

## Editor's Introduction

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What is imagination? Not only is it extremely difficult to answer this question; it is not even clear if this question can be answered at all. In *Mimesis as Make-Believe*—one of the most influential philosophical studies of the imagination to have appeared in print over the last fifty years—Kendall Walton famously proclaims that at least he himself is not capable of defining the concept of the imagination with any precision (See Walton 1990, p. 19). This honest admission of the limits that confine philosophical reflections on the imagination expresses a general sentiment that is shared by virtually all contemporary philosophers who have written on the imagination. All agree that in the history of philosophy, the concept of the imagination is heavily over-determined. All declare that there are many ways to speak of the imagination. The common strategy following this declaration is that of offering some kind of a taxonomy of the imagination. One schematizes imagination historically, by focusing on how imagination has been conceived in antiquity, modernity, and in the contemporary context. One also schematizes it conceptually, by spelling out different notions of the imagination, which in its own turn enables one to accomplish two further tasks: demonstrate the unwieldiness of the imagination and circumscribe the field of one's own analysis. Fortunately, in the present context, our task is not that of spelling out the different senses in which one can speak of the imagination, even though carrying out such a task is of great philosophical merit. Leaving comprehensive categorization of the imagination out of consideration, we need to address one figure of the imagination, viz., *creative imagination*.

The readers of the following volume are bound to discover that such a demarcation does not resolve the ambivalence that plagues the notion of the imagination. There are many ways to speak of creative imagination, and not all of them are complementary. One way to address creative imagination is to place it within a regional taxonomy, which concerns the distinction between creative and recreative imagination. Such a strategy would not be unprecedented: we come across this distinction in Gregory Currie's and Ian Ravenscroft's study, *Recreative Minds* (2002). The authors suggest that one exercises

creative imagination when one ‘puts together ideas in a way that defies expectation or convention’ (Currie and Ravenscroft 2002, p. 9). They contrast such a notion with recreative imagination, which they conceive of as ‘the capacity to put ourselves in the place of our own future, past, or counterfactual self: seeing, thinking about, and responding to the world as the other sees, thinks about, and responds to it’ (Currie and Ravenscroft 2002, pp. 8-9). In the first case, we use imagination by going beyond how others and we ourselves see the world. In the second case, we strive to represent the world the way we see or others see it.

In Currie’s and Ravenscroft’s analysis, the distinction between creative and recreative imagination serves a strategic purpose. They draw this distinction only so as to exclude creative imagination from their analysis and focus exclusively on recreative imagination. This is quite representative not only of recent philosophy of the imagination, but of philosophy of the imagination in general. Most of the handbooks and anthologies on the philosophy of the imagination do not include a separate section on creative imagination. In light of such general indifference, it should not surprise us that to this very day, our understanding of creative imagination is lacking both in terms of depth and breadth. The contributions selected in this volume will leave no doubt that there are many other ways in which we can speak of creative imagination besides the one singled out by Currie and Ravenscroft.

Besides the conceptual efforts, historical attempts to delimit the meaning of creative imagination also prove to be of limited significance. Consider Richard Kearney’s influential suggestion that creative imagination is one of the leading paradigms that we come across in the history of the philosophy of the imagination (see Kearney 1998). Kearney’s historical schematization of the philosophy of the imagination suggests the following typology: while ancient philosophy of the imagination is mainly *mimetic*, and while modern philosophy of the imagination is mainly *creative/productive*, contemporary (that is, post-modern, to use Kearney’s own term) approaches are mainly *parodic*. There is some truth to this periodization, even though Kearney himself admits its problematic nature. Leaving the mimetic and parodic paradigms out of consideration, let us admit that philosophical accounts of creative/productive imagination reach their peak in late modernity, and especially with the main philosophical movements of the nineteenth century—Romanticism and German Idealism. The philosophy of imagination characteristic of these philosophical movements represents in the clearest way a fervent fascination with the creative powers of imagination. Nonetheless, as the contributions to this volume will show, the recognition of the creative powers of imagination is by no means an exclusive characteristic of modern approaches to imagination in Western philosophy.

In this regard, some further terminological clarifications are in place. One sometimes employs the concepts of creative imagination and productive

imagination interchangeably. Although the meanings of both concepts largely overlap, there are important differences between them. One of these differences is of historical importance. While productive imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) has its origins in modernity (See Geniusas 2008, and Geniusas and Nikulin 2008), creative imagination is a far more pervasive concept, which is far less terminologically determined and far more culturally and historically widespread. *Productive imagination is one particular type of creative imagination.* One should therefore be cautious of the all-too-quick identification of creative imagination with productive imagination, for it is precisely this identification that leads to the hardly justifiable view that creative imagination is not only paradigmatic of, but also specific to modern imagination.

