in determining the essential character of the phenomenon illustrated in the example."[49]

As the quoted passage indicates, this last technique can held us "fill in" the initial model thereby generating more complete, intuitive, or less ambiguous examples of the phenomena. Moreover, adding traits without removing existing ones can help us identify additions that are incompatible with the identity of the phenomena. For instance, adding thickness to the right triangle mentioned above would destroy its identity *qua* triangle by transforming it from a two-dimensional, triangular shape to a triangular solid (which indicates the incompatibility of this change with the idea of a triangle). This is significant since

[49] Casey, "Imagination and Phenomenological Method," 76.

specifying precisely why some additions are toxic to the identity of the phenomena help us understand what is essential about it by comparison. For example, why is it that adding thickness to a triangle destroys its identity? This type of interrogation, motivated by the results of addition, can indeed bring to presence and registration the fact (perhaps only implicitly understood before) that triangles are essentially two-dimensional figures without thickness or solidity; hence the importance of adding traits for *eidetic* analysis.

As we generate variants using the aforementioned means, we should begin to notice an "overlapping coincidence" in properties among the members of the series. In other words, produced variants begin to coincide with another; and as they do, it becomes more and more evident that they are nothing more than arbitrarily produced variations on a single theme, i.e., a set of properties necessarily common to all of these variants. As Husserl explains, " . . . [grasping] the *eidos* depends on a freely and arbitrarily producible multiplicity of variants attaining coincidence . . . ".[50] To be clear, the extension on an essence is potentially infinite. For example, the number of actual and purely possible individual triangles appears to us in imagination as an "infinitely open multiplicity", i.e., as a series that can continue to go on indefinitely. However, as Husserl points out, "this does not imply that an actual continuation to infinity is required" to apprehend an *eidos*.[51] Rather, "what matters is that the variation as a process of the formation of variants should itself have a structure of arbitrariness, that the process should be accomplished in the consciousness of an arbitrary development of

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[50] Husserl, *Experience and Judgment*, 342.

[51] Husserl, Experience and Judgment, 342.

variants."[52] In other words, that in the generation of variants, we have been guided by no other aim than the random testing of the properties of our initial examples so as to isolate those changes that are unimaginable. In the context of dealing with an arbitrary series, it becomes evident that continuation of the series by adding more variants to it is unnecessary since variants will continue to overlap precisely in the ways it has become evident that they do. As Husserl says, . . . "it is a matter of indifference what, in addition, I might be given to apprehend in the consciousness that 'I could continue in this way.' "[53] In short, even if we realize in the process of *eidetic* variation that we are dealing with an infinitely open series, what matters is the exemplary arbitrariness of the series for the intuition of essential structures.

Conclusion

We have come to the end of our exposition of the *Epoche* and the method of free variation (the two aspects of Husserl's phenomenological method that have most influenced the account of imagination that I intent to develop in the next two chapters). I have presented the *Epoche* as a methodological device whose main function is to keep at bay naturalistic and other potentially distorting preconceptions of the phenomena so that it can be described solely in the manner it manifests itself to phenomenological reflection. On the basis of Husserl's writings, I also described how the method of free variation works, emphasizing its role of elucidating essences through the imagination of variants. What, if any, is the epistemic value of these two aspects of Husserl's method? Can we hope to achieve certainty about the essence

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

of a given phenomenon by means of them? I wish to conclude this chapter on Husserl's framework with a reflection on the epistemic limits and possibilities of Husserl's method. In particular, I hope to dispel a common skeptical reaction against this method in order to make a case for its current relevance.

To motivate the skepticism about Husserl's method that I wish to dispel here consider the starting point of Husserlian phenomenology. This way of approaching the problems of philosophy begins with a consideration of the world and its determinations, including our own psychic processes, as a phenomenon of consciousness, i.e., as the objects of intentional experiences whereby we are directed to them in one way or another (a radical shift in our natural orientation towards the world initiated by the *Epoche*). Now, while it is logically possible to doubt the existence of the actual world taken as a natural realm of being existing "out there" independently of consciousness, it is seems absurd to deny the fact that even if the physical world around us does not exist at all, we are nevertheless having intentional experiences, and that some of these intentional experiences seem to be about a world that transcends or extends beyond what it is directly giving of itself and its objects. For instance, if I try to doubt the perceptions of the surrounding world that I am now living, it could only mean that I am unsure whether they are genuine perceptions or mere illusions or hallucinations. What this doubt could not mean, however, is that I am not having any intentional experiences at all, or that they do not exhibit a perceptual form, i.e., the sense of being about something in the transcendent world presently appearing to me in the flesh. Thus the fact that I am living through these experiences, and that they have the form of perceptions, and that they retain this sense as long as they continue to cohere with other experiences,

cannot be doubted "every time I think about it or conceive it in my mind", i.e., turn my reflective regard towards them and regard them as phenomena, i.e., as meaningful experiences that I am now living through.[54]

The same is true of the past and the future aspects of the lived world. Although we may be able to conceive of the possibility of coming to doubt the existence of the past as a whole, we cannot doubt the fact that we seem to have memories of the past, i.e., intentional experiences that have the sense of being representations of things and events in the objective world that we experienced before (such as having had dinner with someone, or having imagined something, or having engaged in some other activity). Similarly, although we may be able to conceive of the possibility of coming to doubt the existence of the future, we cannot doubt the fact that some of our intentional experiences of the world amount to anticipations and expectations of how the future will happen.

Accordingly, from the standpoint of Husserlian phenomenology, it is immaterial whether the world really is the way it appears to consciousness, or whether consciousness and its intentional acts are real properties of an actual person. What is important is the fact that we cannot deny that this is how things appear to us; that this is how we experience the world; that this is the apparent content or sense of our intentional life. In other words, that this seems to be the condition or situation in which consciousness finds itself: self-aware of being in a world that manifests a certain phenomenological structure regardless of whether the world as *it is in itself* really has that structure or composition.

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[54] Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy: In Which The Existence of God and the Distinction of the Soul from the Body are Demonstrated*, third ed., trans. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis/ Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993), 18.

If the aforementioned epistemic claims about our intentional experience are correct, it is possible for phenomenology to claim secure beginnings. However, as it became clear from our account of the method of free variation, Husserlian phenomenology seeks to reduce or trace back phenomena to its essential or necessary characteristic, i.e., to the necessary truths that delineate all its actual and phenomenologically possible appearances. To quote Ellison and McCormick, "phenomenology is . . . a philosophical inquiry into the invariant (and therefore nonhistoricist) features of pure (and therefore nonphysical) consciousness."[55]

It is at this point that the skepticism I wish to dispel begins to haunt us. Critics point out that this project presupposes Husserl's idea of philosophy as a rigorous science of the essence of phenomena capable of generating presupposition-less knowledge, i.e., apodictic certainty or indubitably self-evident descriptions about it. These critics insist, however, that there is no such thing as presupposition-less knowledge. [56] They claim that any attempt to get at the essence of phenomena inevitably presupposes something about the being of the phenomena, or about our approach to it, whose validity cannot be established *a priori*, and thus something that must remain potentially falsifiable by new experiences.[57] For instance, the main presupposition of the *Epoche* is that it can bracket all naturalistic assumptions about the

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[55] Fredrick A. Ellison, and Peter McCormick, introduction to the part II of *Husserl: Expositions and Appraisals*, 121.

[56] This objection is typically voiced against Husserl's Philosophy. For a discussion of this objection, see David Michael Levin, "Induction and Husserl's Theory of Variation," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* Vol. 29, no. 1 (Sep 1968), 1-15. J.N. Mohanty, "Husserl's Transcendental Phenomenology and Essentialism," *The Review of Metaphysics* Vol. 32, no. 2 (December 978), 229-322; Leszek Kolakowski, *Husserl and The Search for Certitude* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1975).

[57] For instance, Mohanty asks the following question: " Assuming that there are essences which one can intuitively apprehend, why should such apprehension of essences be any more presuppositionless than perceptual apprehension of empirical particulars and facts?" Mohanty, "Husserl's Transcendental Phenomenology," 301.

phenomena, while the main presupposition of the method of free variation is that it can make self-evident its essential structures by means of a limited number of exemplars conceived in the imagination. But, the critics insist, it is not possible to show convincingly that *the Epoche* is actually able to purify our consciousness of all its factual content, or that the method of free variation can exclude apodictically the possibility of future falsifications of eidetic claims on the basis of a few randomly produced exemplars. [58] Because of these unbridgeable epistemic limits, Husserl should have non-ironically concluded that: "Philosophy As Science, as serious, rigorous, indeed apodictically rigorous, science—the dream is [indeed] over."[59]

I will not attempt here to develop a complete reply to this objection. Other Husserlian philosophers have tried to do this in their writings. [60] Rather, my response to the aforementioned skepticism aims only to weaken its presumption of being an insurmountable obstacle to using Husserl's framework as the foundation of our study.

Accordingly, let me begin by pointing out that the aim of presuppositionless knowledge in Husserlian phenomenology is meant to function as a regulative ideal rather than a reachable end that Husserl's method is meant to guarantee. Husserl thinks that this regulative ideal, or *Telos*, has been implicitly guiding our efforts in philosophy since its ancient origins in Greece. Since its inception in Ancient Greece, philosophy has strived to

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[58] For some classical objections to Husserl's method of free variation, see Richard Cobb-Stevens, "Husserl on Eidetic Intuition and Historical Interpretation," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* Vol. 66, no. 2 (1992), 261-275; and Levin, " Induction and Husserl's Theory of Variation," 8-15.

[59] Husserl, *Crisis*, 389.

[60] See, for example, David Kasmier, "A Defense of Husserl's Method of Free Variation," in Epistemology, Archeology, and Ethics: Current Investigations of Husserl's Corpus, ed. Pol Vandevelde and Sebastian Luft (London: Continuum, 2010), 21-40; and Richard M. Zaner, "At Play in the Field of Possibles," *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* Vol. 41 (2010), 28-84.

achieve universal *Sophia*, or the kind of understanding of the world and our place in it that strives to justify its presuppositions (unlike the empirical sciences, which can afford to be "naïve", i.e., take for granted or be unreflective about their fundamental assumptions). From an ethical standpoint, philosophy has always represented humanity's aspiration to live a "life regulated by pure rational norms", i.e., adequately grounded principles.[61] However, nowhere in Husserl's description of the original *Telos* of philosophy is it implied that it is fully realizeable, or that Husserl's method could ever fully realize it.

To be sure, as Husserl says in the *Cartesian Meditations*, " we tentatively allow ourselves to be guided [by this ideal]", which given Husserl's theory of perception as irreducibly partial, it is almost certain to stand at infinite distance from knowers.[62] But to allow our phenomenological efforts to be guided by it is not the same as affirming that it is realizable, or even assume it's possible. As Husserl says, "we take . . . [it only as] a precursory presumption", we let it tentatively guide our efforts, so as to force us to achieve as much reason in our descriptions as is humanly possible.[63]

For us, the value of allowing ourselves to be tentatively guided by an ideal whose possibility is likely to be unattainable resides in its potential to effect a radical understanding of the most basic concepts and presuppositions informing intentional life. For instance, striving to describe the limits of how something can be experienced; for example,

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[61] "[Philosophy] renders possible from an ethical-religious point of view a life regulated by pure rational norms." Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 166.

[62] Ibid., 9.

[63] Ibid.

imagination, as rigorously as is humanly possible, is bound to bring to light hidden assumptions in our understanding of the phenomena whose reason we now can examine. This in turn can lead to a greater freedom, if not from presuppositions, from unexamined presuppositions.[64] "Freedom from unexamined presuppositions" entails awareness of the fundamental claims and assumptions that ground our understanding of the world, responsibility for clarifying their sense, and a search for the best possible justification there is for them; in short, making them as secured as we can possibly make them. Only under these conditions can we claim with reason that they are truly ours, that we have command over them, that we own them, that they inform and guide the life of a free and an autonomous being.[65]

Accordingly, for these reasons, we will follow Husserl's lead in understanding the certainty that we are striving for in relation to imagination as a regulative ideal tentatively guiding our efforts to provide the best possible grounds for our *eidetic* descriptions of it. This is not to say that I will assume or claim certainty for them. As an empiricist (not in the classical sense of the term but in the sense that is compatible with Husserl's broader concept of experience, which includes the evidence of imagination) I am committed to the value of remaining responsive to new experiences, of remaining open to the ever present possibility of having to revise one's commitments in light of conflicting evidence. For me this is a virtue.

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[64] Peter McCormick makes this point forcefully in his introduction to Husserl's "Philosophy as Rigorous Science." See *The Essential Husserl: Basic Writings in Transcendental Phenomenology*, ed. Donn Welton (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), 150.

[65] I believe that this is what Husserl has in mind in the following quote from "Philosophy as Rigorous Science": "[philosophy] renders possible from an ethical-religious point of view a life regulated by pure rational norms." Husserl, "Philosophy As Rigorous Science," 166. Thus more than an epistemic quest, the idea of philosophy as a rigorous science is an ethical quest to live a truly authentic, autonomous life.

Yet it is a virtue that is compatible with the aforementioned striving for universal *Sophia*, a striving that in our case will take the form of, again, providing the best possible grounds there are (in this case the best possible imaginative evidence that there is) in support of our account of what we take to be the essential intentional structures of imagination.

Chapter Two: Imaginableness and Freedom

Introduction

This chapter begins my account of imagination. Following Husserl's comparative analysis of psychic acts, my focus in this chapter will be to elucidate phenomenal differences between imagination, perception, and memory in terms of their distinct stances on objects and its terms of their freedom. Accordingly, what is imagination? How does it differ from perception and memory in terms of how we live these acts? I propose that imagination is a distinctive psychic act that differs from perception and memory in terms of its *quasi*-positional stance on objects, its unique freedom to vary objects at will, and also in terms of imaginary time (a feature I describe in the next chapter). My account of imagination's quasi-positional stance on objects, a unique stance I call "imaginableness", and of its freedom proceeds in this chapter as follows: I first discuss various conceptions of imagination in order to distinguish them from the sense of imagination as "fantasy imaginings" that I seek to describe here. After identifying how I intend to use the term 'imagination', I will then discuss and critique Humean and causal attempts to demarcate this phenomenon from perception and memory in order to distance the phenomenological approach championed here from these two traditional approaches. Afterwards I describe imagination's intentional attitude in contradistinction to the intentional attitudes constitute of perception and memory. Finally, I describe the distinctive freedom we enjoy in imagination, ending with a reflection on some possible logical and conceptual limits.

I. Imagination and Its Meanings

In a classic discussion on method, Herbert Spiegelberg makes the following observation about the role of conceptual analysis in phenomenology:

> Phenomenologists often take their point of departure from certain characteristic phrases and try to determine their meanings and their equivocations . . . such analyses of terms [are] merely preparatory to the study of the referents, i.e., of the phenomena meant by the expressions. Phenomenological analysis, then, is analysis of the phenomena themselves, not of the expressions that refer to them.[66]

Unlike linguistic philosophy, which prioritizes the analysis of meanings as the way to solve or dissolve philosophical problems, phenomenology analyzes the meaning of words, but only as a preliminary step on the way to the phenomena they are meant to represent. However, when one takes this preliminary step in search of the phenomenon of imagination, one is struck by the plurality of meanings its term has come to denote. For instance, in academia, the meaning of this term can vary widely, varying from mental imagery to falsely believing, creativity, hallucinations, or the Kantian imagination. I will describe next some of these meanings, contrast them with the one I seek to investigate, and explain why I seek to study it over the meanings discussed.

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[66] Herbert Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction*, 2nd edition, *chapter XIV: The Essentials of the Phenomenological Method* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965), 669.

To begin with, the term 'imagination' is often used synonymously with "image."[67] When the term "image" is qualified by "mental", it is meant to denote all manner of sensory-like representations, like memories, dreams, daydreams, after-images, hallucinations, hypnagogic images, and sensory imaginings like visualizing. Unqualified, the term can also include physical images such as sketches, drawings, paintings, portrays, faces seen in fire, on walls, on coffee grains, etc. Sartre, for instance, employs this broader sense of the term in *The Imaginary*, where he proposes that imagination is a form of consciousness that "aims in its corporeality at an absent or nonexistent object, through a physical or psychic content that is given not as itself but in the capacity of 'analogical representative' of the object aimed at."[68]

Besides "image", imagination has come to mean in some contexts falsely believing in something that is not there. I have in mind, for instance, examples like a child falsely believing that a monster is hiding in the closet, or that the noises heard downstairs during the night come from Santa Claus forcing his way down the chimney. People often describe children, or people who endorse these kind of beliefs, as " given over to their fancy" in the sense that they falsely believe in something that is not there, i.e., something fictitious or purely made up or invented.

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[67] The following is a list of classic and contemporary proponets of this view of imagination: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. C. B. Macpherson (London: Penguin Books, 1968), 87-99; David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 11-14; Bertrand Russell, *The Analysis of Mind* (London and New York, 1961), 137-187; Alastair Hannay, *Mental Images: A Defense* (London and New York, 1971); Stephen Michael Kosslyn, *Ghosts in the Mind's Machine: Creating and Using Images in the Brain* (New York and London: W.N. Norton and Company, 1983); and Stephen Michael Kosslyn, William Lad Thompson, and Ganis Giorgio, *The Case for Mental Imagery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[68] Sartre, *The Imaginary*, 20.

Or consider a third and related sense of imagination exemplified in Macbeth's soliloquy about the dagger. Macbeth ponders whether he is seeing a dagger or whether the dagger is "a dagger of the mind, a false creation, proceeding from [a] heat-oppressed brain."[69] Suppose that Macbeth came to falsely believe that he was really seeing a dagger. This would be a case of hallucinating. People often use the term 'imagination' to talk about hallucinations. Presumably, they think of hallucinations as imaginings taken for perceptions.

In yet other contexts the term 'imagination' is equated with "conceivability." Here I have in mind Descartes's *chiliagon*, or the case of imagining something lasting forever, or imagining every single neuron in one's brain suddenly turning into silicon. These entities and states of affairs are imaginable (in the sense that one can develop an idea of what it would be like if they existed or were true), even that it is not possible to directly see them with the mind. In other words, because these objects are not perceptible, it is not possible to form an immediate, sensuous intention of them in imagination. Yet we can imagine them in the sense of being able to conceive them, which is a sense of 'imagination' capable of reaching over a wider range of objects than the sphere of the imageable or sensuously construable.[70]

None of the aforementioned senses of 'imagination' imply creativity in the sense of novel and valuable psychic constructions. Neither mental nor physical images require novel and valuable content, for instance. Similarly, our fanciful believes may be mundane, or

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[69] Willaim Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, Act II, Scene One, in *The Complete Works of Williams Shakespeare* (New York: Chatham River Press, 1987), 1051.

[70] The conception of 'imagination' as conceivability is at the center of analytic debates on imagination, especially on the issue of whether or not imagination is a guide to metaphysical possibilities. For a recent anthology exploring these issues, see Tamar Szabo Gendler, and John Hawthorne, eds., *Conceivability and Possibility* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002).

hallucinations trite, and our conceptions uninspiring. Nevertheless, we can sometimes do things with imagination; people can show or evince inventiveness; and a work of art can embody or express imagination. When the term 'imagination' is used in these contexts, it is been equated with creativity.[71]

"Image", "fanciful belief", "hallucination", "conceivability", and "creativity" are all common ways of conceptualizing imagination. In philosophy, however, the term is often used in idiosyncratic or technical ways in the thought of some philosophers. Kant is a good example. In the *First Critique*, he uses the term to name mental processes whose function are to unify intuitions and concepts by schematizing them. To illustrate why, consider the case of perception. Perception always surpasses itself. In other words, perception always apprehends more and otherwise than what's strictly given by sensual stimulation from the object. For instance, despite that I am only receiving visual sensations from the top of the pen beside me, I am aware that it has more sides than the sides directly showing: a back, an inside, a surface that would feel solid and smooth to my touch; in other words, a horizon of merely intended yet co-given aspects of the same object awaiting to show up directly through future sensory appearances. Moreover, in perception we apprehend objects not just as physical objects. For instance, besides being conscious of the pen as something spread in space, I may also experience it as something pleasant (affective sense), beautiful (aesthetic sense), or as lacking moral status (ethical sense), or even as something worthy of devotion (religious sense).

