

CHAPTER - IIIImagination and PerceptionHume and Kant

The concept of imagination which is going to be my concern in the following pages can be seen in its first form in Hume's Treatise of Human Nature. But Hume was by no means wholly an innovator. He wrote in a tradition of empiricist thought which included Locke and Berkeley, and which in a way had its starting point further afield in Descartes. It was, above all, Descartes who set philosophy in the habit of raising the question 'what are we aware of?' in a general form, and of answering that we are aware of the content of our consciousness. It seemed self-evidently obvious to philosophers after Descartes, however critical they may have been of the details of his solutions, that in order to answer questions about knowledge, belief, perception, or indeed about causation and substance, one had to turn one's attention inwards, and examine the objects of one's consciousness. These objects were, generally speaking, mental objects or ideas. Thus, for these philosophers there was always one problem which had to be solved, above all others, namely the problem of the relation between ideas in my head and things which are apparently not in my head but in the outside world. I seem to perceive the world. But, in another sense, Descartes had taught that what I perceive is my own ideas. How are these two perceptions related ?

Locke, writing in 1690, introduced the word 'idea' in this way: 'I must ... beg pardon of my reader for the frequent use of the word idea which he will find in the following treatise. It being that term which I think serves best to stand for whatsoever is the object of understanding when a man thinks, I have used it to express whatever is meant by phantasm, notion species or whatever it is that the mind can be employed about in thinking.' Further on he says, 'To ask at what time a man first has any idea is' to ask when he begins to perceive; having ideas and perception being the same thing.' There is no essential difference here between perceiving and thinking; all mental activity whatever, indeed all consciousness is bundled together and referred to as 'having ideas'.

Similarly Bekeley, in 1710, opened the Principles of Human Knowledge with the following remark: 'It is event to anyone who takes a survey of the objects of human knowledge, that they are either ideas actually imprinted on the sense or else such as are perceived by attending to the passions and operations of the mind, or lastly ideas formed by help of memory and imagination, either compounding dividing or barely representing those originally perceived in the aforesaid ways.' Once again, there is no sharp line to be drawn between perceiving apparently in the presence of an object, and thinking about it in its absence.

Hume shares this very general picture of consciousness with Locke and Berkeley. It is true that he introduces a new distinction between what we are aware of in perception and

what we are aware of in thought, calling the former 'impressions' and the latter 'ideas'. This distinction, however, though it looks like an important innovation, is less radical than it seems at first sight. Indeed it does not do much to alter his inherited picture of the nature of consciousness. For the distinction between impressions and ideas turns out to be one only of degree. He says, 'All the perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two distinct kinds, which I shall call impressions and ideas.

Those perceptions which enter with most force and violence we may name impressions: and under this name I comprehend all our sensations, passions and emotions, as they make their first appearance in the soul. By ideas I mean the faint images of these in thinking and reasoning.' And he goes on, 'The common degrees of these are easily distinguished; though it is not impossible but in particular instances they may very nearly approach each other. Thus in sleep, in a fever, in madness, or in any very violent emotion of the soul, our ideas may approach to our impressions: as on the other hand it sometimes happens that our impressions are so faint and low that we cannot distinguish them from our ideas. But notwithstanding this near resemblance in a few instances, they are in general so different that no one can make a scruple to rank them under distinct heads.

It is to be noticed that Hume actually defines ideas as images. From the outset, then, he regards imagination, the imagemaking faculty, as playing a crucial role in our thinking. At the very least it supplies us with ideas to think about. It is what reproduces impressions so that we can think

about things in their absence. It is dubious, to be sure, how far the reproduced impressions are to be thought of as mental pictures. But the language of 'faint image' may be taken to suggest this. In any case, there is no doubt that sometimes, especially in Book I of the Treatise, Hume speaks as if ideas were pictures, and thus as if 'imagination' were being used by him in one of its most ordinary senses, as that which enables us to see things 'in our mind's eye'.

Let us try to see in a little more detail how Hume thinks that the imagination actually goes to work. In Book I, Part I, section 3, he distinguishes between memory and imaginations, as ~~two~~ different faculties by which we repeat our impressions, and present these impressions to ourselves as ideas. Again the distinction is in terms of force and vivacity. Ideas presented by memory are much more lively and strong than those presented by imagination. 'When we remember any past event, the idea of it flows in upon the mind in a forcible manner; whereas, in the imagination, the perception is faint and languid, and cannot without difficulty be preserv'd by the mind steady and uniform for any considerable time.' There is a further difference, that the memory is 'in a manner ty'd down' to produce its ideas in the same order as the original impressions were received, whereas the imagination has liberty 'to transpose and change its ideas'.

