THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE IMAGINATION

JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

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THE INTENTIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE IMAGE

This book aims to describe the great function of consciousness to create a world of unrealities, or 'imagination', and its noetic correlative, the imaginary.

The author has permitted himself to use the word 'consciousness' in a sense somewhat different from that which it usually receives. The expression 'state of consciousness' implies a sort of inertia, or passivity of the mental structures, which seems to the author to be incompatible with the known facts of reflection. The term 'consciousness' will be used in this work to designate not only the unity and the totality of its psychical structures, but to indicate each of these structures in its concrete particular nature. We shall therefore speak of the consciousness of the image, of the perceptual consciousness, etc., using the term in one of the senses of the German word *Bewusstsein*.

Introduction

by Mary Warnock

The Psychology of Imagination is a translation of the French work entitled *L'Imaginaire*, which was first published in 1940, three years before the publication of *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre's most complete philosophical work. It was his second work on the imagination. In 1936 he had published *L'Imagination*, which was an essay mainly critical and expository in character. It ended, however, on a note of enquiry, posing a further problem about the nature of the imagination which he sets out to solve in the present book.

There are several respects in which this second study of imagination forms a peculiarly valuable introduction to the early philosophical writings of Sartre as a whole, as well as being an extraordinarily interesting work in its own right. First of all, *The Psychology of Imagination* was specifically designed as an essay in phenomenology. It was Sartre who first introduced Husserl's work to France. *L'Imaginaire* was subtitled 'Psychologie Phénoménologique de l'imagination', and is probably the first of a vast list of French philosophical books which, for good or ill, came to have such titles in the ensuing twenty years. He started the study of imagination from the assertion, derived from phenomenology, that the imagination as part of human consciousness, must be directed upon some *object*. For it was Brentano's definition of consciousness that it was intentional, that is, in all its manifestations whether cognitive, imaginative or emotional, it was necessarily turned towards and concerned with an object. Now the very fact of having something as its object means that consciousness is separate from that object; and not only is it distinct from its object, but it is capable of distinguishing itself from it. There emerges a space between the thinking subject and that which is the object of its thought, between the perceiving subject and that which it perceives. A conscious being, that is, in the terminology later borrowed from Heidegger, a Being-For-Itself, is always at a distance from the world, from Beings-In-Themselves. The importance in the present context

of this area of free play round the object of consciousness is that the conscious being can, as it were, approach his object from various angles, can contemplate it, question it and describe it in a number of different ways. As soon as a question is asked about the object of consciousness, there immediately arises the possibility of two kinds of answer, an affirmative and a negative answer. The existence of negation, or being *not*-something or other, could not arise except for conscious beings whose attention is essentially directed to the world, and who raise questions about the world. These beings have certain expectations about the world and it is within the context of these expectations that one can understand the use of negative descriptions. If one expects something to happen, and it does not, then one is led to the perception of the world through negation. One can imagine how things might be, and describe them as 'not so and so'. Thus there is a sense in which imagination and the power to conceive things through negation are one and the same faculty. We shall return to this point later.

In the meantime Sartre has still to solve the insistent problem which was left over for him at the end of his first study of the imagination. Granted that the imagination, like other forms of consciousness, is directed upon some object, the question is, what is the peculiar object of the imagination? The negative conclusion of the first essay had been that previous philosophers had gone wrong in treating mental images as though they were something like ordinary perceptions, only weaker and fainter. Sartre had boldly suggested that this was totally wrong, in as much as there were not really such things as mental images *in* the consciousness at all. This is the starting point of the present book. He writes 'Whether I see or imagine that chair, the object of my perception and that of my imagination are identical: it is that chair . . . on which I am seated. It is only that consciousness is related in two different ways to the chair.' And, a little later, 'The word "image" can therefore only indicate the relation of consciousness to the object; in other words it means a certain *manner* in which the object makes its appearance to consciousness.' And finally, 'In order to avoid all ambiguity, we must repeat . . . that an image is nothing else than a relationship. The imaginative consciousness I have of Peter is not a consciousness of the image of Peter: Peter is directly reached. My attention is not directed on an image, but on an object.'

