

МОНОЛОГИ, ДИАЛОГИ, ДИСКУССИИ

ОТ РЕДКОЛЕГИИ: Принято считать, что философия является сугубо рациональной деятельностью. Как утверждал Г. Гегель, «философия – это тяжёлая работа с понятием», что подразумевает не просто рациональное познание, но рефлексию над таковым. Однако человек от природы обладает двумя познавательными способностями – не только рациональной, но и эмпирической. Можно ли тогда представить философию как работу с репродуктивным воображением, представив её как рефлексию над эмпирическими образами? В статье Марко Негри «Воображающая философия» как раз и представлена такая попытка. Насколько она удалась, судить читателю.

Напоминаем, что мнение редколлегии журнала «Вестник Томского государственного университета. Философия, социология, политология» может не совпадать с содержанием материалов, опубликованных в рубрике «Монологи, диалоги, дискуссии».

M. Negri

IMAGING PHILOSOPHY¹

Human beings experience the world first of all by seeing and imagining it. They can get close to the world and to their own nature by reflecting on illuminating intuitions and ideas. These are evident truths, partly recorded by some philosophers (by Plato, for example) since the antiquity. These truths, however, have never been put, simply and immediately, at the centre of human beings' practical and theoretical speculations. The main philosophical investigations, on the contrary, above all in the current age, have become more and more strictly verbal. The notes contained in this article are an attempt to stimulate the philosophical mind carefully to study images – that is, to study images as locatable or quasi locatable experiences (and even images as locatable or quasi locatable experiences that are the basis of non locatable experiences).

Keywords: *imaging, images, drawing, locatable experiences.*

What is the world? What is *our* world? How could we try to understand – to penetrate and unveil – the world or reality? And how could we try to put all the pieces of the world together? How could we try to put together all our experiences of the world? How could we try to put together all the kinds of experiences of the world that we have or had?

We see, first of all, the so called external world – we have visual experiences, that is, visual perceptions of the world. For example: I see a table that is placed in my room, or some images of a war that are displayed on the video of my TV (the TV is in my room, but the war is occurring many kilometers far away from me). Visual perceptions are some sort of external or more external images.

We also see, secondly, things somehow inside our minds. For example: I could lie down on my bed, close my eyes and imagine some images of the table in my room and of the war on TV; I could also mentally imagine a non perceivable thing: a golden mountain, etc.

¹ I would like to thank Prof. Larisa A. Korobechnikova for conversating with me about some of my intuitions and ideas – at the time when I was preparing this work. I also would like to thank Prof. Valerjy Surovcev for kindly inviting me to publish my essay on this Journal.

Visual and imaginative experiences are images: they are explicit, iconic images (one could then also note that a visually perceived table is a three dimensional image; and a visually perceived plane is a two dimensional image; a perceived or imagined point is the smallest image).

Auditory, gustative, olfactory and tactile experiences could also be seen to consist of images for all these experiences refer to phenomena that are at least *somehow located*. Indeed: when I touch with my hand the surface of a table I feel such tactile experience to be somehow located close to my hand. A tactile experience thus consists of an image, although a non explicit, non iconic image.

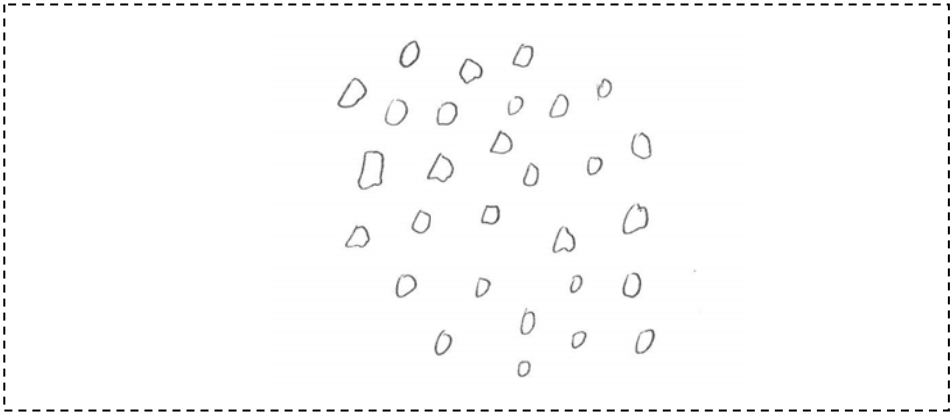
What about written and spoken languages? They are composed of images too. The written alphabet of a language is made of visual signs: letters such as ‘a’, ‘b’, ‘c’, etc. are, first of all, little visual signs – they often appear to us as traces of black ink on a white paper. (Ideograms are of course images.) Moreover, when one orally speaks a language one utters alphabetical sounds that could be seen as images - each spoken letter of the alphabet is generated by a person putting her vocal cords and mouth in a certain position: the person produces a specific wave. Understanding a language, then, implies understanding meanings, and this is possible when a person has or develops the ability to associate certain mental images to certain written or spoken words.

Human beings not only communicate to other human beings images that they have in their own minds, but also point to images that are in common environments. This suggests that there are not only strictly private images, but also shared or more shared images – such as external images of natural and social environments (the visible sun, a perceived public square, etc.). The preoccupation that images would just refer to strictly private experiences – and thus that they would cut out from reality such important things as communities, etc. – is unjustified.

Now what about our most hidden and somehow mysterious reality? What about the most personal part of our mind, our Self or I? The best attempts to understand the nature of the Self – the subject of our experiences - seem also to be attempts to *visualize* the Self. This has indeed been tried and can be tried in many ways: i) by observing (by ‘digging’) from the outside, the physiology of the human body, first of all of the human brain – at its molecular, and even microscopic level: the neural level, and then the quantum level, etc.; ii) or by arriving at a structural phenomenology – this also means to figure out the ‘conditions of the possibility’ of our experience, *à la* Kant, though in a more architectonic and strictly descriptive way than in Kant; iii) or by imaging some plausible solutions to the question about the nature of the Self – even, here, by taking into consideration some perspicuous metaphors about the nature of the Self, such as the metaphor of the ‘theater of the mind’ or of the ‘ghost in the machine’, etc.

Images, as locatable or quasi-locatable phenomenal experiences, seem to be crucial when one comes to the problem of how human beings could know reality. With respect to this, a relevant consideration is the following: according to the correspondence theory of truth, especially in Tarski’s precise account of truth, language (written language) and the world are brought together by saying that a certain linguistic proposition ‘*p*’ is true if and only the world is *p*. As Tarski claims: the proposition ‘the snow is white’ is true if and only if the snow is white. Here, however, there is also a problem: how do we know that the world is *p*? How do we

know that the snow is white? Answer: we know that the world is p , for example that the snow is white, because we *see* that the world is p – because we *see* that the snow is white. If this is so, an explicit, primary way to connect language and world is not that of associating alphanumerical symbols and the world. It is an attempt to connect visual representations of the world and the world. The proposition ‘ p ’ is true if and only if we can first of all *draw* the world as p – the proposition the ‘snow is white’ is true if and only if we could, for example, realistically *draw* this:



Another example, a trivial one, which can throw some light on this point, is the fact that we always find a picture, that is a photograph, on a person's identity card.