[71] For an introduction to central philosophical issues in the philosophy of creativity, see Berys Gaut, "The Philosophy of Creativity," *Philosophy Compass* vol.5, no. 12 (2010), 1034-1046, and Michael Beaney, *Imagination and Creativity* (United Kingdom: The Open University, 2005).

All these ways the pen can appear to me in perception prescribe a horizon of possible ways I can relate to the pen in the future. For instance, if I intend the pen to be something sacred, I will comport towards it as a sacred object.[72] The point is that perception (I should say cognition in general) is constituted by apperceptive and horizontal structures whose conditions of possibility beg philosophical explanation. For Kant, imagination as a schematizing function must be part of this explanation.[73]

Mental imagery, falsely believing, hallucinations, conceivability, creativity, and the Kantian imagination are by no means mutually exclusive or jointly exhaustive of the meaning of the term.[74] Nevertheless, they provide the contrast that I need to elucidate the sense of 'imagination' we seek to investigate here, and explain why we are studying it over these listed meanings. Accordingly, let me begin by saying that the phenomenon of imagination whose essence we seek to clarify best falls under the rubric "fantasy-imagination." As I will explain in more detail later, this phenomenon is defined by a disinterested entertainment of objects, and a freedom to play with them at will, absent in other acts (like perception and memory).

The preceding senses of imagination fail to illuminate these and other facts about it. For instance, the term "image" is at once too broad and too narrow to do so. When applied to mental phenomena, for example, this term includes memories and hallucinations, which have

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[72] For a more in-depth description of the phenomenology of perception, see Husserl, *Passive and Active Synthesis*, 1-62; and Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*.

[73] For a detailed treatment of Kant's Theory of Imagination, see Sarah L. Gibbon, *Kant's Theory of Imagination*: *Bridging Gaps in Judgment and Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994). One of Kant's followers is Mark Johnson. See *The Body in the Mind* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

[74] Stevenson identifies twelve ways in which imagination is taken up in ordinary language as well as academic research. See Leslie F. Stevenson, "Twelve Conceptions of Imagination," *British Journal of Aesthetics* vol. 43, no.3, 238-259.

different intentional structures than fantasy-imaginings. In particular, memories and hallucinations lack the disinterested attitude that defines fantasy-imaginings, thus the term "image" fails to capture this difference. In addition, the term implies that fantasy-imaginings come always perceptually- formatted, when in fact, this is only one of several different forms they can show.[75] This latter point also applies to "conceivability". As I will argue later, conceivability is indeed an abstract, non-experiential form of fantasy-imagination. But like perception-like imaginings, it is also only one of its possible manifestations. Hence, it would be a mistake to equate fantasy-imaginings with the acts of conceivability.

Besides some of the preceding meanings being either too exclusive, inclusive, or both, clarifying others presupposes a phenomenological elucidation of "fantasy-imaginings." This is certainly true of "false believing", "hallucinations," and "creativity". The first, exemplified by the child fancying about the bogeyman, presupposes an account of fantasy-imaginings before we can understand the role they play in encouraging the child to form fanciful beliefs about fictitious entities. The same is true of hallucinations. Despite that people often think of them as imaginings, hallucinatory acts present themselves as perceptions. Unlike imaginings, they are not free or subject to our will, they always appear in a specific sensory form, their objects appear "out-there" or outwardly projected onto external space, they exhibit the detail quality of a percept, and they involve belief in the empirical reality of the hallucinated object. These basic differences cannot be appreciated, however, without describing imagination well.

[75] In the third chapter, I will discuss two other forms of imagination: the phenomenal and the intellectual imagination. I will show there how neither of these two are limited to perception-like representations of their objects.

Finally, as Casey and others have forcefully argued, contrary to popular opinion there is no necessary connection between creativity and imagination. For instance, even if it is true that fantasy imaginings play a central role in the creative process, it is also true that many of them are not creative at all (in the sense of being novel and valuable constructions). Conversely, creativity can happen without imagination.[76] Hence, defining our sense of imagination in terms of creativity, without an adequate phenomenological description of their mutual relation, do not help us at all to clarify the nature of imagination and its contributions to creativity.

Let me finish this attempt to justify investigating our sense of imagination over these others with some remarks about the Kantian imagination. Although it is definitely true that perception, or cognition in general, involves apperceived or horizontally-given structures, it is not obvious that we need to posit imagination to account for these structures (at least in the case of ordinary sense-perception). As Husserl and others have argued, recognitional memory, affectivity, kinesthesis, and other non-imaginative processes that are part and parcel of perception itself, may fully account for these structures, thereby eliminating having to posit an extra intention to explain the perceptual act.[77] Besides, without a sound phenomenological account of how imagination shows up in experience, extending it to encompass all processes

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[76] For instance, Casey and Gaut have argued persuasively against the idea that imagination and creativity are synonymous. See Casey, *Imagining*, 17-20; and Berys Gaut, "Creativity and Imagination," in *Imagination and Creativity*, ed., Micheal Beaney (United Kindom: Open University, 2005), 269-271.

[77] Husserl*, Experience and Judgment*, 171-194. See also Casey, *Imagining*, 146-174, where he discusses the discontinuities between imagination and perception. See also Sartre, *The Imaginary*, 120-123, where he argues for a separation between image and perception.

of constitution involved in perception, or cognition in general, may simply blur distinctions rather than explain intuitively how these two make each other possible.

It is for these and other reasons that will become evident later that imagination as "fantasy-imaginings"—such a visualizing a unicorn, imagining what it is like to feel or do something, rehearsing being other selves, or conceiving a one-thousand sided figure — interest me the most. Arguably, this is a paradigmatic form of what it means to imagine, the most important in understanding the role of imagination in scientific and philosophical thinking (as Husserl 's method of free variation clearly shows), and the one whose elucidation, I believe, promises the most to make intelligible the place of imagination in our intentional life in general.[78] Let us, then, figure out what it is.

II. Humean and Causal Criteria of Demarcation

The preceding section identified fantasy-imaginings as the phenomenon of interest. From hereafter the term 'imagination' will stand for this phenomenon exclusively. Having said this, I now wish to critique Humean and causal attempts to differentiate imagination from perception and memory in order to clear the way for the phenomenological approach that I favor, one that focuses on intentional differences.

Let me begin with Hume's suggestion that one can differentiate imagination from perception and memory in terms of sensible differences in "force and vivacity", but also in terms of "firmness and stability", or in terms of "protean-like" tendencies. According to Hume, the contents of imagination feel generally less forceful and vivacious to the mind than

[78] From now on I will use the term "imagination" to talk about the phenomenon I have been calling "fantasy imaginings."

the contents of memory or the contents of perception. Imaginings can also be less firm or stable than perceptions and, at least in some cases, they can also behave in protean fashion. As he says in *A Treatise on Human Nature*, "in the imagination the perception is faint and languid, and cannot without difficulty be preserved by the mind steady and uniform for any considerable time."[79]

The exact meaning of these terms is subject of much debate among Hume scholars.[80] What is arguably the most compelling interpretation, however, construes "force" to mean the strength or intensity of the experience, "vivacity" to mean how lively or real its content appears to the mind, "firmness and stability" to describe the steadiness or uniformity of its content, while "proteanism" to refer to the tendency of some imaginings to spontaneously morph into different objects.

Using this interpretation, let me contrast my perception of the tree outside my window with imagining a cardinal perching there, and a memory I am now having of my friend Steve. The perception of the tree feels stronger or more intense than the imagining of the cardinal and the memory of my recent conversation with Steve. For example, the visual sensations I am having of the sunlight falling on the tree makes the green color of its leaves appear brighter, certainly more intense, than the languid, almost fainted, certainly unsaturated quality of the cardinal's color, or the verily sensible colors of the shirt Steve appears wearing while I

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[79] David Hume, *A Treatise*, 11.

[80] For a discussion of interpretative issue surrounding Humes' s ways of demarcating imagination, see Francis W. Dauer, "Force and Vivacity in the Treatise and Enquiry," *Hume Studies* Vol. 25, no. 1-2 (April/November 1999), 83-100; Govier, Trudy, "Variations on Force and Vivacity in Hume," *The Philosophical Inquiry* Vol. 22, no. 86 (Jan 1972): 44-52; Gerhard Streminger, "Hume's Theory of Imagination," *Hume Studies* Vol. 6, no. 2 (November 1980), 91-118; and Wayne Waxman, "Impressions and Ideas: Vivacity As Verisimilitude," *Hume Studies* vol. 9, no. 1 (April 1993), 75-88.

recollect what we discussed this morning. Similarly, the degree of loudness the branches of the tree are making as the air rocks them is discernibly higher than the verily audible sounds I imagine coming from the cardinal, or the remembered sounds of Steve's voice as I listen to his critique of the possibility of the phenomenological reduction.

Moreover, in terms of their vivacity, i.e., in terms of how lively, solid, or real they feel to the mind, the perceived tree appears in this case more present and real, more solid and material, than the blurry, ghostly, almost two-dimensional appearance of the imagined cardinal, or the mnemonic appearance of Steve. This greater liveliness or solidity gives the perception a sense of verisimilitude not evoked by the imagined cardinal or the recollected conversation with Steve.[81]

Similar observations can be made in terms of their firmness, stability, and protean tendencies. The appearance of the tree is firm or stable in that it remains fairly uniform or steady, changing in regular and orderly ways in response to law-like changes in the conditions of perception. For instance, the tree does not suddenly or spontaneously change position, color saturation, definition, or take on entirely different forms. In contrast, the appearance of the imagined cardinal and what I am recollecting varies or fluctuates frequently. For instance, the color of the cardinal or the clarity of Steve's voice is now clearer, now brighter, now less so. It is also hard to keep them steady or fixed in mind without them suddenly slipping out of view only to reappear again. Furthermore, although my memory does not exhibit protean tendencies, (a feature that it shares with perception), the imagined cardinal does. For instance,

[81] My interpretation of Hume's concept of liveliness as verisimilitude comes from Waxman, "Vivacity As Verisimilitude", 75.

as I continue to imagine it perching on the tree, the cardinal suddenly morphs into what looks like a different type of bird: an eagle to be precise.

The problem with Hume's criteria, however applicable in ordinary instances like the ones just given, is that it cannot be used to define the differences between imagination, perception, and memory. The reason is that " these distinctions are fluid", as Husserl correctly observes.[82] Perceptions can be just as weak and lifeless, and in some contexts even more so, than some of our imaginings and memories. Imagine, for instance, perceiving a cat crossing the street under poor visibility conditions versus mentally entertaining an unusually vivid image of the same scene. The perceived cat appears blurry, shadowy, almost two-dimensional, while the appearance of the imagined cat—its color, shape, and so on—are clearly given to us. Yet, despite this reversal in force and vivacity between the percept and the image, we normally do not confuse one with the other in circumstances like this one. This is because, despite the poor visibility conditions, the perception has a different intentional structure, a different way of apprehending the object, than the imagining.

The firmness and stability of some imaginings and memories can also rival that of a perception. For instance, for two years now I have been visualizing a pick cube everyday for 10 minutes or so in order to improve my visualization skills. At first, the cube's appearances were ghostly, discontinuous, and hard to keep firm in mind. The color appearance of the cube, for example, often changed spontaneously, making it hard to discern any stable continuity between different color appearances. Yet, as my visualization skills improved, the quality of the cube appearances increased significantly, their sensuous freshness or fullness got much

[82] Husserl, *Phantasie*, 72.

better, and I was not only able to keep the cube firm in mind more easily, but also maintain the continuity of its appearances for longer stretches of time (now up to ten minutes). Hence, as far as the firmness and stability of this fantasy is concerned, and of many others, including many memories, "one can at least doubt, and has doubted whether any distinctions still exist at all" between them and those acts we call perceptions.[83]

In sum, some imaginings and memories are just as forceful, vivacious, and stable than normal percepts, and some percepts and memories are so weak, so unstable in their content, that they can be confused with imaginings. But if this is the case, Hume's criteria does not really help us grasp the distinct character or essential structure constitutive of these three acts. Consequently, however applicable in ordinary circumstances Hume's criteria may be, it cannot be used to define their differences. We must look elsewhere for these differences.

Besides Hume's criteria, another way one may try to distinguish imagination from perception and memory is by positing different empirical causes. The idea is that on can reduce whatever differences there are between these phenomena to the causal mechanisms that produced them. For instance, guided by this approach, some of Husserl's contemporaries insisted that "perceptual presentations originate from pheripheral stimuli, while phantasy presentations do not."[84] Similarly, in *The Analysis of Mind*, Bertrand Russell claims that describing sensations and imaginings (which he calls images) in relation to "their causes and effects" is the only valid way of defining their differences.[85] This causal origins approach

[83] Ibid.

[84] Husserl, *Phantasie*, 12-13.

[85] Bertrand Russell, *Analysis of Mind*, 149.

guides too the empirical sciences, like neuroscience, which often trade phenomenological questions for questions about how mental process arise from physical processes in the brain.

The claim that imagination, perception, and memory have different empirical causes cannot be denied. It not only seems true, but it also true that a phenomenological approach avoids as much as possible taken a stance on questions of empirical causation. What I wish to challenge, however, is the assumption that we can adequately understand these mental phenomena in terms of their empirical causes.

First, without an adequate phenomenological description grounding our search for causes in the first place, it is doubtful whether we can accurately identify the empirical causes of mental phenomena. After all, questions about their causes presuppose a good phenomenological description of what they are, since it is this understanding of what they are that will tell us whether or not our empirical models are able to explain the phenomena they are meant to explain. As Kelly correctly points out in discussing the relevance of phenomenology to the empirical sciences, " . . . in so far as phenomenology devotes itself to the accurate description of these phenomena, it provides the most complete and accurate presentation of the data that ultimately must be accounted for by models of brain function."[86] For example, guided by an incorrect description of imagination as an image-making faculty, one may come to believe that the empirical causes of imagination reside solely in the brain rather than extending beyond it to include the body and even the outside world. Only a rigorous description of the phenomena could possibly save us from this falsehood.

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[86] Sean D. Kelly, *The Relevance of Phenomenology to the Philosophy of Language and Mind* (New York and London: Garland Publishing), 152.

So causation presupposes description. This is the first reason that we find the causal approach wanting. A second and related reason is that we are not so much interested in understanding how imagination arises out of brain processes as we are in understanding what it is like to live through an imagining and how this lived experience differs in essence from what it is like to live through a perception or through a memory. However, because the causal approach tends to underestimate the value of phenomenal experience, it has little to say about our intentional life (such as how we live imaginary time). Besides, it only investigates empirical law, while we are interested in necessities i.e., on the essential features of these acts.

In sum, neither Hume's criteria nor the causal approach that dominates the empirical sciences can help us understand what it is like to live through an imagining and how this lived experience differs in essence from what it is like to live through a perception or through a memory. Only phenomenology can do this, and this is because it recognizes that these differences have to do with essential differences in intention, i.e., in the mode or manner in which these acts apprehend their objects.

III. Imaginableness

We reached the conclusion in the preceding section that attempts to reduce imagination, perception, and memory to internally felt qualities (as Hume tries to do) or to causal differences (as the causal approach does) cannot help us shed light on whatever essential differences may hold between them, and thus that we must make the phenomenological turn if our aim is to get right what these differences may be. As I explained in discussing Husserl's framework, taking this turn means construing imagination as a form of consciousness with the aim of describing how the way objects are meant in this act differs in

essence from the way other psychic acts do. However, psychic acts are innumerable. Besides sensing and perceiving, conscious creatures like us can also displace themselves in to the past, anticipate, expect, or predict the future. They can also dream, daydream, hallucinate, or fall into perceptual illusions. Accordingly, it is simply not possible in a project of this scope to offer a theory of how imagination as a form of consciousness differs from all of these other possible ways that objects can be intended in consciousness. Instead, following Husserl's strategy in *Phantasie, Image-Consciousness, and Memory*, what I will offer in the remaining sections of this chapter, and in the next chapter, is a phenomenological account of what I take to be the three most essential differences between imagination, perception, and memory: their different intentional stances on objects, the unique freedom we experience in imagination, and the distinct ways their respective objects relate to time, a featured discussed in the next chapter. In this section, I will begin my explication of this thesis by describing the quasi-positional stance on objects constitutive of the act of imagining.

Let us begin our account with the example of imagining rather than perceiving or remembering a red cardinal perching on a tree outside our window. What kind of consciousness is it? How does it differ from the kind of awareness we would have of the cardinal if we were instead perceiving or remembering it? The first phenomenological difference I wish to put forth pertains to these acts being fundamentally different ways of apprehending an object. To put the point somewhat misleadingly, they are given as essentially different intentional stances on objects.[87] What I mean specifically is that in imagination,

[87] I say misleadingly because "stance" may give the wrong impression that these are explicitly, reflected, active judgments. However, they are not. These are attitudes that are intrinsic to the act, and are experienced pre-reflectively.

unlike in perception and memory, we are free to entertain objects in a *quasi*-positional manner, which is a way of entertaining objects, an attitude or stance towards the content of our imaginings, I would like to call "imaginableness." To explain what I have in mind by "imaginableness", let me compare these mental doings in terms of their different intentional attitudes or intentional stances towards their objectivities.

Perception and memory are both *positional* acts, i.e., in perception and memory we are committed to the reality and either the current or past presence of the appearing object: in perception, to its actuality and current presence to us in the flesh, in memory, to its having been actual and present to us in the flesh in the past. In other words, in both perception and memory we believe in or posit (i.e., set the object forth) as either existing in the present or as an existent in our past.[88] The perceptual object appears to us as an existent now present to us in the flesh, while the remembered object instead appears as having been part of our past experience of the world.

Thus while perception is original consciousness of an existing object in the flesh, in person, memory is an original consciousness of past existent: things, events, or states-of-affairs that either we take to be true, or take ourselves to have encountered in the world. For instance, if I was perceiving the cardinal perching on the tree outside my window, I would be conscious of this event as something in the actual world that I am now directly witnessing, an event that is now it itself present to me in the flesh.[89] However, if I was remembering it

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[88] The German term for the verb "to posit" or" to set forth" is *setzen*.

[89] It is not accident, then, that the German word for perception is *Wahrnehmung*, which literally means, "taken as true." Perception, then, is an act characterized by direct appearance of a material thing in space to the perceiving subject. In other words, it is the direct apprehension of an object.

instead, it would appear as an event that has been but is no longer present; in other words, as a not now that was a now; an event that appears to recollection as if I was re-living it once again. Husserl putted it well in claiming that memory, as a form of consciousness, is "direct presentation of what is past, just as past, just as perception is direct presentation of what is present."[90]

In contrast, imagination is a *quasi*-positional form of consciousness, i.e., in this act we intent objects in the mode of the *as if* rather than actually positing or affirming them as having-been, or as existing in *any sense* or at *any* time. Put differently, to mean objects in the mode of the as if is to entertain them as if existing, or coming to past, i.e., as if in the imagined condition, without thereby affirming that is actually true, likely, or even possible. Thus imaginings offer us the possibility of remaining neutral towards existence, probability, or even actual possibility, by allowing us to intent or mean objects in the mode of the *as if*. For instance, in imagining the cardinal perching on the tree outside my window, I can busy myself with it in its own terms, and in doing so, I am not necessarily apprehending it as real, likely, or even logically possible. These existential or modal positions on objects are not constitutive of the act of imagining. Rather, I have an attitude of pure *imaginableness* towards it i.e., I am only apprehending or entertaining it *as if* dwelling on the said tree, but only as if.

It is important to state at this point that neither imagination's quasi-positional stance, nor perception and memory's positional stances on their objects, should be confused with what analytic philosophers call " propositional attitudes." [91] Propositional attitudes are

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[90] Husserl, *Phantasie,* 287.

