Imagination, Fantasy, Hallucination, and Memory
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It is a remarkable fact that many previous philosophies and psychologies of mind, however perspicuous or profound that they may be in other ways, have failed to provide adequate accounts of basic differences among imagining, remembering, hallucinating, and fantasizing. Even the most elementary descriptions of such differences are often lacking. Perhaps it has been presumed that the four acts in question are so closely affiliated as not to need descriptive differentiation. In this vein, they are frequently regarded as sibling acts having the same progenitor: perception. Yet each of the acts is related to perception very differently, ranging from apparent replication (in hallucination) to distinct discontinuity (in imagination). It is not my present purpose, however, to delineate this particular series of relationships. Rather, in this chapter I will concentrate on eidetic differences between imagining, on the one hand, and memory, hallucination, and fantasy, on the other. Each of the latter three acts will be described in terms of its most salient features, features that distinguish it from imagining in fundamental respects. Thus the present project represents an exercise in the comparative phenomenology of mind—a neglected but important part of the eidetics of human experience.

I

Memory and imagination have long been regarded as psychical partners, as mates of the mind. Ever since Aristotle conjoined them under the common yoke of "experience,"' philosophers and psychologists have attempted to keep them together in a conjugal state by making two sorts of claims: either that the two acts are in fact one and the same act (though viewed from different perspectives) or that they differ in degree only. The first, more extreme, claim is made by Hobbes:
Imagination and memory are but one thing because both are immediate derivatives of "sense" or sensation, "The Originall of them all" (p. 83). They differ only according to whether more stress is placed upon the content or decaying sense (i.e., "fancy it selfe") or upon the decay per see. Otherwise, they are identical—merely two aspects of the same thing. As Vico was to put it almost a century later: "Memory is the same as imagination" because imagination itself is "nothing but extended or compounded memory" (1668, 75 and 313). Yet what both Hobbes and Vico overlook are the felt differences that emerge in the actual experience of the two acts.

The second claim is more difficult to dispute. That memory and imagination differ only in degree is a thesis that has had perennial appeal. It informs the opinion of a contemporary psychologist, who writes that "the difference between [mental images] and memory images is one of degree and not absolute" (McKellar 1957, 23). But the locus classicus is found in Hume's Treatise of Human Nature, where it is argued that "the ideas of the memory are much more lively and strong than those of the imagination" (1667, 9). Here a difference in vivacity—which is a difference in degree, being a matter of comparative sensory intensity—becomes the criterion for distinguishing imagination from memory. Yet Hume calls this very criterion into question by recognizing borderline cases in which relative vivacity is no longer an adequate basis for distinction: "And as an idea of the memory, by losing its force and vivacity, may degenerate to such a degree, as to be taken for an idea of the imagination; so on the other hand an idea of the imagination may acquire such a force and vivacity, as to pass for an idea of the memory" (Hume 1667, 96).

If memory and imagination are not to be differentiated in terms of relative vivacity alone, how then do they differ? Are there more deep-going differences between the two acts that Hume and others overlook? To single out such differences is not to deny that imagining and remembering possess several features in common. Each act can occur in a spontaneous or in a controlled manner—as ordinary language indicates by distinguishing between "instant" or "involuntary" recall and the effort to "search one's memory." Further each act can alter, compound, or dissociate content that is borrowed initially from perception, though memory is largely restricted to modifying the sequence in which such content was originally experienced. There is, in addition, a similarity of act-forms: we can imagine or remember isolated objects and events, imagine or remember that a certain state of affairs took place, and even imagine or remember how something happened or was experienced. We should also notice that sensory imagery is not any more essential to memory than it is to imagination; recollection can occur abstractly, as when I remember the "atmosphere" of a former situation or recall the answer to a problem in mathematics without summoning up any specific number-images.

Beyond those obvious similarities, however, there remain at least five fundamental differences between memory and imagination.

1. Rootedness in Perception. Not only can memory borrow its content from perception, in most cases it must do so. To remember an object or event is almost always to summon back before the mind what was once in fact perceived. (In the relative few instances when this is not the case, we recall a former fantasy or thought, although there is a tendency even here to remember the perceptual surroundings as well.) The prior perceptions upon which most remembering is founded influence not just its temporal direction (memory is exclusively past-oriented—see point 2) but also its thematic character (see point 5), its corrigibility (recollection, like perception, can be correct or incorrect), and its ability to change own content (an ability delimited by considerations of fidelity to what was originally perceived). All of these features of remembering reflect memory's basis in previous perceptions, and they represent distinctive divergences from imagining, which is less constricted and more maneuverable in regard to each such feature: we need not imagine what is past or real, and what we imagine is not subject to criteria of corrigibility or of fidelity to former experience.

2. Link to the Past. A crucial consequence of the close connection between memory and perception is to be found in the basic temporal character of memory. Just as perception has to do with the in-sistence of objects or events that appear or occur in the present, so memory has to do with the per-sistence of objects or events that first appeared or occurred in the past. Such persistence is in turn founded upon two facts. First, whatever persists as the specific content of memory must possess a certain minimal obscurity—a perseverance over time, even if this perseverance occurs solely in the mind. Second, the temporal field in which remembered content is presently given to one is ultimately continuous with the particular temporal
field within which this content was first experienced at an earlier and precisely datable point. For both the original field of experience and the present field of recollection (which may resemble each other only insofar as it is the same object or event that is experienced and remembered) form part of a single temporal continuum. No matter how distant in time the two fields may be from each other, we are assured that intermediate fields serve to connect the original field with the one in which our remembering now occurs. The resulting continuum from past occurrence to present remembrance provides a unified foundation for the persistence of remembered material.