The first part of *The Psychology of Imagination*, called The

Certain, is intended to make this fundamental point clear by means of descriptions of various kinds of imaginative thinking. Then in the second part, entitled The Probable, Sartre proceeds to what is intended to be a scientific analysis, with empirical evidence, of the imagination. Part III is concerned with the actual uses we make of images in thought; and in the fourth part the discussion centres on the attitudes we adopt towards the objects of imagination.

Despite the confident way in which Sartre starts off, it is unfortunately true that in the first two parts of the book the ambiguities and unclarities remain unresolved. There are two types of imaginary awareness which Sartre considers, though he does not distinguish sharply between them. First we may think of, or imagine, an absent or totally non-existent object. Secondly, we may, given an actual perceptual experience, imagine it as something different, or see it as meaning something beyond itself. It is particularly with respect to the first kind of imagining, obviously, that the insistent question obtrudes itself: what is the object of our awareness? I may, Sartre says, either conceive of a golden mountain or imagine it (it is to be understood as something I cannot possibly ever actually perceive). If I conceive of it, I merely conjoin in my thought the properties of being mountainous and being made of gold, and that is all there is to it. But if I go further and actually envisage such a mountain, then I must first of all decide that this is what I will do, and then start thinking of the golden mountain in a new way. I cannot in this case *ex hypothesi* see an object in the outside world, nor do I look at a drawing or a photograph, so what is the object of my consciousness? To *what* am I attending? We have to remember that Sartre has said that there can be no image *in* the mind. But it is here that he genuinely appears to vacillate.

Comparing three cases, in the first of which I try to recall my friend's face by means of a photograph, in the second by means of a caricature, and in the third by means of a mental image, he says in Chapter 1, The image family,

> In the first two cases at least, the material can be perceived for its own sake (both the photograph and the caricature are *things*). It is obvious that the mental image must also have a material, and a material which derives its meaning solely from the intention which animates it. To recognize this I need only compare my original empty intention with my mental image of Peter, which is

> something that emerges and arrives to fill my intention. The three cases are thus strictly parallel. . . . We can conclude that the act of imagining aims at an absent or non-existent object in its corporality through a physical or psychical content which is given, not for its own sake, but only as an analogical representation of the object aimed at.

He goes on to argue that it is a matter of little theoretical importance whether we use a physical analogue (e.g. a photograph) or whether we use an analogue whose material derives 'from the mental world'. The only difference is that there is no possibility of investigating the world of mental images. Such images are things which occur in our psychic life, but which have no independent existence of their own. They exist simply and entirely *in order to* function as representation or analogy. Now this is very far from a satisfactory account of the image. For either it is simply false to say that it makes no difference whether we recall our friend by means of a photograph or by means of a mental image; or, if it really makes no difference, then we simply have to concede that images are, after all, *things* of some sort which exist in the mind as photographs exist in the world, whatever this may mean. The ghost is back in the machine. At the end of Chapter 2, which is intended to put forward a scientific hypothesis about the image, he says

> . . . an image, like all psychic syntheses, is more than the sum of its elements. What counts here is the new meaning which penetrates the whole. I want to be with Peter . . . my whole consciousness is directed towards him, it is fascinated in some way. And this spontaneity, this intention towards Peter, causes to flash forth this new phenomenon, which is comparable to nothing else, the consciousness of an image.

So, we are told, something flashes forth. There is a consciousness which is quite unlike anything else, and this in respect of its object. The characteristic of this kind of awareness is that its object is liable to disappear into nothingness, and is known at the very moment when it is in existence to be nothing in itself. Such consciousness is a grasping and positing of what is not. A gap, a nothingness enters to some extent into all awareness of objects, even into our awareness of objects in the external world, or indeed we could not be conscious

of them. But the awareness of Peter through an image of him suggests a new relation between the conscious being and nothingness. The image itself carries non-existence (the non-existence, that is to say, of the object of which it is an image) on its face. We know that the object of our image is non-existent partly because of the *poverty* of the image. A real object overflows what we can actually see of it; it suggests more than it reveals; it is available for study, in that we can learn more of it the more we look at it. But an image is not such that we can learn anything from it. All that it contains is immediately available to us, because we put it there ourselves.