[91] In analytic philosophy, proposotional attitudes are usually defined as cognitive stances towards propositions.

intentional stances towards propositions. They are attitudes that modify a proposition's meaning or assertoric conditions. For instance, despite sharing the same propositional content, the propositional attitudes "I am perceiving that the cat is on the mat", "I remember that the cat is on the mat", and "I doubt that the cat is on the mat" differ in meaning or assertoric conditions, because being different attitudes, they modify the truth conditions of their common content.

However, propositional attitudes are just one species of intentional attitudes. This is because not all intentional attitudes have propositions as objects: perception, imagination, and memory, for instance. Rather than having propositions as their objects, these psychic acts present us with things, events, or states-of-affairs. For instance, when someone imagines that the cat is on the mat, the object of the act is a purely possible state-affairs rather than a proposition describing it. Similarly, when someone perceives that the cat is on the mat, the object of the act is an actual state-of-affairs obtaining in empirical reality rather than a proposition about it. The same holds for memory. When someone remembers having seen the cat on the mat, they are recollecting a past state-of-affairs rather than a proposition mediating the act.

Nevertheless, despite this important difference, the fundamental attitudes constitute of these three psychic acts, and propositional attitudes share the same function; namely, they modify how the object is intended or appears in the act. In the case of imagination, perception, and memory, this means that their correlative objects present a certain quality or *noematic* sense reflective of their attitude. Following Husserl and Casey, let me call this quality reflective of the intentional attitude or stance towards it constitutive of an act, "the object's

thetic quality." By "*thetic* quality", I mean the quality that consciousness bestows on the appearing object as a function of the attitude or stance it has towards the being of that object.[92] Consider again, for instance, the example of the cardinal. As long as no doubt has been casted on my perception of it, the cardinal appears as something certainly existing now in the actual world, a quality reflective of the fact that perception posits it as real. However, if this perception were to be contested, the cardinal would take on the quality of something doubtful, which reflects the attitude of doubt I am now have towards its being. Probably existing, necessarily existing, possibly existing, etc., are also among the *thetic* qualities the being of the cardinal, or any object for that matter, can appear or be experienced as having, or manifest, in virtue of an act's intentional stance on its being.[93]

Let me not be misunderstood. This is not to say that these *thetic* qualities are invented or created by consciousness. Rather, these qualities and their correlative attitudes are *noetic-noematic* correspondences; that is to say, fundamental ways in which a psychic act and its object correspond to one another that reflect a dynamic interaction between how objects appear to consciousness and how consciousness must be organized or structured for those appearances to have the sense that they manifest. For instance, the *how* of an object's appearance, reflects past knowledge, affectivity, awareness of bodily movements and, more

[92] Here is how Casey explains it: " By "thetic character" or "thetic quality" is meant the character or quality that consciousness posits in its intentional objects as an expression of its attitude toward the existential status of these objects." Casey, *Imagining*, 111.

[93] Husserl, *Ideas I*, 250.

relevantly for us, intentional attitudes mediating how consciousness understands the existence of the object in an act.[94]

Thus far we have been focusing on the attitudinal side of this correlation, arguing that unlike the positional stances of memory and perception, imagination allows us to take a quasi-positional stance towards objects. But now that we have clarified the notion of an object's *thetic* quality, we are in a position to specify the *thetic* quality of imagined objects corresponding to this quasi-positional stance on them (which I referred to earlier as "imaginableness"). The *thetic* quality of a perceived object is that of a real entity in the physical world that is now present to us in person. The *thetic* quality of a remembered event is that of a past actuality. In contrast, in imagination objects are given as pure possibilities.

"A possibility", Casey explains, "is anything that could be, appear, or take place, but which at any given moment need not do so."[95] There are different possibilities, of course. Logical possibilities are objects that could be, appear, or take place in some logically possible world; that is to say, a world that is logically consistent, or free of contradictions. For example, a world of perfectly round squares is logically impossible but not one made of golden mountains, pink forests, or centaurs that rule human beings. *Nomological* possibilities are also another kind of possibility. These possibilities are not only logically consistent, but they are also consistent with the body of truths expressed by the laws that govern actual or empirical reality. For example, it may be biologically possible to eradicate all forms of cancer but not to eliminate death (although the latter is logically conceivable). There are also real or

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[94] For example, see Sartre's *The Imaginary* for an explanation of how knowledge, affectivity, and kineasthesis contribute to the constitution of images, especially 55-86.

[95] Casey, *Imagining*, 113.

mere possibilities, which reflect judgments of probability. Real possibilities connote likely or probable events in the actual world while, in contrast, mere possibilities, been barely or just possible, imply highly unlikely scenarios. For instance, given past and present conditions in Syria, its dissolution along sectarian lines is a real possibility. However, the possibility of Syria becoming part of Iran, although barely or just possible, is a highly unlikely or improbable event.[96]

Much more can be said about the nature of these possibilities. Nevertheless, the above observations suffice to understand the pure possibilities of imagination. Pure possibilities (unlike the ones just discussed) are possibilities that are conceived, entertained, or intended in the mode of the as if i.e., as if being, appearing, or taking place without assuming this could be so i.e., without assuming that they could exist, appear, or occur in the imagined condition. Consider again, for instance, the example of the cardinal perching on the tree. In imagination it does not necessarily appear as something formerly given, or as something we anticipate to perceive, or as something in the actual world now facing us, or as something present elsewhere in the world, or as something really possible. Although I may happen to believe some of these things about it, these are not necessary features of its *thetic* quality considered as something purely imagined. Rather, considered as something purely imagined, the cardinal is given as a purely possible object, i.e., as an absent and non-actual object that consciousness can intent in the mode of the *as if* independently of how real, or how likely, or how possible,

[96] For a good discussion of different kinds of possibilities, see Tamar Szabo Glendler, and John Hawthorne, introduction to *Conceivability and Possibility*, ed. Tamar Szabo Glendler, and John Hawthorne (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 1-70.

or even how valuable it may be, or we may consider it to be. "That "which hovers before us" in phantasying," Husserl correctly states, "is a pure possibility."[97]

Consequently, what we imagine does not have to exist, nor does imagining it commit us to its existence. It does not have to be likely, nor does imagining it commit us to its likelihood. It also does not have to be really or even barely possible, nor does imagining it commit us to its real or mere possibility. And, although it is true that we cannot imagine conceptual or logical absurdities, in the sense of being able to form a *bone fide* or authentic re-presentation of them, imagination by itself neither affirms nor necessarily cares about the logical possibility of its contents. First, although many philosophers (including Husserl) claim imagination to be a guide to either logical or phenomenal possibilities, this is an interpretation of its modal significance, not the *thetic* sense of its objects. Second, in imagination it does not matter that what we are imagining is not fully coherent or consistent. For example, I am now imaging a story about a man who is taller than himself. He is an Irish immigrant that now lives in Boston and works as a concierge at Ames Boston Hotel on First Court Street. Everyday, after work, he goes back to his flat near Cambridge, eats something light, watches TV, and then calls his girlfriend on the phone to converse about the day. No doubt, in this story I am unable to genuinely imagine the main protagonist. This does not matter. Our imaginative projects do not need to be fully consistent to be worth pursuing for their own sake. Hence, at least in this sense, in imagination we are free to set aside or ignore the rules of logic.

[97] Husserl (2005), p. 608.

Besides not having to be entertained as real, likely, or even logically possible, the possibilities of imagination are pure also in the sense that we do not need to have an external purpose or end in mind in imagining them. In other words, in imagination we are free to entertain possibilities for the sake of whatever interest the act of doing so affords in its own right. For instance, the imagining of the cardinal does not have to be done for the sake of knowledge, or for the sake of making a decision, or for the sake of understanding consequences, or for the sake of some other goal external to the act itself. On the contrary, it can be done for its own sake; that is to say, simply for the sake of entertaining oneself with that possibility. For example, I can explore multiple endings, or tinker with the cardinal's color, shape, or wind span in queer ways, just to experience what happens after doing so. I do not have to serve any other purpose, nor does the act of imagination requires that I must do so. Rather, in imagination, I enter a vast terrain of possibilities that are appealing or amusing in their own right, without the imposition of foreign ends.

I have been arguing that imagination is a psychic act that allows us to entertain pure possibilities, i.e., possibilities in the mode of the as if. I wish now to bring this argument to a close by answering some possible objections. Our claim that imagination lacks affirmation, someone might say, seems *prima facie* wrong. There seems to be plenty of instances in which the imaginer asserts the reality, unreality, possibility, and so on, of the imagined content. For example, if I imagine what my office's ceiling will look after being painted golden, I believe that what I am imaging is true, in the sense that I believe that the room, something I take to be real, will indeed look like I present it in imagination. Similarly, if I imagine what my friend Steve did yesterday in St Cloud, or what he might be doing now, or what he might do or could

do later, I not only believe Steve to be real, but I may also believe that what I am imagining about him is true, likely, or really possible. Besides, the objector might continue, we often deny the existence of what we are imagining, or consider it to be something purely fictitious, as when we imagine flute-playing centaurs and elves parading on twin earth. In short, it is possible that Sartre may be right when he claims that imagination "includes an act of belief… it can posit the object as nonexistent, or as absent, or as existing elsewhere" in the actual world."[98]

But do these examples show that imagination is not a quasi-positional act that entertains pure possibilities without concern for their tie to reality? The answer is no. We cannot deny that people often project these kinds of beliefs on imagined objects. However, the act of imagination in itself does no imply these beliefs, or these ways of apprehending the being of objects. These *doxic* modalities, if they are indeed informing the imaginer's understanding of the being of what she is imagining, do so for reasons external to the act of imagining itself. Moreover, these extrinsic beliefs do not prevent the unique awareness we have of imagined objects *qua* imagined objects. They do not affect the specific sense imagined objects manifest to us in imagination. In so far as I am just imagining what my office's ceiling will look like after painted golden (rather than sensing or remembering it) it is not an actual presentation of the ceiling's color-appearance but a mere imaginary appearance of what I predict it will be. In other words, the imagined color-appearance, regardless of how accurately I take it to describe the future, is a mere product of imagination which— as such— is something purely possible, i.e., an object that we can conceive and explore in the mode of

[98] Sartre, *The Imaginary*, 12.

the as if without affirming anything about its existence, likelihood, or some other connection to reality. The same must be said about the example of imagining what my friend Steve did yesterday in St. Cloud, or what he might be doing there right now. I am merely imagining these possibilities, hence they appear conceivable in their own right, independently of their ties to reality, or whatever beliefs I already have about them. In short, imagination bestows its own unique *thetic* sense on imagined objects regardless of the assertoric attitudes the imaginer may herself be importing. To claim otherwise, as some do, is to miss the quasi-positional form of this act.[99]

Imagination, then, is an exploration of pure possibilities, regardless of what we may already believe about their ontological status. It is a quasi-positional intention that allows us to remain neutral or disinterested towards the object's connection to reality. However, lest I am misunderstood, I should underscore that the neutrality achieved by the mode of the as if is not the kind of neutrality we can achieve through the *Epoche*. As I said in chapter One, the *Epoche* is a series of operations meant to bracket naturalistic preconceptions, so that we can focus on our intentional experience of phenomena as it is given to us. This bracketing of the natural attitude is not an act of doubting or repudiating it but one in which its beliefs are put out of action in order to reflect on their structure. In other words, this bracketing helps us achieve a neutral stance on the world as phenomena and the naturalistic attitudes and posits

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[99] Consider the following thought experiment. Suppose you were to find yourself imaging something without any preconceptions concerning its relation to reality. You did not know much about this object: whether it was real, unreal, likely, or actually possible. You did not know whether you had seen it before, or whether it was the kind of object that you could ever expect to encounter in the empirical world. What kind of awareness would you have of this object? Would you be aware of it as something in the world around you now facing you? Would you be aware of it as something present elsewhere in the actual world? Would you be aware of it as something that could come into being in the future? How about as something actually possible? Not necessary. None of these ways of entertaining the object are part of the essential character of imagination.Rather, what is part and parcel of imagination is the awareness that the object in question is something conceivable and explore-able in its own right, free of commitments or entanglement with reality.

that ordinarily inform our understanding of it. However, this neutrality is different from that of imagination. For instance, when I imagine the cardinal perching on the tree outside my window, I am not neutralizing a perception, or a memory, or an expectation, all of which are positional acts that affirm something about the existence of the object. Rather, I am engaging in an act that it is quasi-positional, and thus existence-neutral, from the outset. As Husserl says, imagination "does not give the possibility of any position at all."[100] On the contrary, this act is quasi-positional from the start. Accordingly, let's not conflate the "neutrality from the outset" of imagination with the explicit neutralization of positional acts achieved by means of the *Epoche*. We are going to see next how, because imagination is a quasi-positional manner of entertaining pure possibilities, it constitutes a unique kind of freedom that is absent in perception and memory. Hume once observed: "[n]othing is more free than the imagination of man."[101] It is time to elucidate more precisely the extent to which this is indeed the case.

IV. Freedom

In *The Imaginary*, Sartre proposes that, "for consciousness to be able to imagine, it must be able to escape from the world by it very nature, it must be able to stand back from the world by its own efforts. In a word, it must be free."[102] Sartre's insight is that we are free to the extent that we are able to stand back from the world and imagine alternatives to what is found there or what its actual laws permit. The freedom that is available to us in imagination to conceive and play with alternatives is one of its distinguishing characteristics, perhaps the

[100] Husserl, *Phantasie*, 695.

[101] David Hume, *A Treatise*, 124.

[102] Sartre, The Imaginary, 184.

most significant, since it is part of what enables us to change our situation in the world. In this section I wish to describe what I consider to be some of the features of this freedom.

It almost goes without saying that in imagination we are able to entertain different kinds of alternatives to reality. Undoubtedly, some of these alternatives to the empirical world bear some connection to it. For instance, some of these alternatives may describe what the perceptually absent aspects of a perceived object will look like, or what would happen, or is more or less likely to happen, if other events were to happen or fail to do so, while other alternatives may describe counterfactual possibilities, like scenarios concerning how things in the actual world might be the same or different had the past been different than it turned out to be. However, what is most distinctive about imagination's freedom stems from its unrestrained power to transform any of these alternatives to reality into a pure possibility.

Because we are able to do this in imagination, i.e., entertain possibilities in the mode of the as if, a minimally constrained power over its contents that is absent in perception and memory becomes possible; namely, the power to shape and reshape "in infinitely many ways and at one's own pleasure" the manner in which these contents appear to consciousness.[103] In other words, within minimal constrains, in imagination we experience the power to direct ourselves to objects, explicate them, or end them in whatever ways we wish or desire, i.e., purely at our own discretion. Husserl calls this power *unconditioned arbitrariness*.[104] Let me illustrate next what I take to be some of its distinct characteristics.

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[103] Husserl, *Phantasie*, 643.

[104] Ibid., 642 and 695.

Consider the cardinal again. On the basis of my current knowledge of cardinals, I make appear before consciousness a typical adult male with crimson red plumage looking around for mates. As I scan it, I realize that I do not like the pale, unsaturated colors of its plumage. Thus I proceed to brighten or sharpen their colors. I succeed. Their appearance increases in "force and vivacity," as Hume would say. I also realize a moment later that the cardinal is not holding anything in its beak, so I decide to place an insect there. As soon as I do, a green worm appears spontaneously; that is involuntarily, but I voluntarily transform it into a gray cicada.

The point is that I could have chosen a dragonfly, a monarch butterfly or some other insect. More radically, I could have transformed the entire presentation into something else altogether, for example, into a dancing snake, or into a green leaf. However I decide to proceed, I am aware that my decision is, within minimal constrains, *optional*, i.e., that I can proceed arbitrarily if I so wished, or in ways that are unconditioned by anything other than my will to continue however I see fit.

What I mean by "unconditioned" is the following. First, an act of imagining — whether it happens spontaneously (in an unsolicited manner), or as the direct result of a voluntary act— can occur without the causal agency of other acts, such as preceding perceptions, memories, or imaginings.[105] Some imaginings are no doubt the direct result of either a temporally preceding act, or something happening around us. For example, perceiving rain falling on the street may directly and unambiguously trigger an act of imagining people on the street wearing yellow raincoats. Likewise, the act of remembering something may

[105] The following paragraphs have been inspired by Casey's discussion of imaginations autonomy. See Casey, *Imagining,* 175-234.

trigger an imagining of some specific scene. However, this is not necessarily the case with all of our imaginings. Many of our imaginings are neither the result of temporally preceding acts, nor stand in any specific causal link to, or are necessarily influenced by, anything else in the world that we may be experiencing around us while imagining. I am now imagining, for instance, a flute-playing centaur playing a flute on a sandy beach in a planet that exists thousands of light years away from Earth. None of the perceptions that preceded this act caused it, or are reflected in its content in any way. In fact, its intentional content bears no relation to what currently is going on in the surrounding world.

This independence from specific causes or anything else in the surrounding context, allows imagination to disengage from whatever it is that is happening around it, and disinterestedly entertain alternatives of its own making in the mode of the as if. Sometimes we indulge in this freedom to disengage because we are seeking knowledge, sometimes because we are seeking entertainment; other times we are seeking to escape from undesirable circumstances. Whatever the reasons may be, this is possible because our imaginings are unconditioned; they can occur and proceed independently of whatever causal context or situation we may find ourselves. This causal-independence is peculiar to imagination, enabling its *optional* character.

Second, our imaginings are unconditioned in the sense that they do not have to replicate, or even resemble, the specific contents of any other intentional act. “When we describe what we imagine in a particular case,” Casey observes, “our description is not inherently interchangeable with the description of, say, what we have once perceived or

remembered—or will some day perceive and remember."[106] For instance, I have never before perceived, remembered, or imagined an irrational number progressing to infinity. Nor does the fact that I am now imagining it implies that I will ever perceive, remember, or imagine it ever again. We, of course, often reproduce in imagination something that we have perceived or remembered before. We may also perceive in the future something imagined. The point, however, is that this need not be the case. What we imagine need not replicate, or even resemble, the specific contents of other acts—imaginative or not—nor is there any guarantee that other acts will replicate, or even resemble, what we have imagined at some point in our lives. This is not to deny that imagination presupposes perception and memory. Without being able to perceive, retain, and later access perceptually gained information, many of our imaginings—even those that present radically new objects—would not be possible. Yet, even if our imaginings always use elements acquired through past perceptions, it is still true that their contents need not replicate, or even resemble in any substantive way, the specific content of others.

Third, our imaginings are unconditioned in the sense that they can be free from their having to serve external ends or purposes, or their having to be guided by the promise of some use. As Husserl correctly observed, "phantasy is the realm of purposelessness, of play… from the beginning [they] have no purposive function… in themselves they are "play," in a loose sense, to be sure."[107] In claiming this, Husserl is not suggesting that our imaginings amount to games, or are done for leisure or recreation, or are lacking in seriousness. Instead he is calling

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[106] Casey, *Imagining*, 194.

[107] Husserl, *Phantasie*, 695.

attention to the playfulness or unimpeded freedom that we experience in imagination, a freedom to arbitrarily explore pure possibilities without being at the mercy of external ends.

To illustrate what this "purposelessness of play" means, consider the case of *Mad Men*, a drama television series created by Matthew Weiner about the private and professional life of Don Draper, an enigmatic advertising executive living and working in Manhattan during the 1960's. At this point in the series, Don Draper is struggling to grow his company, has recently divorced his first wife, is dating the company's psychologist, and has decided to write a memoir about his life. I don't know how the series is going to end. So I start playing with alternative endings. I begin by imagining Don Draper terminating in utter poverty and dying alone after his company collapses and everybody else turns their back on him. Then I change course in the direction of a happier ending by envisioning Don retiring comfortably, marrying the psychologist, finding his son, and making peace with his former wife.

I can go on adding more possible endings. The ones mentioned, however, suffice to raise the following question: is this exploration of alternative endings to *Mad Men* done in the service of any particular purpose external to the activity itself? The answer is no. I am imagining these alternative endings not because I want to discover something about the show, or test a set of hypotheses, or invent a new idea, or a new work of art, or because I am trying to decide on various options, or want to solve some pressing human concern, but solely because I find the act of doing so inherently interesting, or amusing in and of itself (not in the sense of being comical, funny, or even delightful; but rather, in the sense of being an activity that one can freely indulge in for its own sake and not for the sake of anything else external to it).