In imagining, there is a notable absence of both of these factors. Nothing, strictly speaking persists in imaginative experience, whose content lacks the fixity and stability of remembered content. In the fluidity and fleetingness, imagined objects and events exhibit none of the obduracy or perseverance of the things we remember, and they are not datable and locatable in any measurably precise fashion. Further there is nothing in imaginative experience that is meaningfully comparable to a perduring temporal field in which entities or events can arise, last, and be focused upon in an intersubjectively confirmable way. Consequently a given imaginative experience does not necessarily intermesh with the imager’s past experiences. In fact it is normally quite discontinuous with the temporal fields in which these experiences took place. Yet, by the same token, precisely because what we imagine is not something that has persisted from the past and does not belong to a backward-reaching continuum of linked temporal fields, it is free to arise and develop in a less confined manner than is what we remember. In exercising memory, we revert, implicitly or explicitly, to particular points of reference as factual-historical supports: I remember Jones standing on the dock, at such-and-such a time of day, and so on. These referential points, which help to situate whatever it is that we recollect, cannot be transposed once they are established by the original appearance or occurrence of a given object or event. Imagined objects and events, in contrast, are not attached to any such fixed original positions and may be freely transported from one imaginative presentation to another.9

3. Retentionality. The term “retentionality” brings together two closely related features that are both inherent in the temporality of memory: retentiveness and the retentional fringe. Neither of these features has any counterpart in imagination. Retentiveness refers to the capacity to retain a former experience in mind (though not necessarily consciously in mind) so as to be able to recall it on subsequent occasions. Thus retentiveness is a “dispositional” term in the sense that it indicates what memory puts at our disposal through its powers of retention. These powers are considerable, and it has even been argued that in some sense we retain everything we have ever experienced. At the very least, we cannot fail to be struck by the way in which many of our prior experiences are preserved in a form that is, in Freud’s phrase, “astonishingly intact” (Freud and Breuer 1893–95, 10). At the same time, retentiveness makes possible the assimilation of cognitive, perceptual, and motor skills; once they are thoroughly learned, we need not recollect explicitly how we first learned them.11 Retentiveness, we might say, is the means by which we hold the past ready for reactivation in the present. As such, it is the basis for all explicit recollection.12

The retentional fringe, on the other hand, is that element or phrase of a just-past experience that lingers on in each successively new “now”: it is the immediately preceding moment as it fades from focus. William James describes the retentional fringe as “the rearward portion of the present space of time” (1950, 647), and Husserl (who terms it “retention” or “primary memory”) likens it to “a comet’s tail which clings onto the perception of the [present] moment” (1962, 57–59). The retentional fringe is essential to retentiveness, for an experience lacking a retentional fringe would not possess sufficient temporal density or distention to be retained for future recall. Moreover, far form being restricted to a role in retentiveness and recall, the retentional fringe shows itself to be operative in all area of mental life: every psychical phenomenon has its retentional fringe. This fringe helps to constitute the felt continuity that is ingredient to some degree in all forms of human experience. For no single characteristic of imagining can a comparable universality be claimed. In fact it is evident that imagining functions more as an alternative to, than as an accompaniment of, other mental acts. None of its essential features figures as an invariant dimension of other types of experience, while it is itself subject to retentiveness in both senses of the term: a given imaginative experience is retained indefinitely, and it possesses its own retentional fringe.

4. Familiarity. Another distinctive, but more delimited, trait of memory is familiarity, the fact that what we remember is always something with which we are already acquainted to some degree. Unless we were at least minimally familiar with the objects and events we recollect, we could not
be said to re-member them—that is, to put them back together in a way that is faithful to the original experience, as well as becoming once more their contemporary (though now only via an intermediary act of recollection). In short, to be remembered, something must form part of the rememberer’s own past experience. As James puts it: “Memory requires more than mere dating of a fact in the past. It must be dated in my past. In other words, I must think that I, directly, experienced its occurrence” (1950, 650). The familiarity underlying memory thus involves a personal relationship with remembered content, a relationship characterized by what James calls “warmth and intimacy” (1950, 650) and Bertrand Russell “trust.”

Familiarity is closely related to retentionality as described above. First of all, familiarity presupposes retentiveness insofar as any object or event with which we are familiar is one whose acquaintance we have retained over a given period of time. Second, familiarity involves the retentional fringe because we could never have become familiar with a particular object or event in the first place unless the experience of this object or event had been allowed to linger (“sink down” into our mind, as Husserl says) long enough for familiarity to be established.

As a form of personal relationship with the content of past experience, familiarity decisively demarcates remembering from imagining: familiarity is indispensable to memory but dispensable in imagination. I can imagine something with which I am not at all familiar (i.e., which has never been present in my experience), but I cannot remember anything with which I am not acquainted or familiar in some way and to some extent. It comes as no surprise therefore to discover that a number of philosophers “have regarded this same sense of familiarity as the feature which distinguishes memory from imagination.” (Smith 1966, 20). All that needs qualification in this assertion is that familiarity is not the only feature that differentiates the one act from the other.