This is the view expounded by Sartre in the descriptive part of this book (Chapter 1), and it seems to me to be neither entirely clear, nor, as far as it is intelligible, strictly true. For in fact it is quite often possible to conjure up an image specifically in order to find out more about the object under consideration than we could at first remember (for example, I may deliberately envisage someone in order to find out whether or not he has a moustache). Admittedly, my image may be wrong and I have no further check on it by which to find out if it is right or wrong. But at least the example suggests that we may sometimes believe ourselves to be able to find out more about something from our image – we may *treat* the image as a given object of attention; and this is what Sartre seems to deny.

However this may be, Sartre maintains that the mental image, whatever it is, is parasitic. It cannot be described independently of a description of that of which it is an image. But yet it has enough of an existence of its own to be properly thought of as an *analogue* of its object, and this is what it has in common with the photograph or other physical representations of an object.

If we now turn to the other kind of imagination, that in which an actual existent object in the world is seen, by an imaginative act, as something else, we shall find that once again the concept of Not-being, or Nothingness, plays an essential role in Sartre's analysis of the case. In the first kind of imagining he speaks, as we have seen, of our using the image as an analogue of that of which we are imaginatively thinking. It is the essential feature of the analogue both to be and not to be that which it stands for. Its existence is essentially ambiguous, since it cannot be clearly distinguished from the object of which it is an analogue, yet it is not that object. It is not *taken for* its object. It is known to be separate and different

from it. The photograph is understood as *not* that which it represents, which is often known to be absent. Now the photograph of course is a physical analogue of its subject; but there is another case which Sartre seems somehow to assimilate to that of the photograph, and this is our second kind of imagination. This is the case in which an object in the real world may be seen either as an analogue or simply as something which has no reference beyond itself to anything else. In Chapter 1 Sartre has many fascinating things to say about this kind of case. One may, for example, look at a painting and not realize at first that it is a portrait of an actual, though absent, person. Then suddenly, by what he refers to as a 'radical conversion', one may see the painting in a new way *as* an analogue. One sees it, that is to say, not as *being* the person whom it represents, but as *standing for* him. The painting takes on a specific meaning, beyond itself. Once one has seen it in this light, it takes a deliberate act of will to go back to seeing the painting as not significant of anything in particular. It is at this point in the argument that Sartre introduces the very fruitful and elaborate example (p. 26 *et seq.*) of our understanding of an impersonation, in this case an impersonation of Maurice Chevalier by Franconay. When we realize what or who she is meant to be, a change comes over our actual perception of Franconay. 'That dark hair we do not see *as* dark', and so on. We arrive in the end in a kind of state between perception and imagination; for we still see the real Franconay, but we *see her as* Maurice Chevalier, and in some ways we are affected by her as we would be affected by him. Moreover, in this mixed and ambiguous condition we have a new sense of freedom, for we realize that it is within our power to perceive the object before us, the person, in either of two ways, as what she is, and as what she is not.

In the Conclusion (pp. 223-5), Sartre makes an attempt to apply this doctrine of the analogue, not very successfully as it seems to me, to the performance of music. The real sounds which we hear must be experienced as analogues. The symphony itself is not only outside space and time, it is in no way real. It is therefore to be heard only imaginatively. It follows, he thinks, that that to which we ascribe aesthetic values is *always* unreal. It is only the object of the imagination which can be either aesthetically good or aesthetically bad, beautiful or ugly. Considered simply as things in the world with no meaning beyond themselves, paintings and symphonies have no

more aesthetic character than have words considered merely as marks on a page or sounds without significance. The imagination is that which brings before us what is not, or is not wholly, real, and it is to this that we apply aesthetic appraisal. This is one of the main functions of the imagination.

Sartre himself compares this power of the imagination to enable us to see things in the world as one thing or another, with the seeing of trick pictures in one or another way. He also frequently speaks of the imagination as that which enables us to perceive things as pointing beyond themselves, or having *sense*. It is perhaps worth remarking, in this connexion, how he himself, in *Being and Nothingness*, appears to use a kind of philosophical imagination, if it may be so described, in just such a way. Objects in the world are minutely described, not simply for their own sake nor to form a part of the description of the world in which human beings live and have to make their decisions, though the point of the descriptions is partly this: but in addition, we are asked to see objects described as significant beyond themselves. It is suggested that if we consider such phenomena as the viscous sticky honey which runs off the spoon onto the top of the honey in the jar, we shall actually see that it signifies the human fear of being swallowed up by the sticky, unmanageable mass of *stuff* in the world, which we are always half afraid may overwhelm us and master our precarious consciousness. And Sartre is not saying that the honey is *rather like* this undifferentiated mass of stuff; in some deeper way it stands for it and brings it before us, we see it straight, that is, with the eye of imagination, for this eye can see through the superficial aspects of a thing to the profound sense which it has. This is the kind of use which Sartre himself makes of imagination; and it is to be regretted that he did not return to the analysis of this faculty after he had written *Being and Nothingness*.