Does this iconic perspective on the correspondence theory of truth dismiss Art as a form of valuable knowledge? No, on the contrary: indeed, in the most genuine works of art, one can find not only significant images of the perceived external world, but also significant traces of a person's sensitiveness and intimate thoughts – including his or her delusions, dreams, fantasies, etc. For instance: in some painters' artistic portraits one not only finds realistic figures, but also attempts to make more visible a person's most inner mental traits – his or her personality, etc.

Values, that seem to be crucial for such fields of enquiry as ethics, or cultural studies, etc., could of course be understood as meanings, and thus explained in terms of images and ideas – we have said that the most plausible way to comprehend ideas is to conceive them as mental images. From a more practical or existential point of view: the ethical experience usually depends on a person's disposition to put himself or herself in other people's shoes – to imagine himself or herself from other people's perspectives.

Some classic philosophers have of course put images at the centre of their vision of the world (this is so at least under certain readings of such thinkers): Plato, Grosseteste, Descartes, Hume, Wittgenstein, Bakhtin, Sartre. None of these philosophers has however embraced images in a straight way – none of these philosophers has put images at the centre both of his theory and practice. Wittgenstein's case, here, is perhaps the most paradigmatic: the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, a book written by Wittgenstein in the first part of his life, stresses the importance of

pictures for explaining how a language represents reality. In the *Tractatus*, however, Wittgenstein does not show how the written language itself could be explained in term of images – he just shows how the meanings of such language could be explained in term of images. Neither he uses, in the *Tractatus*, explicit images as a privileged way to express his thoughts about reality – the *Tractatus* is almost wholly written only by means of alphanumerical symbols. The philosophical works that Wittgenstein writes in the second part of his life (his lectures on the foundations of mathematics, etc.) do then contain some drawings, but at this time Wittgenstein has abandoned the idea that pictures should be the main focus of his vision of reality.

To return to the main question: how could we try to comprehend the world or reality? Perhaps by unveiling the *design* that ‘insists’ at the core of our world or reality.

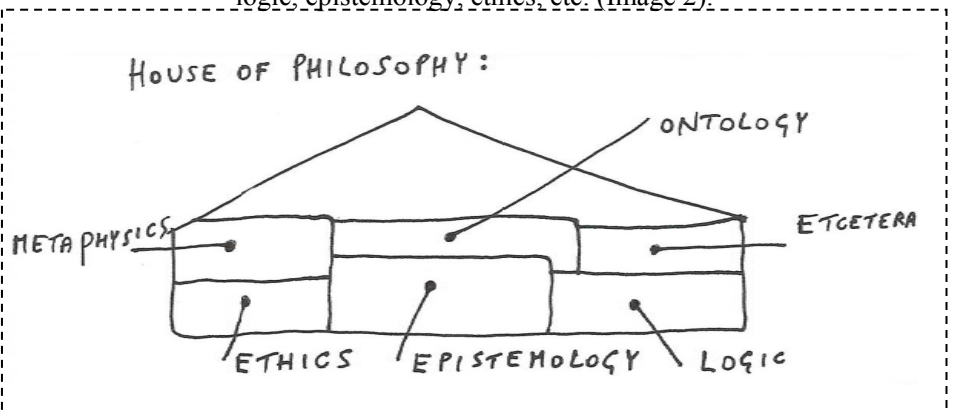
1

Philosophy’: ‘love of wisdom’. Some people in Ancient Greece reflect on the world or cosmos and describe what they do by means of the spoken and written words ‘philein’ (‘to love’) and ‘sophia’ (‘wisdom’). (Image 1).



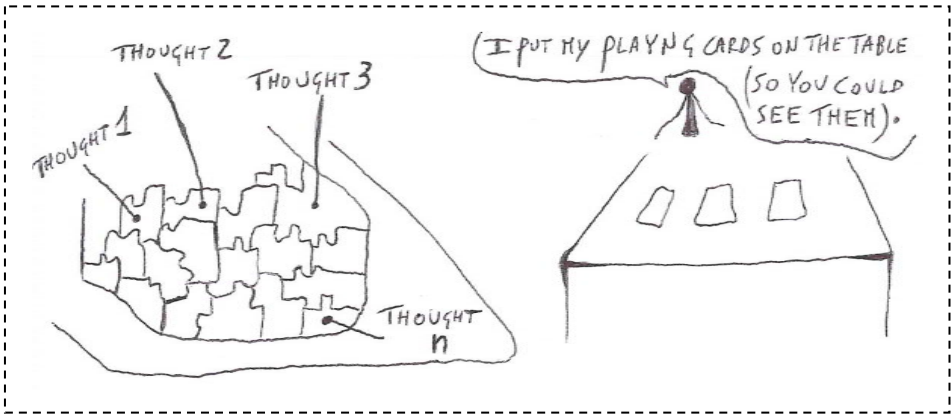
2

One could see philosophy as a house with many rooms: metaphysics, ontology, logic, epistemology, ethics, etc. (Image 2).



3

Communicating our thoughts: sometimes it's like putting pieces of a puzzle on the table and ordering them; or putting down some playing cards on a table; etc. (Image 3).

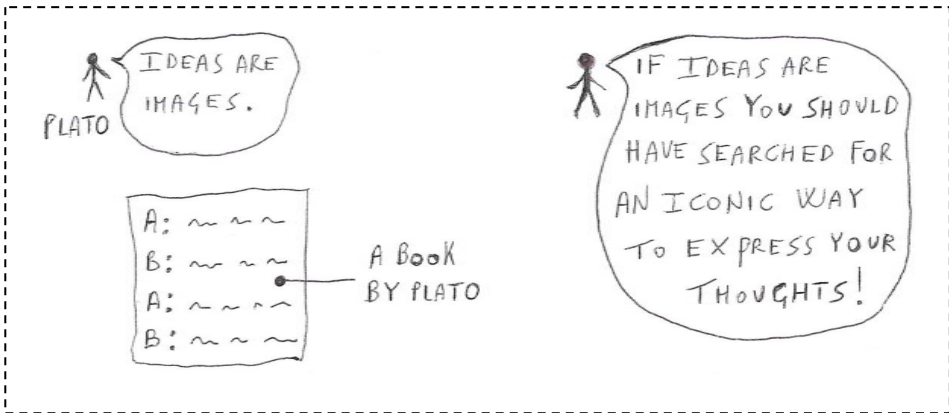


4

According to Plato, ideas are essences of reality and ideas are images (or resemble images).

Plato, however, creates his concrete philosophy only by means of written words: by means of dialogues made of written words.

Here I would like to say this: Plato should have searched, instead, for an iconic or more iconic technique to express his thoughts (Image 4).

