Imagination – Fabulation

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"Imagination is the mode of thought most precisely suited to the vagueness of the virtual." (Massumi, 2002: 134). Massumi's note is important as it strangely enough adds precision to the attempts to grasp what imagination is. This history involves several central thinkers in European intellectual history, including Aristotle, Hume, Kant, Heidegger, Bergson, and Deleuze. On the American side of this history, we will have to add William James, but for the purpose of this paper, we will try to confine the discussion to one where our processual theorisation can be extended. Deleuze worked out several of the hallmarks of his philosophy in his early (1953/1991) study of David Hume's theory of human nature (1739-40). One of those hallmarks is the idea of immanence (others being multiplicity; thinking as synthesis, experimentation, and invention; rejection of totalisation; seeing transcendence as illusion) which receives from Hume the idea that the subject is not the ground of experience, but produced on the level of practice, as an effect of synthesis in (not by) the mind (Deleuze, 1991: 92). Mind, as well as matter, is an attribute of life and not some separate substance from which the world is thought. The brain connects with other parts of the body and with the world (other bodies and relationships to the world) and form images/perceptions. One of those images is that of the mind. Its foundational status is but an illusion. This answers to a relational ontology: something is (achieves being) only as response. The mind 'is' the image that results from a response – the brain's to the world. "Before there are actual terms – 'mind' on the one hand, 'world'

on the other – there is a potential for relation, and relations for Deleuze are best described as 'images'" (Colebrook, 2006: 5).

It follows that this kind of empiricism – centred on Deleuze – suggests that fiction-telling, inventing of stories of futures, or – our preferred term – fabulation, is central to human nature. There would be no mind without the fantastic image of a mind, and this image is a product of life's inventive powers. There is no primacy of either the faculty of understanding (as in Kant's critique of pure reason), nor of the faculty of reason (as in Kant's critique of practical reason). Nor is there the crisis of the disorder of the senses that Kant struggles with in his critique of judgement (where the sublime and imagination play a key role for the production of this crisis). Instead, there is an affirmation of this disorder and a turn to life's immanent creative/inventive powers. Imagination, Deleuze suggests, is a synthesis of time and his reading of Hume resulted in the idea: based on the difference that the mind draws from repetition (the self is this drawing of difference), imagination anticipates and creates the future. Rather than starting from the image of the mind, Deleuze thus wants us to look at this create force of life, the force that creates Gods and Giants (as Bergson put it) – the force that has created also the image of the foundational mind, a force we here describe as fabulation. From this shifting of perspective, we can see how the image of mind, or subjectivity for that reason, becomes imprisonments of our power of becoming. Multiplicity is reduced via transcendence (the subject's status as guaranteeing the consistency of the faculties) and totalisation (theory as informing or directing practice).

Fabulation would then be this narrative expression of life's creative tendency to produce images and futures. Moving images and people may be described as hinging on whether one can free them from investments in images and representations – that is, if decoding can take place. One example of a powerful image is of course Descartes' cogito, always present in relationship to the conceptual persona of the lonely, doubting Descartes-on-travel (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994). Fabulation, to some extent already in Bergson but definitely in Deleuze's appropriation of the concept and his adding to it a political dimension, carries also the power to free us from the limits of the present. Imagination, we have noted above, is that mode of thought that represents a small crisis in Kant's attempt to unite the faculties under

common sense. Imagination gives rise to a disjunctive theory of the faculties (Deleuze, 1997: 210; Smith, 1996: 33) as we have to deal with the power of thinking, not as a representational power of reason, but as an inventive power presenting images of a world to come. Imagination thus breaches the unity of reason in a leaping that spring from sensible experience. Imagination does not organise our experience but goes beyond it, challenges its present limits (cf. Colebrook, 2002: 81). It seems to me that we can describe the role of imagination for Kant as a disturbing one, provoking him to minimise its role in discussing how it plays together with understanding (Crockett, 2001). Deleuze instead finds imagination important precisely as it seems to point at a higher faculty (than knowledge, desire, and feeling) which is what makes us genuinely creative, moving beyond our present limits as we fabulate. Affect has this function in Deluze's philosophy; it produces suspense, a breaking-free from the continuity of reason, as pause in which we are powered up in our receptivity so that our capacity to affect others increases. We will call this time the time of passion.