But to return from this excursion into the subject of Sartre's own imagination, we have already noticed how the phenomenological definition of consciousness entailed that the conscious being, having some object of his awareness or his thought, must necessarily be set at a distance from this object, to the extent of being able to say of it (or at least think of it) that it was separated and different from himself; and that this separation further entailed, according to Sartre, the faculty of conceiving negation. Sartre moves from the

notion of negation to that of nothingness in a somewhat confusing way, both in the present work and in *Being and Nothingness*. But one of the reasons why it is helpful and informative to read *The Psychology of Imagination* before reading *Being and Nothingness* is precisely because in the former the idea of nothingness is introduced in a less vague, more specific way than it is in the latter. Not only must the conscious being who is imagining be aware that his mind is directed to an object which is not himself but in some (mysterious) way separate; but he is also aware in imagination of a further negation, namely that the object is not, or not wholly, in existence. Thus the nothing or non-existence has a double role. In the conclusion of *The Psychology of Imagination* (pp. 210-11) he says

> . . . if I imagine Peter as he might be at that moment in Berlin . . . I grasp an object which is not at all given to me or which is given to me simply as being beyond reach. There I grasp *nothing*, that is, I posit *nothingness*. . . . What is common between Peter as an image and the centaur as an image is that they are two aspects of Nothingness.

So, he goes on to say, the essential feature that consciousness must possess in order to be capable of imagining is that it must be able to 'posit an hypothesis of unreality'.

> It is of the very nature of consciousness to be intentional; and a consciousness that ceased to be a consciousness of something would *ipso facto* cease to exist. But consciousness must be able to form and posit objects which possess a certain trait of nothingness in relation to the whole of reality.

This negative act is constitutive of the image. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance which Sartre attaches to the power of denial, of negation, of asserting not only what is but what is not the case, and, in *Being and Nothingness*, of asserting both what is and what is not the case at the same time, thus embarking on self-deception. It is true that in *The Psychology of Imagination* the reader may sometimes get the feeling that, after all the elaborate arguments and examples, the final conclusion is nothing but an enormous platitude – that in imagination the object of thought often, like the golden mountain, does not exist. And surely, he may complain, if we did not know *this*, we would not even have

understood what the subject of the enquiry was in the first place. But quite apart from the interest of seeing the development of the idea of nothingness in Sartre's own thought, the chapter of the present work in which he discusses the extent to which a man dreaming or suffering from hallucinations is aware of the non-existence of the object of his consciousness (Chapter 4, the Imaginary Life) is of absorbing interest for its own sake. Sartre uses secondary material to a large extent, of course, and draws his examples fairly uncritically from psychological case-books. But nonetheless there are few purely philosophical discussions of these topics which are better worth reading.

There is one final aspect of *The Psychology of Imagination* which links it to the main body of Sartre's philosophy and makes it a useful introduction to the whole. Not only in *Being and Nothingness*, but even in his later works, he insists that man's freedom to act in the world is a function of his ability to perceive things not only as they are, but as they are not. If man could not, first, describe a present given situation both as it is *and* as it is not; and if he could not, secondly and consequentially, envisage a given situation as possibly being otherwise than how it is, then he would have no power to intervene in the world to change it. If he could not realize, in experiencing his present ills, that they might be removed, that his life might be different, he would have neither motive nor capacity for remedying his situation. Merely to experience something as given is not enough. One must have the power of imagining it as well as perceiving it; that is, of imagining it otherwise. For the power to see things in different ways, and to form images about a so far non-existent future, is identical with the power of imagination. It is thus absolutely appropriate that Sartre's first serious philosophical work should have been concerned with what turns out to be the foundation upon which freedom itself rests. It was in *The Psychology of Imagination* that he first brought together his new enthusiasm for phenomenology with the kind of analysis of the prerequisites of human freedom which, more or less, was going to be his main concern in his later philosophical works.

