

**IMAGINATION** The emphasis placed in phenomenology on eidetic insight and PERCEPTION might seem to render the role of imagination superfluous or secondary. While both perceiving and essential insight (*Wesensschau*) bear on stable, if not altogether fixed, regularities — namely, physical objects and material and formal essences respectively — imagination would seem to be concerned with fugitive phenomena that elude the invariability so highly prized in phenomenological description. Yet from the very beginning, EDMUND HUSSERL considered imagination a topic worthy of serious pursuit in two respects: as something to be described in its own right, and as having special methodological merit.

(1) *Imagination described for its own sake.* At first, Husserl followed FRANZ BRENTANO in maintaining that there are no essential differences in the act-character of imagination and perception, both being modes of “representing” (*Vorstellen*); the critical differences consist only in the different kinds of content at stake in the two acts. But by the time of Husserl’s lectures on “Phantasie und Bildbewusstsein” — which were part of the same 1904/05 course that included the lectures on inner time-consciousness — he had rejected this approach as inadequate, since it made the difference between phantasms and perceptions either a mere matter of degree or a question of direct vs. indirect representation: sensations are direct and unmediated representations, while phantasms are mediated by connections and concepts of various kinds. He insists instead that there are differences of kind, not just of degree, between what we imagine and what we perceive, which are not just two ways of “objectifying” in which the appearance of an object occurs.

The crucial differences are differences in act-character, i.e., in modes of consciousness: in the presentation (*Gegenwärtigen, Präsentation*) of something present vs. the non-presentation or RE-PRESENTATION (*Nicht-Gegenwärtigen, Vergegenwärtigen*) of some-

thing not-present. Perceptual consciousness gives its content the “credit” of being “actually there,” as “itself,” given “in person,” while imagining consciousness “discredits” it as “non-actual,” “merely” represented. In the case of an “image” qua “picture” (*Bild*), a more complex structure emerges: Husserl distinguishes the picture (i.e., the photograph, painting, etc.) as a perceived physical thing; the pictorial object (e.g., the image of a child) as sheer appearance; and the subject of the picture (e.g., the independently existing child who has been painted or photographed).

These distinctions are still observed in Husserl’s analysis of Dürer’s engraving “The Knight, Death, and the Devil” in *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie I* (1913). But his analysis highlights the different modes of consciousness at stake in experiencing it. “Normal perception” grasps the engraving as a physical thing, while “perceptive consciousness” focuses on the figures, “knight on horseback,” “devil,” etc. “Aesthetic observation,” on the other hand, seeks to apprehend the “depicted realities,” e.g., a flesh-and-blood knight. Husserl emphasizes that the perceptive consciousness of the engraved figures is a “neutrality modification” of the initial perception of the material work of art: although the latter is posited as a really existing thing, the pictorial object itself is given neither as existing nor as not-existing. This claim allows him to make the much more general assertion that “imagining in general” is a “neutrality modification of the ‘positing’ (*setzenden*) act of re-presentation (*Vergegenwärtigung*), and thus of remembering in the widest sense of the term.” All representations can therefore be divided into memories on the one hand and their neutralized re-presentations on the other — i.e., into positing and non-positing re-presentations, of which imaginings form a significant subset along with supposings, doubtings, etc. And thanks to this common genealogy, imaginings may combine with perceivings and rememberings in manifold ways (so that there can be imaginings of memories or perceptions as well as imaginings in memories) and with themselves (so that we can have “phantasies in phantasies”).

This line of thought would seem to privilege MEMORY — and thus perception, from which most memories stem — over imagination as the mere (albeit sometimes complex) “modification” of the former. Yet Husserl in-

sists that while imagination is typically a modification of a positing re-presentation (i.e., an act of remembering) or a positing presentation (i.e., an act of perceiving), it is not necessarily linked to a particular previous positing and need not modify any particular previous act as such, but can be an entirely spontaneous act. Such an act nonetheless preserves features basic to every act of remembering or perceiving (e.g., horizon, the field structure of space, the successive nature of time, the fulfillment or cancellation of intentions, etc.). Moreover, although the perceptual anticipations that are non-independent parts of all acts of perceiving need not give rise to explicit acts of imaginative EXPECTATION, these predelineations can indeed motivate an intuitive filling-out, a kind of imaginative explication functioning as a quasi-determination of what is given in passive synthesis as a determinable indeterminacy. Here too, there is neither a temporally nested re-production of any particular past course of experiencing nor a neutrality modification of something in particular already posited, but a kind of quasi-experiencing according to the general style proper to the type of objectivity in question. To such imaginative explication there must also be added the possibility of an imaginative transformation (*Umfingieren*) that varies some aspect of the given (or constructs an entire phantasy-world) while respecting its general style, yielding an as-if experiencing and its correlative quasi-reality.