This, of course, is not to deny that imagination plays a frequent role as an indispensable source of inspiration and insight in every important human activity. For instance, experiments in cognitive science suggest that people rely on their imagination to solve spatial problems (e.g., finding locations with the aid of visualized maps), to determine the existence of something they have overlooked (e.g., whether frogs have eyelashes), or to deal with other challenges of daily life (e.g., figuring out how they would look on a particular garment). It is also well established that imagination is often put at the service of art and science in a myriad of ways; for instance, from exploring different ways of representing something, to visualizing possible worlds, to testing hypotheses by means of thought-experiments. Rather, the point is that imagination is not fated to be utilized in any of these ways.

In short, within minimal constrains, in imagination we experience the power to direct ourselves to objects, explicate them, or end them in whatever ways we wish or desire, i.e., purely at our own discretion or with unconditioned arbitrariness. Accordingly, how imaginings proceed is optional or reflective of the imaginer's own choices, ways of proceeding that are unconditioned by preceding acts, content, context, or external ends. Imagination's freedom is unrestrained by these factors.

To be sure, the optionality of our imaginings expressed by this unconditioned arbitrariness always operates against the background of some minimal constraints. I have in mind logical and conceptual constrains. Let me talk about these a bit more.

Nothing that we have said about imagination's freedom contradicts the claim that we cannot imagine logical impossibilities in the sense of being able to form a *bone fide* or

authentic representation of them. It is true, for instance, that it is not logically possible to imagine simultaneously the present or absence of the same characteristics in an object, such as imagining simultaneously the presence and absence of the cardinal on the tree outside my window. I can imagine it present and absent at different times, or in different acts, but I cannot do so at the same time. Similarly, it is not possible to imagine the simultaneous presence of contradictory properties in an object, such as imagining a perfectly round square, or a lion wolf. Nevertheless, within these logical limits, the optionality of imagination is unrivaled. And, as I we said before, imagination by itself neither affirms nor necessarily cares about the logical possibility of its contents. This is because, as the example of my story about the man who was taller than himself showed, in imagination it does not matter necessarily whether what we are imagining is or is not logically consistent. Hence, at least in this sense, imagination is unconditioned by the rules of logic.

Besides logical constrains on the unconditioned arbitrariness of our imaginings, the imagined object may also impose some conceptual constraints. I mean that the nature of what we are imagining can limit how we can imagine it. Consider the case of imagining a world that coheres well with the idea of a centaur. This requires "creating precisely a world that can be a harmonious world for this centaur" by means of future imaginings that agree or fit with its sense or nature. A centaur is a creature with the head, arms, and torso of a man and the body and legs of a horse. The centaur that I am currently imagining already appears in a world; that is, within a certain context; for instance, it is seating at the edge of a rock that juts out into an unknown ocean while playing a sad tune with its flute. Now, being an imagining, I am free to continue the life of this centaur in such world at my own pleasure in an indefinite

number of ways, as long as new imaginings of this centaur, or the entities around it, fall within possibilities prescribed by their nature. In other words, further imaginings must conform to the possibilities prescribed by their idea.

This means that if I ask what the centaur will do next; for example, how it will move on the way home, I can specify anything I wish, subject to the minimal conceptual restrictions imposed by the sort of entity the centaur is imagined to be. Thus I can freely decide to make it gallop rather than trot back home (but not make it walk back like a bear, or flight there like an eagle). The point here is not that I cannot imagine such worlds, but that these worlds would not be centaur worlds, since they require changing the nature of the object in ways that do not preserve its identity, and since my goal in this case is to preserve its identity, a goal that our imaginings do not necessarily have to follow, my freedom is limited by its concept.

Of course, if my original intention was to create a world of hybrid creatures that combined the idea of a centaur and the idea of an eagle, or to create a world in which the centaur suddenly transforms into an eagle on the way home, then the idea of flying home like an eagle becomes part of the object's horizon. But these would be different worlds, involving creatures that were never centaurs to begin with (as in the case of the hybrids), or centaurs that lost their original identity afterwards. Moreover, it would still be true that if the parts or contents of these imaginings do not cohere well together, they would not constitute single worlds for these objects.

Hence, besides logical constrains, the unconditioned or optional arbitrariness of imagination may also be constrained by these kind of conceptual requirements. If we want to create a fantasy world that harmonizes with a certain type of object, we must tame this

freedom and articulate this world in ways that agree with its nature. Yet, even if this is true, our freedom to proceed at will in these cases remains vast and the possibility of radical revision of whatever world we construct still an option. In other words, the imaginer is not only free to decide among the indefinite number of worlds and circumstances that can harmonize with the object, but she is also always free to create ever new worlds, or recreate existing ones by appropriating some of their parts. I may, for example, decide to undo the world in which the centaur plays the flute and create a new one in which it plays the drums instead and lives in the desert rather than the beach. This is not true of the perceptual world. As Husserl correctly observes, " [this] world is not a matter of option and free choice."[108] But fantasy worlds are. The imaginer " . . . can create ever new worlds, and can re-create a given world with the sense of disagreement with a previously fashioned world, although the re-created world appropriates fundamental parts and unities from the previously fashioned world."[109] And do all of these, i.e., take advance of this freedom, despite conceptual limits.

Conclusion

We have reached the end of our phenomenological reflections on imagination's quasi-positional stance on possibilities and its minimally constrained freedom to vary them at will. Many claims were made along the way, from the claim that we should focus on fantasy-imaginings, that Humean and causal criteria cannot say what is essentially different about it, that imagination is a quasi-positional act that allow us to entertain pure possibilities, to claims about the nature and limits of its freedom. I wish to conclude this chapter by briefly

[108] Husserl, *Phantasy*, 643.

[109]Ibid.

addressing an important concern that some philosophers may have regarding my views on imagination's freedom.

I made the claim that imagination, within minimal constrains, allows us to turn any object into a pure possibility and freely vary it more or less arbitrarily. And, although I acknowledged logical and conceptual constrains on this freedom, I did not discus ideological limitations. "But isn't the case," a Marxist or Critical Theorist may ask, "that we must posit the concept of 'ideology' as a matrix that limits what we think possible, and thus imaginable, given a certain material order?" To illustrate this concern, consider the following example. We are constantly being bombarded by the idea that technology can make anything possible; for instance, enhance our intelligence, stop global warming, increase strength, produce driverless cars, and even transform the possibilities of sex. In this realm, we imagine that everything is possible. In contrast, in the political realm, we are told that nothing is possible. You want to raise the minimum wage to a modest level? Impossible! It will destroy the economy. You want to protect the environment? Impossible! It would destroy economic growth. You want to raise the billions of impoverished people to a mere subsistence level? We are told it cannot be done. Accordingly, what explains contradictory understandings of what is possible such as these? Isn't the case that we have to posit ideology as the medium that is affecting in these and other ways our sense of possibility? Thus limiting the imagination to only those possibilities that the dominant ideology and its correlative socio-economic conditions allow as part of their functioning?[110]

[110] I would like to thank my friend Steve Schoonover for bringing this objection to my attention.

Let me attempt a reply to this objection by making the following important point. I never denied that imagination and socio-economic orders interact dialectically in complex ways that constrain our sense of what is really possible. But these limits are not absolute. It is always possible to negate them by questioning the assumptions that make them possible. This cannot be done without the imagination, i.e., without conceiving possibilities outside these limits. Hence, ironically, even that they discipline the imagination; it is precisely the imagination that ultimately allows us to free ourselves from their shackles and initiate a new era, epoche, paradigm shift, or different understanding of being. To be sure, this act of rebellion by the imagination may have to await changes in the material conditions of life to be taken seriously, such as the climate crisis, but it is the imagination that ultimately has to posit it before it can become a reality.

Chapter Three: Time and Execution

Introduction

Thus far, I have argued that imagination differs from perception and memory in terms of its quasi-positional stance on objects, and, within minimal constrains, its unconditioned freedom to vary its objects however one desires to do. In this chapter, I seek to accomplish two goals: first, I wish to argue that imagination can also be distinguished from perception and memory in terms of how imaginary time differs from the actual or real time of perceived and remembered objects. Second, I wish to describe some of the central ways we can carry out an imagining. Accordingly, how does imaginary time differ from the actual time of perception and memory? And what are the central ways we can construct an imagining?

Concerning the first question, Husserl claims that the products of imagination "have no [temporal] connection in their objective relations, either among themselves or with perceptions." [111] Few pages later he adds that: "what is imagined is always something temporal, enduring in time; but its time is a quasi-time."[112] These claims are about the modified sense of imaginary time, but Husserl does not develop them in detail, hence their implications remain to be articulated. Other Husserlian phenomenologists, such as Sartre and Casey, have also recognized that time appears differently in fantasy acts, but, like Husserl, do not offer satisfactory descriptions. [113] Moreover, within the analytic tradition matters get worst: this tradition does not even recognize the need to describe these temporal differences;

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[111] Husserl, *Experience and Judgment*, 168.

[112] Ibid.

[113] Sartre, *The Imaginary*, 129-136; Case, *Imagining*, 52-53.

it assumes wrongly that one can adequately explain the nature of imagination without taking into account how imaginary time also defines it.[114]

In the first section of this chapter, then, I draw on Husserl's remarks on the temporal discontinuity of imaginings in order to develop a more satisfactory answer. This answer will proceed as follows: After distinguishing phenomenal time from time as it is regarded within the natural attitude, I argue that imaginary objects do not appear in actual time but merely present as it were or in fictional temporal worlds of their own, explain how their lack of positioning in actual time relates to the fact that they lack objectively specifiable temporal determinations, and that, because of this, imaginary times appear as self-contained, self-referential time frames that are potentially infinite in number, and subject to our creative will. I also argue afterwards that there is no reliable connection between time and becoming in imagination, as it is in perception and memory, and end this description of imaginary time by mentioning some interesting ways we can alter time in fantasy.

In the second section of this chapter, I address the second question by discussing how we form sensory, phenomenal, and intellectual acts of imagination. Doing so will enable me to talk about what I consider to be the central ways we can imagine something, but also discuss in some detail how these central ways of carrying out an imagining affect the way the object appears before consciousness. The central thesis that I will defend here is that what differentiates these three forms of imagination from each other has to do with the manner in which they achieve consciousness of their object: the sensory imagination by simulating as if

[114] Tamar Gendler's Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy's entry on imagination, where all the issues that concern analytic philosophers are described, does not mention at all the relevance of time as a distinctive feature of our experience of imagination. See Tamar Gendler, "Imagination," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Fall 2013 edition), accessed December 14, 2013, http://plato.stanford.edu/.archives/fall2013/entires/imagination.

perceptions of its objects, the phenomenal imagination by simulating in more complex ways what it is like to live through the target experience (usually with the use of the whole body), and the intellectual imagination by simulating abstract, intentional thoughts that make the object present, although not necessarily in a direct sensuous or experiential manner.

To be sure, these are not the only themes that I consider as I present this picture of imaginary time and forms of imagining. They are, however, the main points. Time is a difficult topic. Berkeley said once that: "whenever [he] attempted to frame a simple idea of time . . . [he] was lost and embrangled in inextricable difficulties."[115] My aim, however, is not to say what time is; but rather, how we experience time in imagination, and how this experience makes it a distinctive act, as well as to highlight central ways in which an imagining can be executed. Accordingly, let's us not feel intimidated by Berkeley's remark. Using the list of differences just mentioned as our Ariadne's thread, I am confident that the reader and I can come to understand better than before imagination's time and versatility.

I. Imaginary Time

Let me begin by clarifying the notion of 'time' we are interested in describing in this section. We seek to describe the difference between imaginary and actual time—the temporal horizon in which perceived, remembered, or any actual object appears—both regarded as *phenomena,* i.e., as they appear within lived experience. This is to be contrasted with actual time as is assumed to be within the natural attitude: an objective relation between actual or real events in the external world that can be measured and explained wholly independently of

[115] George Berkeley, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, ed. Jonathan Dancy (Oxford: Oxford University Press,1998),138.

consciousness; for example, by means of clocks, or by a stipulated abstract system of coordinates.

In his writings on time-consciousness, Husserl shows clearly that these two senses of time— time as a physically measured objective relation between real events, and time as a phenomenon of consciousness—differ phenomenologically.[116] Let me offer here couple of reasons that will illustrate this difference. First, taken naturalistically, i.e., as an objective relation measured by a clock or some stipulated abstract system of coordinates, an event's duration is often different from its "felt duration", i.e., its duration as it manifests itself to the experiencing subject. Imagine, for instance, someone impatiently waiting to meet with his or her doctor. In an unhappy situation like this, where the person would rather be somewhere else, the waiting period can and often does appear as if it was longer than it actually was; as if time had dragged, or as if something had slowed it in order to torture us. However, time would appear rushed if it were true that we were late for the visit. Second, under certain conditions, time can "collapse and expand like an accordion", and thus not behave like the continuous series of abstract, uniform parts or temporal points succeeding one another presupposed by the movement of a clock's pointer, or by some idealized measurement system that assumes it to be a mere quantity.[117] For instance, when we are engrossed in an activity to

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[116] Husserl's phenomenology of time is found on his essay called, *On The Phenomenology of The Consciousness of Internal Time (1893-1917)*. The phenomenology of imaginary time I offer here only draws on Husserl's distinction between *scientific* and *phenomenal* time, since this is all I need to describe those features of our experience of time in imagination that I want to call attention to. Accordingly, I will say little about other Husserlian distinctions; for example, the structure of protentions, impressions, and retentions that Husserl emphasizes there. For Husserl's detailed theory of inner-time consciousness, see Edmund Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of The Consciousness of Internal Time (1893-1917)*, trans. John Barnett Brough (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers).

[117] Bel Kaufman, quoted in John Crowley, "Time After Time," in *Lampham's Quarterly's* vol. 7, no. 4 (Fall 2014), 199.

the point of losing track of time, when we are in “the zone”, to use a cliché, time seems to fold or collapse into the present, the present swallowing the past and the future in such a way that it feels upon reflection as if we had entered eternity, or distort time’s continuous advance.

Of course, relative to the movement of the clock’s pointer, time continued to flow in a series, as minutes and seconds passed, and the subject continued to register the passage of time at some pre-reflective or pre-explicit level of consciousness. Nevertheless, the point is that this is not how the experiencing subject experienced time in these situations, which attests to the fact that phenomenal time differs from time as it is usually regarded from the point of view of the natural attitude. Accordingly, from this point on, our account of how imaginary time differs from actual time should be taken as an account of how these differences are lived. Any appeals to naturalistically construed time will be bracketed as much as it is possible.

Consider once again the example of the cardinal perching on a tree outside our window. If we were imagining this scene, how would its time differ from the actual time of perceived or remembered objects? To answer this question, allow me to begin with some observations about time in relation to perception and memory.

Perceptions flow from one to the other in coherent, harmonious ways; they co-intent or co-refer to each other in relations of anticipations or expectations that, if fulfilled by the future course of experience, bring to presence and registration the same spatial-temporal enduring beings existing in the same spatial-temporally enduring world. Perceptions, then, in virtue of fulfilling each other’s expectations, form an extended, unified stream of psychic acts

all pointing to the same world.[118] This is true even if we come to realize in the course of experience that what we took to be a perception of X is really an illusion and the experience really refers to Y or Z. Perceptual illusions, which are intentions that cannot be integrated harmoniously into the course of actual experience, are precisely that: departures from the successful integration of perceptions into a coherent whole. Consequently, perceptual illusions presuppose successful perceptions as the required condition.[119]

Now, as the retentive aspects of perception sink deeper into the past, they become memories which, as I already explained, intent those things and events in the world that have lapsed into the past, and thus that are no longer present, but that, nevertheless, are connected to current perceptions by a series of intervening events and their corresponding acts. Memories and perceptions, then, presuppose a common temporal horizon connecting their objects to one another in determined and determinable ways; in other words, our memories and perceptions intermesh or interlink with each other so as to form a unified, temporally extended field of intentional acts whose ground is the actual world (a world that is one for us all).

This is not to deny that the contents of many memories suffer from gaps, are often fragmented and incomplete, or affected by vagueness. I remember the first time I heard a philosophy lecture in college, but I don't remember many of its details; for instance, what the professor was wearing, or many of the things that she said during class. And, although I

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[118] To quote Husserl: "External perception is a temporal run-off of lived-experience where appearances concordantly pass into one another and form the unity of coincidence corresponding to the unity of sense, *Passive and Active Synthesis*, 44.

[119] Husserl puts it as follows: "disappointment essentially presupposes partial fulfillment." *Passive and Active Synthesis*, 64.

remember some of the intervening events in my life that connect this memory to the present, I am certain that I could never remember all of these events or many of the facts that characterized them. Yet, despite this psychological fact about the imperfections of our memories, it is still true that the objects of our memories are given as past, and as being horizontally linked to the present by means of succeeding memory acts constituting the segment of consciousness necessary to connect that particular memory to the living now. [120]

If this were not the case, if the sense of the remembered object's temporal position were to change in such a way that it seemed to be part of the living present, then it would appear to be present in the flesh, or some of its retained or protented aspects. But protentions and retentions are moments of perception correlated to what's now present (a specious present to be sure) instead of being acts of memory themselves.

Memories, then, direct us to past events by reproducing the original experiences we had of them. But in doing so, they also reproduce the web of referential implications or perceptual background implicitly connecting those experiences to the actual now. In remembering what I had for dinner yesterday, for instance, I must reproduce the original perception of the event and its horizon of implicit references to the present. These implicit references constitute the remembered event's implicit temporal context, "a horizon directed towards the future, specifically towards the future of what is recollected", which, at least in principle, can be brought to intuitive presence through further acts of memory. [121]

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[120] "It belongs to the essence of memory that what is remembered has a location in relation to the actual present." Husserl, *Phantasie*, 636.

[121] Ibid., 57.

This would not be possible, however, unless the objectivities correlated with perceptions and memories appeared against the background of a temporal world common to all of them and to the different experiencing subjects bearing those acts. The fact that they do —that these objectivities can be located in the same temporal world—implies a commensurability on the basis of which we can ascertain their temporal relations; for example, their location and duration, based on a tacitly shared frame of reference. The cardinal that I remember seeing yesterday, and the cardinal that I am now seeing, have their own specific locations in time. They manifest a certain determinable duration, and stand in a certain relation of before, and after. In short, the times of memory and perception are parts of a single whole.

Now imaginings qua psychic acts of consciousness are themselves part of the experiencing subject's temporally extended stream of intentional experiences, just as perceptions and memories qua psychic acts are, and thus are internally given to the experiencing subject as either before, simultaneous, or after other psychic acts. In other words, as Husserl says, " the imaginings . . . of one ego have a connection, not only among themselves but also with the perceptions of this ego, as lived experiences, as do all the lived experiences of internal consciousness . . . imaginings are ordered in the unity of the ego, just as all acts are."[122] Hence, regarded as psychic acts, imaginings, like any other psychic act, have determinable durations and locations within the subjective life of a person just as much as they have a determinable duration and location when compared to events in external reality. My perception, memory, and imagination of the cardinal taken as modifications of my

[122] Husserl, *Experience and Judgment*, 168.

consciousness, for instance, stand in determinable temporal relations to each other, just as they stand in determinable relations to things and events in the world.

However, neither this nor the preceding points we made about the objects of perception and memory hold true of the act of imagination with respect to its objects.

To begin with, unlike perceived or remembered objects, imagined objects do not appear in actual time. Instead, imagined objects appear either merely present as it were in the actual world, or present elsewhere, i.e., in fictional worlds of their own. For instance, as we go from one perception of the tree to another perception of the tree, we go from an appearance of an object in the actual world to another appearance of the same object in the actual world, both occurring at different moments in actual time. Likewise, as we go from a memory of that tree to our current perception of it, we go from an appearance of it that has already sunk into the past to one that fills the actual present, the past and the present being both real. In contrast, in going from our current perception of the tree to the fictional leaf we project onto it, we go from an appearance of something in actual time to an appearance of something that is not really in actual time at all, but merely *present at it were* or in its own isolate fictional time.