This last mentioned difference turns out to be extremely important for Hume. On it turns the distinction between simple and complex ideas. Hume, like his predecessors, tends to assume that impressions come into our minds through the

senses as single, simple items. These philosophers do not, on the whole, raise difficulties about what counts as a single impression, how long a single impression is supposed to last, how to count impressions at any moment of consciousness, or anything of the kind. Perhaps, in Hume's case, the word 'impression' itself, with its metaphorical sense of pressing one seal onto one piece of wax, made it easier to overlook all such possible ambiguities. Where Hume talks about 'complex impressions' he means impressions which come through more than one of the senses at the same time: we receive a complex impression of the apple before us in that the impressions of colour, taste and smell, which we may receive all at once, are distinguishable from each other. Now the imagination may, in forming an idea, join different parts of such a complex impression with parts of other complexes, or with simple impressions which came originally at a different time. So I may form the imaginary idea of a fruit which is dark purple and soft but which smells and tastes like an apple. Each of the ideas I have here (of purple, softness, apple-taste and smell) must have been derived from some simple impression, but the impressions need not have come to me joined as I have joined them in my imagination. Though no idea can exist even in the imagination which was not caused to exist by a previous impression, yet there is a sense in which the imagination is creative, in that it can construct what it likes out of the elements at its disposal.

However, although to a certain extent the imagination is free, there are limitations on its freedom. It is in the exploration of these limits that Hume begins to elaborate the

special role of imagination in our understanding of the world. He argues that, although the imagination is free to join ideas together in any way that it pleases, and although this freedom is in fact one of the distinguishing characteristics which mark off imagination from memory, yet it does not always join ideas at random. There is a kind of bond between different separable ideas, by which one idea 'naturally introduces' another. Hume says 'This uniting principle among ideas is not to be consider'd as an inseparable connexion; ... not yet are we to conclude that without it the mind cannot join two ideas; for nothing is more free than that faculty: but we are only to regard it as a gentle force which commonly prevails, and is the cause why, among other things, languages so nearly correspond to each other; nature in a manner pointing out to everyone those simple ideas which are most proper to be united into a complex one.' 'There are, it turns out, three uniting principles, three features, that is to say, which our ideas actually possess, in virtue of which the mind is conveyed from one to the other and unites them. These three features are resemblance, contiguity in time or space, and causal connexion. (The last of the three, when Hume comes to analyse it, turns out itself to be complex and at least in part the product of imagination, but in the present context he treats it as if it were a simple observable fact that two ideas may be so related.) In memory, then, our ideas are bound to occur to us in the temporal and spatial order in which their originating impressions occurred. In imagination, on the other hand, the three principles of union supply the place of the inseparable connexion by which they are bound to each other in memory.'

Hume is not prepared to carry his analysis further. He speaks of a kind of attraction between ideas. 'Its effects are everywhere conspicuous; but as to its causes, they are mostly unknown, and must be resolved into original qualities of human nature which I pretend not to explain.'

Let us now see how these principles are supposed to work in our forming complex ideas of substances, and in our understanding and use of general terms. The ideas we have of substances (gold, silver, and so on, and also cats, dogs, and other material objects) are, like all ideas, derived from impressions. We learn about substances through the senses. But the impressions we get of these things are, like all impressions, divisible into simple, single impressions, impressions of a particular colour, texture, smell and so on. These particular impressions go together in groups so often that we come to call each group by a name, 'gold' or 'cat'. So an idea of a substance is a complex idea, derived from a group of impressions and attached to a name. So much Hume tells us in section 6 of Part I. But we know that we can think in abstract and general as well as in concrete and particular terms. If our ideas are all derived from impressions, and if our impressions are all particular and concrete, how can ideas be abstract? It is at this stage that Hume introduces the faculty of imagination. In Part I, section 7 he argues that all ideas are particular and are ideas of specific things with specific properties. But a particular idea may be used, as abstract ideas are supposed to be used, to 'go beyond its nature', and it may refer not only to the particular thing