In light of these remarks, we can clarify the central goal of this volume. Its task is to present a large variety of different ways in which creative imagination has been addressed in the history of philosophy. Without aiming to be exhaustive, the volume strives to broaden the conceptual, historical, and geographical horizons of analysis, which cannot be ignored by anyone who wishes to offer a robust account of creative imagination. The goal of this collective effort, which represents the voices of many authors (and the different philosophical traditions that they themselves address) is not to trap creative imagination within the boundaries of a specific definition. The selected papers will show that the ways in which the concept of creative imagination has been used are too diverse to permit either a straightforward definition, or even a simple taxonomy. Far from aiming to silence the further efforts to understand the different senses in which one can speak of creative imagination, this volume will serve as an invitation to continue to deepen and broaden our investigations into the creative nature of the imagination.

The articles collected in this volume thematize creative imagination in diverse theoretical frameworks. The first two articles focus on creative imagination in antiquity. The third article present us with classical post-Kantian philosophical approaches to creative imagination. The fourth and fifth contribution focus on classical phenomenology in dialogue with analytical philosophy and psychoanalysis. The sixth and seventh contributions stretch the geographical boundaries of analysis and present us with reflections on creative imagination that originate in the commonly overlooked geographical frameworks. Finally, the eighth and ninth contributions focus on creative imagination in the framework of socio-political philosophy in general, and critical theory in particular.

The first two articles bring into question the widespread view that there is no place for creative imagination in antiquity in general, and Ancient Greece in particular. Presumably, Ancient Greece knows nothing of creative imagination because it from the start conceptualizes imagination as a capacity of the soul to reproduce given impressions. It therefore seems that imagination is fundamentally reproductive. It is, however, important to stress that creative

imagination can be conceived either as a capacity of the soul, or as an essentially desubjectivizing power. In her contribution, Claudia Baracchi maintains that in pre-Aristotelian Greek philosophy, creative imagination is conceptualized in the second of these ways: not as a faculty of the soul, but as a force that ‘traverses and possesses the human being, in the sense that it is not controlled at will’. Offering an intriguing interpretation of Plato’s *Timaeus*, Baracchi contends that still before Aristotle had brought imagination to the center of philosophical attention, it had already secured a place in philosophical reflections, although not as a subjective process, but as a cosmic force within the metabolism of nature. Before a human being learns how to imagine anything, it itself is already a product of cosmic imagination. According to Baracchi, the curious interrelation between the human and the cosmos is mirrored in the structure of theatrical performances. This serves as an invitation to recognize the effects of creative imagination upon philosophical discourse itself. According to Baracchi, the philosophical narrative is arranged according to the logic of the theatre.

There is yet another way to question the widespread assumption that Ancient Greece knows nothing of creative imagination. Besides drawing a distinction between psychic and cosmic imagination, one can further argue that even when thinkers of antiquity conceive of imagination as a psychic power, they do not reduce it to the capacity to retain and reproduce perceptual images. Even Aristotle, who was the first philosopher to offer explicit reflections on the imagination and who conceptualized imagination not as a cosmic, but as a psychic power, does not conceive of imagination as a residue of a perceptual act, or what Thomas Hobbes has labelled as ‘a decaying sense’ (Hobbes 1992, p. 5). Such is the view that Justin Humphreys argues for in his contribution. According to Humphreys, the standard reception of the Aristotelian philosophy of the imagination is an instance of a historical confusion: it is expressive of a distinctly modern conception of the imagination which is inappropriately projected upon antiquity. It is therefore important to stress that Aristotle is not a modern empiricist who conceives of sensations as the only source of knowledge about the world. Like many other Ancient thinkers after him, Aristotle conceives of the imagination as a power of the soul, which, far from being reducible to sensation, is necessary for the understanding as well as for the production of illusions, hallucinations, and dreams. As Humphreys further shows, not just Aristotle, but many other ancient thinkers are consistent in taking the imagination to be an autonomous, non-truthmaking, psychological power of production and presentation.