5. Belief. By “belief” I refer to the characteristic thetic activity of remembering. In this usage, I follow Hume’s lead: “The belief or asent, which always attends the memory and senses ... alone distinguishes them from the imagination” (Hume 1967, 86). But if such belief, in line with the critical remarks made previously, is not to be reduced to what Hume calls the “vivacity of perceptions, in what does it consist? Is it only a matter, as James claims, of “feeling” or “emotion”? Also, and more crucially, involved in mnemonic belief is a specific cognitive operation by which we attribute a particular thetic character to what we recall. When I remember an object or event, and whether I do so with effort or spontaneously, I take this object or event to be something that once actually appeared or occurred in my presence. I accept or take it as possessing the thetic quality of having-been-part-of-my-past-experience.

This thetic character is unique to memory and is ultimately bound up with the four characteristics of remembering outlined in preceding sections. It is related, first of all, to prior perceptual experience, for to believe in the empirical existence of something requires that it be (or have been) perceived or at least perceivable. As Freud says laconically, “Belief in reality is bound up with perception through the senses” (1917, 230). Second, belief in the content of memory as having-been-part-of-my-past-experience carries with it the presumption that my present act of recollection is temporarily continuous, through a series of interfacing time-fields, with the original experience I am now recalling; the absence of such continuity might lead me to doubt the authenticity of my memory. Third, belief in the past reality of what I remember presupposes retentionality; I believe that something actually has been because it has been “retained” in both of the primary meanings of this term. Finally, and perhaps most tellingly, I lend mnemonic credence to what I am familiar with through former (and perhaps continuing) acquaintance. To be familiar with the content of memory is to be in a position to posit this content as authentically having-been-part-of-my-past.

As Husserl recognized, the verb “to posit” (setzen) is of critical importance in any consideration of thetic activity. To say that I believe in the reality of what I recall is to say that I posit it (i.e., set it forth) as existent-in-my-past—just as I posit the content of anticipation as existent-in-my-future. Both forms of “positing presentification” (to use Husserl’s technical term) are thus to be distinguished from the nonpositing presentifications of imagining, picturing, and sign-activity. This suggests a final formulation of the difference between memory and imagination in regard to their respective thetic activities. In remembering, I believe in, or posit, as existing in my personal past that which presents itself (or more exactly, that which is presentified) now in the present; in imagining, I do not such thing: not only do I not posit imagined content as having-been, I do not posit it as existing in any sense or at any time.
pathological human subjects, are considered by Freud to be quite analogous to "hallucinatory wish psychosis" and to furnish a paradigm for psycho-neurotic symptoms (1917). 20

Nevertheless, the paranormal character of hallucinating need not be pathological in any strict clinical or nosological sense. There is a whole group of hallucinatory experiences that, while potentially disruptive, are not signs or symptoms of sickness of any kind. These include vivid enoptic images ("phosphenes"), after-images and eidetic images, hallucinations induced under hypnosis, déjà vu experiences, various synesthetic sensations, misreadings of written texts (these are often species of negative hallucination, as in imperfect proofreading), phantom limbs, imaginary companions, "dream scintillations," and religious visions. 21 None of these varied experiences is inherently pathological, and yet each is a genuine instance of hallucination inasmuch as its perceptual or quasi-perceptual nature is able to arrest our attention and divert it from absorption in present perceptual experience. By thus competing with ordinary perception, such experiences remain paranormal. From this we may conclude that whether pathological or not, hallucinations differ distinctly from acts of imagining. The latter, lacking the commitment to the empirically real, typically do not interfere with or interrupt acts of perceiving. Imagined objects or events never appear as if existing in the perceptual world. Therefore imagining cannot be considered paranormal, since it does not divert or divert perceiving or threaten to take its place. In its inherent innocence, imagination neither rivals nor replicates perception.

2. Sensory Vivacity. It follows from what has just been said that unless hallucinations achieve a certain sensory intensity, they cannot be compared with, nor substitute themselves for, perceptions. To invoke "intensity" and "vivacity" might seem to land us in the same difficulty in which Hume became ensnared when he tried to distinguish imagination from memory. But it is not here a question of establishing a scale of carefully graduated sensory intensities on which to locate various mental acts at different points. Rather, it is only a matter of attesting that in a given situation (and therefore allowing for differences from situation to situation) a hallucination must display sufficient vividness to allow it to enter into competition with our ongoing perceptual activity. It must be rich enough in sensory qualities to claim our committed awareness, to make us believe in it as a bona fide form of perception. Thus a dream-image need not be as sensuously vivid as a positive hallucination occurring in broad daylight. In the former case, the level of sensory vividness can be considerably diminished, thanks to what Freud called the "motor paralysis" of sleep. With our normal waking sensory channels mostly closed off, our mind is more easily attracted by a comparatively dim presentation. In the latter case, in contrast, the hallucination must appear vividly enough to be accepted as an acute or possible occupant of the daylight world. 22

In imagining, there is no competition of any sort with perceiving. For one thing, we can imagine and perceive concurrently—so long as we are not attempting to imagine and perceive the same thing in the same respect. Imagined content is not experienced as occupying part of our present perceptual field, much less as taking it over. Further, what we imagine need not be sensory in character. By imagining nonsensuously, we diminish still further the opportunity for any direct competition with perception. To imagine an abstract state of affairs as purely as possible is, ipso facto, to leave the domain of perception—and any domain built upon, or analogous to, perception. Hallucinating, on the other hand, knows no such freedom from perceptual or quasi-perceptual domains. Hallucinations always appear in a specific sensory form, where the meaning of "sensory" includes reference to all of the following factors: space, time, direction, distance, obtrusiveness, mineness, motion, measurability, and objectivity" (Straus, 1966, 284). 23 No such set of strictly perceptual parameters structures the mini-worlds of imagination.