it represents but generally to things of that sort. He says, 'When we have found a resemblance among several objects, that often occur to us, we apply the same name to all of them ... . After we have acquired a custom of this kind, the hearing of that name revives the idea of one of these objects, and makes the imagination conceive it with all its particular circumstances and proportions. But as the same word is suppos'd to have been frequently applied to other individuals, that are different in many respects from that idea which is immediately present to the mind; the word not being able to revive the idea of all these individuals only touches the soul ... and revives that custom which we have acquired in surveying them. They are not really and in fact present to the mind, but only in power.' Imagination has a part to play here in that it forms further images for us, related to the image we first thought of in relation to the word which we are using or seeking to understand. But it seems that Hume places imagination under the control of custom. We must have the custom first, and then the image-forming faculty can get to work. Thus, let us suppose that I read the word 'cat'. Immediately, because of a previously formed habit, the image of a particular cat, my own cat, Simpkin, comes into my mind. I know, however, that what I am reading is not about Simpkin but about 'the cat' in general. And I can understand that the properties of the cat referred to, perhaps that it can see in the dark, belong not only to Simpkin of whom I have an image, but also to other cats. So my imagination can, though it need not, form images of numbers of other cats. It may even be so good as to produce images of counter-examples, if necessary. 'For

this is one of the most extraordinary circumstances in the present affair, that after the mind has produc'd an individual idea, upon which we reason, the attendant custom, reviv'd by the general or abstract term, readily suggests any other individual, if by chance we form any reasoning that agrees not with it. Thus, should we mention the word "Tringle", and form the idea of a particular equilateral one to correspond with it, and should we afterwards assert that the three angles of a triangle are equal to each other, the other individuals of a scalenum and isocetes which we overlook'd at first immediately crowd in upon us, and make us perceive the falsehood of this proposition, tho' it be true with relation to that idea which we had form'd.'

Once again, Hume refuses to try to account for the custom which underlies the imaginative function here. He says, 'To explain the ultimate causes of our mental actions is impossible.' But one thing should perhaps be noted. He thinks that, in this respect, everyone's mental action is the same, or at least is based upon the same principles. The most general account he can give is in terms of resemblance. 'As the individuals are collected together, and plac'd under a general term, with a view to that resemblance which they bear to each other, this relation must facilitate their entrance in the imagination, and make them be suggested more readily upon occasion.'

It seems that Hume is here talking about our thinking of objects, cats or dogs, in their absence. The medium of the word is essential for his account of abstract ideas, and

therefore it is essential to the function of imagination in this respect. Imagination operates according to its three principles, and particularly according to the principle of resemblance, to enable us to think not of one thing at a time, but of things in general. What Hume does not say is that we need imagination in order to apply the general word 'cat' to be animal before us. We are not, apparently, required to exercise imagination in order to identify Simpkin as a cat, nor to recognize another cat as a cat, though not Simpkin. But the question may be raised why we should not need imagination here too. For to recognize Simpkin as a cat is to apply the general word 'cat' to him. And how are we to understand this word both as general and as applicable to the particular thing before us, if all we have is the particular thing before us, if all we have is the particular collection of impressions of Simpkin which happen to be under our hand or before our eyes? How can we be expected to know that he is like other creatures, except by carrying in our minds a set of images with which to compare him? However, Hume does not say that we do this. He seems to think that blind habit is enough to get us to say 'cat' if asked 'what is Simpkin?' or to think 'cat' if we see him in the chair. Imagination has so far been assigned a role only in our thought about objects in their absence, not in the application of descriptive terms to them when they are before our eyes.

However, there is another, more fundamental, role which Hume does ascribe to the imagination when objects are actually before us, and are being perceived. Since he believes

that our knowledge of the world is derived from impressions, which are separate, short-lived and constantly succeeding one another in our experience, and since impressions are necessarily what are impressed on each one of us individually, he is faced with the problem of accounting for the obvious fact that we think of the world as containing objects which are not of this kind, but which are on the contrary permanent, lasting and independent, in some sense, of ourselves. We distinguish, indeed, within our own experience, between our sensations, momentary twinges, itches or feelings that are fleeting, and we believe could not exist if we were not there to feel them, and on the other hand our impressions of external objects, which seem essentially to be impressions of objects waiting to be observed by us or another, and existing continuously in such a way that we and other people can come back to the same object and observe it again and again. The problem of accounting for our unthinking belief in such objects arose for Hume entirely because he insisted that all our experience of the world must ultimately, and on analysis, be described in terms of our impressions, and an impression is something which we each of us receive at a particular time, in ourselves. He thought, as we have seen, that there is no intrinsic difference between my experience of an 'internal' sensation such as a twinge of pain, and my experience of something 'external', the sound of a flute for instance. If, from within, there is no real difference between my impression of pain and my impression of the note played on the flute, why is it that in the first case I do not believe that

my pain could outlive my feeling it, whereas in the second case I do believe that the sound could go on even though I ceased to hear it? The continuity of the object which I believe in, in the case of the flute but not in the case of the pain, is connected with its independence of me. What makes me distinguish in this way?