In later writings such as *Erfahrung und Urteil* (1939), Husserl refers to such imagination as "quasi-positing," i.e., it posits its objects *as if* they were existent, causally efficacious, etc. This brings imagination significantly closer to what is traditionally regarded as "fiction" and hence to the Coleridgean criterion of "willing suspension of disbelief." And it calls into question the necessity of any strict neutrality modification, since the "as-if" is not ontically neutral: it takes the imagined object (or state of affairs) to be possibly—but only purely possibly—the case. It also suggests that *feigning*, that is, pretending to be the case, whether in action or in mentation, is an important variant form of imagining.

(2) *Imagination as methodologically valuable.* It was thanks precisely to the recognition of a kind of imagination that is not necessarily tethered to memory, yet preserves fundamental structural features of experience per se in its free play that Husserl was able to em-

ploy it as a keystone in the arch of phenomenological method. For only by the "free variation" of examples through their imaginative exfoliation can genuine consistencies and regularities appear that might otherwise never be grasped. In *Ideen I*, Husserl's example of the free use of imagination in EIDETIC METHOD is the geometer, who is not restricted to actual sketches or models, but elucidates essential clarifications by generating, in phantasy, variation upon variation of the geometrical figure in question. Similarly, the phenomenologist cannot derive all pertinent essential knowledge from the primordial givenness of perception, but must supplement what experience has actually delivered with what imagination can project. It is notable that this necessary supplement need not be restricted to the productions of the investigator's own imagination but can include—indeed, *should* include—contributions from the imaginative work of others in the fields of HISTORY and LITERATURE (especially poetry); Husserl even names fiction a "vital element" and source for the truth phenomenology seeks. (AS MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY and others have pointed out, the investigator's own imagination is historically and culturally situated and thus limited, making recourse to others' stories even more crucial.)

Husserl further refines and extends the methodological use of imagination in phenomenology in *Erfahrung und Urteil*. A given case (whether actually experienced or imagined) is taken as a "model" or example that is then varied in imagination; the imaginative activity can be active, i.e., willed as such, or spontaneous, i.e., just occurring on its own without explicit volition, and can be continued indefinitely. Eventually, sufficient "overlapping" (*Deckung*) occurs among the variants to allow a "unity of coincidence" to arise, and an invariant—an eidos or essence, that which is the same throughout—emerges and can be grasped in its own right. Another crucial aspect of this procedure is what might be termed the test of "imagining away": if a given feature cannot be eliminated in imagination, then it belongs to the phenomenon under investigation. What is essential to a phenomenon is what it cannot do without, and imagination is indispensable in establishing this *sine qua non* status. The *via negativa* of this approach rejoins and complements the *via positiva* of allowing the invariant to arise from the series of variations. But what matters most is that imagination, whether employed actively or passively, gives us access to a realm of possibilities

considerably broader than any set of instances drawn from our own perceptual experience (and thus posited as actually happening or as having happened).

Imagining is an essentially *intuitional* act rather than a conceptual one. Yet despite staking out the enormous territory of re-presentations and doing much of the most extensive, painstaking mapping of it, Husserl rarely singled out the intuitional element of re-presentations as such, including the instance of imagination. It was left to his close student and disciple, EUGEN FINK, to take this step in a prize essay and dissertation entitled "Vergegenwärtigung und Bild," first published in the *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* in 1930. Fink considered all re-presentations to involve an originary access to temporal horizons not given in (or as) the present, an insight that had already led Husserl to his investigations of inner time-consciousness in his 1904/05 lectures. But Fink emphasizes that the temporal horizons and spatial parameters of what we imagine constitute an entire world, a "phantasy-world" (a "quasi-world," as Husserl says in *Erfahrung und Urteil*). Fink describes this world as inherently "possible" — even when elements have been incorporated into it from actual worlds and even though its "open leeway (*Spielraum*) of possibilities" are structured in accordance with the "a priori laws of intuitiveness in general." The ontic status of such a world is that of "unreality," of the "as it were." Yet although objects in the phantasy-world are at once possible and unreal, they are coherent and consistent enough for predicative judgments to be made about them, and taken together, form a totality that transcends consciousness.