3. Projectedness. Still another basic characteristic of hallucinations is that their contents are experienced as "out there," as projected presences existing externally to the hallucinator's consciousness. Thus Freud asserts that a dream (his prototype for all hallucinating), is "a projection: an externalization of an internal process" (1917, 233). 24 Further, "dreams construct a situation out of [hallucinatory] images, they represent an event which is actually happening" (1900, 50). An event actually occurring in a situation takes place outside oneself as its observer; it is located externally to the perceiving self—as if arising beyond this self. Since a hallucinated event does not in fact occur in an actual situation, it has to be projected by the hallucinating subject as occurring there. "Projectedness" names the resulting pseudo-eternality, which characterizes everything from the elaborate visual displays of LSD hallucinations to "autosopic" observations of one's own body from an external point in space. What psychologists or physiologists would regard
as located inside one's mind or body is projected outward until the equivalent of an authentically perceived object or event is felt to be present.  

Imaginative experience does not contain anything comparable to such thoroughgoing projectedness of content. We may speak of "projecting" possible objects and states of affairs in imagining, but such possibilities are not projected as constituents of actual situations external to the imager. Far from inhabiting a concrete setting, imagined possibilities are typically projected into a spatio-temporal limbo that is felt to be neither external nor internal to the imager. When I imagine how to row a boat (and even when I do so in sensory detail), the scene I summon up lacks the distinctive situatedness of something hallucinated. Even if I expressly attempt to project a state of affairs that is at some significant distance from myself—and perhaps even partly superimposed on an actual perceptual scene—what I imagine still lacks the sense of obdurate otherness that is found as a matter of course in hallucinated scenes. And I can always, by a further effort, overcome this imaginary distance and make myself one with the imaginatively projected situation—which I cannot do readily, if at all, in hallucinating the same situation.

4. Involuntaryness. With rare exceptions, hallucinations arise without our express volition. This may happen in various circumstances—in psychopathological states or when hypnotized, asleep, drugged, and so on—but whatever the causes or conditions of hallucinations, they tend to emerge spontaneously and beyond our conscious control. Indeed, they often appear so rapidly and with so little warning that we are astounded or shocked that any such thing could happen. (Contrast this reaction with the characteristically mild surprise that occurs in imagining.) Furthermore our ability to control or terminate hallucinations once they have appeared is usually quite limited; witness the "voices" of the schizophrenic patient, auditory presences that mercilessly pursue and threaten.  

Hallucinations may also recur with distressing and unpredictable frequency, as in Sartre's persisting hallucinations of crabs (occasioned by mescaline). There is little, if anything, that the hallucinating subject can do to ward off these unwelcome revenants—in contrast with imaginative experience where the obsessive recurrence of an imagined object can be dealt with much more effectively. In fact, as imaginers, we are normally able to terminate, once and for all, a given imaginative appearance, and even if we cannot do this, we can alter the subsequent course of this appearance.

5. Belief. The involuntariness of hallucinatory experience reflects its predominant thetic activity—belief in the empirical reality of its content. Voltaire remarked that hallucinating "is not seeing in imagination: it is seeing in reality." And "seeing in reality" entails believing that what one apprehends is present to one's senses as spatio-temporally existent. As Jean-Étienne Esquirol said in 1833, "A man who has the inner conviction of a sensation actually perceived while no object fitting for its excitation is at the threshold of his senses, such a man is in a condition of hallucinating." Or as Freud put it more pithily, "Hallucination brings belief in reality with it" (1917, 230).

Hallucination involves belief in the empirically real precisely because of the vivid sensory quality of hallucinated content. We adhere to the reality of what we hallucinate inasmuch as it appears to us not only as the sort of thing that could be perceived (this is true of many things we imagine) but as actually perceived. By "actually" is meant perceived in the present as an occupant of the very same spatio-temporal field in which one is situated oneself. In this way, the hallucinator's belief is to be distinguished from the sort of thetic activity that inheres in either memory or imagination. In contrast with mnemonic belief, hallucinatory belief does not bear on realities in their pastness (i.e., as having-been-present-in-my-past) but on realities that appear (or appear to appear) at the present moment. As contrasted with what happens in imagining, in hallucinating we place credence in the existence of some presently appearing object or event; we do not suspend committed belief altogether and entertain pure possibilities. If we include anticipation in a schema for comparing different types of thetic character, we arrive at the following diagrammatic results:

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Does this mean, as the diagram suggests, that there is no distinction to be made between the belief-character of hallucination and that of perception? Here we are forced to recognize that there are in fact two forms of hallucinatory belief. The first is experientially indistinguishable from perceptual belief; occurring in what is called colloquially a “full-blown hallucination,” it involves the same fully committed credence in empirical reality that characterizes ordinary perception. The second form of hallucinatory belief is less intensely committed in character; in this case, the hallucinator remains able to distinguish between what is hallucinated and what is actually perceived. The paradox is that the hallucinated content, even though distinguishable from what is genuinely perceived, is still regarded as real. The patient who does not confuse his recurrent hallucinations of a person dressed in a certain way and standing under his window with bona fide perceptions of just such a person actually standing under his window nevertheless maintains that both presences are real: “Yes, there is someone there, but it’s someone else.” Qualitative distinctness does not preclude the belief that both forms of presence are empirically real, as we can also observe in many cases of “hearing voices”; the hallucinated voices are experienced as real (encroaching on one’s senses from the outside, occurring in the present, etc.) and at the same time as different from ordinary, authentically perceived human voices. Indeed, it may be this very difference that accounts for the frequently reported “eeriness” of numerous hallucinatory experiences. The implication, in any case, is that the thematic character of empirical reality possesses sufficient ambiguity or latitude to allow it to be the object of at least two different forms or modes of belief, one of which is common to perception and full-blown hallucination while the other is peculiar to a less intense type of hallucination.

No such overlap of belief-forms emerges when we compare hallucination or perception with imagination, which does not in any way involve belief in empirical reality. The imaginer remains content to posit pure possibilities. It is clear that the natural alliance between perceiving and hallucinating in this regard, and thus the basis for their mutual differentiation from imagining, is to be found in the fact that hallucination not only resembles perception but seems to provide a form of surrogate perceptual experience. This is why we are often tempted to term hallucinatory experience “quasi-perceptual,” where the “quasi” indicates that the hallucinated content may in certain cases be taken as fully valid perceptual content. We might say that hallucination fashions a world like the perceptual world, and one that momentarily usurps its place, even though such a world is in fact no world at all. In this, the hallucinatory departs widely from the imaginer, whose mentated mini-worlds neither resemble the perceptual world nor replace it with something quasi-real.

III

Of the various psychical phenomena with which imagination may be compared, fantasy is no doubt the most ambiguous and difficult to define. “Fantasy” is a polysemous word which in ordinary parlance denotes a variety of acts ranging from near-hallucinatory and quite involving experiences, through reveries and daydreams, to mere “passing fancies.”32 Because of this equivocality, attempts at strict definition are in danger of effecting premature foreclosure. Consider, for example, one recent attempt: “Fantasy is defined as verbal reports of all mentation whose ideational products are not evaluated by the subject in terms of their usefulness in advancing some immediate goal extrinsic to the mentation itself” (Klinger 1971, 9–10). Conspicuous in this statement is its entirely negative character; we are told what fantasy is not, not what it is. Moreover the single criterion mentioned—not evaluating results of mental activity in terms of usefulness—is so general as also to apply to imagining, to hallucination, and even to memory. Greater specificity is clearly called for.

When we try to become more specific, however, we notice that the ambiguity of fantasy is not only verbal. It is also, and more important, phenomenal. For human experience includes a whole series of phenomena that can be considered types of fantasy, from children’s “theories” about the adult world to the Walter Mitty daydreams of adults themselves. Compounding the problem is the fact that these phenomena are not always readily isolatable from each other. They tend to overlap in such a way as to make strict separation extremely difficult. “There are many transitional forms… Fantasy shades into remembering when it uses memories and when the inaccuracies of memory are fantasies. For corresponding reasons, fantasy shades into perceiving, anticipating, and planning (Schafer 1968, 37). Nevertheless, fantasy tends to ally itself more with certain mental activities than with others; it is not indifferently connectable with all such activities. In particular, it has a tendency to border on hallucination, on one hand, and on imagination, on the other. In the former case, a fantasy becomes increasingly involving, dramatic, and sensuously vivid. It draws the
subject into its grip in such a way that he or she is on the verge of losing control of the experience, which may then become fully hallucinatory. But there is a second possibility as well—namely the conversion of fantasy into imagination. Such a conversion typically occurs in daydreams or reveries, when what had been a full-fledged fantasy suddenly becomes an experience in which the autonomous action of the subject is much more prominent than in fantasy proper. The daydream or reverie ceases to be as engrossing as before and is experienced as something merely entertained (hence more easily controllable) by the now-imagining subject.

But here we must ask: What is fantasy if it is still distinguishable from hallucination and imagination? Even while admitting that fantasy is exceedingly difficult to pinpoint in its pure state (Sartre would call it “metastable”), we may single out five distinctive characteristics.

1. Narrative character. Perhaps the single most striking feature of fantasies is their tendency to tell a story. This feature is based on their sequential structure, which contrasts with the fragmentariness of most hallucinating and imagining. In fantasy, individual episodes are woven together to realize a more or less coherent story line, instead of being allowed to appear in isolation. A representative fantasy is given in the following autobiographical account of Jerome Singer's:

Within the format of [my] fantasied football games, Poppy Ott emerged as the super-star, the shifty-footed, clever broken-field runner and accurate passer. As time passed the overt motor representation of an imagined game was no longer socially feasible and I began to draw the game on paper in cartoon form. I would visualize an entire league series, draw significant highlights from each game, occasionally write out play-by-play accounts of the games, and keep statistics on the various achievements of my fantasy players in the same way that the newspapers do for running or passing averages. As I grew into adolescence, Poppy Ott, who was supposedly a few years older than I was, grew up too. He left Tutter to play professional football and, after so well-documented setbacks, emerged as the greatest football player of all time on a Boston professional team of my own creation. (1966, 19–20).