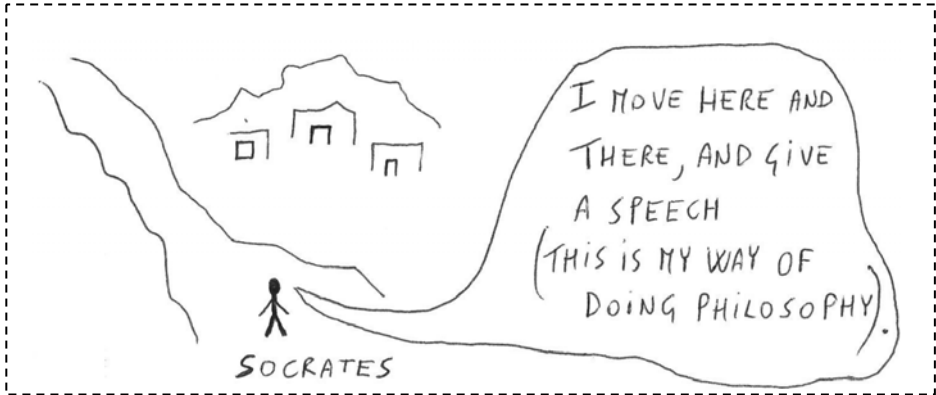


5

Socrates and Plato.

Socrates' way of doing philosophy is even less visual than Plato's. Socrates does philosophy by means of spoken words. (Socrates: "I do philosophy by talking while I'm moving around.") (Image 5).

Plato transforms Socrates' spoken words into written words.

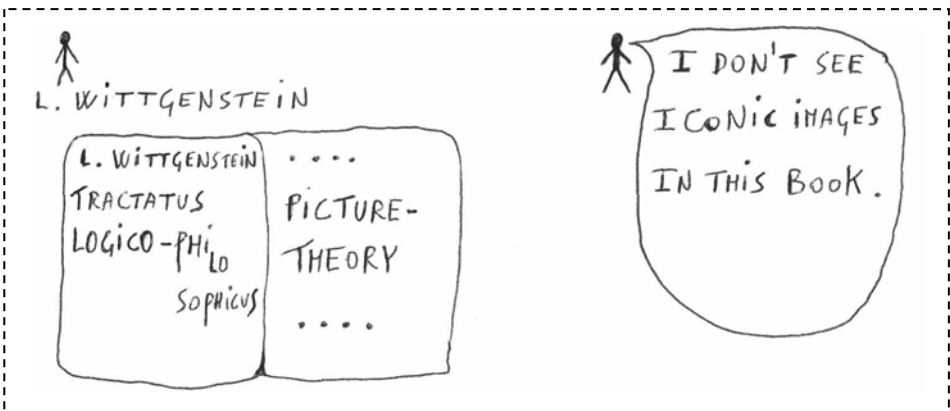


6

In his book *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Ludwig Wittgenstein stresses the importance of images for our comprehension of the world: he develops, in the *Tractatus*, a 'picture-theory' of language or meaning (he claims, for example, that "the proposition is a picture of reality". (*T*, 4.01). Wittgenstein himself will later significantly criticize and abandon many ideas exposed in the *Tractatus*.

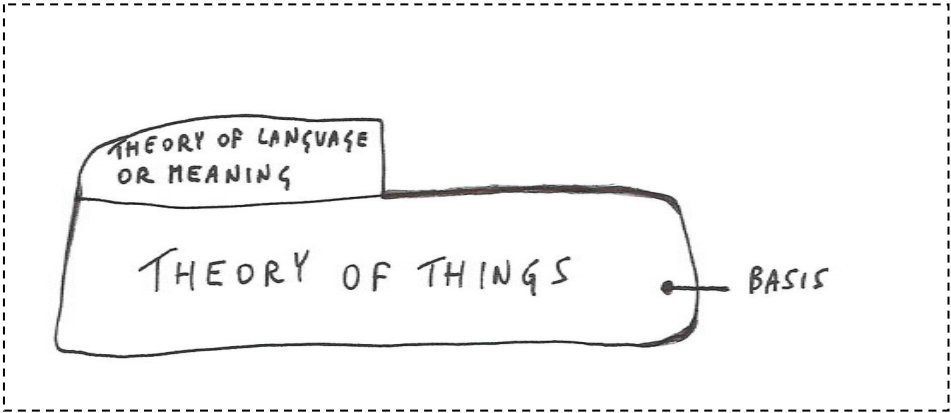
Here one should note this: that even in his first work, Wittgenstein is not however putting iconic images at the very centre of his reflection – he is putting linguistic words and written symbols at the very centre of his reflection. The *Tractatus* is made, after all, just of alphabetical and logico-mathematical words and symbols (a part from three explicit drawings, in 5.5423, 5.6331 and 6.36111). In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein does *not* make, for example, a simple claim like this: "The proposition is, first of all, a visible sign" (Image 6).

(This point is furtherly explained in 16)



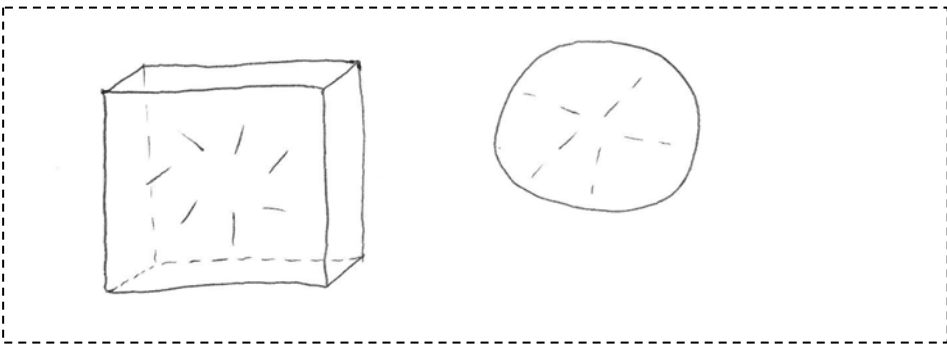
7

A person sees this: that a theory of things is more basic than a theory of language or meaning (Image 7).



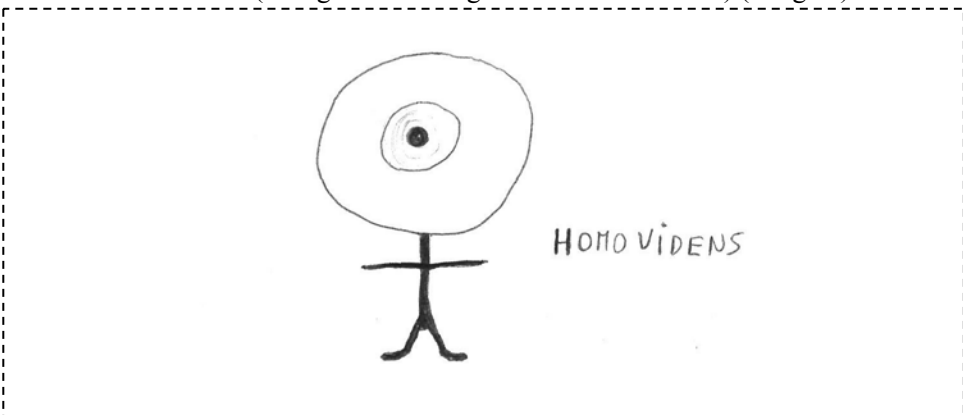
8

Things are intimately centered images (Image 8).



9

We live in the 21st century: some sociologists have noticed it might be the age of 'homo videns' (the age of a 'seeing man' or 'visual man') (Image 9).