Imagination then plays a crucial role in provoking these times of passion. Fabulation is described by Bergson as a creativity that "…fulfils its ends by creating hallucinatory fictions – vivid, haunting images that imitate perception and induce action, and thereby counteract the operations of judgement and reason. Fabulation, then emerges in the shock of an event, a vertiginous moment of disorientation in which images bypass reason and work directly on the senses to induce action." (Bogue, 2006: 207) We can recognise how Bergson is trying to make space for his concept of fabulation vis-à-vis Kant's faculty of imagination (they come close in Bergson's description, although this is summarised here by Bogue). Deleuze, instead, contrasts fabulation with utopia and says the latter is too programmatic, simply not good enough if we want to understand how a 'minor people' (politically and not necessarily numerically 'less', such as women vis-à-vis men) can resist and transform majorities (the dominant group) by fabulating a world-to-come for the missing people (Deleuze, 1998). Bergson contrasted fabulation with élan vital and saved for the latter the true creative force that would result in an open society of love, whereas the former (as he discusses this in relationship to religion) would end in static societies of morality. Deleuze instead seems to move fabulation closer to the concept of élan vital as he conjoins the political force of the creative collective with the artistic force of
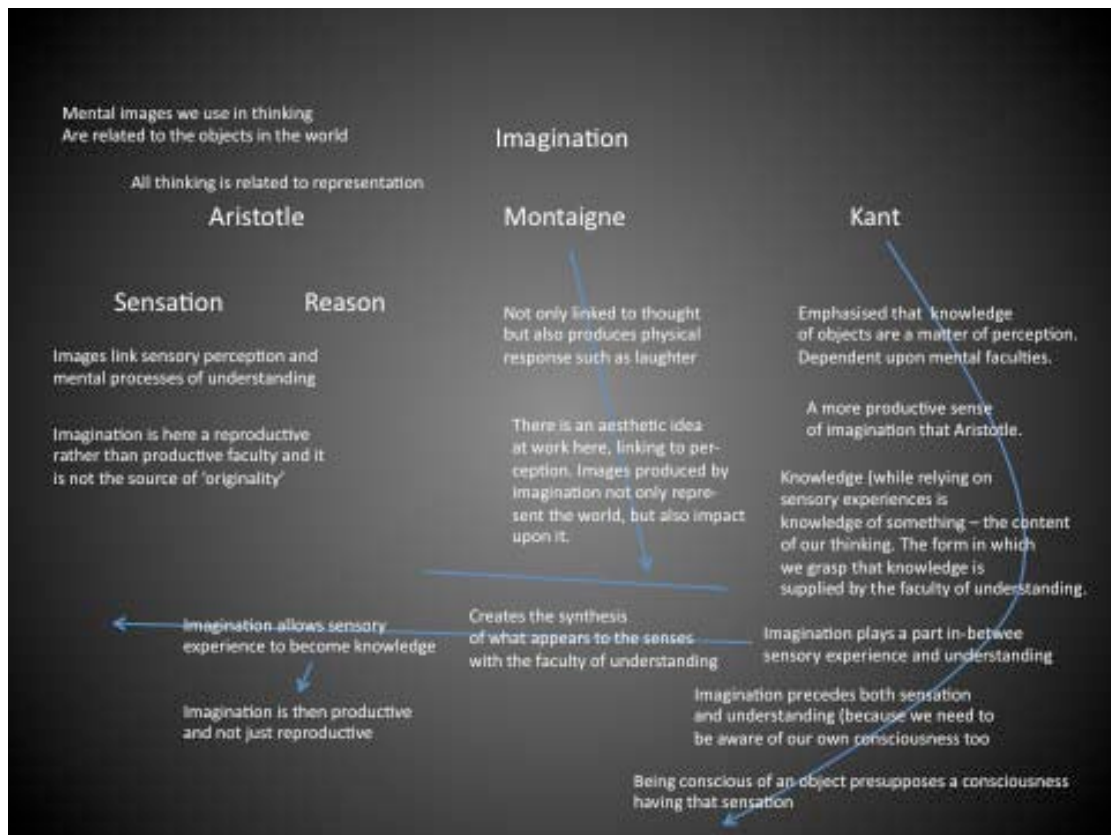
inventing a missing people in his appropriation of fabulation: "For Deleuze, the fabulative function is the function proper to art, which projects into the world images so intense that they take on a life of their own." (p. 218)