Several significant aspects of this “Poppy Ott” fantasy should be noticed. First of all, it was initially inspired by Singer's boyhood reading of a series of children's books which featured Poppy Ott as one of the principal characters. Notably Singer did borrow the fictitious personage of Ott from these books, but also he placed Ott into fantasies which by their very form and structure continued the narrative mode of the original stories. It was as

if the fantasies took over at the point where the stories left off. Second, in the early stages of his Ott fantasies, Singer depicted their content in dramatized actions, drawings, or in words. Only later did he turn to visualizing as the predominant mode in which to realize these fantasies. Moreover the fantasies were not unrelated to actual events in Singer's life; for example, they appeared especially frequently during the football season. In all of these ways—by dramatization, drawing, and writing, and by correlation with actual events—Singer drew on resources that reinforced the inner continuity, sequential character, and general credibility of his fantasy experiences. The result was that the entire fantasy sequence settled into a fairly circumscribed pattern. In high school and even into adult life I would deal with situations that were monotonous or dull by resorting consciously to playing out a particular game in which Poppy Ott starred” (1966, 19–20).

No such “circumscribed pattern” characterizes imaginative experiences, which lack the fundamental consistency and coherence of fantasies of the sort Singer describes. Indeed, it is even questionable whether we can be said to imagine the same object or event again and again, and any sense of a perduring spatial or temporal “field” in which a narrated action could take place is lacking in imaginative presentations. Thus, without any basis for recurrency or spatio-temporal stability, it is very difficult to superimpose a narrative form on what we imagine. For such a form to “take,” a certain continuity in content and manner of presentation is required. In the absence of such continuity, isolated episodes may appear, but they will not fit together to constitute anything like a story. The result is that imaginations are inherently nonnarrative in character, episodic at best (though often much more fleeting even than this), they disintegrate too quickly to possess a strictly narrative structure—"one glimpse and vanished" (Beckett 1965, 7).

2. Sense of participation. The tales that are told in fantasies differ from explicitly literary tales in two important regards. First, there is not a comparable concern with form in the two cases. Literary tales are fashioned with an eye to their formal perfection, and part of our pleasure in coming to know them stems from our apprehending their well-crafted formal qualities. Fantasies are, as it were, purely narrative, stories spun solely for the sake of their content—a content that is typically, as Freud observed, either erotic or ambitious in tenor (1908, 147). At the same time they often give the impression of “taking their own course,” that is, proceeding without the express direction of the fantasist.
Second, fantasied stories always involve the fantasist himself or herself as a participation in their narrated scenes. This fantasist (who is none other than “His Majesty the Ego”) represents himself as partaking in the unfolding action of the fantasy in either of two ways. On the one hand, he may do so straightforwardly by depicting himself as present in person in the fantasy, as one of its dramatis personae—though the exact nature of this presence varies considerably from fantasy to fantasy. On the other hand, the fantasist may participate in the fantasied action by proxy, either by identifying himself with one of its presented personages (e.g., Poppy Ott) or by designating one of these personages as his delegate or representative (e.g., as when the fantasist thinks to himself, “That’s my type of man”).

A further and closely related phenomenon is found in what psychoanalysts call “reflective self-representation,” that is, a distinct sense of oneself as separate from the self that is represented (directly or indirectly) in the fantasied scenes. This peculiar self-consciousness is by no means constantly present—it tends to come and go—but it is always felt to be within reach: “the suspension of the reflective self-representation is temporary or oscillating, or, in other terms, easily and effortlessly reversible” (Schafer 1968, 94).

These aspects of participation in fantasy may be contrasted with what happens in imagining and hallucinating, especially the latter. In hallucinating, the subject typically feels himself or herself to be the passive recipient or victim of external forces over which he or she has no control (hence their frequently frightening character). Only rarely does one represent oneself as participating, in person or by proxy, in a hallucinated scene. In fact one’s sense of self-identify may be so weak that one feels that a dead or depersonalized self is being attacked by the threatening forces. The imagining, on the other hand, normally retains a quite intact sense of self-identify. Indeed, his or her reflective self-representation may be even more pronounced than that of the fantasist, particularly during experiences of controlled imagining: “I am imagining this,” one is implicitly saying to oneself at such moments. By the same token, and perhaps as a consequence of this secure self-consciousness, there is a tendency for the imaginer not to represent himself or herself as a participant in the imaginatively projected scene. This is not to deny that one may do so on occasion, especially when one imagines how it is to be in a certain imagined situations. Yet if imagining—how thereby requires one’s participation, this is not the case with regard to simple visualizing or imagining that such-and-such obtains. These latter spread before the imagining momentary scenes of which he or she is the mere

witness, situated at their edge as it seems. In such instances one does not depict himself as a participant in the ongoing action.