Philosophical reflections on creative/productive imagination reach their peak in late modernity, and especially with the main philosophical movements of the nineteenth century, such as Romanticism and German Idealism. The philosophy of imagination characteristic of these philosophical movements represents a fervent fascination with the creative powers of imagination. One

might find it highly surprising, if not paradoxical, that these philosophical movements do not present us with systematic accounts of the imagination, even though they assign imagination a central place in their respective philosophical systems. Such being the case, any attempt to come to terms with the philosophy of the imagination of the nineteenth century must first and foremost consist of an attempt to systematize what is presented only in a form of an outline. Such is the goal that guides Gregory Moss's analysis of the role that creative imagination has played in German Romanticism. According to Moss, the fundamental goal of philosophy, as envisioned by the Romantics, is to give an account of the 'Absolute'. Yet precisely because philosophical knowledge is conceptual, philosophy is incapable of fulfilling its task. Insofar as it grasps the Absolute conceptually, philosophy transforms the Absolute into something other than it is: in philosophy's hands, the infinite becomes finite, the complete becomes incomplete, and the Absolute becomes relative. With this realization, one might be led to the opposite conclusion and claim that the Absolute can be grasped only non-conceptually, by relating to it directly and intuitively. Yet according to Moss, the same limits that confine philosophical analyses also apply to different forms of mysticism. By relying on a sharp distinction between concepts and intuition, the mystics can only offer a relative account of the Absolute, which excludes all mediation and positionality. It thus appears that the only way philosophy can come to terms with the Absolute is by overcoming the sharp distinction between mediate and immediate forms of knowledge: between concepts and intuitions. According to the proposal of the German Romantics, to accomplish this task, philosophy must become poetry, and *vice versa*. Creative imagination is that very power that enables us to accomplish this task. Conceived as a form of *sensual thinking*, imagination is both conceptual and intuitive, and it thus provides us with a form of knowledge, which is both mediate and immediate. In the hands of the creative powers of genius, imagination enables us to think the universal as a particular, and the particular as a universal, thereby enabling the Absolute to acquire determinate identity.

The central philosophical movements of the nineteenth century present us with the most arduous defense of the power of the imagination. According to some critics, the central claims these movements generate are impossible to sustain with sufficient philosophical justification (see Casey 2000). The situation appears to have drastically changed in the first half of the twentieth century, and especially with the advent of phenomenology, which succeeded in replacing the 'orgy of overestimation' with sober and impassionate descriptions of the essential features of phantasy and image consciousness. No matter how impassionate the phenomenological descriptions might have been, they nonetheless assigned imagination a central place in the phenomenological method, as became especially clear with Edmund Husserl, who consistently

maintained that fiction is ‘das Lebenselement der Phänomenologie’ (Husserl 1980, p. 148).

While recognizing the centrality of phantasy in phenomenology, one might nonetheless think that phenomenological descriptions are of little use when it comes to our understanding of creative imagination. After all, such concepts as creative imagination, or productive imagination, are hardly to be found in classical phenomenology.<sup>1</sup> The fourth and fifth contributions to this volume bring such a view into question by demonstrating that creative imagination is of significance for phenomenology and that phenomenology has an important contribution to make to the philosophy of creative imagination.

In her contribution, Jagna Brudzińska focuses on Husserl’s genetic phenomenology. Building her case on the insights that Husserl provides in his late published works and unpublished manuscripts, she focuses on the relation between body consciousness and the process of subjective genesis. Within such a framework, she argues for the pivotal role that phantasy plays in the never-ending process of becoming a self. This leads to the re-evaluation of phantasy as an *original* experience. Creative phantasy is at work in anticipation, consciousness of possibility, experience of non-presence, as-if-presence, quasi-presence, pre- and non-linguistic experience, ambiguity, historical and future experience, and sociality. Admittedly, we do not come across the concept of creative imagination in Husserl’s writings, yet there seem to be good reasons for this. Husserl appears to think that other concepts are more appropriate when it comes to a phenomenological description of the functioning of what in the history of philosophy has been addressed under the heading of creative imagination. According to Brudzińska, the concept of *hyletic anticipation* is such a concept: it describes the elementary function of creative phantasy. As soon as we realize that phenomenology conceives of phantasy as an original creative experience, we obtain the means needed to open a meaningful dialogue between phenomenology and psychoanalysis, where phantasy is conceived as the primary content of unconscious psychic processes, which despite its unconscious nature, does not compromise the inner coherence of psychic reality. Brudzińska opens a dialogue between phenomenology and psychoanalysis, which in its own turn lead to the realization that phantasy is a creative force, active in the constitution and transformation of psychic reality. Besides functioning as an element of an already fully shaped psychic reality, it also plays a key-role in the formation of the psyche itself, that is, in the process of becoming a self.