Accordingly, because imagined objects are not really in actual time, because they lack "absolute temporal position…strict localization" there, they lack objectively specifiable temporal determinations. Let me explain. The temporal location and duration of most of our imaginings, for instance, whether they are happening in some fictional past, present, or future, or how long they have lasted, often appears as something missing and indeterminable. To return to our example of the cardinal, if I try to pinpoint the location and duration of the imagined cardinal objectively and non-arbitrarily, I find myself at a loss. It is true that as it

hovers before me, as I as if perceive it, it occupies an as if present, a fictional now that I seem to be witnessing or living through directly from a perspective that is external to the space and time that it occupies. But what kind of present is "present as it were"? Can I specify it more precisely in intersubjectively ascertainable ways? No, I am unable to do so.

This is not to say that we cannot intent it as having well-defined positions and durations in imagination. Yet, whatever temporal order we ascribe to it in imagination, is unrelated to that of other imaginary worlds, or to the single, all-encompassing temporal horizon linking all actual things and events. It does not make any sense to say, for instance, that the imagined cardinal is either younger or older than the real tree in which I imagine it perching, nor can it be said that it came before, after, or is contemporaneous with the tree, as is true of the people I am now seeing crossing the street. The same is true when we compare the objects of different imaginings. Each act of imagining has its own temporal world, thus, unless we pretend otherwise, it is without sense to claim that the imagined cardinal came before or after the pink cube I am now imagining, or the flute-playing centaur I imagined two days ago. As Husserl correctly points out: "the centaur is neither earlier nor later than the hippopotamus or than the table which I now perceive."[123] They do not occupy the same time.

The reason for this temporal disconnectedness should be evident by now. The objects of different imaginings do not presuppose the same world as the objects of different perceptions and memories do. Rather, these objects appear within temporal fields that are neither parts nor segments of actual time, nor constitute among themselves a single temporal order; but instead, they are self-contained, self-referential frames made of determinations that

[123] Husserl, *Experience and Judgment*, 168.

are unique to a particular fantasy. Hence, because acts of imagination are potentially unlimited, "there are as many such [time frames] as there are or can be such imaginings, thus, infinitely many."[124]

In other words, while the actual world is one, the worlds of imagination are potentially infinite, each with their own unique time. Some of these worlds are ephemeral, others last for a while as the correlates of more enduring imaginings.[125] For instance, as I walk down the street during a cold morning in October, I suddenly find myself imagining the now barren landscape full of spring and summer flowers. I did not hold on to the intention, but let it died out as soon as I lost my focus on it. As a result, the imagined scene came and left, and I have never try to reimagine it. However, if I had wished, I could have kept this intention firmly in mind in order to build a more enduring world by "joining present scenes with past scenes by means of empty intentions accompanying quasi-fulfilling acts."[126] Or, as Sartre explains, by "producing in jerks isolated objects in their totality and establish between these objects, by means of empty intentions and decrees, 'intramundane' connections."[127] To be sure, the persistence of a world of this sort, and that of the things and events I imagine in it, is an imagined persistence. In imagination there is no objective criteria of sameness or re-

[124] Ibid., 170.

[125] In phenomenology, the world is not the system of things as a whole; but rather, it is the ultimate outer horizon of experience, the overall context in which all meaningful entities are situated. Imaginary worlds are not part of this overall context, but are instead isolated mini fields providing a habitable place to their objects.

[126] Sartre, *The Imaginary*, 131.

[127] Ibid., 135.

identification of particulars overtime.[128] Nevertheless, within the unity of a single imaginary intention, imaginary worlds can provide a common fictional time for their characters; they can function as self-contained wholes that provide a locale or habitation for their unique denizens. And these more enduring worlds, just like the evanescent ones, are also potentially infinite.

Having said this, let me briefly summarize what I have done up to now before introducing new claims about imaginary time. I said that imagined objects are not located in actual time which, among other things, implies that they are not in the past, present, or future, or stand in relations of before or after with those of other imaginings, or with those of perception, memory, or any other intention. In fact, I pointed out that imagined time frames are potentially infinite, and thus do not add up to anything like a single, all encompassing background underlying all real events.

All of these claims are grounded on the temporal disconnectedness we experience between imagined objects and the objects of perception and memory. But also on the temporal disconnectedness we internally experience between the purely possible timeframes of imagined objects and the temporality of imaginings *qua* intentional acts, which is part of the temporality ordering our lived experience. What I mean is that while imaginings qua lived experiences stand in determinable temporal relations of before, simultaneous, or after other lived experiences within our subjectivity, relations that are given to us as constitutive of the time in which our lived experiences flow, this is not the case *vis-à-vis* their corresponding objects. As we have been stressing, imagined objects appear in self-contained temporal frames

[128] Husserl puts this point as follows: "the experience of imagination in general provides no individual objects in the true sense but only quasi-individual objects and quasi-identity, namely, within the fixed unity of an imaginary world." *Experience and Judgment*, 174.

of their own, disconnected from the temporal succession of events in the actual world, but also from the inner temporality our psychic states. For instance, it does not make sense to say that the pink cube I am now imagining occupies the same present, the same now, than the now, the living present, occupied by the imagining itself, or the background perceptual awareness of the environment surrounding it. Moreover, it would be a mistake to assume that the duration of the imagined pink cube, or any other imagined object for that matter, is simply the duration of the imagining act (as if they presupposed or existed within a common temporal field).

The duration of an imagined scene, such as that of a pink cube floating on top of my computer, is just what we imagine it to be, which can be greater or smaller than the duration of the imagining act (although no doubt they often seem to dovetail). For example, if I were to imagine the pink cube having been around for two days, the duration of its existence would appear longer than the duration of the imagining act. Conversely, if I were to imagine it as something enjoying momentary existence, its duration would take on the sense of being shorter than that of the act of imagining. And, although it is true that the duration of a remember event is not identical with the duration of the act of remembering it, and the duration of a perceived object not identical with the duration of the act of perceiving it, it is not true that their temporalities are wholly disconnected as it is the case with imagining and its object. In the case of perception, the act of perceiving occupies the same now, the same living present, as the perceived object, which is present in the flesh through this act. In the case of memory, the remembered object is located in the actual past while the act of

remembering it is part of the living present, but both presuppose one world. But this cannot be claimed literally of our imaginings and the many fictional worlds these acts reveal to us.

Besides the temporal disconnectedness of the objects of imagination from those of perception and memory, and from the act of imagination itself, there are other important ways in which imaginary time differs from actual time as we live it. Consider the following: we are all familiar with the fact that time passes by. For instance, I am now reflecting on the fact that the computer in front of me continues to exist and appears roughly in the same way as new nows replace those that came before them. I myself continue to exist and appear roughly in the same way as I reflect on this fact. My lived experiences also come into being, endure for a while, and then sink into the past as time continues to pass. To be sure, our experience of the passage of time can change with our situation. As previously stated, lived time sometimes moves faster, sometimes slows down, sometimes it seems to "collapse and expand like an erratic accordion," as Bel Kaufman rightly notices.[129] However, regardless of the shape and reason for this passing away of time, it is indisputable that time relentlessly passes by.

Having said this, there is no reliable link between time and becoming in imagination as there is between actual time and the realm of actuality it regulates. Concerning things and events in the actual world, we must agree with Cicero's claim that "there is no work of human hands which time does not wear away and reduce to dust."[130] Cicero is right that in the physical world things are subject to the laws of becoming and destruction brought about by the passage of time. In fact, one of the conditions that makes possible our sense of the passage

[129] Bel Kaufman, quoted in John Crowley, "Time After Time," in *Lampham's Quarterly's* vol. 7, no. 4 (Fall 2014), 199.

[130] Cicero, quoted in Dunsany, "Lord Dunsany Declares War," *Lapham's Quarterly* Vol. 7, no. 4 (Fall 2014), 36.

of time is rooted in the fact that we witness things in a constant state of becoming: things change in appearance; they get older; they start to decay, as entropy starts to win over, and eventually die.

However, Cicero's claim breaks down when applied to fictional beings. Imagined objects seem immune or not subject to the inevitable death and decay we witness in the external world with the passage of time. For instance, the centaur I have been imagining for quite sometime has not changed at all. There is no discernable qualitative difference despite that all of this time has passed by. There is also no sense that it is getting older, or that it will die at some point in the future. On the contrary, it appears as if it was frozen in time. This is not to say, of course, that we cannot fancy it changing in various ways; for instance, getting older and eventually dying as time passes by within the world that we have created for it. And, of course, we can also imagine this world continuing to exist after its death, and even having someone in this world remembering the time of its death relative to some fictional present. But this is a very particular way of imagining the object, and thus need not be true of all of our imaginings and, as a matter of fact, is not true of most of them.

Besides this disconnect between time and becoming in imagination, imaginary time also differs from actual time in that the former is subject to our will. What I mean is that we can freely determine the temporal duration and location of imagined objects as part of the extensive freedom we enjoy with our imaginings. For instance, I can locate the imagined cardinal in some fictional past, or in some fictional future, or simply leave its temporal location completely undetermined (as is the case with most imaginings). I can also lengthen or shorten its duration at will. I initially imagined this event lasting about four minutes only to

change its duration later to about 10 minutes, for example. I can change it again if I desire to do so.

In perception and memory I do not have this freedom to vary the temporality of objects however I wish to. On the contrary, the temporal facts or relations subtending the things and events in the actual world depend on a network of apperceptions and intentions whose temporal ordering is not subject to our will.[131] The cardinal showing up outside my window, for instance, occurred at a certain moment in actual time, and is either in a relation of having occurred before, at the same time as, or perhaps after some other event(s). To be sure, if the network of apperceptions and intentions change, the temporal position of the cardinal *vis-à-vis* the temporal position of other things and events may change. But this is not up to us. Several reasons can be given: actual time extends beyond any of our thoughts and their objects, including our temporally extended lives as the bearers of these thoughts. Moreover, actual time continuous to move or flow relentlessly forward, indifferent to our desires or preferences: we can't make something happen in the past rather than the present, or push it forward into that which is not yet. In sum, we neither can stop time nor change the temporal order of things in the real world.

Finally, I want to end this reflection on imaginary time with the following observation. It is often claimed that time can only move or unfold only in one direction: forward. Surely, this is phenomenally true in the sense that new moments (nows) are constantly replacing

[131] By "apperception", I mean the perception that accompanies direct perception [*perzeption*]. For example, in a perception, the perceiver is not only aware of those aspects of the object being directly sensed, but also of those just seen and still to be perceived sides or aspects of the object as well as other objects spatially or thematically related to the perceived object. In other words, apperception is an awareness of the inner and outer horizon of co-intended aspects of an object and its surrounding environment. Temporally speaking, it's an awareness of how the object fits into the past and the future, a temporal order that is no subject to our will.

existing ones, while existing ones are pushed into the past. Some physicists claim, however, that, under certain special conditions, time can move backwards. To illustrate this idea, they usually offer examples like the following: people getting younger rather than older, stars un-exploding rather than exploding, or broken eggs unbreaking.[132] There is controversy about whether this is really possible, or whether the aforementioned examples really are examples of time moving backward. Here I will not take on this issue. I wish only to say that, if these are indeed examples of what it would mean for time to move backwards, then we can at least imagine what it would mean for time to do so, even if it turns out that this is not physically possible. This in addition to the undeniable fact that we can time-travel in imagination, i.e., imagine a state of affairs in which we imaginatively travel either to the past or the future, even if, like time itself moving backwards, time-travel may also not be physically possible.[133]

II. Execution

Our description of some of the most important temporal differences between imagination, perception, and memory has come to an end. These may not be the only temporal differences between these three psychic acts, nor do I want to claim that my account of these differences describes everything worth saying about them. Nevertheless, they represent the most essential ways in which imaginary time differs from actual time. Hence, together with imagination's imaginableness and freedom, the discontinuity of imagined time

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[132] Stephen Hawking proposes this idea and uses these examples. See, *A Brief History of Time*, 10th edition (New York: Bantam Books, 1996), 147-159.

[133] For a discussion on the possibility of time travel, see Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*, 151-179.

frames, the fact that they are potentially infinite, or the fact that we can manipulate their order at will, are also constitutive of what makes imagination a distinctive form of consciousness.

Now that the *eidetic* structure of imagination have been made explicit, and thus we have a good sense of how imagination differs from perception and memory, I wish to describe in this section some of the ways in which we can form an imagining, i.e., some of the specific ways we can imagine something, or, as the title of this section suggests, some of the ways an imagining can be carried out or executed. Doing so will enable me to underscore some of the interesting ways we can achieve reference to an object in imagination, an aspect of what it means to live through this act that is often neglected or forgotten, but also discuss how different ways of imagining an object affects the way the object appears to us.

Let me begin this description by asking the following question: how do we achieve reference to an object in imagination? One may be tempted to answer this question by saying that we do so by reproducing a mental picture of the object within consciousness that, in virtue of resemblances, stands for or represents the object. However, as I will explain in our last chapter, this popular explanation wrongly confuses imagination with image-consciousness, resulting in the reduction of imagined objects to " private objects" taken the form of internal mental pictures. Accordingly, we instead propose that we can achieve reference to an imaginary object by simulating in various complex ways a consciousness of that object. Put differently, by constructing purely possible intentional acts that present us with the object itself, although as something merely imagined rather than genuinely present. What follows, then, is a brief description of some of the forms these simulations can take.

First, imagination can take the form of *sensory* imaginings or sensory-like experiences of pure possibilities (what Husserl and others call *as if* perceptions). This is perhaps the most investigated form of imagining, especially its visual species. It achieves reference to objects by simulating as if perceptions of those objects. The character of these as if perceptions, however, depends on the sense being simulated. Consider the following: some sensory imaginings are sense-modality specific as if perceptions. The most common of these is visualization, but the sensory –specific form of sound-imaginings (the musical imagination), tactile-imaginings (the haptic imagination), taste-imaginings (the gustatory imagination), and smell-imaginings (what Gilbert Ryle calls "smelling with the mind's nose").[134] For instance, when I visualize a pink cube I am *as if* seeing this figure floating before me, when I imagine a piece of music, I am *as if* hearing the notes, when I imagine the smell of a freshly baked Dresden Stollen, I am *as if* smelling its fruits and cinnamon, and when I imagine a texture it is *as if* I was feeling it with my finger tips. All of these are examples of sensory-modality specific as if perceptions of an object. However, other sensory imaginings are more complex; they make an object as if present to consciousness by simulating multi-sensory as if perceptions of it, as when I not only visualize the Dresden Stollen, but also as if smell and as if taste it, which is an integrated, or unified sensory-like experience made of three sensory modalities: vision, smell, and taste.

The kind of objects that we are able to imagine this way—with the sensory imagination—are *perceivable* objects. I mean by this individual things, events, processes, or states of affairs. Most of the examples of imagination that I have used throughout the present

[134] Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (New York: Hutchinson House, 1950), 256-258.

work have been of this sort: pink cubes, flying pigs, red cardinals, and so on. However, besides individual things, with the sensory imagination we can also as if perceive events, like a Christmas parade, or a simple process, like the process of opening an oyster, or a sensible state of affairs, like the fact that the cat is on the mat, the fact that my dogs are playing with me. These are objects that we can perceive: we can see, hear, touch, smell, or otherwise have a multi-sensory experience of them. With the sensory imagination we become acquainted with what it could be like to perceive them even if they are pure possibilities of the imagination.

Moreover, although this kind of acquaintance is not perceptual acquaintance, in the sense that we are actually grasping something that is present to us in the flesh, as is true of perception, nevertheless the sensory-like perceptions that compose sensory imaginings make their objects float before consciousness with a sense of *immediacy* that mimics perception but that is absent in pictures and symbols. What I mean is that these sensory-like experiences present objects as if they were themselves present to us rather than a third term standing in their place. For instance, if I was looking at a portrait of Napoleon, it is clear that what would be directly present to me would be a pictorial representation of Napoleon standing as substitute for what is representing. Similarly, if I was looking at a sign or a symbol of Napoleon, it is these two abstract representations of him that would be directly present before consciousness, not what they are representing; namely, Napoleon. In these two cases one object (Napoleon) is given indirectly or through the mediation of something else that is given directly or immediately (the image, symbol or sign).[135] But, this is not how we experience the

[135] To be precise, pictorial representations allow us to see their subject (Napoleon) in another (the portrait) while signs and symbols do not. Signs and symbols are for the most part established conventions that need not resemble their objects while images are meant to function as quasi-intuitive illustrations of what they represent. Nevertheless, both are representations of their objects. They stand as substitutes. I will discuss these differences more in depth in the next chapter.

objects of imagination, i.e., as substitutes for what we are trying to imagine.[136] On the contrary, when I imagine a pink cube, it seem itself to be appearing directly before my consciousness as if present, rather than showing merely indirectly by means of a mental substitute, like a mental image. It is not, of course, literally present. What is present—what I am actually living through— are its as if perceptions. In contrast, the pink cube is a pure possibility. Nevertheless, through these sensory-like experiences, it appears present as it were.

Sensory imaginings, which we form by simulating as if perceptions of their objects, are by no means the only way we can carry out an imagining. Besides individual things, events, and states-of-affairs, we can also imagine what it is like to feel, sense, or emote something; in other words, what it is like to have or live through certain experiences. Suppose, for instance, that you had to imagine the feeling of nausea the main character in Jean-Paul Sartre's novel, Antoine Roquentin, feels towards existence while starring at that tree stump. Or suppose that instead of being asked to visualize a wet cat, you were asked to imagine what it is like to feel soaking wet. Or, instead of these two, you were asked to rehearse an action—such as the series of behaviors implicated in deactivating a land mine, or the action of wading across a river — in order to learn what it feels to perform these actions.

These examples illustrate a second form of imagination I will call here the *phenomenal* imagination. This way of carrying out an imagining consists in simulating from a first person perspective what it is like have a certain feeling, or to move or act in a certain way

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[136] Pictorialists, those who equate the objects of imaginations with mental pictures, think of imagination as a representation, i.e., as a capacity to represent one thing (whatever it is that we are trying to imagine) with another thing (a mental picture). For instance, according to this model, I visualize a pick cube by forming a mental representation that I grasp as standing for it by means of recognized resemblances. I will argue in the next chapter that this model misrepresents the nature of imagination.

(the latter being an example of motor imaginings).[137] Like the sensory imagination, this form presents its objects with the felt sense of immediacy just described; that is, without the appearing mediation of a third object. Moreover, like the sensory imagination, its simulations are experiential, sensuous, or phenomenal in character. Unlike the perceptual imagination, however, it is not about simulating as if perceptions of external objects. Instead, we carry out this type of experiential imagination by evoking feelings or movement-sensations (what philosophers like Husserl call *kinaesthetic* sensations) that are similar to the actual feelings or movement-sensations that one is trying to understand through the imagination. I suppose that part of this calling-forth or evocation process can be achieved in different ways. However, a necessary feature of this imagining is that it must be performed from a first person perspective, since the point is for the imaginer herself to experience what may be like to have such feelings or to perform such action. In addition, unlike the sensory imagination, which need not engage the full body, the phenomenal imagination often requires actively engaging the full body in the relevant manners, either by acting as if one were having the feelings one is trying to as if experience, or by mimicking similar bodily movements, or actions.