Hume's answer to these questions, which are fundamental to post-Cartesian western philosophy as a whole, is to be found in the section of the Treatise entitled 'Of Scepticism with regard to the Senses' (Book I, Part IV, section 2). He is here concerned not with the question how we come to form general ideas, say of cats, but of how we come to form the idea that a particular cat, Simpkin, is seen and heard by me again and again; why we believe that the same cat enters and re-enters our lives, having a continuous existence which is independent of our own.

He divides the question into two parts, First he asks why we attribute continued existence to objects even when we are not experiencing them, and secondly why we suppose them to have an existence distinct from our mind and senses. But he regards these two questions as in a way the same, since 'if the objects of our sense continue to exist even when they are not perceiv'd, their existence is of course independent of, and distinct from, the perception: and vice versa, if their existence be independent of the perception and distinct from it, they must continue to exist even though they be not perceiv'd.' I propose, in the remarks that follow, to accept Hume's assumption that if one can describe the way in which

we come to believe in the continuous existence of objects, then one has accounted also for our belief in their independence and distinctness, and that one then will have accounted, in general, for their 'externality' and 'publicity'. The fact is that Hume has various different senses which he ascribes to the word 'distinct', some of which seem to be logically connected with continuity and some of which do not. But his point about the imagination can quite properly be made with respect to continuity only. For it is perfectly certain that one of the essential beliefs that we hold with regard to objects in the world is that they have a continuous existence which is not interrupted each time that we blink, or turn away. If we can see that Hume regards the imagination as having an essential role in forming this belief, then we shall certainly have to say that, for him, imagination enters into our most ordinary perception of the world. And this is what I want to suggest.

Hume has three candidates for that element in us which produces our belief in the continued existence of objects. The candidates are our senses, our reason and our imagination. He regards it as absolutely obvious that the sense cannot give rise to this belief, since the impressions we get through our senses are discrete and discontinuous. We are perpetually blinking, or moving or going to sleep, and this in itself breaks up our perceptions into short bits. If we had nothing but the senses to rely on, then we would believe that the world was made up of nothing but discontinuous things. Impressions, according to Hume's original definition, come to us without any strings attaching them to external

objects. We must consider them simply as bits of sense experience. He reiterates this basic assumption in the present context: 'Every impression . . . , passions, affections, sensations, pains and pleasures are originally on the same footing; and . . . whatever other differences we may observe among them, they appear, all of them, in their true colours as impressions or perceptions.' The senses themselves, therefore, cannot supply us with any material for our belief in the continued existence of things in the world.

He deals more briefly with the possible claim that reason may do so. He notices that people are inclined to believe in continued objects as the causes of some perceptions but not others. We are not inclined to attribute continued existence to pain or pleasure, but we are inclined to do so when our impression is of colour or sound, as well as of bulk and solidity. Philosophers, Hume says, are prepared to argue that bulk and solidity are really in the bodies we perceive, and have a separate existence, while they argue that colours and sounds have no such separate existence. (He is here referring to the distinction between primary and secondary qualities, drawn by Locke). But he says that these philosophical arguments are known to few and it is not by them that children, peasants and the greater part of mankind are induced to attribute objects to some impressions and deny them to others. Hume is not, unfortunately, very clear in his statement of what it is that the greatest part of mankind, or the vulgar, do actually believe. He allows that people unreflectingly distinguish between those perceptions or experiences which are, and those which are not, of

designed to convey, namely that there is no distinction to be made at all between continuing objects and fleeting objects, and that all are alike 'objects'. But in spite of these confusions, it is possible for us to understand Hume's problem. How is it that when perception itself is all fragmentary and broken up, and when we learn all there is to be learned about the world through perception, we yet would claim to know, or would assume without question, that the world contains objects which are not fragmentary, but which have a continuous existence of their own? Neither for the philosophers nor for the vulgar can reason or sense provide the basis for this assumption. There is therefore nothing left which can provide it except imagination.

Hume argues that the notion of continuous existence arises from the concurrence of some qualities of our impressions with some qualities of the imagination. In itself this is not a wholly intelligible remark, but it becomes a little clearer as we go on. The qualities of impressions in question are constancy and coherence. These, like resemblance and contiguity, are features which some of our impressions as a matter of fact do display. We ascribe continuous existence to things where we have collections of impressions either virtually unchanging (as is the case with the groups of impressions we call 'mountains' or 'houses') or whose changes in a fire as it gradually dies over a period of time). Now the imagination, Hume says, 'when set into any train of thinking, is apt to continue even when its object fails it, and, like a galley put in motion by the oars, carries on its course without any new impulse.' So the imagination completes