Bringing phenomenology into dialogue with analytical philosophy, Michela Summa addresses the relation between fiction and make-believe while focusing on Edmund Husserl’s, Paul Ricœur’s, Gilbert Ryle’s and Kendall Walton’s writings on the imagination. Conceiving of fiction as make-believe, Summa aims to offer a kind of reciprocal supplementation between these approaches to the imagination. Building her case on the basis of Husserl’s

and Walton's contribution, she argues against Ricoeur's and Ryle's claim that make-believe is an instance of reproductive imagination. Relying on Ricoeur's insights, she maintains that fiction has a remarkable impact on shaping and transforming the sense of reality. Summa's central goal is twofold: on the one hand, she aims to work out a nuanced conception of make-believe and pretense, which would prove to be irreducible to what Ricoeur has identified as the level of reproductive imagination and which would fruitfully complement Ricoeur's conception of productive imagination. On the other hand, she also wishes to demonstrate that theories of fiction as make-believe themselves profit when one recognizes that they entail those elements that fall under the heading of what Ricoeur identifies as productive imagination. Admittedly, such an approach blurs the distinction between productive and reproductive imagination, as least as far as Ricoeur's understanding of this distinction is concerned. Yet we can gain more than lose by abandoning clear lines of demarcation between two distinct types of imagination. By blurring the distinction between them, one acquires a more precise conception of make-believe and significantly broadens one's understanding of creative imagination.

In his contribution, Witold Płotka addresses a little-known chapter in the recent history of ideas. He strives to uncover the contribution that early Polish phenomenology has made to the philosophy of creative imagination. Within such a framework, Kasimir Twardowski's influence cannot be overestimated. As Płotka shows, according to Twardowski, imagination has an intuitive character; it is fundamentally different from recollection; it is not propositional; its object is *quasi-mereological*; finally, its functioning consists of integrating sensual elements into an imagined whole. Moreover, and this is especially important in the present context, in Twardowski's works, we come across an important distinction between three different types of imagination: *perceptive*, *reproductive*, and *creative*. Besides giving an account of Twardowski's conception of the imagination, Płotka also addresses the contribution made by two of Twardowski's students, Roman Ingarden and Leopold Blaustein, who took Twardowski's ideas in significantly different directions. While Ingarden's analyses are distinctly ontological, Blaustein's fall under the heading of descriptive psychology. With this in mind, one can say that in early Polish phenomenology, creative imagination is addressed from two different standpoints and is understood in two different ways. Conceiving of the phantasmatic object as a purely intentional object, Ingarden contends that this object is *heteronymous*, *derivative*, *self-sufficient*, and *dependent*. By contrast, conceiving of phenomenology of imagination as a kind of descriptive psychology, Blaustein offers us an original theory of imaginative intuition, which culminates in the claim that a phantasmatic object has a quasi-real character. Płotka concludes his study with seven important claims about creative imagination: 1) the act of imagination is an *existential fundament* for the created object; 2) creative imagination produces the content that combines experienced parts; 3)

contents refer to the imagined object which is presentable only if its features refer to the real world (otherwise it is not imagined, but created as a concept); 4) what is created can lose its connection with the imaginative intuition; but 5) it is also existentially dependent on a certain concretization; 6) as such it can have a character of a quasi-real object; finally, (7) a creation is a mode of action.

Dalius Jonkus further broadens the geographical horizons of the philosophy of creative imagination by focusing on the relation between embodied imagination and the aesthetic apriori in the works of four important phenomenologists: Edward S. Casey, Mikel Dufrenne, Max Scheler and Vasily Sesemann. One of the important questions raised in his analysis is that of whether or not imagination is limited by aesthetic expression. Another important question concerns the relation between perception and imagination. A third no-less important question concerns the relation between productive and reproductive imagination. Last but not least, the question concerning the relation between imagination and unconscious drives and desires also plays a role in his analysis. By addressing these and other questions, Jonkus invites us to conceive of the imagination as an essentially free activity, which is restricted only by the style of the world's horizons.