To illustrate what I just said, consider the case of imagining rowing a boat through a river in order to rehearse the actions that define it as part of training for an upcoming competition. How does one go about using the imagination to do so? A typical way athletes do so is with a mixture of visualization and phenomenal imagination, in particular, the motor imagination. First, they visualize themselves rowing their boat through the river from a first person perspective, i.e., from the perspective of someone directly engaged in the act. Second,

[137] I borrowed the term phenomenal imagination from Berys Gaut. See *Creativity and Imagination*, 273.

they start acting as if they were actually rowing by seating appropriately in order to mimic the strokes they seek to rehearse (usually with the use of a rowing machine made out of oar-like handles that, if used, simulate some of the motions and physical pressures typically involved in this sport). The point is to master the technique of the stroke, a complex action involving the whole body in various ways, as well as group synchronization and other aspects of the sport, such as unanticipated surprises, by making the subject feel herself performing the action. Hence, although this imaginary project uses the sensory imagination to visualize a scene in which the rower finds herself rowing along the river, it cannot be adequately achieved without the phenomenal imagination as the primary means—not only to enhance or intensify the visual as if perceptions themselves—which become more powerful or distinct from the feelings, movement-sensations, and emotions that come from the use of one's whole body—; but also, in order to feel or experience the action itself as a powerful form of rehearsal that is needed to achieve mastery of this sport.[138]

Consider also empathetic uses of the imagination, which are about imagining being some person or imagining being in a person's position; in other words, what some philosophers call the "dramatic imagination," because it is about grasping what it is like to be someone else by imaginatively walking on their shoes (to use a common metaphor).[139] This form of imagination can be very complex. To dramatically imagine what it is like to be in

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[138] For a more extensive treatment of how this form of imagination is used to foster high performance in sports, see B.S. Rushall, *Imagery Training in Sports* (Spring Valley, CA: Sports Science Association, 1991); and R.S. Weingberg, "Imagery Training for Performance Enhancement," in *Applied Sport Psychology: Personal Growth Peak Performance*, ed. J.M. Williams (Palo Alto, CA: Mayfield), 209-234.

[139] See, for example, Berys Gaut, *Creativity and Imagination*, 274.

someone else's position; for example, in the position of an immigrant facing deportation, I have to entertain various states of affairs about her situation and entertain concepts of various objects, and imaginatively evoke the various possible feelings and sensations she may be enduring based on what I know about her, or based on how I or anyone similarly situated would likely feel in his or her place. Again, although the dramatic imagination uses the sensory imagination to visualize some aspects of this predicament, it calls primarily for the use of the phenomenal imagination, since empathy is about experiencing what other selves are themselves experiencing.

Common to the sensory and phenomenal imagination is their distinctive experiential aspect. Through them we can either directly as if perceive or as if live through their objects first hand. Their objects appear concretely, intuitively, given by sensory or experiential appearances. But is it the case that all imagination is defined by a distinctive experiential aspect whose function is to enable us to as if perceive or as if experience the object itself? The answer is no. To explain, let me begin with some examples that I consider to be examples of imaginings whose objects cannot be as if perceived or experienced in a direct way. For instance, I can imagine that there is a chiliagon in the next room; I just cannot form a sensuous presentation of one (that is distinct from a sensuous presentation of a 900-sided figure). Similarly, while reading Lewis Carroll's *Thru The Looking Glass*, I find myself imagining that the red queen can live forever; I just cannot as if perceive or as if experience this directly. Lastly, I can imagine also that I cannot imagine the schemes of a psychopath against me.

Examples like these illustrate "a state of things or combination of objects" that is not image-able in any straightforward sense.[140] Yet it does not seem possible to deny that we can imagine these kinds of abstract possibilities. It does not seem possible to deny this because we can conceive or conceptually entertain what they could be like if they existed or if they were true, as well as freely vary them, while in doing so, also maintain a quasi-positional, neutral attitude towards these constructions. In other words, despite that we may not be able to form a sensuous presentation of some possibilities, we can still entertain them in our imagination.

This third form of imagination is more intellectual or abstract in character. It is what some philosophers, like Colin McGinn, sometimes refer to as the *cognitive* imagination.[141] How do we achieve this kind of imagining? If we cannot form a direct or straightforward sensuous presentation of an object with this form of imagination, because its objects are not directly perceivable, how, then, do we achieve reference to them? My answer is that we do so by constructing abstract intentional thoughts bearing reference to the object we are trying to make present. These thoughts are abstract in the sense that they are about objects that cannot appear in imagination directly in a sensuous or experiential manner. Thus whatever sensory or phenomenal experiences may accompany them, they are not *bona fide* or literal as if perceptions or as if experiences of these objects, since they can be used to stand for different

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[140] States of affairs are made up of relations between actual or purely possible objects; they are complex facts that can be represented by propositions. For instance, when I perceive that the cat is on the mat, the object of the perception is not the cat, or the mat, but the fact that the cat is on the mat or, to put it differently, the fact that one object (the cat) stands in a certain relation to another (the mat). Thus, just as we can perceive or remember some states of affairs, we can also imagine them. I can imagine that the cat is on the mat, or that a chiliagon is in the other room, or that every single neuron in my brain is now turning into silicon. However, not all states of affairs are perceivable or image-able such as the ones illustrated by the examples just given. My definition of a state of affairs comes from Wittgenstein. See *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 5.

[141] Colin McGinn, *Mindsight: Image, Dream, Meaning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004, 128.

objects as well. For example, as is often the case with intellectual imaginings, I may decide to form an indirect experience of a perceivable figure whose similarities to a chiliagon can help me develop a sense of what it could be like for one to be found in the basement. But not all intellectual imaginings do this, and, even if they did, since whatever it is that I have managed to visualize can just as well stand for a 900 or less- sided figure, it is not a literal "image" of the chiliagon; that is to say, of the 1000-sided figure I am seeking to make as if present.

Nevertheless, despite this limitation, what is most valuable about the intellectual imagination is that it allows an expansion of the range of objects that we can imagine. With it, we are not tied to what we can as if perceive directly, or to the feelings and actions that we can directly simulate with the phenomenal imagination. As the aforementioned examples show, with it we can attempt to develop a sense of what it would be like if something existed or was true, even if it is not perceivable. With the intellectual imagination, abstract objects become subject to our imaginings. We can explore these possibilities freely and neutrally.

Conclusion

Our description of central ways we can imagine—sensory, phenomenal, and intellectual – has come to an end. Admittedly, much remains to be said concerning phenomenological differences between these three ways of imagining something. For our purposes, it suffices to allude to the diversity and power of our imaginings. Imagination is unique, powerful, and diverse, and thus it is a mistake to equate it either with another form of consciousness, or with one of its specific forms. Part of the value of a phenomenological account of imagination, or of any other psychic act for that matter, is that such description can provide the most complete and accurate presentation of the experiential data that must be

explained by any theory or model purporting to be a theory or model about the given phenomenon. Consequently, a phenomenological account can serve as the basis of a critique of dominant theories and models. In the next chapter I appropriate this idea and use some of the lessons we have learned about imagination in this and the preceding chapter as the basis of a critique of pictorialism, which is the most influential theory of imagination in the history of philosophy and in contemporary science, but one that, I will argue, is contradicted by our experience. This critique will enable me to show the value phenomenology for contemporary philosophy.

Chapter Four: A Phenomenological Critique of Pictorialism

Introduction

At the end of the last chapter, I claimed that phenomenology can be used to critique dominant theories. Of the accounts of imagination that differ from mine, pictorialism is perhaps the most important. It has a long history in philosophy and the empirical sciences, and continues to guide much contemporary philosophical and scientific thought on the subject.[142] This alternative account defines imagination as a capacity to form mental images. In this chapter I offer an extensive critique of this influential way of conceptualizing imagination. I argue that, despite its popularity, (especially in cognitive science) it conflicts with the data of experience.

I will develop this critique as follows: after clarifying that pictorialism is not committed to the existence of literal pictures in the mind, and explaining the two most important arguments given in defense of this position, I argue in section two of this chapter that pictorialism conflates imagination and image-consciousness, that its definition of imagination is simultaneously too broad and narrow, that we do not need to posit mental images to explain how we can achieve reference to objects in imagination, as pictorialists claim, and, finally, that it is not true that empirical research on mental imagery shows the existence of mental images. If this critique is successful, it should show the inadequacy of

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[142] My critique of pictorialism will focus primarily on critiquing the defense of this position by Alastair Hannay and Stephen Michael Kosslyn. My understanding of their position comes primarly from the following two sources: Alastair Hannay, *Mental Images: A Defense* (London and New York, 1971); Stephen Michael Kosslyn, *Ghosts in the Mind's Machine: Creating and Using Images in the Brain* (New York and London: W.N. Norton and Company, 1983); and Stephen Michael Kosslyn, William Lad Thompson, and Ganis Giorgio, *The Case for Mental Imagery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

assuming that our imaginings are manifestly about forming and inspecting mental imagery. More importantly, it should demonstrate not only the value of my account of imagination, but also the power of phenomenology to generate valuable critiques of misconceptions in contemporary philosophy.

I. Pictorialism

The claim that imagination is the capacity to form mental images, i.e., to represent something by means of mental depictions, is ambiguous. On the one hand, the term 'mental image' might be interpreted to mean an actual image or picture in the mind. On the other hand, it might be interpreted to mean a mental representation that merely functions as if it were an actual mental image. For instance, while the first interpretation implies that the pink cube I am now visualizing is an actual mental picture standing for it, the second interpretation only implies that what I am now mentally seeing is a mental representation that appears to be, but it is not literally a mental picture of the pink cube.

Now, because it assumes that "images are literally pictures in the head", the first interpretation has been rejected by contemporary scientists and philosophers that endorse pictorialism. As Kosslyn correctly observes, "no [contemporary scientist] studying imagery begins with the assumption that images are literally pictures in the head."[143] However, contemporary pictorialists accept the second interpretation, using it, for instance, as the basis of their studies of mental imagery and other phenomena they associate with imagination. Accordingly, I will focus on the second interpretation of the mental image in order to determine more precisely its meaning before I discuss the arguments in favor of pictorialism.

[143] Kosslyn, *Ghosts in the Mind's Machines*, 29

Contemporary pictorialists endorse the claim that imagination is the capacity to form mental images.[144] However, they claim that these images are "not actual pictures, with a size, weight, and so on; nor are such images viewed with an actual eye."[145] Rather, they insist that what phenomenally looks like a mental image floating before our minds is a "mental representation that [at the phenomenal level] functions as if it had pictorial properties."[146] In other words, this way of construing mental images does not deny that our phenomenal experience of the contents of imagination is picture-like, i.e., that it appears to be a matter of mentally seeing what subjectively looks like an actual picture of an object; for example, one with spatial and other properties that resemble it. However, it denies that this is the nature of these mental representations, proposing instead that they only function as if they were images.

To illustrate the distinction between an actual picture and a mental representation that only functions as it were, imagine someone seeing the image of a pink cube on their computer screen. If the person were to get close enough, they would likely see an array of colored dots that looks like the pink cube; that is, that looks as if it has the spatial form and color of the pink cube (as seen from a certain angle). However, this is not the actual nature of this mental representation (despite that it appears that way phenomenally). In reality, the apparent image is just a computer representation constituted by patterns of binary digits stored in the computer's memory that encode information about the spatial and other properties of cubes; for example, shape, angles, points on their surface, color, movement, weight, and other

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[144] By "resent pictorialists" I have in mind mostly Kosslyn and his followers.

[145] Kosslyn, *Ghosts in the Mind's Machine*, 20 and 30.

[146] Ibid.

relevant properties that we associate with this type of solid. The point is that these underlying representations causing the appearance of an image of a pink cube on the screen do not look or have the form of pictures. For instance, if the person were to see them directly, they would not have actual pictorial properties. Nevertheless, these machine representations can function as if they had such properties; for example, as if they had the spatial and other properties of cubes. In other words, if suitably interpreted, these underlying representations can be made to function as a picture on the screen; more precisely, as if they were an array of pinkish colored dots tracing the shape of a pink cube. But to claim that they can function this way, i.e., that they can generate the appearance of being an actual picture of something, pictorialists insist, is neither to claim that this is the only way that they can function, or that they are literal pictures that are somehow embodied or located in the computer's memory. As is well known, the data that they encode is not picture-like. This does not matter, however. "The computer can generate images on the screen from information that is not picture-like; data that are stored as symbols in the computer's memory emerge on the screen in pictorial form."[147] In short, despite not being literal pictures, these representations can nevertheless function as if they were actual images.

The same can be said of our imaginings—according to this form of pictorialism. The mental representations that cause our experience of "seeing" mental pictures of imaginary objects only function pictorially, i.e., as if they were mental pictures (resembling analogs). In reality, these mental representations, or the neural networks and their pattern of activity that compose them, do not need to have the actual format of a picture. They only need to function

[147] Kosslyn, *Ghosts in the Mind's Machine*, 2.

as such. That is, as Kosslyn explains, “we can imagine sets of neurons in the brain (or patterns of neurons firing) that stand for the various portions of an object, and neurons which connect these representations so that they give us the information we need to discern a picture. In this way, nerve cells can function as if they composed something like an image without actually being one.”[148]

In sum, the claim that imagination is the capacity to form mental images does not imply the existence of actual pictures in the mind. It is rather the claim that our imaginings are borne by mental representations that (at the level of our phenomenal experience) function as if they were mental pictures. In other words, subjectively, these representations appear as if they were images, and we use this experience; for example, to tell how an object looks in imagination. Nevertheless, like the case of the pink cube appearing on the computer screen, this is not their true nature. In reality, they are nothing more than the effect of interpreting their underlying causes as if they were actual images.

Thus far I have described the version of pictorialism I intent to critique. I now wish to introduce two central arguments in support of this way of conceiving imagination. Let me introduce the first argument by quoting in full the following passage from Hannay:

> “Without a' mental' analogue of the pictorial property that allows us to see something when it is perceptually absent one could no more picture or imagine something to oneself that one could see something represented without seeing a representation. 'Imaging' and 'seeing things represented' denote analogous visual experiences, and both

[148] Ibid.

require a 'material' object. If there were no mental images there would be no imaging."[149]

Hannay's claim is that, without the existence of mental images taken the place of their objects, we cannot explain how it is that in imagination we can represent objects in the absence of appropriate external stimuli or, as Kant eloquently put it, "even without [their] presence in intuition."[150] In other words, since imagination represents things that are perceptually absent, something must be actually present in our minds standing for them. Just like we could not "see" something represented in a painting or a photograph without simultaneously seeing the painting or the photograph, we could not represent anything in imagination, the argument goes, without the actual presence of an image mediating between us and what it makes appear. What it makes as if present e.g., a pink cube, is something really absent that is indirectly grasped through the image: a mental representation that functions as its substitute.

Besides the argument that imagination requires mental images in order to represent absent objects, another argument in defense of mental images comes from the empirical research on "mental imagery" that cognitive scientists have been conducting since the 1970's. According to pictorialists, this research demonstrates that people rely on mental images, i.e., mental representations that phenomenally "look like" pictures, to solve cognitive problems (from finding locations with the aid of mental maps to using imagery to determine facts about the appearance of previously seen objects.). It is not possible to describe here all of the

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[149] Hannay, *Mental Images: A Defense*, 73.

[150] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans, and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 256.

experiments that have been conducted since then, or do justice to their full significance.[151] So, in order to critique this argument, I will describe only two of these experiments.

The first type of experiment that I wish to discuss involves asking participants to imagine previously shown maps in order to measure the time that it takes them to locate landmarks found at differing distances in these maps. In one of these experiments, for instance, participants were asked to memorize a map with seven locations displayed on it: a rock, a patch of grass, a tree, a beach, a well, a hut, and a lake. The distance between every two locations was different. Keeping an image of the whole map in mind, subjects were to focus on one location and then "look" for the second one. Half the time this second location appeared on the map and half the time it did not. When it was on the map, the subjects were to picture a little black speck moving as fast as possible from one location to the other one, so that their scanning would be as direct as possible. When the speck reached the target destination, subjects were to push a bottom. If they "looked" around the map and could not find the named location, they pushed a second bottom. The assumption is that if the map that participants hold in mind while mentally scanning for landmarks functions like an image, i.e., as if it had a two-dimensional spatial format, then one would expect a measurable correlation between travelled distance and time: the farther away the landmarks are from each other the longer it would take to connect them.

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[151] For a full description of these experiments, see Kosslyn, *Ghosts in the Mind Machine*, and Stephen Michael Kosslyn, William Lad Thompson, and Ganis Giorgio, *The Case for Mental Imagery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

The results of these map experiments seem to bear this assumption. In all of these experiments scanning times increased linearly *vis-à-vis* distance between landmarks.[152] For pictorialists, this demonstrates that the "mental representations [subjects use to locate landmarks on an imagined map] are depictive."[153] In other words, in order to solve the problem of identifying landmarks located at various distances from each other with the aid of visualized maps, they claim that participants avail themselves of mental representations that function like pictures of maps, i.e., that subjectively function like representations of physical spaces with scannable distances, and other quasi pictorial properties. Since these quasi-physical spaces mimic the actual behavior of physical spaces, time should directly increase with distance, as was found in these experiments.[154]

In order to discuss the second type of experiment, allow me to make the following observations first: images—like drawings, paintings, and photographs—occur in or on a medium such a piece of paper, a canvas, or an array of pixels in a computer screen. You cannot paint a picture of a pink cube, for instance, without something to paint it on, and the

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[152] Kosslyn, *Ghosts in the Mind's Machine*, 46-47.

[153] Ibid., 46.

[154] Again, pictorialists want to claim that these mental representations, like the image of the map, function like a physical space not that they are actual physical spaces somehow housed within the mind or the brain Kosslyn emphasizes this point in the following quote:

> Thus we can imagine sets of neurons in the brain (or patterns of neurons firing) that stand for the various portions of an object, and neurons which connect these representations so that they give us the information we need to discern a picture. In this way, nerve cells can function as if they composed something like a television screen without actually being one." Kosslyn, *Ghosts in the Mind's Machine*, 25.

Kosslyn's point is that, although the spatial medium displaying the image of the map when we visualize it need not be a literal space, it nevertheless functions like one. In other words, as I explained earlier, mental pictures need not be ultimately literal ones; since the mental representations that cause them only function like pictures without being themselves actual pictures.

properties of what you painted it on—its size, its texture, its color—will affect the painting you make on it, like its size, sharpness, or even its perspective. For example, an image would overflow a canvas if is too large for it. If it is too small for its grain, parts of the object will be missing or indiscernible. The point is that, when it comes to images, the properties of the medium affect the character of the message (the image itself). This should be true of mental images as well. If what we "see" when we imagine something is a mental representation that functions like a picture, then it must occur in or on a mental medium (a functional space) whose properties affect its character in measurable ways.[155]

At least this is the idea motivating the second type of experiment. In one of these experiments, for instance, experimenters decided to measure the resolution limits of this mental medium. The idea was that if objects are imaged too small, parts should be harder to see. "This is true in visual perception," the head of these experiments observes, "and if the same medium is used in imagery and perception, it should be used in imagery too."[156]

In these experiments, then, participants were asked to image a target animal, like a rabbit, which would later be inspected next to either an elephant or a fly. The two animals (whether a rabbit or an elephant, or a rabbit and a fly) were to be imagined in terms of their relative sizes. The reason was that if the mental medium had a limited size, then participants would have to vary the size of the target animal, depending on how much of the mental

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[155] For Kosslyn, the mental medium that displays mental images is, as he explains it, something that functions like "a place where representation can be put." *Ghosts in the Mind's Machine*, 54. Again it is a functional not an actual screen. To quote him again, "the image medium is not a physical space inside the head; it is a system that functions like a space." Ibid., 62.

[156] Kosslyn, *Ghosts in the Mind's Machine*, 54.

medium was already taken by the other animal (a lot in the case of the elephant but hardly any in the case of the fly). Thus, if the target animal (the rabbit) was next to the elephant, it should be quite small, thus making it harder to see its features than when imagined next to the fly. According to Kosslyn: "by measuring how long it took subjects to check the animals in their images for various features, we should be able to tell whether details are indeed obscured by the grain of the mental medium."[157]

The results of this second type of experiment seem also to support the idea that what we "see" in the imagination occurs in or on a mental medium with a certain size and resolution grain. The amount of time that subjects took to answer questions about the appearance of comparatively small animals was indeed greater than the amount of time it took them to report on the bigger animals. For pictorialists, these results are not surprising, since we should expect that if the medium has a limited size and grain, then animals that are too small (because they are being crowded by the larger animals already occupying most of the limited space of the medium) would be harder to "see" than relatively larger animals, since the grain would be too coarse to convey their details. As Kosslyn explains: "the mental medium has a grain which can obscure the details of an image."[158]

In sum, according to pictorialists, not only do we need to posit mental images in order to explain how we can represent absent objects in imagination, but also to explain the results of experiments on the cognitive value of mental imagery. These experiments indicate that

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[157] Ibid., 56

[158] Kosslyn, *Ghosts in the Mind's Machine*, 60. This is true even after controlling variations in how much participants know about the appearance of animals.

people use the quasi-pictorial properties of these images, such as their apparent spatial properties, as scaffolding for solving different problems (like finding locations with the aid of mental maps, matching shapes, or determine object appearance). In addition, these mental representations seem to occur on a mental medium with measurable pictorial properties of its own that affects their character; for example, their size, resolution, and so on and so forth.