the uniformity which is indeed to a limited extent actually to be found in our impressions, by supposing continued existence of objects, to make the uniformity greater still. It is the same with the constancy of our impressions as with their coherence. When we have constantly similar impressions of, let us say, the sun or the sea, the imagination is apt to disregard the gaps in our perception, and regard our successive perceptions not merely as similar to each other, but as strictly identical. If our different impressions are very like one another, then the imagination passes very easily from one to another as we have seen above. But it passes so easily that it may feel as though there were only one identical object present to the mind. The imagination, that is, confuses similarity with identity, and thus the fiction arises that there is an identical object, the sun, when all we actually have is a number of very similar perceptions of light, heat and so on. 'The smooth passage of the imagination along the ideas of the resembling perceptions makes us ascribe to them a perfect identity.' 'When the exact resemblance of our perceptions makes us ascribe to them an identity, we may remove the seeming interruption by feigning a continued being which may fill those intervals and preserve a perfect and entire identity to our perceptions.' And we not only feign the idea, but we believe in it. We do this because we have, besides a present impression of the heat and light of the sun, a further present memory idea of the sun as we have experienced it before. Thus the imagination which fills in the gaps in our experience is supported by the

memory, which brings a very lively and vivid idea to mind of what we have experienced before. And so the fiction of the imagination acquires that liveliness and force which according to Hume is what constitutes a belief.

Thus, in Hume's system, the imagination has the function of compelling us to believe that there are objects in the world which exist continuously. And so it is by means of the imagination that we can recognize the sun when we see it again as the sun we saw yesterday, or identify Simpkin, our cat, as the cat who has been out all night, but has come in to be fed in the morning. It is remarkable that in describing this function of imagination Hume constantly uses such words as 'feigned' or 'fictitious'. Notoriously, at the end of the chapter on scepticism he says of himself, 'I feel myself at present ... inclined to repose no faith at all in my senses, or rather imagination ... I cannot conceive how such trivial qualities of the fancy, conducted by such false suppositions, can ever lead to any solid and rational system.' And he goes on to spell out once more how the imagination works by confusing similarity of perceptions with identity, and simply gets us into the habit of assuming the continuous and separate existence of objects. He concludes that 'carelessness and inattention alone can afford us any remedy.' If we are sufficiently careless and inattentive we shall succumb to the seduction of the imagination, and go happily on in the world surrounded by comfortingly constant, solid separate objects. It is imagination alone which creates for us the world we like to have, in which we can not only confidently understand the

word 'cat', but securely identify our old friends, the very same cats we saw yesterday, Imagination is not only the helpful assistant; in this chapter, it has turned out to be the deceiver, who gives us an altogether unwarranted sense of security in the world. It is like a drug, without which we could not bear to inhabit the world.

Nevertheless, in spite of the low view of imagination expressed at the end of Part II, Hume does, somewhat surprisingly, later distinguish between good and bad, serious and frivolous work which the imagination has to do. In Part IV, section 4, he writes as follows : 'I must distinguish in the imagination betwixt the principles which are permanent, irresistible, and universal; such as the customary transistion from causes to effects, and from effects to causes: And the principles, which are changeable, weak, and irregular ... The former are the foundation of all our thought and actions, so that upon their removal human nature must immediately perish and go to ruin. The latter are neither unavoidable to mankind, nor necessary, or so much as useful in the conduct of life ... . One who concludes somebody to be near him, when he hears an articulate voice in the dark, reasons justly and naturally; though that conclusion be deriv'd from nothing but custom, which fixes and enlivens the idea of a human creature, on account of his usual conjunction with the present impression. But one who is tormented he knows not why with the apprehension of spectres in the dark, may perhaps be said to reason, and to reason naturally too: but then it must be in the same sense, that a malady is said to be natural; as arising from

natural causes, tho' it be contrary to health, the most agreeable and natural situation of man.' There is a difference, in fact, between the 'just' and the 'unjust' exercise of imagination. The former is not only founded upon a well-established custom, and produces ideas which are genuinely related to an appropriate present impression, but moreover its use is absolutely essential to our proper understanding, For only with its help can we interpret our experience in order to make rational use of it.

This distinction becomes, in the hands of Kant, the all important distinction between the transcendental and the empirical imagination. Kant has several words which may be translated by the word 'imagination', but the most important of these is the word 'Einbildungskraft', which suggests a power of making images, pictures or representations of things. This word is sometimes used in the ordinary everyday sense in which we may distinguish the real from the imaginary, the waking from the dream or daydream experience. In this sense of the word what a man has the power to imagine or represent is a matter of his own particular psychological character, and of what has happened to impress, amuse or frighten him in his life. Kant uses the same word for this fiction-making power, which varies widely from one man to another, and for the power which is fundamental to our perceptual understanding of the world, which is universal and the same for everyone. This is the a priori or transcendental imagination.