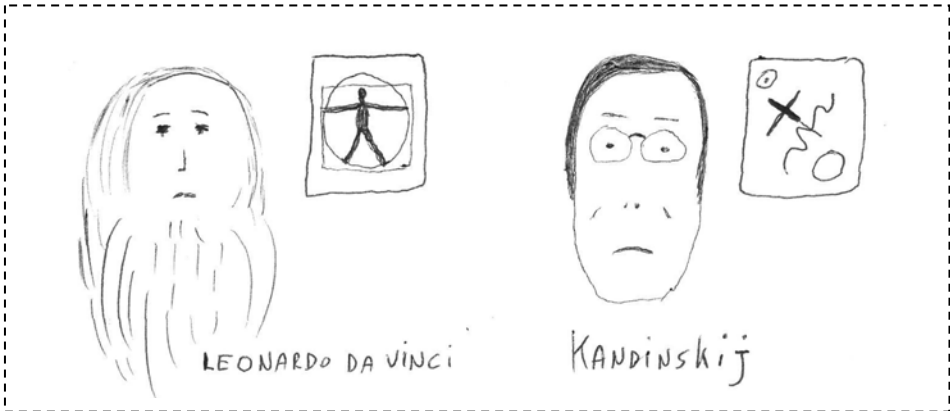


10

The philosopher Galen Strawson observes that discursive thought – i.e. thought expressed by words – might not be adequate to the nature of reality.

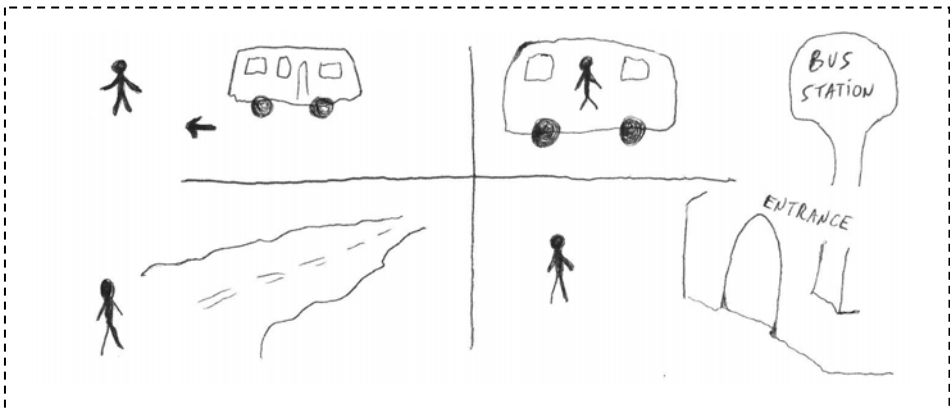
11

In the works of Leonardo da Vinci and Vasilij Vasil'evič Kandinskij one finds some simple intuitions and reflections about the possibility of arriving at an imaginative approach to our knowledge of the world. (Leonardo and Kandinskij of course develop their imaginative approach mainly *as artists*.) (Image 11).

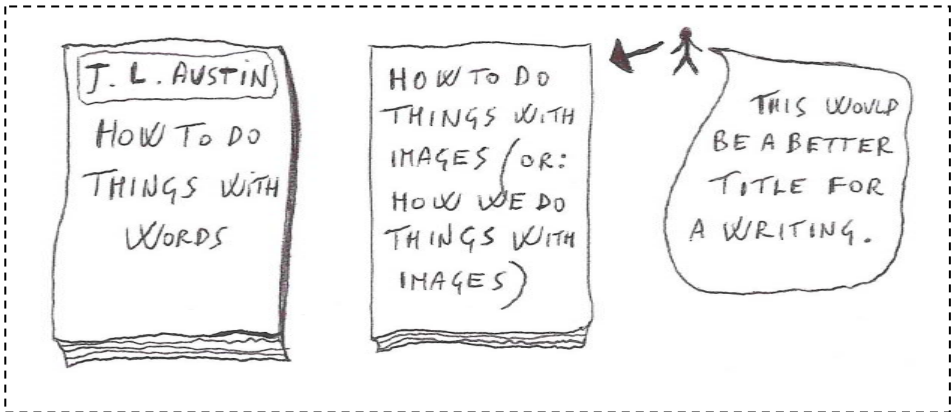


12

Consider our ordinary life. Consider, for example, this: a person has to go back home by bus. She is concerned with the following images: she sees the coming bus and moves in order to catch it; then she sees the bus station where she has to leave the bus; then she sees the street along which she has to walk; finally she sees the entrance of her house (Image 12).



Title of a writing by the philosopher of language John Langshaw Austin: “How to do things with words”. Here a more relevant title for a reflection would be this: “How to do things with images”; or: “How we do things with images” (Image 13).

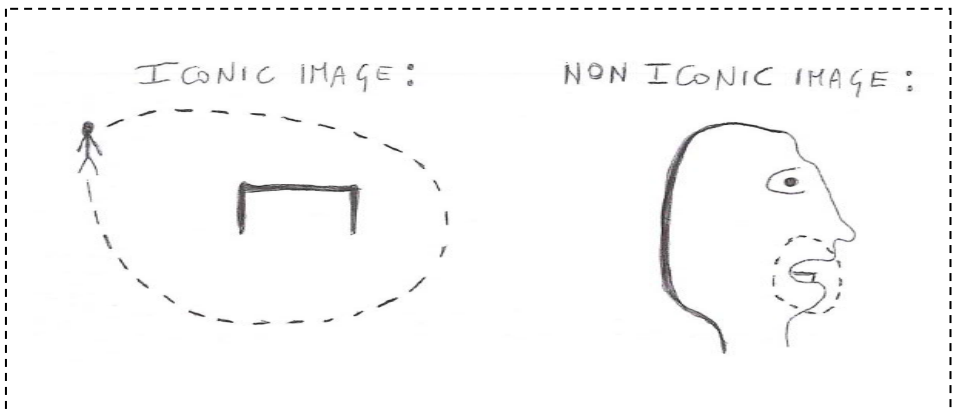


One could see there are i) iconic and ii) non iconic images.

i) A person's visual perception is, for example, an iconic image.

(Some iconic images contain colors.)

ii) A person's gustative perception is, for example, a non iconic image (Image 14).



15

Non iconic images are still images for they appear to be *located* in one's experiential reality.

For example: one's experience of taste of an apple while one is eating an apple is something that one cannot see, and yet is able to place in some region close to his or her tongue (Image 15).



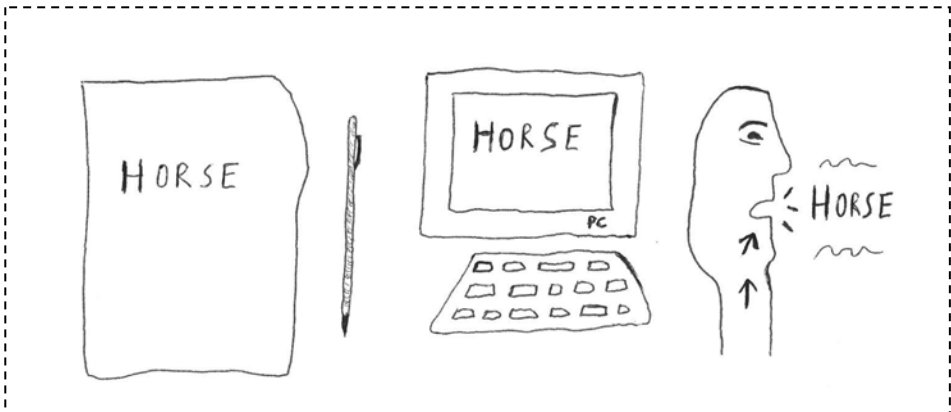
16

A written word is an image.