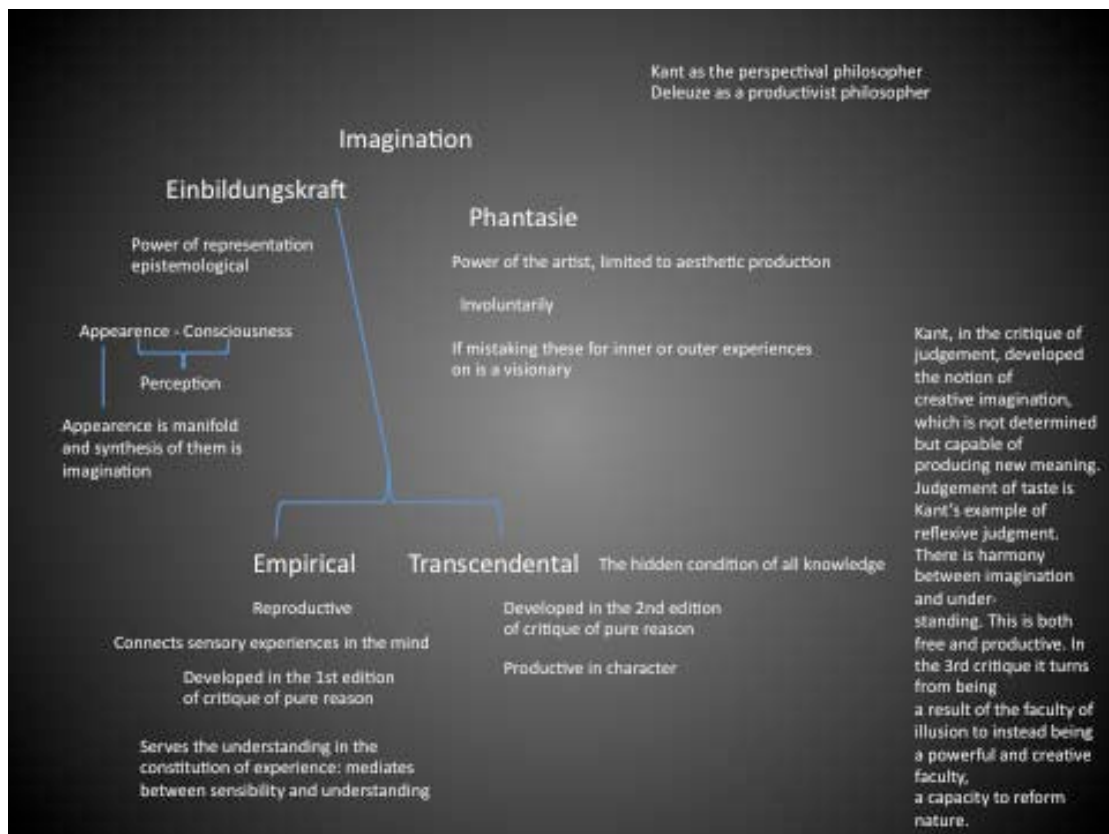
Fabulation is sensed viscerally; we register intensity as we are moved into suspense, the pause created by falsifying received truths central in the re-production of dominant social orders. The receptivity of power's ability to be affected and the spontaneity of power's ability to affect (Deleuze, 1988: 71) play together in the relationship between the fabulator and the affected. Imagination is crucial in this relationship as it is what creates the break with the continuity of reason, which in turn provides material for the fabulation. Having falsified received truths there is a time of suspense to make use of. Here is where we could turn to entrepreneurship as figured on the idea of creating and making use of opportunities (Hjorth, 2003; Gartner, Carter, and Hills, 2003). The opportune act is what brings us towards the harbour (referring here to the *Latin* meaning of *ob* + *portus*, meaning toward, port/harbour). Harbour is a refuge, meaning an escape or to flee (from Latin *refugere*). Here is where 'the entrepreneur' shines through as a conceptual persona of social creation processes. The drama of creating a 'line of flight' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994) – of articulating and acting towards an opportunity – is one that makes the concept of 'entrepreneurship' necessary. Crucial here is the fabulation's articulation or expression of the flightline, of the imagined 'nextness', that provokes the world to become something it is not. I have described this as fabulation, and we can connect this now to the concept of flightline with Smith (1998: xlv):