This phantasy-world is not to be confused with another image-world, also intuitional in character: the "picture-world" (*Bildwelt*) that opens to us when a certain appearance serves as its "bearer," e.g., the surface of a painted canvas. This surface is typically hidden from direct apprehension; we see *through* it into the picture-world with which it coincides. Thus Fink calls the image a "window" onto the picture-world, and such a window, the unique point of access to the picture-world, is "nothing other than the pure picture-phenomenon itself."

JEAN-PAUL SARTRE'S *L'imaginaire* (1940) also ends with an analysis of a work of art regarded as what he calls an "external image." For Sartre, such an image

serves as an effective "analogon" for a purely imagined object; by grasping it in its very materiality, we are conveyed to the latter, which is the only object that counts in imagination. In this way, Sartre merges into one continuous experience what Fink would keep rigorously separate: re-presentational acts of pure "phantasy" and presentational acts of picture-consciousness based on a "bearer." However, Sartre's study — based on his earlier study of alternative conceptions of imagination, *L'imagination* (1936) — is valuable for its broader typology of the "image family." The pure image — usually regarded as a "mental image" — is the first member of this family and possesses four traits: it is a consciousness not of an image, but of an object in image form; it does not possess an endless wealth of detail as does a perceptum, but "suffers from a sort of essential poverty"; its object is posited as a "nothingness" that itself takes four forms (nonexistent, absent, existing elsewhere, or "neutralized," i.e., not posited as existing); and it is spontaneous.

Sartre also discerns other kinds of images, largely on the basis of the difference in the materiality by which they are presented. Some of these possess a strictly physical medium of presentation (photographs, illustrations, portraits, caricatures, impersonations), others a mixture of material and psychic media (faces in flames, arabesques seen in tapestry, hypnagogic images). What matters most, however, is not the medium of imagining, much less its objects, but the precise "attitude of consciousness" or intentional stance we take up: e.g., seeing the painting of a person *as* a portrait, or regarding a schematic drawing *as* representing a dancing figure. Part of this attitude is also the knowledge we bring to the act of imagination; thus I can never be surprised by what I imagine, since I find in the image only the very comprehension I have brought to it, though affectivity or feeling is also integral to image-consciousness. For Sartre, then, the imagined intentional act transcends the images themselves, aiming toward the real objects they signify. Yet what we get is nevertheless the "essential ambiguity" of an actual real object in a derealized "anti-world," and in the very act of intending it, I "make myself unreal" as well.

A less despairing view is found in EDWARD S. CASEY'S *Imagining: A Phenomenological Study* (1976), which provides a twofold analysis of imagination, "intentional" and "eidetic." On an intentional analysis, it

object phase consists in the "image" (i.e., how the imagined object is given) and the "imaginative presentation," which is made up of the specific content imagined (i.e., just *what* we imagine); the "imaginal margin" (the edge of the content); and its "world-frame" of imaginal space and time (the world-frame standing somewhere between Fink's commitment to a full-fledged imagined world and Sartre's dismissive idea of an anti-world.) The act phase comprises three main types of imagining: "imaging" (that is, sensuous displays of discrete objects and associated traits), "imagining-that" (wherein the specific content is a state of affairs, itself either sensuous or non-sensuous), and "imagining-how" (i.e., how to *do* something, wherein the imaginer is involved as agent, either in person or by proxy). Combinations are frequent: we imagine how to swim the crawl stroke by imagining that a certain state of affairs obtains — e.g., that the pool water is warm — and in so doing we generate a number of images that illustrate or support what we are imagining. Other act-forms are possible but not explored in this book: e.g., imagining-as or imagining-with-respect-to.