A written word is an image of ink (on a piece of paper); or of some black colored pixels (on a computer video); etc.

Let's look, for example, to this written word: 'horse'

A spoken word is an image too: it is prompted by a certain movement of the vocal cords and of the mouth - they generate a sound wave (Image 16).

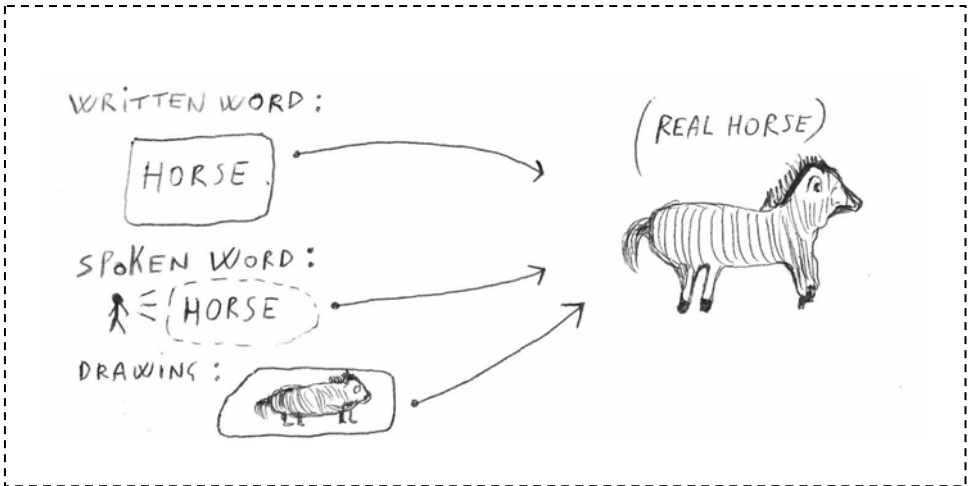


17

A spoken word is a less visual image than a written word (see what we have said about Socrates and Plato).

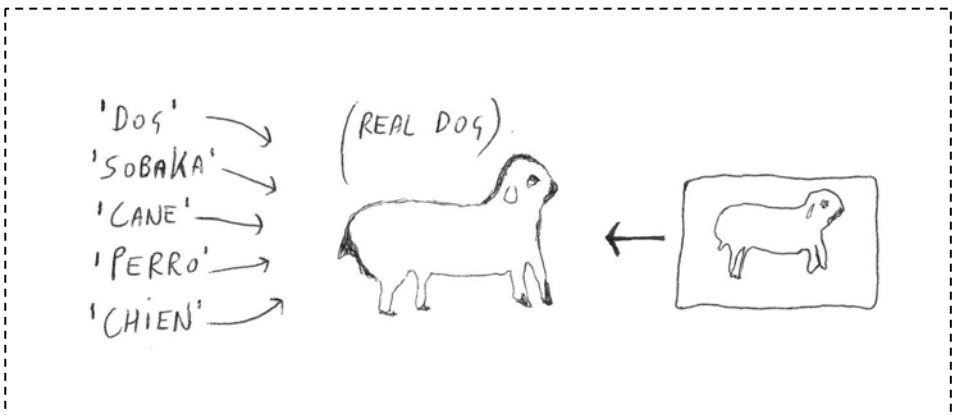
18

All written and spoken words - as ink signs, or sounds, etc. - are genuine metaphors: they are images that *stand for other* images. Drawings provide one with the possibility of referring more immediately to other images of the world (Image 18).



19

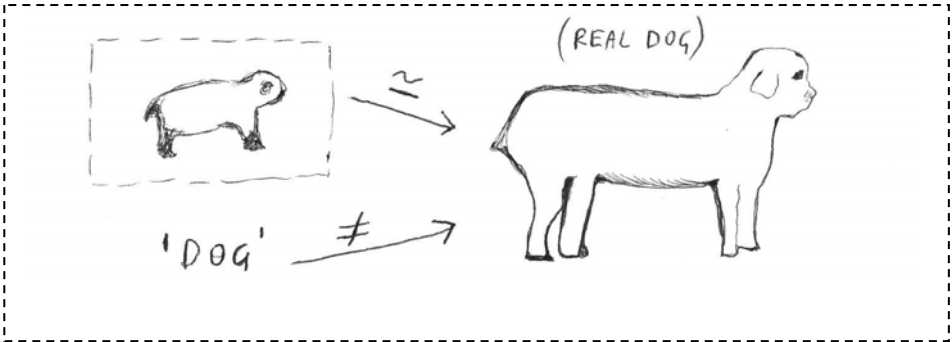
The words 'dog' (English), 'собака' (Russian), 'cane' (Italian), 'perro' (Spanish), 'chien' (French), 'cão' (Portuguese), etc. refer to a real dog. A drawing of the dog can more explicitly refer to a real dog. (Image 19).



20

A drawing of something is closer – i.e. is much more similar – to that thing than the written word that refers to it.

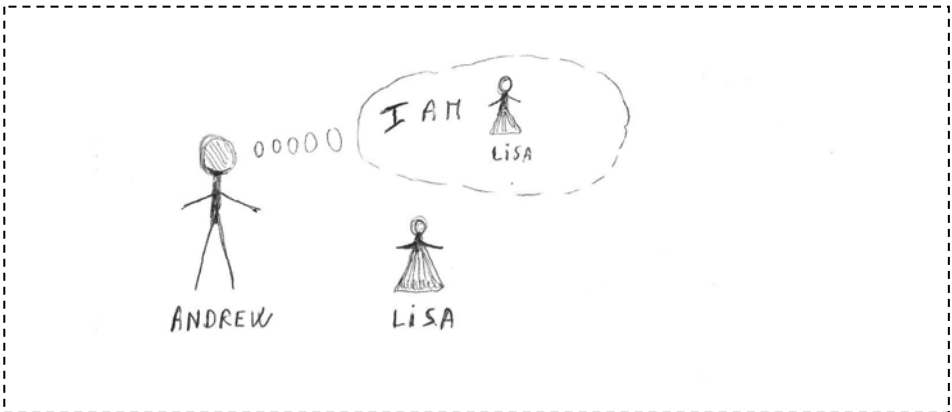
The drawing of a dog is closer – i.e. is much more similar – to a real dog than the written word ‘dog’ (Image 20).