Hume, as we have seen, like his predecessors, had conceived of human beings receiving into themselves a series of impressions of the world, through their senses. If someone

wanted to, he could report these impressions one after the other as a series. But because the impressions actually exhibit a certain regularity and similarity, we become accustomed to lumping sets of them together and giving the recurring set a name, such as 'dog' or 'cat'. We use the imagination in two ways. First, one hearing the name 'cat'. We use the imagination in two ways. First, on hearing the name 'cat' we can produce an image of a set of impressions which is suitable to be the bearer of the name. But secondly when we receive a set of cat impressions and then another set, after a gap, we are led by the imagination to group these sets together and think of them as constituting one particular continuously existing object. It is imagination which makes us think of the cat, the individual cat, as an object to be seen again and again, existing when we do not see him.

Now Kant accepted as a given fact that we move in the world, talk of it, indeed perceive it as a world full of independent objects, many of which behave in a regular and predictable way, and which we place firmly and all the time outside ourselves in space, and separate from ourselves in time. This just is the nature of our experience. His question is 'How is such experience possible?' He takes it to be self-evident that we can be aware of things only as they appear to us, so how is it that we assume that these appearances will present themselves as they do, as solid separate objects, related to each other by causal laws and connected with each other in an orderly and relatively predictable manner? The aim of his whole critical philosophy is to lay bare the features which our experience must have, if it is to be experience of the world

as we know it. It is on the basis of the necessity of these features that we are entitled to claim, as he thinks we can, that some things about the world are known to be true for ever, for the future as well as the past. We are not here concerned, however, with Kant's arguments relating to such knowledge as we can claim, or rather this is only indirectly our concern. We are concerned with an earlier stage of experience. For the function of the imagination, as he conceives it, is prior to knowledge. It operates in the presentation to us of objects in the world; and without objects knowledge would have no subjectmatter.

But there is also a second function, related to the first, and that is to enable us to apply general words to sorts of objects in the world. Hume had thought that it was simply by custom or habit that we came to apply the word 'cat' to groups of impressions. In the presence of a group of impressions we, as it were automatically, say to ourselves the word 'cat'. In the absence of the impressions, but on hearing the word, we can, by means of imagination, produce a suitable image; but if the impression is actually with us, the imagination has no work to do. If we have the impression itself we do not need the reflection of it. Custom alone is enough to enable us to identify the experience. But Kant saw a connexion between the need for imagination to play what we have referred to as its first role, namely to give us the concept of a continuously existing independent object in the world, and the need for it also to enable us to recognize an object as an object of a certain kind. For if we had a set of

impressions, however frequently they came to us together, it would still be possible for us to think of them as mere impression. In order for it to be right to apply a general term, say 'cat' we need, here as well, to conceive of the set as repeatedly forming an object, not a mere sequence of sensations. So Kant completed the account which Hume had begun of the part the imagination plays. Not only does it make objects out of some of the immediate but intermittent sensations which we experience, and induce us to say 'same cat' of these, but it also induces us to apply object-words (that is, type-of-object-words) to our experiences, so that we can recognize a kind of experience, and identify what we see as a cat.

There is a further difference between Kant and Hume. Hume seems to think that our experience can be seen to be serial and partial in the way he describes. If we open our eyes and ears, if we stretch our hands to feel, what we actually get is a series of impressions, which we could so describe, though as it happens we generally organize them to some extent before talking about them. Kant, as I understand him, does not think that we can ever actually have an experience of the world which is so serial and chaotic. He takes it for granted, indeed regards it as self-evident, that our senses alone would give us such an experience if we ever, as we do not, had to rely on them alone. But that we cannot find or describe such experience is precisely the proof that something besides the senses is at work in all our experience. In the Transcendental Deduction he says, 'What is first given to us is appearance. When combined

with consciousness it is called perception. Now since every appearance contains a manifold, and since different perceptions therefore occur in the mind separately and singly, a combination of them such as they cannot have in sense is demanded. There must therefore exist in us an active faculty for the synthesis of this manifold. To this faculty I give the name Imagination.'