3. Waywardness. By this term, I refer to the specific character of control that the fantasist experiences vis-à-vis his or her fantasy. In contrast with both fantasy and imagination, hallucination allows for very little conscious control, arising as an externally imposed and often overwhelming experience. It is true that certain hallucinations may be elicited at will, but once having emerged even these have a way of taking over the whole of one’s awareness and of vanishing unpredictably and independently of one’s volition. Fantasies are subject to considerably more control throughout. The fantasist can encourage their initial appearance (coax them into being, as it were), exercise varying degrees of influence upon their development, and draw them to a close by merely diverting his or her attention. But we should not exaggerate the controlled character of fantasy. As was remarked earlier, fantasizing tends to take its own course, not to the wild and bizarre extent of hallucinating, but nonetheless to the point of appearing to generate its own content. It is in this sense wayward, seeming to have a will of its own and spinning itself out. The fantasist is usually content to assume a position of engrossed awareness so as to follow the unfolding narrative. This contrasts with what is found in imagining, where the factor of control is much more prominent. In almost every case, the imaginer can imagine precisely as, how, and when he or she wishes to. No comparable controllability of content manifests itself in fantasies, most of which arise and proceed spontaneously. The point is not that such fantasies cannot be controlled (as if so often the case in hallucinating) but that they are less frequently and thoroughly controlled than are imaginative experiences.

4. Wish fulfillment. In a much-quoted statement, Freud asserted that “a happy person never phantasies, only an unsatisfied one. The motive forces of phantasies are unsatisfied wishes, and every single phantasy is the fulfillment of a wish, a correction of unsatisfying reality” (1908, 146). We need not posit wishes as “motive forces” in order to agree with Freud. Fantasies are experienced as wish-fulfilling, whatever the exact status of wishes may be in the total system of the psyche. Thus “wish-fulfilling” as used here refers to an actually experienced trait of fantasies, not to their general function. Fantasies set forth situations that, by their very nature, represent the fulfillment of wishes. The sense of fulfillment is itself based on the fact that fantasies present relatively complete depictions of their own
content, and their narrative character aids immensely in presenting scenes that are complex enough (spatially, temporally, and in other ways) to be scenes of satisfaction.

The term “satisfaction” is important here. The primary affect attaching to fantasy experiences is that of pleasure. We find most fantasies pleasant to behold, and this is so even when the scenes they portray are sadistic or self-reproachful. It is no less enjoyable to witness the fulfillment of our own vengeful or self-critical thoughts than it is to project the fulfillment of altruistic or erotic impulses or thoughts enacted—but enacted precisely in fantasy. Where actual enactment might well bring consternation or horror, enactment in fantasy gives rise to pleasure. Much as in viewing movies, we know that the scenes fantasies proffer, however terrifying they might be if they were in fact present, are by no means real ones. There is a “willing suspension of disbelief,” but by the same token there is the assurance that what we witness is not to be believed as actually occurring.

The factor of wish-fulfillment brings fantasy closer to hallucination in one respect and to imagination in another. It is clear that fantasy and hallucination resemble each other to the extent that each projects entire scenes or situations; each thus provides a sufficient pictorial basis for representing the fulfillment of a wish by some particular action or set of actions. Imagining, in contrast, is often too scanty in its presentations to allow wish-fulfillment to be adequately represented. Nevertheless, in terms of affective quality, fantasy and imagination are closer to each other than either is to hallucination. Hallucination elicits fully and deeply felt emotions, often of an anxious or apprehensive nature, while the emotions associated with fantasying and imagining are comparatively tepid. Where a peculiarly self-indulgent pleasure is the main affect experienced in fantasy, a muted surprise or even an absence of overt emotion is characteristic of imagining.

5. Belief. As in the case of several other basic traits of fantasy, its thetic activity situates itself between the corresponding activities of hallucinating and imagining. On the one hand, this activity differs from the sort of committid belief found in hallucination, since fantasied content is not posited as real or as competing with the real. As Freud formulates it, “daydreaming is never confused with reality” (1900, 50)—as opposed to nocturnal dreaming, where the confusion occurs constantly. Nothing in what we fantasy induces us to consider it as actually taking place before us. Indeed, the more attuned and open to fantasy we are, the more we rely upon a sure sense of the difference between what we experience in fantasy and what we experience in hallucination or in ordinary perception.

On the other hand, the thetic character of fantasy is to be distinguished from that of imagination insofar as what we fantasy is not experienced as purely possible. Thanks to its narrative form, fantasied content evokes in us a special allegiance—a conviction that what we are witnessing is, if not empirically or externally real, at least real in mune. Such content has a peculiar ability to persuade us that the scenes we are fantasying exist by right—by psychological right—if not in fact. As a consequence we ascribe to them what Jung calls “esse in anima” (Jung 1947–75, Collected Works VI, 45) or what other psychoanalysts term variously “inner reality,” “internal reality,” and above all “psychical reality.” The scene being enacted in fantasy does not represent or even adumbrate what is empirically real or purely possible; it has a distinct form of psychological presence that calls forth neither the commitment of hallucination or perception nor the non-committal attitude of imagining. In fact the resulting sense of the psychically real involves a turning away from the extra-psychically (i.e., materially or socially) real.

Extra-psychical reality is replaced, not by a quasi-perceptual hallucinatory reality, but by a psychical reality that is of our own making.