21

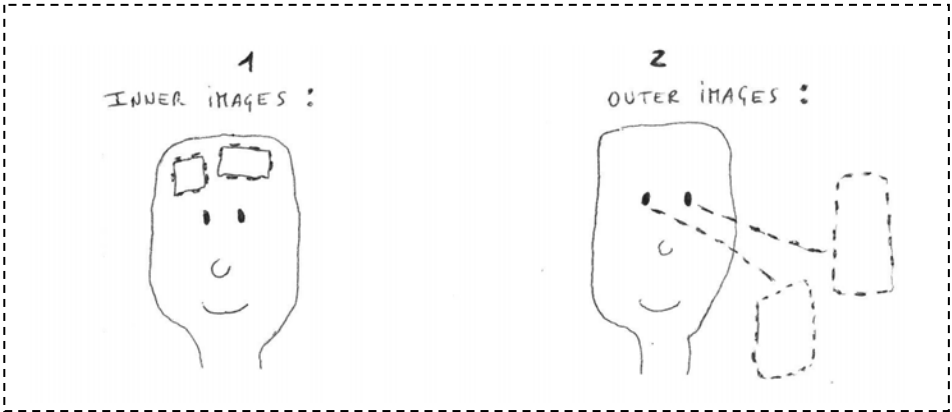
One of the main philosophical questions is a question about the nature of knowledge.

Experience and imagined experience are at the basis of knowledge (imagined experience is, among the other things, the experience of one who tries to put herself or himself in something else or someone else's shoes).

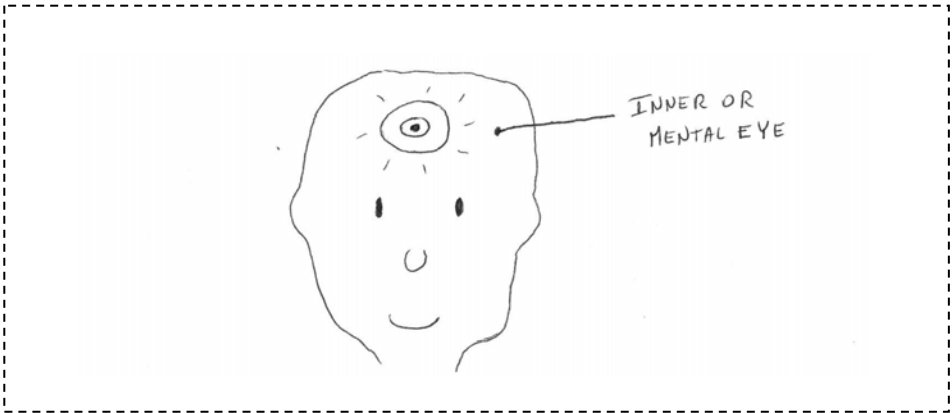


One could see there are inner (or 'inner') and outer (or 'outer') images. Inner images are experienced to be somehow inside oneself – during phenomena of imagination or self-perception (Image 22.1).

Outer images are experienced to be outside or more outside with respect to inner images - they are usually seen to be in an 'external' body or environment (Image 22.2).

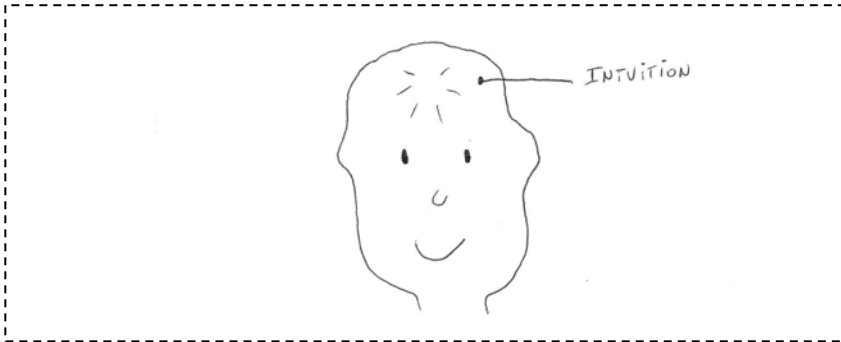


Inner or 'inner' images seem to be experienced by some sort of inner or mental eye (Image 23).



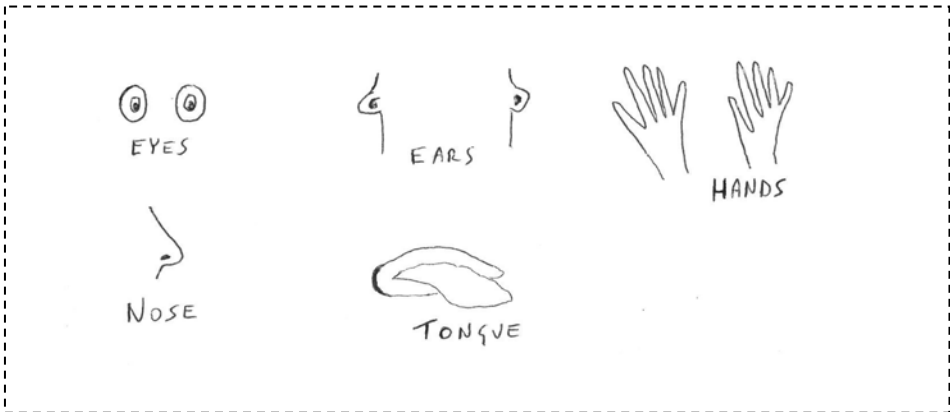
24

An intuition is a flash in the mind. (Image 24).



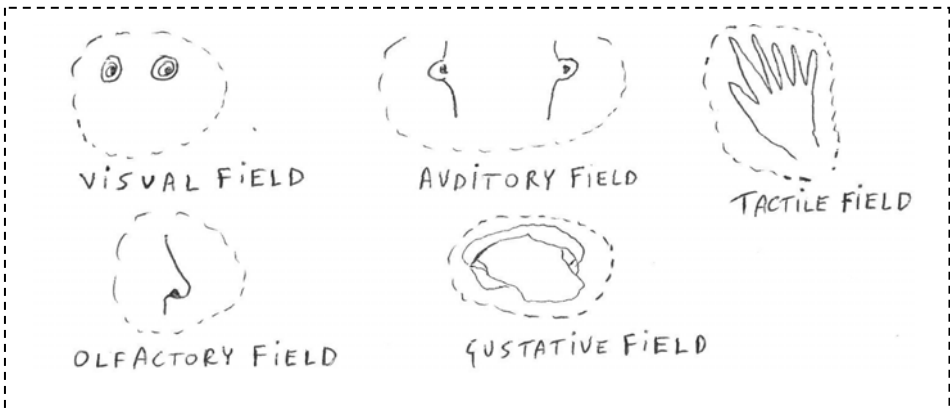
25

i) Eyes, ii) ears, iii) hands, iv) nose, v) tongue: they provide us with i) visual, ii) auditory, iii) tactile, iv) olfactory, v) gustative images (Image 25).



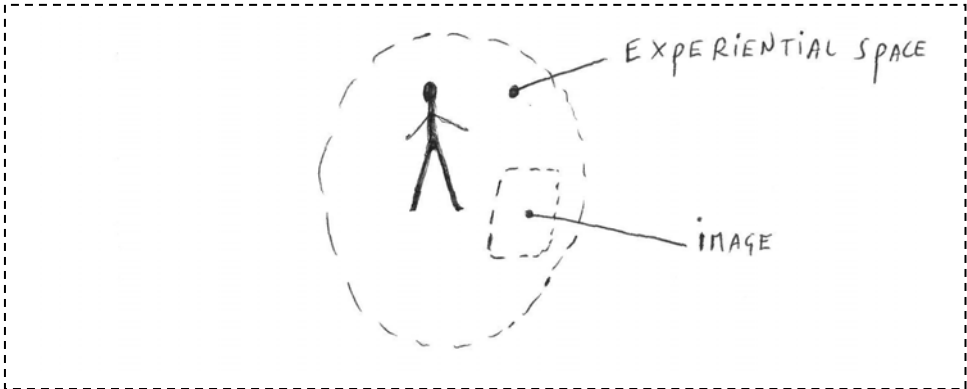
26

One could see that there is a visual field; and then an auditory field; and then a tactile field; and then an olfactory field; and then a gustative field (Image 26).