CHAPTER ONE

The Certain

DESCRIPTION

1. The Method

Despite several preconceptions, to which we shall return shortly, it is certain that when I produce the image of Peter, it is Peter who is the object of my actual consciousness. As long as that consciousness remains unaltered, I could give a description of the object as it appears to me in the form of an image but not of the image as such. To determine the properties of the image as image I must turn to a new act of consciousness: I must *reflect*. Thus the image as image is describable only by an act of the second degree in which attention is turned away from the object and directed to the manner in which the object is given. It is this reflective act which permits the judgment 'I have an image'.

It is necessary to repeat at this point what has been known since Descartes: that a reflective consciousness gives us knowledge of absolute certainty; that he who becomes aware 'of having an image' by an act of reflection cannot deceive himself. There have been psychologists, no doubt, who maintained that a vivid image could not be distinguished from a faint perception. Titchener even cites some experiments in support of this view. But we shall see further on that such claims rest on an error. In fact, the confusion is impossible; what has come to be known as an 'image' occurs immediately as such to reflection. But it is not a metaphysical and ineffable revelation that concerns us here. If this consciousness is immediately distinguishable from all others, it is because it presents itself to reflection with certain traits, certain characteristics, which at once determine the judgment 'I have an image'. The act of reflection thus has a content of immediate certainty which we shall call the *essence* of the image. This essence is the same for everyone; and the first task of psychology is to explain this essence, to describe it, to fix it.

Why, then, should there be so many different theories concerning

this immediate knowledge on which all psychologists should certainly be of one mind? Our answer is that the majority of psychologists ignore this primary knowledge and prefer to build explanatory hypotheses concerning the nature of the image. (1) These, like all other scientific hypotheses, never possess more than a certain probability: the data of reflection are certain.

All new studies of the image should therefore begin with a basic distinction: that it is one thing to *describe* the image and quite another to draw *conclusions* regarding its nature. In going from one to the other we pass from certainty to probability. The first duty of the psychologist is obviously to formulate into concepts the knowledge that is immediate and certain.

So we shall ignore theories. We want to know nothing about the image but what reflection can teach us. Later on we shall attempt, as do other psychologists, to classify the consciousness of the image among the other types of consciousness, to find a 'family' for it, and we shall form hypotheses concerning its inherent nature. For the present we only wish to attempt a 'phenomenology' of the image. The method is simple: we shall produce images, reflect upon them, describe them; that is, attempt to determine and to classify their distinctive characteristics.

2. First characteristic: The image is a consciousness

The very first reflective glimpse shows us that up to now we have been guilty of a double error. We believed, without giving the matter any thought, that the image was *in* consciousness and that the object of the image was *in* the image. We pictured consciousness as a place peopled with small likenesses and these likenesses were the images. No doubt this misconception arises from our habit of thinking in space and in terms of space. This we shall call *the illusion of immanence*. The clearest expression of this illusion is found in Hume, where he draws a distinction between impressions and ideas:

> Those perceptions, which enter with most force and violence, we may name *impressions*. . . . By *ideas* I mean the faint images of these in thinking and reasoning. . . . (2)

These ideas are none other than what we called *images*. Now Hume adds several pages further on:

> But to form the idea of an object, and to form an idea simply is the same thing; the reference of the idea to an object being an extraneous denomination, of which in itself it bears no mark or character. Now as 'tis impossible to form an idea of an object, that is possest of quantity and quality, and yet is possest of no precise degree of either; it follows, that there is an equal impossibility of forming an idea, that is not limited and confined in both these particulars. (3)

According to this view my actual idea of chair has but an extraneous relation to an existing chair. It is not the chair of the external world, the chair I just perceived; it is not the chair of straw and wood by which I am able to distinguish my idea from the idea of a table or an inkwell. But, my actual idea is nevertheless an idea *of* chair. What can this mean but that, for Hume, the idea of chair and the chair as an idea are one and the same thing. To have an idea of chair is to have a chair in consciousness. That this is so is shown by the fact that what is true of the object is also true of the idea. If the object must have a determined quantity and quality, so must the idea.