The last two contributions to the volume address the function of creative imagination in social and political life. Bringing into dialogue hermeneutics and critical theory, Roger W. H. Savage highlights creative imagination's subversive function in reshaping the practical order of everyday life. Savage conceptualizes the subversive function as the *wager of the imagination*. The practical situation we find ourselves in calls for a meaningful response, yet precisely because this response relies on creative imagination, there is no guarantee that it will fulfil the subversive function one expects from it. Arguing that imagination challenges and contests sedimented outlooks and practices, Savage highlights how individual works exemplify the rule summoned in response to a problem as apprehended by the artist, composer, or author. Just as a work of art shatters the real by refashioning it, so an exemplary social act, too, responds to the demands of the situation in an original way. With the claims and injunction emanating from individual works of art and exemplary social acts, we come to recognize the exercise of creative imagination and see how it gives rise to the wager described above. These claims and injunctions open new paths into the heart of the real, just as they inscribe themselves into the structure of action, thereby illuminating the horizons of as yet unfulfilled aspirations and demands. While works of art make claims to truth, social acts provide us with examples to follow. These works and these acts should be understood as responses to the demands of the situation, and according to Savage, these responses ride on the back of creative imagination. The wager of the imagination acquires its broadest significance when conceived as a universal project that aims to liberate humanity as a whole. According to Savage,

this wager is presupposed, either implicitly, or explicitly, by each and every critique.

In the final contribution to this volume, Mario Wenning addresses utopian imagination, conceived as a specific type of creative imagination. Although there are different types of utopia, they all seem to have in common the same structure: through the power of creative imagination, they constitute a world that either does not exist, or does not *yet* exist, but despite its irreality, is in need of realization. This general structure brings to light that the utopian imagination is ambivalent in that it both escapes from and at the same time critically engages in contemporary forms of life. The central goals of Wenning's contribution are the following: to bring to light the appeal of utopia as well as the failure of utopia, to distinguish between different types of utopia, to spell out the central objections against the political interpretations of utopia, and to respond to these objections. Wenning maintains that utopian imagination is not so much an adversary, but rather an ally of practical reason, so much so that one could even characterize utopian reason as a particular type of practical reason, whose chief characteristic lies in its radically critical function to expose present pathologies. In the final analysis, the task of utopian thinking is to transform the impossible into the possible and thereby avoid the captivity of the real.

Let us bring these introductory remarks to their end by asking the following question: *What can be expected from the philosophy of creative imagination?* Although one can answer this question in a number of ways, I would like to single out three answers as fundamental. 1) From the philosophy of creative imagination, one can expect a detailed analysis of creative imagination's central functions in the essential frameworks of philosophical analysis. The goal is to understand why creative imagination is irreplaceable in epistemology, ontology, ethics, aesthetics as well as social and political philosophy. 2) One can also expect a clarification of how creative imagination generates errors and deceptions, thereby contaminating rational inquiry. In this regard, philosophy of creative imagination must clarify what precautions one must take to guard oneself against the pathologies of the imagination. 3) Last but not least, one can also expect both a recognition and a clarification of how creative imagination can provide access to truths that otherwise would remain unreachable. What is at stake here is not only the recognition of the limits that circumscribe rational inquiry but also the realization that rational inquiry itself rests on the shoulders of creative imagination.

These three answers allow us to see that at least as far as human life is concerned, the life of the mind would not be what it is without creative imagination. As far as philosophy goes, should it ignore the role of creative imagination, it would misunderstand the nature of consciousness and the function of cognition; it would all-too-easily succumb to errors and deceptions; it would

remain detached from those fundamental truths that only imagination can reveal to us.

Are we then to say that one must necessarily choose between these three general ways to address creative imagination? One can certainly find a way to render these ways compatible with each other. Even a cursory look at the history of the philosophy would bring to light that not a single thinker has ever exclusively subscribed to any single approach that I have here singled out. Juxtaposing these three approaches is a matter of treating them as ideal types. However, as we concede the possibility of rendering these accounts compatible with each other, we also need to admit that they can be rendered compatible *only in part*. Clearly, one cannot both fearfully reject and enthusiastically embrace what imagination delivers at the same time and in the same respect. So also, one cannot pursue one's analysis in a sober and intoxicated way.

At least when it comes to philosophy, one can say: *tell me what you think of imagination, and I will tell you who you are*. Is creative imagination of philosophical importance because it is irreducible from the life of the mind? Is it important because it obscures one's path to truth? Or is it important because it paves the way to those truths that otherwise would remain inaccessible to the human mind? One is a significantly different thinker depending on how one answers these questions.

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## Notes

- 1 Martin Heidegger's *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (Heidegger 1997) appears to constitute an obvious exception to this claim. This well-known study focuses on Kant's concept of productive imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) and offers this concept an ontological interpretation. While recognizing the importance of this work, one might nonetheless question whether it truly is a phenomenological study. The same could be said about Max Scheler's analyses of productive imagination (*produktive Phantasie*), which are more metaphysical than phenomenological. As far as Husserl's writings on imagination are concerned, such terms as productive imagination or creative imagination appear only on very rare occasions.