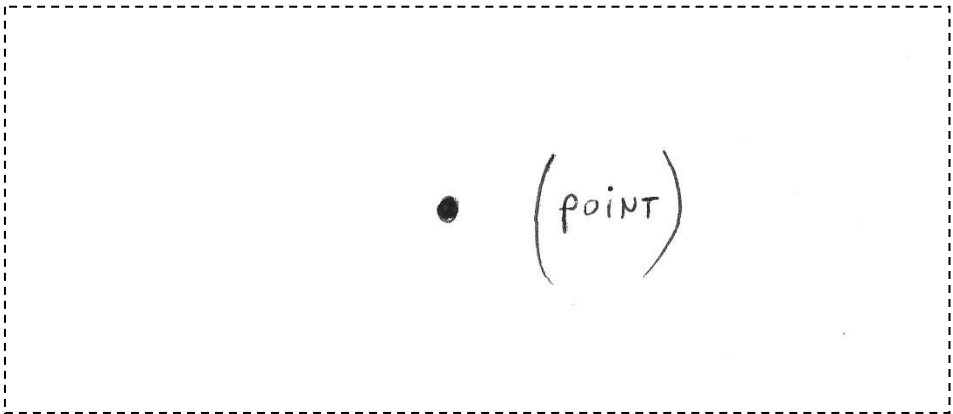
27

An image is a region of experiential space. (An image is something *open*, this is the reason why I draw it here by means of a dotted line) (Image 27).



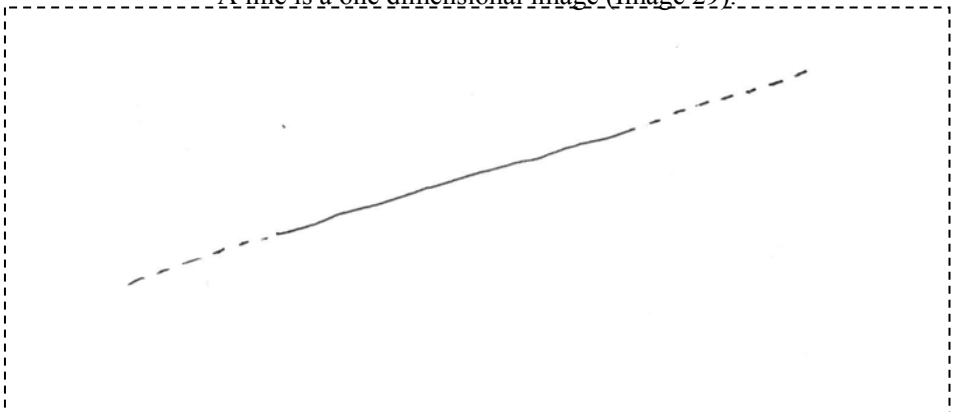
28

A point is the smallest image (Image 28).



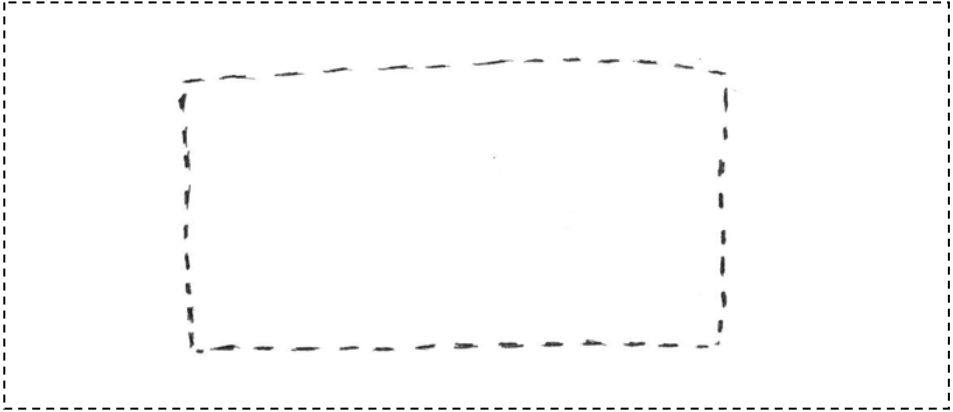
29

A line is a one dimensional image (Image 29).



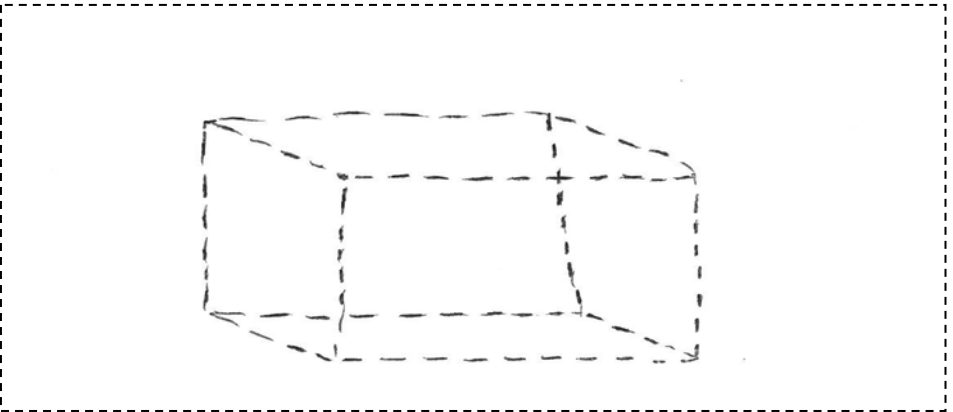
30

Basic images seem to have two dimensions (Image 30).



31

An ordinary body is a three dimensional image (it is a piling up of two dimensional images) (Image 31).



32

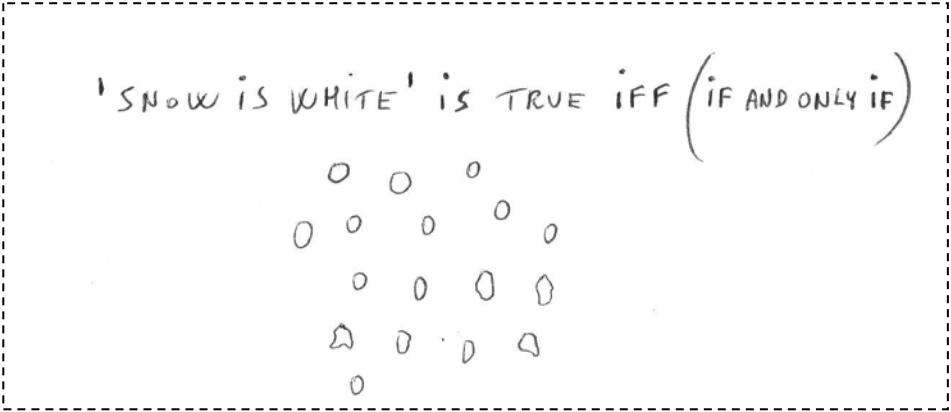
In the room of epistemology one also finds the idea of truth. For the polish logician Alfred Tarski the idea of truth depends on the correspondence or adequacy between a sentence and reality. Tarski writes (in his *The Semantic Conception of Truth and the Foundations of Semantics*, § 4):

the sentence "snow is white" is true if, and only if, snow is white.