Psychologists and philosophers have in the main adopted this point of view. It is also the point of view of common sense. When I say that 'I have an image' of Peter, it is believed that I now have a certain picture of Peter in my consciousness. The object of my actual consciousness is just this picture, while Peter, the man of flesh and bone, is reached but very indirectly, in an 'extrinsic' manner, because of the fact that it is he whom the picture represents. Likewise, in an exhibition, I can look at a portrait for its own sake for a long time without noticing the inscription at the bottom of the picture 'Portrait of Peter Z....' In other words, an image is inherently like the material object it represents.

What is surprising is that the radical incongruity between consciousness and this conception of the image has never been felt. It is doubtless due to the fact that the illusion of immanence has always been taken for granted. Otherwise it would have been noticed that it was impossible to slip these material portraits into a conscious synthetic structure without destroying the structure, without breaking the contacts, arresting the flow, breaking the continuity. Consciousness would cease being transparent to itself; its unity

would be broken in every direction by unassimilable, opaque screens. The works of men like Spaier, Bühler and Flach, in which the image is shown to be supple by being full of life, suffused with feeling and knowledge, are useless; for by turning the image into an organism they did not make it any the less unassimilable by consciousness. It is for this reason that certain logical minds, like F. Moutier, (4) have felt that the existence of mental images must be denied if the integrity of the mental synthesis is to be saved. Such a radical solution is contradicted by the data of introspection. I can, at will, think of an image of a horse, tree or house. But if we accept the illusion of immanence, we are necessarily led to construct the world of the mind out of objects entirely like those of the external world, but which simply obey different laws.

Let us ignore these theories and see what reflection teaches us, so that we may rid ourselves of the illusion of immanence.

When I perceive a chair it would be absurd to say that the chair is *in* my perception. According to the terminology we have adopted, my perception is a certain consciousness and the chair is the *object* of that consciousness. Now I shut my eyes and I produce an image of the chair I have just perceived. The chair, now occurring as an image, can no more enter *into* consciousness than it could do so as an object. An image of a chair is not, and cannot be a chair. In fact, whether I perceive or imagine that chair of straw on which I am seated, it always remains outside of consciousness. In both cases it is there, *in* space, in that room, in front of the desk. Now – and this is what reflection teaches us above all – whether I see or imagine that chair, the object of my perception and that of my image are identical: it is that chair of straw on which I am seated. Only consciousness is *related* in two different ways to the same chair. The chair is directed towards its concrete individuality, its corporeality, in both cases. Only, in one of the cases, the chair is 'encountered' by consciousness; in the other, it is not. But the chair is not in consciousness; not even as an image. What we find here is not a semblance of the chair which suddenly worked its way into consciousness and which has but an 'extrinsic' relation to the existing chair, but a certain type of consciousness, a synthetic organization, which has a direct relation to the existing chair and whose very essence consists precisely of being related in this or that manner to the existing chair.

And what exactly is the image? Evidently it is not the chair: in general, the object of the image is not itself an image. Shall we say then that the image is the total synthetic organization, consciousness? But this consciousness is an actual and concrete nature, which exists in and for itself and which can always occur to reflection without any intermediary. The word image can therefore indicate only the relation of consciousness to the object; in other words, it means a certain manner in which the object makes its appearance to consciousness, or, if one prefers, a certain way in which consciousness presents an object to itself. The fact of the matter is that the expression 'mental image' is confusing. It would be better to say 'the consciousness of Peter as an image' or 'the imaginative consciousness of Peter'. But since the word image is of long standing we cannot reject it completely. However, in order to avoid all ambiguity, we must repeat at this point that an image is nothing else than a relationship. The imaginative consciousness I have of Peter is not a consciousness of the image of Peter: Peter is directly reached; my attention is not directed on an image, but on an object.*

Thus, in the woof of the synthetic acts of consciousness there appear at times certain structures which we shall call imaginative consciousness. They are born, develop and disappear in accordance with laws proper to them and which we shall try to ascertain. And it would be a grave error to confuse this life of the imaginative consciousness, which lasts, becomes organized, and disintegrates, with the object of this consciousness which in the meantime can well remain immutable.