Let us return for a moment to the distinction, to which attention was called just now, between the transcendental and the empirical imagination, and see if we can become clearer about what the function of each of these kinds is, in Kant's theory. The empirical function of the imagination is whatever it happens to be able to do in a particular case. In order to find out how it works for each of us, we have to report on our own particular experience. For example, a man need not ever have come across a rhododendron in his life. But if a particular man happens always to have lived in Surrey then he will have learned to identify a rhododendron bush and he will be entirely familiar with the concept of a rhododendron as it occurs in his experience. He will differ from a man who might have some concept of a rhododendron, but would not know how to apply it - that is, would not recognize a rhododendron bush if he saw it. Our Surrey man will both understand the word, and thus be able to describe a rhododendron bush when there is none present, and also be able to apply the word to a bush in front of him. Now he can apply the concept either to a kind of bush (that is to a particular bush of the kind in question) or to an individual bush in his own drive. And

both these things he can do by means of his imagination, which has unified parts of the manifold of his imagination, which has unified parts of the manifold of his sensory experience, visual appearances of flowers of a certain colour and shape, of shiny green leaves and so on. These have been unified into a familiar set or group in such a way that an image of such a set can be constructed in his mind at any time. He is enable to recognize a new bush, which he has not seen before, as a rhododendron by the imaginative grasp he has of the features of rhododendrons, that is, by having a possible image of other rhododendrons he has known. Thus Kant holds that at the empirical level a man identifies objects as being of a certain type by means of the image-making faculty. This identification, in Hume's view, was made simply by habit and custom. Kant also thinks, and here he and Hume agree, that a man is enable to refer unhesitatingly to 'my rhododendron' day after day, because he has the possibility of an image of a rhododendron bush as the sort of thing which not only presents certain visual appearances each time it is seen, but which continues to exist through time; which persists and shows systematically different appearances, according to the different seasons. He can identify and refer to his own bush, in that it is both exhibiting rhododendron characteristics, and exhibiting the general features of an object which exists independently in space and time. Both these aids to identification are supplied by the image-forming faculty which he possesses in his imagination. When a man sees his own bush, he applies to it the concept 'my rhododendron bush' and when he sees a new bush, he applies to it the concept

'rhododendron bush'; but he could not apply either of these concepts unless he had in his mind the image of other rhododendron bushes or of his own bush on another day, images, both of them, of objects not immediately before him when he applies the concept.

Now this is so far the empirical function of the imagination. For none of us need have, as a condition of our perceiving the world at all, the ability recognize things as rhododendron bushes, still less to recognize one of them as our bush. The empirical imagination depends for its working on the association of ideas which we just happen to have, but need not have. This kind of imagination is sometimes referred to by Kant as the 'reproductive imagination', and he says of it that its working is 'entirely subject to empirical laws, the laws, namely, of association'. 'The reproductive synthesis', he says, 'falls within the domain not of transcendental philosophy, but of psychology.' What distinguishes the transcendental from the empirical imagination is that the transcendental imagination is said to have a constructive function. It is called by Kant the 'productive' imagination, and it is an active or spontaneous power. It is, he says, 'determinative and not, like sense, determinable merely.' It 'determines sense a priori in respect of its form'.

What does this mean? It seems that in Kant's system the imagination, whether empirical or transcendental, lies half-way between the purely intellectual part of our knowledge of the world, the part, that is, which consists of our having abstract concepts or thoughts about things, and the purely sensory part, which, as we have seen, he regards as totally chaotic and unorganized, if considered on its own. Without

imagination, we could never apply concepts to sense experience. Whereas a wholly sensory life would be without any regularity or organization, a purely intellectual life would be without any real content. And this amounts to saying that with either the senses or the intellect we could not experience the world as we do. The two elements are not automatically joined to each other in their functions. They need a further element to join them. The joining element is the imagination; and its mediating power consists in its power to bring the chaos of sense experience to order according to certain rules, or in certain unchanging forms. The imagination obliges us to see the world as bearing these forms whenever we see it at all. It must construct our world into objects which exist independently of ourselves, which persist through change and which manifest some regularly associated features. It is a matter of indifference what particular features these are. I may, by chance, have in my mind an available set of images of palm trees or of rhododendrons or of neither of these. What I must have is a collection of images with the general form of objects. Without this I could not perceive the world as I do. Kant held that to determine these general forms is the task of transcendental philosophy, while to determine what reminds me of a palm tree on the occasion and a rhododendron on another is the task of psychology. It is not entirely obvious that this is a proper distinction. But we can at least distinguish between particular psychological truths about individual people, which are part of the history of those people, and general psychological truths about people at large. What Kant is offering us is a

general psychological truth about the function of imagination, but a truth which he claims is not only universally applicable, but can be shown to be necessarily true.