> "…'fabulation' is a function that extracts from them [the dominant stories or discourses presently ordering the social, my comment] a pure speech act, a creative storytelling that is, as it were, the obverse side of the dominant myths and fictions, an act of resistance whose political impact is immediate and inescapable, and that creates a line of flight on which a minority discourse and a people can be constituted."

Let us now bring the above discussions into an investigation of subjectification, how becoming-entrepreneur happens in the opening/break/suspense that fabulation creates. We are interested, in particular, in how intensity is provided by this artistic-political

force of fabulation, and how this 'electrification' of the social provides a passionate time where the power to be affected and the power to affect are important forces.

Mental images we use in thinking
Are related to the objects in the world

Imagination

All thinking is related to representation

Aristotle   Montaigne   Kant

Sensation   Reason

Images link sensory perception and mental processes of understanding

Imagination is here a reproductive rather than productive faculty and it is not the source of 'originality'

Not only linked to thought but also produces physical response such as laughter

There is an aesthetic idea at work here, linking to perception. Images produced by imagination not only represent the world, but also impact upon it.

Emphasised that knowledge of objects are a matter of perception. Dependent upon mental faculties.

A more productive sense of imagination that Aristotle.

Knowledge [while relying on sensory experiences is knowledge of something – the content of our thinking. The form in which we grasp that knowledge is supplied by the faculty of understanding.

Imagination allows sensory experience to become knowledge

Creates the synthesis of what appears to the senses with the faculty of understanding

Imagination plays a part in-betwee sensory experience and understanding

Imagination is then productive and not just reproductive

Imagination precedes both sensation and understanding (because we need to be aware of our own consciousness too

Being conscious of an object presupposes a consciousness having that sensation

Kant as the perspectival philosopher
Deleuze as a productivist philosopher

Imagination

Einbildungskraft

Phantasie

Power of representation
epistemological

Power of the artist, limited to aesthetic production

Involuntarily

Appearence - Consciousness

If mistaking these for inner or outer experiences
on is a visionary

Perception

Appearence is manifold
and synthesis of them is
imagination

Kant, in the critique of
judgement, developed
the notion of
creative imagination,
which is not determined
but capable of
producing new meaning.
Judgement of taste is
Kant's example of
reflexive judgment.
There is harmony
between imagination
and under-
standing. This is both
free and productive. In
the 3rd critique it turns
from being
a result of the faculty of
illusion to instead being
a powerful and creative
faculty,
a capacity to reform
nature.

Empirical   Transcendental   The hidden condition of all knowledge

Reproductive

Developed in the 2nd edition
of critique of pure reason

Connects sensory experiences in the mind

Productive in character

Developed in the 1st edition
of critique of pure reason

Serves the understanding in the
constitution of experience: mediates
between sensibility and understanding

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