3. Second characteristic: the phenomenon of quasi-observation

When we began this study we thought our concern was with *images*, that is, with some elements of consciousness. Now we see that we are dealing with complete consciousnesses, that is, with complex structures which 'intend' certain objects. Let us now see whether reflection can teach us more about these consciousnesses. The simplest procedure will be to examine the image in its relationship to

* Cases may be cited in which I produce an image of an object which has no real existence outside of myself. But the chimera does not exist 'as an image'. It exists neither as such nor otherwise.

the concept and the percept. To perceive, conceive, imagine: these are the three types of consciousness by which the same object can be given to us.

In perception I *observe* objects. By this we must understand that although the object enters into my perception in its completeness, I nevertheless see it only from one side at a time. Consider the example of the cube: I know it is a cube provided I have seen its six sides; but of these I can see only three at a time, never more. I must therefore apprehend them successively. And when I pass, for example, from sides ABC to sides BCD, there always remains a possibility that side A has disappeared during my change of position. The existence of the cube therefore remains doubtful. But let us note that when I see three sides of the cube at the same time, these three sides never present themselves to me as squares: their lines become flat, their angles become obtuse, and I must reconstruct their squareness at the very beginning of my perception. All this has been said hundreds of times: the characteristic of a perception is that the object appears only in a series of profiles, of projections. The cube is certainly present to me, I can touch it, see it; but I always see it only in a certain fashion which includes and excludes at one and the same time an infinity of other points of view. We must *learn* objects, that is to say, multiply upon them the possible points of view. The object itself is the synthesis of all these appearances. The perception of an object is thus a phenomenon of an infinity of aspects. What does this mean for us? It means that we must *make a tour* of objects; wait until the 'sugar melts', as Bergson said.

When, on the other hand, I *think* of a cube by means of a concrete concept,* I think of its six sides and its eight angles all at once; I think that its angles are right angles, its sides squared. I am at the centre of my idea, I seize it in its entirety at one glance. This does not mean, of course, that my idea does not need to complete itself by an infinite progression. But I can think of the concrete essences in a single act of consciousness; I do not have to re-establish the appearance, I have no apprenticeship to serve. Such is, no doubt, the clearest difference between a thought and a perception. This is the reason why we can never perceive a thought nor think

* The existence of such concepts has at times been denied. Nevertheless a perception and an image presuppose concrete knowledge without image and without words.

a perception. The two phenomena are radically distinct: the one is knowledge which is conscious of itself and which places itself at once at the centre of the object; the other is a synthetic unity of a multiplicity of appearances, which slowly serves its apprenticeship.

What shall we say of the image? Is it apprenticeship or knowledge? Let us note first that it seems to belong to perception. In the one, as in the other, the object presents itself in profiles, in projections, in what the Germans designate by the apt term *Abschattungen*. Only we no longer have to make a tour of it: the cube as an image is presented immediately for what it is. When I say, 'the object I perceive is a cube', I make an hypothesis that I may have to reject at the close of my perceptions. When I say, 'the object of which I have an image at this moment is a cube', my judgment is final: it is absolutely certain that the object of my image is a cube. What does this mean? In perception, a knowledge forms itself slowly; in the image the knowledge is immediate. We see now that the image is a synthetic act which unites a concrete, non-imagined, knowledge to elements which are more actually representative. The image teaches nothing: it is organized exactly like the objects which do produce knowledge, but it is complete at the very moment of its appearance. If I amuse myself by turning over in my mind the image of a cube, if I pretend that I see its different sides, I shall be no further ahead at the close of the process than I was at the beginning: I have learned nothing.

And this is not all. Let us consider this piece of paper on the table. The longer I look at it the more of its features are revealed to me. Each new orientation of my attention, of my analysis, shows me a new detail: the upper edge of the sheet is slightly warped; the end of the third line is dotted . . . etc. No matter how long I may look at an image, I shall never find anything in it but what I put there. It is in this fact that we find the distinction between an image and a perception. In the world of perception every 'thing' has an infinite number of relationships to other things. And what is more, it is this infinity of relationships – as well as the infinite number of relationships between the elements of the thing – which constitute the very essence of a thing. From this there arises something of the *overflowing* in the world of 'things': there is always, at each and every moment, infinitely *more* than we see; to exhaust the wealth of