II. Critique

We have finished our exposition of pictorialism and the main arguments in defense of it. In this section, I develop a systematic critique of this theory. It consists of the following four claims: first, I will argue that talk of mental representations that function like mental pictures is not supported by our experience of imagination. Second, I will explain how this way of conceiving imagination is simultaneously too broad and too narrow. Third, I will describe how we can entertain imagined objects without recourse to mental images. Finally, I will offer a non-pictorial interpretation of the aforementioned experimentation on mental imagery.

Although the version of pictorialism we have been discussing does not posit the existence of literal pictures in the mind, it nevertheless posits mental representations that function like pictures, i.e., that phenomenally appear to us as if they were actual pictures. Accordingly, this view presupposes that our phenomenal experience of the contents of imagination is picture-like, i.e., that it has the sense of mentally seeing a picture of whatever it is that we are trying to imagine rather than being directed to the object itself. In fact, it relies on this pictorialist description of our first-hand experience of imagination to claim that only functional images can explain the picture-like sense of this experience.

But to assume that imagination is experientially picture-like, as pictorialism does, is to assume that imagination shares a common phenomenological structure with image-consciousness i.e., with our intentional experience of depictions. This assumption, however, is not borne by the data of experience. To see how this is so, consider the case of looking at a painting of a pink cube hanging at the wall, and let's us describe some of its essential characteristics. First, the act of looking at a pink cube hanging at the wall is a clear instance of what Husserl calls image-consciousness. As a form of consciousness, a distinct way of being related to an object, it is intentional, i.e., through it an object is given, for example, the pink cube. The painting could be depicting something real, or something that is purely fictitious. As far as this act is concerned, the existential status of the depicted object is immaterial. The second essential feature of this type of intention is that the object appearing through it is not immediately present to us. Rather, it appears as something that is merely being represented through the mediation of something else that is actually present; namely, a resembling analogue embodied in some physical medium. For example, the pink cube depicted in the painting is not actually present to us. Rather, it is something represented (made as if present) through the painting, i.e., through an immediately given, resembling analogue embodied in some physical medium such as an arrangement of lines and colors in a canvas. Put differently, an image-consciousness, like the perception we are imagining having of the pink cube, is constituted by three distinct moments: 1) the physical image, i.e., the canvas painted and framed, the patches of color distributed on the canvas, etc. 2) the image-object, i.e., the resembling analogue which appears through a certain distribution of colors and shapes, and 3)

the image-subject, i.e., what is depicted or represented through the resembling analogue; in our example, the pink cube.[159]

It is tacitly experienced differences between these three distinct moments; for example, between the two-dimensional array of lines and color on the canvas and the seemingly three- dimensional shape of the image-object, and between the properties of the image-object and the properties of the image-subject—such as shape, size, or color differences—that partly constitutes the appearing object as being an image of something. However, image-consciousness exhibiting this tripartite structure is insufficient. It is possible to argue, as Charles Sanders Pierce did, that "sign –consciousness" also exhibits or manifests to consciousness this structure: sign-signifier-signified. The signified would correspond to the image-subject, the signifier to the image-object, and the sign to the physical image or medium embodying the image-object. So it is possible to argue that pointing out image-consciousness's tripartite structure as the sole differentiating feature is insufficient because it falls short of telling us how this type of experience differs from our consciousness of signs. Accordingly, if our characterization of image-consciousness is to be successful, we must give another condition that is present in pictures but absent in signs.

In addition to having a tripartite structure, images, unlike signs, allows us to "seeing into" the image-subject, i.e., into what they are representing. For instance, when someone perceives the painting of the pink cube, it is as if the person was "seeing" the pink cube in the painting. To give another example, when someone perceives one of Van Gogh's self-portraits,

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[159] Husserl, *Phantasie*, 21. For a more detailed discussion of image-consciousness than the one found here, the reader should consult the following works: Brough's introduction to Husserl's *Phantasy, Image-Consciousness and Memory*, xliv-xlix; and Robert Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 77-87.

it is as if Van Gogh himself was appearing in the painting. It seems to the viewer as if she could "see" into Van Gough's wrinkled forehead, or his intensely blue eyes. In other words, a picture invites us to look into what it represents through it, to stay with it and "see" its subject.

Our ability to "see into" an image explains why it makes sense to look into it, to notice its features and way of representing its object, to focus or stay with what we find there. It explains why people—unable to understand something in the abstract, i.e., an empty or non-intuitive concept or idea—request a picture, a concretely depicted example of the idea or concept that they are trying to understand.[160] This is because an image allows us to "see into" a particular exemplification or an instance of a concept or an idea. In contrast, it makes little sense to examine the appearance of a sign in order to "perceive" their subject, or develop an intuitive sense of it. This is because, unlike images, signs are abstract, non-intuitive representations based on conventions; signs need not bear any resemblance to whatever it is they happen to signify. Images, on the contrary, function as resembling analogues. An image of a pink cube, for instance, need not be pink (e.g., it could be a black-and-white photograph), but something spherical and white cannot be an image of something cubical and pink. This is not to say that something spherical and white might be intended as a sign of something cubical and pink, but it would not be an image of it.[161] To be an image, it must function as a

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[160] The idea that the experience of seeing the subject *in* the image distinguishes image-consciousness from signifying or symbolizing consciousness is found in Husserl, *Phantasie*, 48.

[161] As Husserl says, "in symbolic representation, the meaning regard is pointed away from the symbol; in pictorial representation, it is pointed toward the image. In order to present the object, we are supposed to immerse ourselves *in* the image; we are supposed to find the object displayed in what carries the imagining function in the image. And the more vitally we grasp it, the more alive the subject is to us in the image, the more vitally is it made intuitable to us, re-presented to us, in the image." *Phantasie*, 37-38.

resembling analogue that, through a pattern of resemblances, allow us "see into" the image-subject.

To be clear, the less we are able to discern differences between the image-object, the image-subject, and the physical medium bearing the image-object, the less we are able to tell whether we are looking at an image of something or are actually perceiving it. As I enter the movie theater, I am suddenly taken aback by what seems to be Kevin Spacey standing several feet across from where I am standing. From this perspective, it looks like I am seeing the actor in person standing across the room in the flesh. I cannot discern any differences between the appearing object and Kevin Spacey himself. In other words, from this perspective, my experience of this object feels like a perception. However, as I get closer, I suddenly realize that what seemed to be Kevin Spacey in person is just a highly realistic, digital image of him. What changed? My capacity to discern differences between the image-object, the image-subject, and the physical medium composing the image-object: as I moved closer, I began to notice the flatness, the lack of motion, and other differences between this image and the real Kevin Spacey. It became obvious that I was not looking at the actor, but only a good depiction of him. Hence, the harder it is to discern differences between the three moments of an image, the harder it is to claim: "I am seeing an image." Similarly, the more abstract or symbolic elements an image contains, the more it functions as a symbol of what it represents, and thus the harder it is to "see" what its represented in it (as it the case with many surreal or abstract, cubist paintings). Nevertheless, these possibilities neither change the fact that image-consciousness exhibits a tripartite structure grounded in tacitly experienced differences

between its three distinct moments, nor the fact that what sets an image apart from signs or symbols is the experience of "seeing in" definitive of image-consciousness.

Thus far, I have identified the two distinguishing features of image-consciousness: its tripartite structure, and being able to "see-into" the image-subject. We can say, then, that image-consciousness is a form of intention that makes appear what it represents indirectly to consciousness through a directly apprehended representation of it embodied in a physical medium, such as a configuration of lines and colors in a canvas. Accordingly, we are now in a position to determine whether or not imagination has the same phenomenological structure.

As I said before, pictorialists assume this is the case. They presuppose that our phenomenal experience of the contents of imagination is pictorial i.e., that it has the sense of mentally seeing a picture of whatever it is that we are trying to imagine. In other words, they assume that, at the phenomenal level, imagination and image-consciousness have a common phenomenological structure. However, this is not the case. Imagined objects lack the tripartite structure constitutive of images. For instance, no matter how hard we focus on the imagined pink cube, no matter how clearly and distinctly we try to conceive it, or no matter how stable it appears to us, we cannot isolate the materials that compose it, i.e., the physical image, from the resembling analogue, as we would be able to do if we were dealing with a painting, or a photograph, or even a digital image of the same object. Similarly, no matter how hard we concentrate, we cannot tell apart the resembling analogue (the image-object) from what it represents (the image-subject). In other words, imagination does not have the sense of "seeing into something" that is indirectly appearing through a resembling substitute, as it is true of image-consciousness. Rather, imagination is a simple act that intends its objects directly, i.e.,

with a sense of immediacy that is lacking in image and sign-consciousness. As Husserl explains in describing the case of someone imagining a brightly lighted theater: "the lighted theater which I immediately experience in the imagination does not pretend to be a more or less analogous image; intended in the imagination is not something similar to what appears there, intended is what appears itself, the appearing theater."[162] Or, as he says elsewhere, in imagination "the intention aims at the thing itself."[163]

Imagination, then, does not have the experiential form of something absent being represented by an image (a directly appearing substitute); but rather, the character of an intention that directs us towards the object itself. In visualizing a pink cube, a form of sensory imagining, I am directed towards the pink cube itself instead of an image. I achieve reference to it by simulating as if perceptions of it, which are not as if perceptions of a mental image, but simulated acts that are about a fictional pink cube. Similarly, when I imagine what it is like to feel existentially nauseated, a form of phenomenal imagining, I do so by simulating the relevant state of mind itself, instead of an image. And when I imagine every neuron in my brain turning into silicon, a form of the intellectual imagination, I conceive the state of affairs itself instead of an image of it.

Accordingly, we must conclude that imagination does not share a phenomenological structure with image-consciousness. But if this is the case, pictorialists are wrong in claiming that at the phenomenal level imagination appears to us picture-like. Consequently, they cannot use our phenomenal experience of imagination as evidence for the existence of mental

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[162] Husserl, *Phantasie*, 304.

[163] Ibid., 192.

representations that function like images; that is, that look subjectively or phenomenologically like actual pictures (even that they are not). This is not to deny the existence of mental representations underlying all our imaginings. Whether these mental representations exist or not, and how they causally generate our imaginings are both empirical questions outside the reach of phenomenology. Rather, the point is that there is no phenomenological evidence to think that if these mental representations exist, that they function like actual mental pictures at the subjective level. Hence, those who wish to understand imagination from the point of view of experience must remain skeptical of empirical attempts to reduce it to a mere mechanical faculty for undergoing mental representations that function like mental pictures. Put differently, they should remain skeptical of reducing the phenomena of imagination to that of image-consciousness, thereby overlooking the aforementioned differences between these two acts.

Besides conflating imagination and image-consciousness, another reason to eschew pictorialism is that it simultaneously includes and excludes too much. It includes too much in that the term "mental image" is a "catch-all" term that includes any type of imagery, from memory images, to dreams, daydreams, after-images, and hallucinations. But a term that includes too much fails to explain how these acts differ from one another. For example, in comparing memory an imagination, we learned that while memories posit their objects as past, imagination allows us to entertain their objects as pure possibilities. It also became evident that in imagination we are free to vary objects at will, but not in memory. And, of course, imaginary time differs markedly from the real time of remembered events. None of these differences are clarified by treating these acts as effects of the same "imagery" faculty.

But the term also excludes too much in that it assumes that all imaginings are *sensory* ones. In other words, defining imagination as the capacity to form mental images implies that imagination requires forming sensory representations of an object. But as we saw before, sensory imaginings (or as if perceptions) are only one of three forms of imagination. The other two are phenomenal and intellectual imaginings. Unlike sensory imaginings, phenomenal imaginings are not only about simulating as if perceptions of external objects. Instead, we carry out this type of experiential imagination by evoking feelings or movement-sensations (what philosophers like Husserl call kinaesthetic sensations) that are similar to the actual feelings or movement-sensations that one is trying to imagine. Evoking these experiences often require us to actively engage the full body in relevant ways, either by acting as if one were having the feelings one aims to imagine or by mimicking similar bodily movements or actions, which is not true of sensory imaginings. And, concerning intellectual imaginings, they do not even require an experiential level at all, let alone as if perceptions.

Moreover, talk of mental images does not fit well with sensory imaginings either. Consider what happens when we extend this theory beyond visualization to other sensory forms of imagination; for instance, the imagination of sounds. Imagine the sound of raindrops falling on the window in your room. If we pay attention to the character of the imagined sound, it becomes obvious to us that it does not have the sense of a picture-like resemblance of the sound. If this were true, it would mean that what we are directly grasping is a mental object that points internally to the imagined sound by means of resemblances—perhaps in terms of loudness, pitch, tempo, rhythm, etc. But this is not the sense of this experience. Rather, the experience has the sense of as if perceiving the mentally evoked sound, not an

image of it. The same is true about imaginary smells e.g., the act of imagining the smell of a rose. It seems odd to say that what we are seemingly seeing with the mind's nose is a picture of the smell rather than saying that we are having as if perceptions of an imaginary smell. The point is that (although talk of mental pictures may seem a bit more plausible in the context of visualization) the model seems less plausible when applied to other forms of sensory imagination (let alone when applied to the phenomenal and the intellectual imagination).[164] In short, because of all of these considerations, we must conclude that construing imagination as a capacity to form mental images results in a definition that is too broad and too narrow.

Thus far, we have argued that pictorialism conflates imagination and image-consciousness, and that it's definition of imagination simultaneously includes and excludes too much. Let me reply next to the claim that we must posit mental images to explain how we can achieve reference in imagination. As I said previously, pictorialists claim that without the existence of mental images taking the place of their objects, we cannot explain how it is that in imagination we can represent objects in the absence of appropriate external stimuli or, as Kant eloquently put it, "even without [their] presence in intuition."[165] In other words, since imagination represents things that are perceptually absent, something must be actually present in our minds standing for them. For instance, just as we could not "see" something represented in a painting or a photograph without simultaneously seeing the painting or the

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[164] My point here is that it may seem plausible to say that when we visualize something we are mentally seeing a picture of it, or something that presents the appearance of a picture. After all, this is what's going on when we perceive physical pictures. Besides, the defender of this model might say, there seems to be some important parallels between visualization and image-consciousness: Both require representing something perceptually absent, and both are quasi-intuitive, and so on and so forth. Why not, then, describe imagination in general in pictorial terms not just visualization? The point of this paragraph is to show that it does not make sense when we try to do so.

[165] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 256.

photograph, we could not represent anything in imagination, the argument goes, without the actual presence of a mental image standing between us, and what we aim to imagine.

This claim is not warranted, however. Rather than claiming that we achieve reference to something imagined by constructing a mental representation that, at the phenomenal level, functions like an image, we should claim instead that we achieve this reference by simulating in various complex ways a consciousness of that object; in other words, by constructing purely possible intentional acts that bear reference to the imagined object itself, intended as something just imagined rather than something genuinely present.

As I explained before, the nature of this simulated consciousness depends on the type of imagination at work. In the case of sensory imaginings, we achieve this reference by simulating as if perceptions of the object. [166] In the case of phenomenal imaginings, we not only simulate as if perceptions, but also, and more importantly, feelings or movement-sensations similar to the actual feelings or movement-sensations that one seeks to as if live. And, in the case of the intellectual imagination, by constructing abstract intentional thoughts bearing reference to the object we are trying to make present. These thoughts are abstract in the sense that they are about objects that cannot appear in imagination directly in a sensuous or experiential manner. Thus whatever sensory or phenomenal experiences may accompany them, they are not *bona fide* or literal as if perceptions or as if experiences of these objects, since they can be used to stand for objects other than the one we are trying to imagine.

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[166] Thompson makes this point forcefully when he observes correctly that: "in visual imaging or visualization, we do not experience mental pictures; but instead, we visualize an object or scene by mentally enacting or entertaining possible perceptual experiences of that object or scene" Evan Thompson, "Look Again: Phenomenology and Mental Imagery," *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* Vol. 6 (2007), 138.

Regardless of the nature of the simulated consciousness, or the purely possible acts composing an act of imagination, what is relevant is that they are able to refer to something absent in virtue of the objective sense built into them, not in virtue of being mental images. The objective sense of an act is not the object of the act (as the metaphor of an image implies); but rather, it is what determines how the object is intended in the act (The How of its appearance). In other words, it is what is essentially meant by the act, the ideal content through which the intentional act propagates itself towards that which is intended. For instance, I am now visually conscious of that tree (the object which is intended by the act) without being in any way aware of the objective sense through which my consciousness is so directed. Nevertheless, the objective sense determines how I am conscious of that tree, i.e., how the tree is intended or appears in the act. Or, as Drummond explains, the tree " just as it is intended with its [full] significance for us."[167] Similarly, when I visualize a pink cube, I am aware of the pick cube itself without being in any way aware of the objective sense through which my consciousness is so directed. Nevertheless, through this sense, I apprehend the object as a pink cube, as a mere fiction.

Phenomenologically, the objective sense of an act is not an image serving as the object of the act, but one of two ways of describing the appearing object. First, we can describe it simply as that "which is intended" by the act. Second, we can describe it "as it is meant in the act…the "object in the How of its determinations."[168] The object considered as "that which is

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[167] Drummond, "The Structure of Intentionality", 71.

[168] Husserl, *Ideas I*, 312. In Logical Investigations, Husserl calls *the noema* the act's matter. Here is how Husserl describes it: "The matter…is that element in an act which first gives it reference to an object meant in a general way, but also the precise way in which it is meant." Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, 589.

intended" by the act is what Husserl formally refers to as "the determinable X"; in other words, the object as the identity running through the manifold of given appearances that manifest it in concrete yet partial or non-exhaustive ways. In contrast, the object "as it is meant in the act" is what Husserl calls the act's *noema*, and refers to the appearing object considered precisely in the manner in which it is being meant in the act. In other words, the object considered in terms of the determined significance it has, in relation to our animating interests and concerns, and so on.

Again, when we attend to any imagined object as it is meant in the act of imagination; for example, the pink cube, it does not have the sense of a mental picture of the pink cube. Rather, it has the sense of the pink cube itself intended as a something merely imagined. And we are able to refer to it, not because we have managed to construct a mental image standing in place of it, but because the simulated as if perceptions bear it as the referent.

In short, the intentional acts constitutive of imagination make something absent present in virtue of the intentional sense built-into them. Since this sense is an intrinsic component of these experiences, in virtue of their being intentional, it enables them to direct us towards their objects despite their perceptual absence. Given that this intentional sense built-into them is not a mental image, as I just argued, there is no need to posit these entities in order to explain how imagination makes us conscious of an absent objectivity.

Having said this, it remains to determine whether experiments on mental imagery like the ones described in the previous section demonstrate that people use mental representations that function as mental pictures in order to solve cognitive problems. Some philosophers and scientists think that they do. They claim that the representative examples that I discussed here

(and other experiments like them) provide strong evidence that imagination requires mental representations that function like pictures. For example, they claim that the experiments about tracing distances between landmarks in an imagined map show that people use the quasi-pictorial properties of visualized maps and other images, like their apparent spatial properties, as scaffolding for solving problems. They also claim that the experiments about comparing animals in terms of their relative size show that mental images occur in or on a mental medium with measurable pictorial properties of its own; for example, size, resolution, grain, and other properties of images. I do not believe that these experiments demonstrate this. Accordingly, I offer next several considerations against the pictorialist's interpretation of this empirical research.