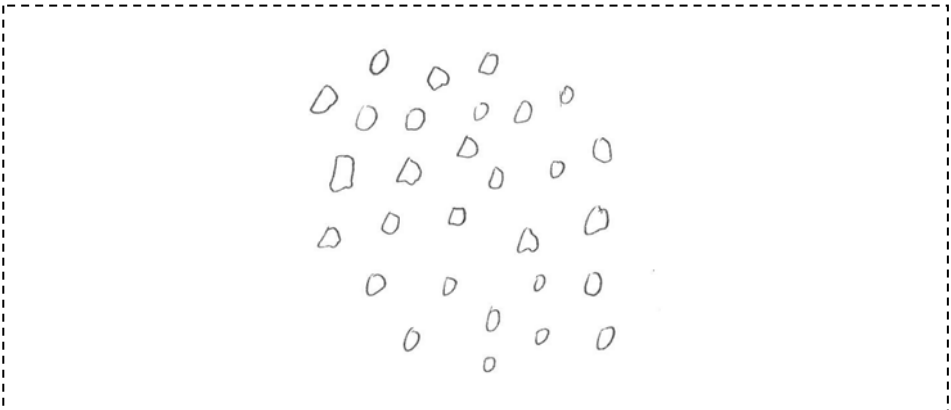
Here I would like to make this proposal:

'snow is white' is true if, and only if, Image of white snow (Image 32).

And now consider this more explicit proposal:

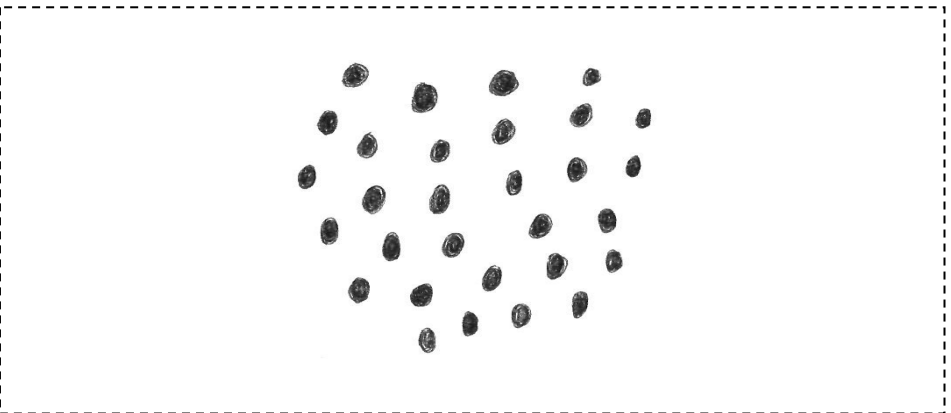


1) True 'white snow': Image of white snow (Image 32.1).



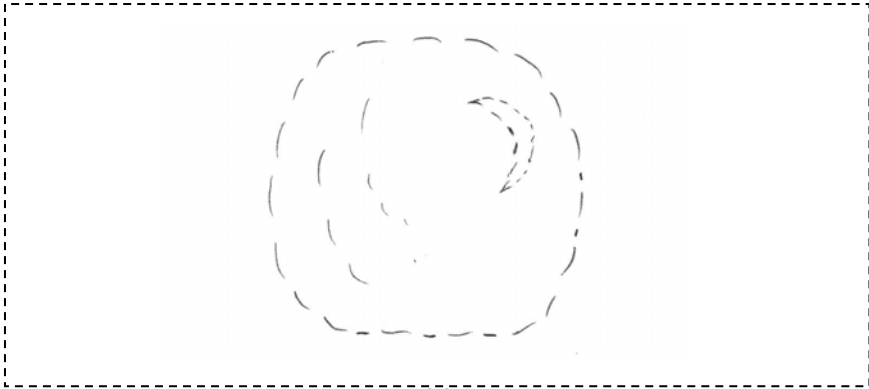
2) False 'white snow':

Image of non white (e.g. black) snow (Image 32.2).



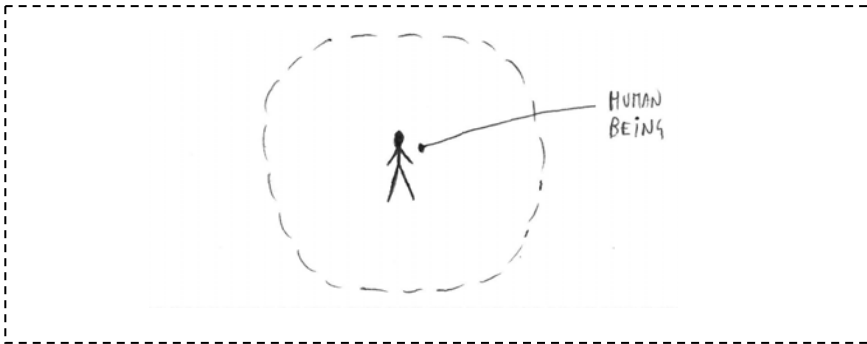
33

Reality. How would it be an image of our reality?
The image of a big three dimensional sphere? (Image 33).
(The bounds of the sphere are open?)



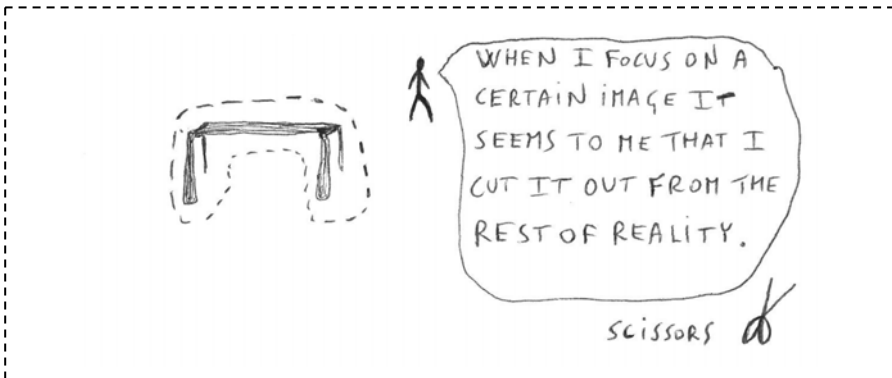
34

If one wants explicitly to see that our reality is a reality from the point of view of a human being one has to draw a man inside such big three dimensional sphere (Image 34).



35

By drawing the world we can better concentrate on certain parts of it, or on certain perspectives on it, etc.. The lines of the drawing help, among the other things, to highlight certain images of the world (Image 35).



Reality is a *design* of itself. (Here see the strict relationship between this point and point 8.) (Image 36).

