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Few concepts in the history of philosophy or science are as rich, polysemic and mysterious as imagination. That "art concealed in the depths of the human soul" as Kant said, is indeed a fundamental concept in philosophy, namely in philosophy of knowledge, logic, metaphysics, philosophy of science, modal epistemology, aesthetics, philosophy of art, ethics, social and political philosophy, philosophy of mind and so on.

As it happens with all philosophical concepts, the concept of imagination has an history and a controversial heritage. Present in all great philosophical traditions, both continental and analytical, the concept of imagination has been specially worked out by such figures as Plato, Aristotle, Francis Bacon, Thomas Hobbes, Pascal, Spinoza, David Hume, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Peirce, William James, Husserl, Bachelard, Gilbert Ryle, Wittgenstein, Sartre or Ricoeur. Even Descartes, who is very suspicious of the imagination, cannot avoid the evil demon, an imaginary creation, which is presented as the strongest metaphysical argument in his rationalist theory.

Imagination is also a transversal concept that cuts across various fields and disciplines besides philosophy, namely psychology, arts, literary theory, religion, law, rhetoric, heuristics, cognitive sciences, and, more recently, some aspects of scientific computing and artificial intelligence. In addition, in natural sciences studies, imagination is often presented as the driving force behind the discoveries and counterfactual reasoning of scientists such as Kepler, Galileo, Darwin or Einstein, to name but a few.

Among the vast literature on philosophy of imagination, one of the most challenging problems is concerned with the mere passive, reproductive, substitutive nature of the imaginative mental activity; the other is its anticipatory, productive, creative capacity. Is imagination intimately linked to receptive experience, perception, memory, and mental representation, or is it actively capable to open to alternative realities, to convey, to develop, to project something new. Does imagination simply re-produce image-copies, as Gadamer would say, or does it freely produce (presents) novelties projected in the past or in the future?

If so, is imagination a deceptive capacity, producer of illusion and error that must be corrected, or does it perform a positive cognitive role? Could it be, as Kant pointed out, that imagination might constitute "the source, the matrix of understanding"?

But - and this is a decisive point - how to determine that constitutive power of imagination? Does it lie in its mediating role between sensibility and intellect, in its synthesizing capacity of intuition and concepts, in its capacity to produce the rules (schemata) by which intuitions may be subsumed into concepts (Kant's first Critique), or, more than that, is imagination a free, "wild power" capable to extend, surpass, exceed the limits of empirical understanding? (Kant's third Critique). Among the many other important theses that have been advanced to clarify that constitutive power of imagination, some stressed the prescriptive propositional nature of imagination, its illustrative, iconic ability to display the existing concepts, to exhibit their relational range and, thus, to open to the conditional, to the possible, to the "as if" (Husserl), to the nothingness (Sartre), that is, not only to what is not present (the impossible, the absent, the existing elsewhere, the suspended existence), but to the non-existent, the inexistent, to fiction (Ricoeur).

Surprisingly, since the mid the 20th century, different traditions and disciplines come together in the development of an intense research on productive imagination. More, much more than an escape from reality, imagination is though out as an instance of ontological and epistemological scope. A fruitful capacity that sets aside the classical propositional way of reference to describe the world allowing a better comprehension of reality (Bachelard), to scrutinize the technological capacity of producing novelty (Simondon), to uncover the abductive logic of scientific discovery (Peirce), to inspect the secretive phenomenon of insight (Wertheimer, Weisberg), to understand the artistic production of new entities (Collingwood), the fictional literary capacity of remaking reality (Castañeda), the political search for alternative worlds, the social quest for new forms of life. In other words, imagination is manly thought out as a creative force underlying all kinds of human activity, be it scientific, technological, artistic, social, or political. In sum, we could say that today, in the world of complexity, imagination is receiving growing attention in diverse areas, as in aesthetics and philosophy of art (imagination is claimed vital for the artistic work of painters, writers, musicians, performers), in philosophy of mind (where the relationship of imagination to belief and desire has been especially considered), and in philosophy of science (imagination is nowadays central to discussions on thought experiments and modal epistemology).−

Maybe, the centrality of the concept of imagination is a symptom of the apologetic regime of the new which we live under today. A regime which wants to ensure, at all costs, that the new is possible, whether in science, in technology, in arts, in

politics, in or everyday life. And maybe, the attention that imagination attracts today from so many philosophers, scientists, politicians, and artists is due to the fact that it is a wild, savage force that carries with it the promise of new possibilities.

These are some of the reasons why we believe in the importance of continuous research on the concept of imagination. And, in this sense, we can no longer accept excuses and magic words to try to explain imagination.

The editors