Neither understanding alone nor sensation alone can do the work of imagination, nor can they be conceived to come together without imagination. For neither can construct creatively, nor reproduce images to be brought out and applied to present experience. Only imagination is in this sense creative, only it makes pictures of things. It forms these pictures by taking sense impressions and working on them. Kant calls this activity 'apprehension'. Later he speaks of the activity of the pure, or transcendental, imagination as being an activity according to rules or schemata. The schema, like a particular image, is something which the imagination makes for itself, and which it then applies to experience in order to render it intelligible to the understanding. It is, it seems, a kind of readiness on the part of the imagination to produce an image where necessary. 'If five points be set alongside each other thus ( ..... ) I have an image of the number five. But if, on the other hand, I think only of a number in general, whether it be five or a hundred, this thought is rather the representation of a method whereby a multiplicity, for instance a thousand, may be represented in an image in conformity with a certain concept, than the image itself. This representation of a universal procedure of imagination in providing an image for a concept I entitle the schema of this concept.'

Kant does not pretend to be able to explain exactly how the formation of such rules or methods is possible for

the imagination. He says, 'The concept "dog" signifies a rule according to which my imagination can delineate the figure of a four-footed animal in a general manner, without limitation to any single determinate figure such as experience or any possible image that I can represent in concreto actually presents.' And he goes on, 'This schematism of our understanding (which is the same as imagination) in its application to appearances and their form is an art concealed in the depth of the human soul whose real modes of activity nature is hardly likely ever to allow us to discover, and to have open to our gaze.' He tries over and over again to make this mystery plainer. In the Critique of Judgment, where he is discussing how we come by the idea of what is normal for any given type or species, he makes another attempt. The aesthetic normal idea represents the standard by which we recognize a man as a member of a particular animal species. The question is, how is this done? 'In order', he says, 'to render the process to some extent intelligible (for who can wrest Nature's whole secret from her?) let us attempt a psychological explanation. It is of note that the imagination in a manner quite incomprehensible to us is able on occasion to reproduce the image and shape of an object out of countless numbers of others of a different or the same kind. And further, if the mind is engaged on comparisons we may well suppose that it can in actual fact, though the process is unconscious, superimpose as it were one image upon another, and from the coincidence of a number of the same kind, arrive at a mean contour which serves as the common standard for all.' If we

were deliberately seeking for the definition of the normal man we could reach the concept mechanically by actually measuring a thousand men and finding the mean. 'But the power of the imagination does all this by means of a dynamical effect upon the organ of internal sense, arising from the frequent apprehension of such forms.' The imagination, in doing this, does not operate in accordance with rules. On the contrary, it seems somehow to generate its own rule, 'it is an intermediate between all singular intuitions of individuals, with their manifold variations, and the generic idea ... a floating image for the whole genus, which nature has set as an archetype underlying those of her products that belong, to the same species but which in no single case she seems completely to have attained.' Thus again, this time from an explicitly psychological standpoint, Kant describes the imagination as a mysterious faculty which enables us to go beyond the immediate object of sense, and recognize, it as a member of a kind of objects, and as a faculty which does this by means of actual images or representations which we can form for ourselves in our minds.

We are now in a position to see that (both for Hume and Kant) it is the representational power of the imagination, its power, that is, actually to form images, ideas or likenesses in the mind which is supposed to contribute to our awareness of the world. In Hume's theory, though this power was manifested in enabling us to understand words uttered in the absence of objects as having general application, it did not function in the presence of objects, except to enable us to treat them as continuously existing, even when we were not

experiencing them. And even this power Hume was inclined to regard as a cheat. But, in Kant's theory, the imagination had a double role. Without it not only could we not regard objects as properly objective, distinct from ourselves and with a continuous existence, but we could not recognize things we experience in the world as objects of a certain kind. And both these functions, crucial to our actual understanding and manipulation of the world, were carried out, albeit mysteriously, by the image-forming power, whether the power merely to represent things previously experienced, or the creative power to construct images of a certain form, blueprints, as it were, for all future and possible reproductive images. In Hume, the use of the word 'impression' for what we receive through the senses brings out the fact that he regards sense experience as wholly passive. Thought about the world, on the other hand, is active. Similarly, in Kant, we are supposed merely to receive the manifold variety of sensations: concepts, on the other hand, are wholly created by us, and need have no application to the world at all. But our actual experience of the world is neither wholly creative nor wholly a matter of passively receiving what we are given. It is a mixture of both elements. The question is, how such a mixture can come about, in Hume, and still more clearly in Kant, it is the imagination which has emerged as that which enables us to go beyond the bare data of sensation, and to bridge the gap between mere sensation and intelligible thought.

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