An eidetic analysis of imagining reveals a set of six paired traits. *Spontaneity* and *controlledness* exhibit an exclusivist "option-necessity": each act of imagining arises *either* spontaneously — unbidden, on its own accord — *or* as solicited by the imaginer, who controls its course more or less completely. By the same token, every aspect and phase of imagining is *self-contained* — i.e., coheres without having to rely on modes of continuation or supplementation — and *self-evident*: it is as it *presents itself*, without needing any additional experience or history to complete it. Where the first two pairs obtain for both object- and act-phases of imagining, the third pair holds only for the object phase. *Indeterminacy* signals the way that each imaginative presentation trails off into an aura of indefiniteness, an intrinsic vagueness that belongs to it and is not a failing or sign of incompleteness. *Pure possibility* indicates that the status of what we imagine is neither necessary nor actual, but possible — and not just possible but *purely* possible, that is to say, *only possible*, without any implication of impending or even potential development. It is to be noted that indeterminacy and pure possibility, along with self-containment and self-evidence, are "trait-necessary" insofar as they characterize every feature of imagining without exception.

Following a comparative assessment of perception and imagination, Casey's study concludes with an examination of imaginative autonomy in terms of "independence" (of causality, context, use) and "freedom of mind." The role of such "thin autonomy" in various activities and fields — especially psychology, philosophy, and art — is then investigated.

Both Casey and Sartre end their studies of imagination by referring to the importance of imagining in art, a theme that has been actively discussed ever since Kant — followed by Schelling, Coleridge, and other Romantics — suspected that imagination is indispensable to the creation and enjoyment of art. ROMAN INGARDEN takes up this theme in detail in *Das literarische Kunstwerk* (The literary work of art, 1931), describing how imagination fills in gaps and fleshes out details beyond the indefinite descriptions or schematic adumbrations offered in the bare words of the text, thus creating sensuously intuitive scenes in "imaginative modes of appearing" that exceed what the words explicitly indicate.

In *Phénoménologie de l'expérience esthétique* (1953), MIKEL DUFRENNE builds on Ingarden's model of literature as dependent on the active participation of the reader, extending it to a general theory in AESTHETICS. Yet the very activity singled out by Ingarden and attributed to imagination — i.e., the filling in of indeterminacies and opacities — is excluded by Dufrenne as unnecessary, for in art "appearance says all" and does not require imagination to specify it further into representational concreteness. What is required, however, is "feeling," which derives from a "sympathetic reflection" in which objects (the proper concern of imagination) are replaced by "quasi-subjects," while appearances become aspects of an expressed and expressive world. Thus imagination is at once surpassed and suppressed in the experience of art.

In subsequent writings, Dufrenne introduces the idea of "great images" that mediate between humans and nature and the notion of an "imaginary in depth" that anchors us in, and attunes us to, the natural world. A similar turn is taken by Gaston Bachelard (1884–1962), who distinguishes between a "formal imagination" that concerns itself with the elegances and niceties of sheer form (whether in art or science) and a properly "material imagination" that has to do with the way the four ancient elements — air, fire, earth, and

water — sustain poetic imaginaries of many kinds. A material imagination aims not at building up and shaping represented objects, but at following the intricate and subtle pathways into the material world as it is co-imagined by poets and readers alike. Thus poetic images, far from taking us into the ethereal and irreal, “resonate” with the materiality of the very world around us and bring to light its oneiric depth.

Others have explored the importance of imagination in art, notably WOLFGANG ISER in *Der Akte des Lesens* (The act of reading, 1976) — which takes up the “image-character of representation” in READING in a discussion heavily indebted to Husserl, Ingarden, and Dufrenne — and BRUCE WILSHIRE, who in *Role Playing and Identity* (1982) investigates the role of imagination in acting and theoretical experience more generally, emphasizing its bodily and physiognomic instantiations. Wilshire, like Dufrenne, is sensitive to the restrictions of imagination in art — it “carries limits and obstructions” — but he underlines the way that imagination also brings a vision of the unlimited.

The boundless resources of imagination are such that its creative and constitutive character cannot be limited to the domain of art. To trace out its import and impact in other areas is an unfinished task, but one that still beckons with much promise. How is imagination part of social life? Of RELIGION? Of political action? Of erotic encounter? Of ordinary thought and LANGUAGE? Of perception and memory? With these questions we not only return to a point of origin in Husserl’s first investigations into the interplay between imagination and other acts of re-presentation and presentation, but also look forward to future descriptive work in directions yet uncharted.

#### FOR FURTHER STUDY

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**INDIA** When “phenomenology and Indian philosophy” is being spoken about, the “and” does not imply any relationship or influence obtaining between