A last remark is in order. It cannot be denied that important continuities and overlaps occur between the four acts that have been compared in this chapter: memory may furnish the framework and even the details of hallucinating, fantasying, and imagining; fantasy can collapse into hallucination or be taken up into imagination; hallucination can be instigated and modified by all of the other acts, just as it may significantly influence them in turn; and imagining may draw on each of the others for its specific content, while also (though infrequently) lending content to them. But any such mutual impinging must be distinguished from epistemological dependency. For each of these four acts can occur independently of the others and in their absence, and none serves as a necessary condition for the rest. Moreover, each is eidetically differentiable from the others, possessing its own unique set of distinctive characteristics. Although resemblances exist among certain of these characteristics, distinctions are to be found even here: the controllability of fantasying and that of imagining, however similar, are not precisely the same; the positing activities of hallucination and of memory, though both bearing on empirical reality, do so in very different ways. We may conclude, therefore, that a descriptive analysis of
memory, hallucination, and fantasy reveals these acts to be epistemologically and ontologically distinct not only from imagination but from each other as well.

Notes

1. The structure of imagining itself is described in detail in my Imagining: A phenomenological Study (1976). The same work also contains a comparison of imagination and perception (chapters 6 and 7) and a specification (in the introduction) of the ways in which imagining, remembering, fantasizing, and hallucinating have been inadequately distinguished from each other in Western psychology and philosophy.

2. See Aristotle, Metaphysics (1980: 24-30). See also Aristotle's explicit linking of memory and imagination in De Memoria et Reminiscentia: "Memory, even the memory of objects of thought, is not without an image... And it is the objects of imagination that are remembered in their own right" (1972, 49).

3. Quoted from Leviathan, his italics. Note that "fancy" and "imagination" are interchangeable for Hobbes.

4. In Hobbes's proto-empiricist view, all mental acts stem from sensation: from it, "the rest are derived" (1968, 85). But memory and imagination are more directly derived from sensation than are other acts.

5. Also memory "is nothing but the springing up again of reminiscences" (1968, 264). Such a view is not restricted to Hobbes or Vico. An eminent imagery researcher writes that "images are not merely imitations, but memory fragments, reconstructions, reinterpretations" (Horowitz, 1970, 4, my italics).

6. Note that McKeever supports his position by invoking the same argument as Aristotle or Hobbes: "No imagination can occur that is not composed of elements derived from actual perceptual experience" (1957, 23).

7. On the same page, Hume suggests another criterion for distinguishing between ideas of memory and ideas of imagination. The "order and form" of the former must conform to their "original impressions," while no such conformity is required of the latter. But Hume comes to reject this criterion when he acknowledges that it is "impossible to recall the past impressions, in order to compare them without present ideas, and see whether arrangement be exactly similar" (p. 85).

8. The situation in fact is more complex than this simple division implies. The generic term "memory" (active form: "remembering") subsumes spontaneous recall and elaborated recollection, but it also includes intermediate acts such as "reminiscing," which may be spontaneous or controlled.

9. As mentioned, of course, my act of imagining possesses a determinate temporal position: I imagined x at time y, and this remains true indefinitely. But the contents of my act are neither positioned on an objective time-line nor located in a determinate spatial space. Rather, these contents exfoliate, at whim or at will, without regard to any precise point of origin in space or in time.

10. Freud also muses upon how "unexpectedly accurate memory can be" (p. 11) and is struck by the "hypermnestic" quality of dreams which reproduce earlier and long-forgotten situations (Freud 1900, 11-17).

11. On this point, see Brian Smith, Memory (1966, 108).

12. As William James says, "An object which is recollected, in the proper sense of the term, is one which has been absent from consciousness altogether, and now revives anew. It is brought back, recalled, fished up, so to speak, from a reservoir in which, with countless other objects it lay buried and lost from view" (1950, 646). Described thus, receptiveness cannot be restricted to specific skills we have learned; it applies to anything and everything that, having once been experienced, has now sedimented itself into our permanent stock of recallable material.

13. ... the "characteristic by which we distinguish the [memory] images we trust is the feeling of familiarity that accompanies them." (Russell 1921, 161).

14. For Smith's own reservations as to this thesis, see (1966, 42, 96).

15. "Memory is then the feeling of belief in a peculiar complex object... The object of memory is only an object imagined in the past... to which the emotion of belief adheres." (James 1950, 652).

16. Hume also writes: "To believe is... to feel an innate impression of the senses, or a repetition of that impression in the memory." (1966, 86). Aristotle agrees: "Belief will have as [its] object nothing else but that which, if it exists, is the object of the perception" (De Anima, 428a: 28-30).

17. See Hussel's The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness (1962), sections 16-28 and appendices I and II. See also Hussel's Ideas. (1958), sections 43, 99-101, and 111. My two essays "Imagination and Repetition in Literature" (Casey 1976a) and "The Image/Sign Relation in Hussel and Freud" (Casey 1976b) discuss Hussel's classification in more detail than can be attempted here.


19. See also Freud (1900-1901, 544-46 and 598ff) and (1923, 20). These passages make it clear that although the formation of dream-images specifically involves the cathexis of memory traces, the memory that is thereby revived is of a former perception.

20. Especially page 230: "One might speak quite generally of a 'hallucinatory wishful psychosis,' and attribute it equally to dreams and amnesia." On the dream as a prototype of neurotic symptoms, see The Interpretation of Dreams (Freud 1900, xxxiii). On the relation between dreams and insanity, see ibid., (88-92).

21. For a comprehensive overview of such nonpathological paranormal experiences, see Horowitz, (1970) especially chapter 1.

22. I saw "actual" or "possible" because of the fact that many hallucinators do not believe that what they hallucinate is actually present before them. They assume what Lhermitte calls a "critical" attitude even as they are hallucinating (Lhermitte 1951, 26). Also see section 5 below.