The first point I wish to make is that much of this research actually encourages participants to interpret their phenomenal experience of imagination in pictorial terms. To see how, let's go back to the two experiments discussed previously. Like in many of the other experiments on mental imagery that have been conducted since the 1970's, in these two experiments participants had to memorize and then imagine maps and pictures of animals. For instance, in the first experiment participants were asked to memorize and then imagine a map, i.e., a pictorial representation of a landscape with landmarks on it. Hence, these experiments we essentially about memorizing and imagining pictorial representations of landmarks rather than being about imagining these landmarks *per se*.

However, imagining a picture and imagining a scene are distinct psychic acts: in the first we intend a picture of something while, in the second, we intend the object itself. Put differently, the first act is about simulating the perception of a picture while the second act is

about simulating a perception of the object *per se*. Because of their lack of regard for phenomenological description, researchers conducting these experiments overlook this important intentional difference. As a result, people are asked to imagine a picture of something rather than asked to imagine a scene or an event per se, which makes it more likely that they would describe their phenomenal experience of imagination in these experiments as having the sense of seeming to perceive mental pictures rather than the sense of *as if* perceiving the objects themselves. In other words, these experiments encourage someone to ascribe the character of what they are trying to imagine (that of a picture of something) to the act or process of imagining it as a whole.

Hence, because the experiments on mental imagery do not take this into account, I believe their very design encourages a pictorialist interpretation of what participants do in these experiments especially in a context in which scientists assume that someone can determine the character of their experience through simple acts of introspection; that is, by simply turning inwards and reporting what one finds inside. But thinking that the character of our first-hand experience is readily available to introspection makes it likely that one would overlook the distinction between imagining a picture of something and imagining a scene per se, as well as overlooking how failing to make this distinction could bias experiments meant to provide independent evidence for the pictorial model.

To make my second point, let me describe again the pictorialist's interpretation of the two experiments we have been discussing. Presumably, the experiments involving mental maps show that participants avail themselves of mental representations that function like pictures. It is the fact that they function like pictures; for example, that they mimic spatial

relationships, that accounts for why time directly increases with distance when participants scan them in order to connect landmarks. Likewise, the experiments about comparing animals of different sizes also presumably shows that mental images occur in or on a mental medium with a certain size and resolution. Again, according to pictorialists, it is the size of this medium that determines the size of the images that it can contain before they overflow it, and its grain is what presumably determines their resolution, i.e., the amount and clarity of detail one could discern in them at various sizes. Presumably, because of the limited grain of this medium, smaller animals are harder to inspect than comparatively larger ones, which is indicated by the time it takes to report on the details of an animal relative to its size.

This interpretation, however, misunderstands what is actually happening in these experiments. I showed earlier that image-consciousness requires a third term mediating between the subject and the imaged. I also said this third term is the immediate object of this act and functions as a resembling analogue of the imaged. So if visualizing a map were a form of image-consciousness, as pictorialists claim, then we would have to say that imagining a map requires simulating the perception of a mental picture of a map rather than simulating the perception of a map *per se*. In other words, pictorialist would have to claim that participants were "mentally seeing "something that resembled the map (a picture of a picture of a certain location) rather than simply "mentally seeing" the map itself. But this is an odd and incorrect way of describing what is actually happening. Rather, what the participants were actually doing was evoking or simulating possible or as if perceptions of the map per se, i.e., of the pictorial representation of a certain spatial region that they were shown in the experiment. Similarly, rather than "mentally seeing" a picture of a picture of an animal (as the pictorialist

interpretation of the second experiment implies) what participants did was to evoke or simulate possible perceptions or as if perceptions of the pictures of the animals that they were shown in the experiment.

Moreover, simulating the perception of a picture of something (whether a map or a group of animals standing next to each other) is not strictly speaking a form of image-consciousness, i.e., an act of representing something by means of a resembling image. Rather, it is an imagining that has an image as its object instead of an intention aiming directly at the thing that image represents. In other words, it is an as if perception of a picture rather than a consciousness of a picture by means of a mental picture of it. Accordingly, even if the participants had been asked to imagine directly the landscape represented by the map that they were shown, or to imagine directly the animals in the pictures that were shown to them in the second experiment, it would still be false to claim that they were mentally entertaining an object that looked like a picture of these objects. On the contrary, if they had done this, the phenomenologically correct claim to make is that their experiences took the form of evoked or simulated perceptions of these objects.

But if what the participants in these experiments are doing is simulating possible perceptions of pictures of maps and animals, then it should not be surprising that the experimenters discovered a linear correlation between distance and time or between the size of the object and the time it took to report about its features. In fact, one should expect this if imagination mimics perception in important ways. Ordinarily, it takes longer to visually connect two points in space the farther away they are from each other. It is also true that the scope or range of our perceptual field is limited. So the range of objects one can see clearly at

any given moment depends partly on their size and relative distance from us. In addition, objects can also overflow our perceptual field if they are too large and too close to us, so that we can only see parts or portions of them at any given time.

Moreover, a map is a representation that resembles the region or location that it represents in spatial format. Part of what this means is that it takes longer to connect points in space the farther away they are from each other in a map than if they are closer, just like it take longer to connect points the farther away they are from each other in the world. It also means that objects of certain sizes are harder to see in or cannot be represented in a map as a whole just like objects of a certain size and at certain distance are harder to perceive than others. In short, given these well-known facts about maps and perception, one would expect that in scanning a mental map in order to find locations, or in trying to report on the features of a small object, similar results would obtain. But this is because imagination mimics perception in important ways (at least in its sensory form) not because we are manipulating mental representations that function like mental images.

To conclude, for all of the reasons just given, we do not need to posit mental representations that function like pictures to explain the results of these experiments, or to explain how subjects use imagination to solve cognitive problems. To solve cognitive problems (like finding locations on a mental map, or finding what something looks like from a certain perspective) people simulate possible perceptions of the relevant objects, and use these experiences to find solutions to these problems. These simulations are about the objects themselves rather than private pictures somehow contained within consciousness standing for these objects.

Conclusion

This is the end of my phenomenological critique of pictorialism. Using the data of experience, I argued that pictorialism, the claim that imagination is the capacity to form mental images, conflates imagination with image-consciousness, defines the phenomenon in a way that is simultaneously too broad and too narrow, fails to see that we do not need to posit mental images to explain how we can achieve reference in imagination, and misinterprets the results of empirical research on "mental imagery." I would like to conclude this chapter with some reflections concerning the difference between phenomenology and introspection, given that introspection is often confused with the phenomenological approach I have been using.

The account of imagination defended in this work, and the critique of pictorialism just offered, presuppose a Husserlian framework, which asks us to go back "to the things themselves", bracket our naturalistic-scientific preconceptions about them, and focus on describing our intentional experience of them as the means to disclose their true nature. Opponents of this way of approaching the problems of philosophy often accuse phenomenologists with engaging in introspective psychology. In fact, this is the objection that pictorialists often give to defend their view against phenomenological critiques like the one I just offered. Their claim is that phenomenology wrongly assumes that imagination can be defined reliably through introspection. But why should we assume that it is possible to specify the nature of imagination by means of introspection? For instance, why should we assume that our inability to discern introspectively imagination's tripartite structure shows that imagination is not a form of image-consciousness? Could not the case be instead that introspection is not sufficiently penetrating to reveal the nature of our mental states? In fact,

the argument goes, “it would be faintly miraculous if introspection did reveal it, just as miraculous as if unaided sight were to reveal the actual properties of light.”[169] Besides, those who argue this way might also say that people vary significantly in their ability to introspect, and they are often “full of mistakes, illusions, and ignorance regarding the nature of their own mental events."[170] In short, skeptics may reject my account of imagination, as well as my arguments against pictorialism, on the grounds that it naively relies on introspection.

This objection, however, confuses phenomenological analysis with introspection. Introspection is supposed to be special type observation, “inner observation”, an act of attending to and describing the contents of our mental states. In experimental contexts, it takes the form of asking participants to “turn inward” and report on the character of their mental states. Introspection implies that the invariant features of the phenomena, like those constitutive of imagination, are somehow intuitively obvious or readily available.

All we need to do is “look inside” and report what we find there. But the essential structures that phenomenology seeks to unveil are not readily available to casual reflection. Identifying and properly describing these invariant features requires painstaking, systematic, methodologically guided analysis of the phenomenon being investigated as given through carefully selected examples.[171] Husserl had to write over five hundred pages of research notes,

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[169] Paul M. Churchland. *Matter and Consciousness*, rev. ed., (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1999), 28.

[170] Kosslyn, *Ghosts in the Mind’s Machine*, 37.

[171] Again the reader must read the next chapter for an explanation of Husserl’s phenomenological method of analysis —from the bracketing of the natural attitude to the phenomenological reduction. The distinction between introspection and phenomenological analysis should become even clearer then. For the present my purpose it to argue as best as possible against confusing introspection with phenomenology without getting caught up explication Husserl’s framework.

for example, in order to develop a defensible account of imagination.[172] Accordingly, it is simply naive to think that one can simply turn one's attention away from the world into our "inner" experience and describe it adequately.

Introspective approaches also often lack an account of intentionality, which is not about observing inner states of mind, but about clarifying the intentional sense of acts. Clarifying the intentional sense of an act requires us to shift our reflective regard from the object given in an experience to how the object appears through the experience. But this is not a shift from something external and public to something internal and private (from an outer to an inner sense) as introspection also implies. Rather, it is a methodologically guided effort to penetrate into the invariant ways an object of a certain type can appear to consciousness. Gallagher and Zahavi explain this important difference when they point out that: "phenomenology has as its goal, not a description of idiosyncractic experience—'here and now, this is just what I experience'—rather, it attempts to capture the invariant structures of experience . . . phenomenology aims to disclose structures that are intersubjectively accessible, and its analyses are consequently open for corrections and control by any (phenomenologically tuned) subject."[173] In other words, the intentional structures that phenomenology seeks to unveil are not idiosyncratic experiences, but objective, publically knowable, intersubjectively communicable structures whose elucidation calls for a suitably prepared investigator. I hope that my study of imagination has made this difference evident.

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[172] See, for example, Husserl's *Phantasie*…

[173] Shaun Gallagher, and Dan Zahavi, *The Phenomenological Mind: An Introduction to Philosophy of Mind and Cognitive Science* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 26.

Conclusion

Our phenomenological study of imagination has come to an end. In the first chapter I offered a systematic exposition and defense of the ideas and methods of Husserlian phenomenology that most influenced my phenomenological account of imagination. After defining 'phenomena' as "any meaningful appearance or showing whatsoever", I explained here Husserl's theory of 'intentionality', distinguished between two ways of regarding the object of an act, and argued afterwards that the nature of psychic acts must be described in terms of the invariant ways they apprehend their objects. Concerning the method used to analyze the nature of psychic acts, I focused on the *Epoche* and the method of free variation. I presented the former as being primarily a devise meant to help us bracket naturalistic and other preconceptions that may stand in the way of accurate description, and the latter as a systematic way of making intuitive the essence of a phenomenon by means of the production of imagined variations of its type. Finally, against those who accuse Husserl's framework of assuming the possibility of presuppositionless knowledge, I argue that this is meant to function only as a regulative ideal rather than as an epistemic goal Husserl's method was mean to guarantee, and that letting ourselves be guided in our investigations by this ideal of certainty can help us achieve a radical understanding of the most basic concepts and presuppositions informing our intentional life, which can in turn result in greater amounts of freedom and autonomy.

My description of imagination as a distinctive psychic act began in chapter two. In this chapter I defended the claim that imagination can be differentiated from perception and memory in terms of its quasi-positional stance on objects, which allows us to entertain them

as purely possible, and its freedom to vary these possibilities at will, i.e., in unconditioned and arbitrary ways (although within some possible limits). On these grounds, I argued that pure possibilities are possibilities that one can busy oneself with or entertain in their own right, i.e., without positing their existence, probability, likelihood, or even logical possibility. For this reason, imagination affords us a freedom not found in any other act: namely, the freedom to transform any object whatsoever into a pure possibility, which, within minimal constrains, allows us to alter them freely at will without having to affirm them. I called this freedom "unconditioned arbitrariness" because it reflects the fact that imaginings are not dependent on the causal agency of other acts, do not have to replicate or even resemble the specific contents of past, present, or future acts, and do not have to serve or be constrained by external ends. Imaginings need not have an external master, because they can be taken in their own right.

In the third chapter I ended the eidetic description of imagination began in chapter two by defending and explicating the thesis that imaginary time is different from the actual time of perceived and remembered objects, as well as described central differences between sensory, phenomenal, and intellectual imaginings. Concerning imaginary time, I argued that imaginary objects do not appear in actual time but merely *present as it were* or in fictional temporal worlds of their own, explained how their lack of positioning in actual time relates to the fact that they lack objectively specifiable temporal determinations, and that, because of this, imaginary times appear as self-contained, self-referential time frames that are potentially infinite in number, and subject to our creative will. I also pointed out that there is no reliable connection between time and becoming in imagination (as it is in perception and memory). I

concluded this account of imaginary time by remarking on the problem of time moving backwards. I claimed that, even if this is not possible, we at least can imagine it doing so.

Concerning the construction of sensory, phenomenal, and intellectual acts of imagination, I argued that what differentiates these three forms of imagination from each other has to do with the manner in which they achieve consciousness of their object: the sensory imagination by simulating as if perceptions of its objects, the phenomenal imagination by simulating in more complex ways what it is like to have or live through the target experience (usually with the use of the whole body), and the intellectual imagination by simulating abstract, intentional thoughts that make the object present, although not in a direct perceptual or phenomena manner. I also discussed other differences between these forms of imagining, such as the fact that sensory imaginings are restricted to perceivable objects, the fact that phenomenal imagination often requires engaging the whole body, and the fact that intellectual imaginings do not require a direct, sensuous or experiential grasp of their objects. In other words, intellectual imaginings evoke non-intuitive ways of grasping objects.

In the fourth and final chapter, I developed a critique of pictorialism, a theory of imagination that defines it as a capacity to form mental images. After making clear that this conception of imagination is not necessarily committed to literal pictures in the mind, but only mental representations that function like pictures, and describing the best possible arguments in defense of this position, I argued that this conception of imagination, despite its popularity in science and among some philosophers, fails because it conflates imagination and image-consciousness, is simultaneously too broad and too narrow, wrongly assumes that we need to

posit mental images to explain how we can achieve reference to objects in imagination, and, finally, because it misinterprets the results of empirical research on imagery.

Let me summarize the underlying themes of this dissertation in a way that reminds us of their significance as follows: imagination is a multifarious form of consciousness wherein we can entertain possibilities freely in the mode of the as if. One can best appreciate this special freedom by thinking about the modifications in consciousness that occur as one moves from perception, to memory, to imagination. Percepts occur within the bounds of rigid laws of actuality. For instance, what a percept is about, and how it meshes with other percepts, and with memories, anticipations, and expectations of the future; in other words, with the ongoing stream of conscious experiences stimulated by the actual world, is really not up to the perceiver but a matter of intentionally motivated relations between the perceiver, the object and the surrounding world. Moreover, perception is positional. It apprehends or takes as true or factually existing what it presents to us in the flesh. One way to put this is to say that in perception we are relatively passive and our degree of freedom is limited to the changes in perspective that we can intentionally bring about with the self-directed movements of our body. As our percepts sink into the past and become memories we experience a greater degree of freedom in that memories are to a greater extend subject to our will. This is illustrated by the fact that we can recollect many of them by focusing our effort on the will to do so, but also by the fact that it makes sense to order someone to remember something, and this is because, unlike perceptions, memories are subject to our will in that with effort and concentration we can revive or bring to presence many of them by means of a decision to do so. Nevertheless, we cannot represent the past however we wish to. Hume is right when he

says that memories must "preserve the original form, in which its objects were presented, and that whatever we depart from it in recollecting anything, it proceeds from some defect in that faculty."[174] In other words, memories must correspond to the facts, they must not only represent something that actually occurred to us in the past, but must also represent it in the temporal order in which it actually occurred. Thus, like perception, what a memory should be about, as well as how it should fit with other memories and the present, is really not up to us. Memory posits or takes what is being remembered as an event in the actual world that we experienced first hand. Accordingly, as in the case of perception, we are passive when it comes to the content of our memories, our degree of freedom being limited to our efforts to revive them.[175]

In transitioning from memories to fantasies, from the realm of actual laws to that of pure possibilities, we experience a vast expansion in our freedom. In the realm of fantasy there is a sense in which the imaginer reigns supreme, in that she can shape and reshape the contents of her imaginings at will. This is partly due to the peculiar temporality of imagined objects. Imagined objects have their own time, a time that bears no reference to other imagined times or to the objective time of the physical world. Thus imagined objects are not

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[174] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 12.

[175] Let me not be misunderstood. I am not saying that our memories are actually mere faithful recordings of the past. As a matter of fact, most of our memories are edited; they reflect our imaginative efforts to make sense of them as our understanding of ourselves continues to be influenced by new experience and knowledge. My point is rather that memories have to have a certain phenomenal structure to be experienced as such; they must exhibit a certain form, regardless of how accurate they may be, otherwise they would not be given to us as being memory acts at all.

limited by the temporal facts and relations that hold in the physical world; they are not caught up or entangled in the world of actuality, and thus are not subject to its rigid laws. That is why their temporality (the when and how long of imagined objects) is subject to our wishes.

But this freedom is also reflects the fact that in imagination, unlike in any other act, we can busy ourselves with its contents without thereby having to commit to their reality, or having to be reassured of their likelihood, or even their logical or real possibility. In other words, imagination allows us to take a quasi-positional stance on its objects, to entertain them in the mode of the as if, independently of what our actual beliefs about them may happen be.

This quasi-positional stance, an attitude of pure imaginableness, is a special kind of freedom. It is the freedom to be creative for its own sake. Being creative for its own sake requires recognizing that imaginableness is the upmost possibility of imagination, but also a willingness to surrender to it, to appropriate it by exploring possibilities without been concerned about their connection to actuality. In other words, without being concerned about how far-fetched, or about how far removed from reality, or about how possible they are. It is only when we are wiling to indulge in this way that imagination shows up in its purest form, which is also an indication that our minds are sufficiently free to conceive unsuspected possibilities. Perhaps this is the most important point that one can take away from our investigations: namely, that what is most essential and valuable about imagination is this special freedom to project things into the realm of pure possibilities, a vast realm indeed.

Besides this, I also hope that the reader came away from my study more appreciative of the richness and diversity of imaginings. The majority of empirical and philosophical studies of imagination privilege visualization over the many other ways that we can perform

this act. It is also true that ordinary people tend to assume that imagination comes only in a single format, usually visualization, and thus are typically unaware of the existence of other modes of imagining something. Because of this, they are unable to take advantage of the diverse powers this act offers. But as it became clear in the context of explaining the formation of imaginings, visualization is only one of the five sensory forms perception-like imaginings can take, and, besides sensory imaginings, there are also phenomenal imagination, which are about making present what it is like to feel or live through something, and the intellectual imagination, a more abstract, non-experiential way of conceiving pure possibilities. The point is that imagination can be performed in different ways, allowing us to make present a wider range of objects visualization alone cannot do so. There is an important lesson here. If we want people to develop the full range of their imaginative capacities, we must design teaching environments that foster not only visualization, but also other ways of exercising one's fantasy.

Let me conclude the present work with some remarks about what this study of imagination suggest about the place of phenomenology in contemporary philosophy. With some notable exceptions, phenomenology has always been a relatively minor movement within Anglophone philosophy and, in the European Continent, has been superseded by deconstruction, hermeneutics, postmodernism, and other ways of philosophizing. Many scholars find this state-of-affairs justified because they are suspicious of grand narratives and epistemological pretensions to certainty. But, as I argued in the chapter on method, phenomenology need not promise or guarantee certainty in its descriptions of experience to be of value in clarifying the nature of the concepts that inform many of the scientific and

philosophical problems of our time. It only has to show that it can develop rational conjectures about the essence of the phenomena that reveal something important and indispensible about it that other approaches cannot reveal because of their focus on language, causes, or radical re-conceptions. I believe that I have shown this much about the relevance of phenomenology for contemporary philosophy in this work by calling attention to some neglected but essential characteristics of our being as *homo imaginationem*.

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