

Philipp Stoellger
UNIVERSITY OF ZÜRICH,
SWITZERLAND

Imagination Ltd.

Considerations on the Quest for Limits of Imagination

The “actual infinite” is a “mere word”.
It would be better to say: for the moment this expression merely produces a picture
—which still hangs in the air: you owe us an account of its application.
An infinitely long row of marbles, an infinitely long rod.
Imagine these coming in some kind of fairy tale.
What application, even though a fictitious one, might be made of this concept?
Let us ask now, not “Can there be such a thing?” but “What do we imagine?”
So give free rein to your imagination. (Wittgenstein, Zettel no. 274f.)¹

The following few lines on an unimaginably wide topic remain within the limits of imagination. In considering imagination, even if its limits are at stake, one has not necessarily to be imaginative. It is a privilege of reflection that you can think about something without becoming what you think about. That is why I will proceed quite ordinarily: firstly with some remarks on Garrett Green's paper, secondly with a few hints how limits ‘in general’ could be considered, with at least two examples of the limits of imagination: otherness and memory.

1 Some Remarks on Garrett Green's Limits of Imagination

1.1 Metaphors of Imagination

a. ‘Imagination’ is omnipresent for us, because there is even no perception without the presence of imagination. To see something means also to imagine the backside of it; to hear something means (to try) to hear it ‘as’; to taste something is immediately affective, evocative and associative, likewise to feel or to smell something. There is always the ingredient of imagination in it; be it the remembered presence of the past, the expectation of the future, or at least the significant horizon of the present sensibility. Before any intentional representation, there is the representative character of the presence itself; being spatio-temporally connected to time and location, being ‘for us’ in a perspective and horizon and thereby being significant. To put it semiotically: everything is sign, everything is interpretative and thereby always as well imaginative. The ‘as’ of representation may be a latter rationalisation by analysis, but the representing and signifying character of every presence means to be imaginative, at least for us. *Everything for us is imaginative—but imagination is not everything for us.*

1. ‘Das “wirklich Unendliche” ist ein “bloßes Wort”./ Besser wäre zu sagen: dieser Ausdruck schafft vorläufig bloß ein Bild./—das noch in der Luft hängt; dessen Anwendung du uns noch schuldig bist./ Eine unendlich lange Kugelreihe, ein unendlich langer Stab./ Denk dir, davon sei in einer Art Märchen die Rede./ Welche Anwendung könnte man, wenn auch nur fiktiv, von diesem Begriff machen?/ Die Frage sei jetzt nicht: Kann es so etwas geben? Sonder: Was stellen wir uns vor?/ Laß also deiner Einbildung wirklich die Zügel schießen!’, Zettel Nr. 274f.

© 17th August 2002, *Ars Disputandi*. If you would like to cite this article, please do so as follows:
Philipp Stoellger, ‘Imagination Ltd.’, *Ars Disputandi* [<http://www.ArsDisputandi.org>] 2 (2002) | ESPR Proceedings Cambridge, UK, 2002, section number.

The basic imagination is not a possible subject of experience – dark and enlightening, inscrutable and unavoidable – but itself an ingredient and a condition of all perception, experience and cognition. That is why we have no empirical concept of imagination like that we have from any thing, but just a (more or less) rational construction of this transcendental power of theoretical, practical and aesthetic reason. Such constructions are not articulated by completely defined terms, because in regard to such conditions (not given to experience but always in and with it) we cannot achieve a final definition, but by conceptual or beforehand by pre-theoretical metaphors and similar figures. Such metaphors are as manifold as one can imagine and even more than we can imagine actually.²

b. Green structures his exploration of imagination (following M.H. Abrams and R. Kearney) by two prominent root metaphors, the mirror and the lamp,³ which represent two traditions. The *mirror* stands for the platonic mimesis-model, where the imagination is the counterpart of reason, disturbing the rational access to truth. However, for Plato⁴ imagination is not only suspicious mirroring. Remember the ‘phytourgos’ creating the ideas, or also the imaginative myths and their function in ‘enlightening’ the access to the ideas. The creator of ideas is not less imaginative than the philosopher with his ingenious ‘mirror of ideas’. Even the mirror mirrors only by light. Platonism tends to an imaginative transcendence of mere mimesis, evident in mystics and in the platonism of the Renaissance, if man is seen as ‘alter deus’, not only inventing spoons.⁵

Vice versa, is a *lamp* really a fitting metaphor for the productive imagination? A lamp is an ‘enlightened’ metaphor for discovery, not for invention, at any rate not for creation. Furthermore, metaphors like the creator, the genius (malignus or benignus) or perhaps the sun (or nature) are images for the productive power of imagination.⁶ That is why I would restrict the (suspected) ‘true lamp-function … to produce virtual worlds’ (7) neither to Romanticism nor to the ‘lamp’ (nor to *virtual worlds*). The ‘ways of worldmaking’ are not a past extremism of imagination, but present as well and not always extremist. And if one imagines an ‘imaginatio Dei’ in the gen. subj. (like in the *intellectus archetypus*), God would not be capable of creation just by a ‘lamp’. Is a quite pale metaphor, if one tries to

2. That is why one could ask, whether ‘imagination’ is only ‘one’ phenomenon to be conceptualised in ‘one’ concept—or moreover a heterogeneous complex where one finds only equivocations and resemblances. A conceptual homogenisation of this complex tends to metaphysics (what could be avoided by the awareness of the metaphoricity of speech about imagination).

3. To structure them by mirror and lamp as reproductive and productive is a retrospective and constructive distinction, seemingly already guided by Kant.

4. According to Green's thesis (in regard to Plato) ‘imagination is chained to the bodily senses’ (3) cf. H. Blumenberg, *Höhlenausgänge*, Frankfurt a.M. 1989 (‘caves exits’), and in regard to the decline of mimesis cf. H. Blumenberg, *Nachahmung der Natur. Zur Vorgeschichte der Idee des schöpferischen Menschen, Wirklichkeiten in denen wir leben. Aufsätze und eine Rede*, Stuttgart 1981, 55–103.

5. Cf. Green's affirmation of Michelangelo's Adam as ‘theomorphic rendering of man’ (*Imagining God*, 87, see 95). A main reference for this view is (quite critically) G. Pico della Mirandola, *Liber de Imaginatione/On the Imagination*, ed. by H. Caplan, New Haven 1930.

6. It would be a separate topic to discuss ‘illumination’ in comparison to imagination. I guess that the ‘lamp’ may be a secular version of the illumination-tradition.

imagine the division of light and darkness and other ways of worldmaking.⁷

Therefore the metaphorical schema of mirror and lamp seems a little bit too clear and too unimaginative. The suggestive power of such a schema is dangerous: it can restrict (limit) the research and its imagination to mere re-identification of what is suggested and pre-understood. The schema itself *misleads* historical and philosophical imagination (and memory): it ‘mirrors’ a cliché (or stereotype) and functions itself not as a lamp to enlighten the past, the actual or the future possibilities (foremost not their creation). Expressed metaphorologically: the critique of metaphors is a way of discovering the limits of imaginations (as of metaphorical schemata), and this critique is more or less directed by rationality, but needs imagination (and memory) to become aware of what is lost by the criticised metaphors.

c. Green conceives of the ‘biblical world view’ in connection with the ‘ancient Greek ontology’ (3), with the consequence that in medieval times imagination is suspicious (3), even if ‘the Hebrew scriptures and the Greek philosophical tradition’ are ‘the principal sources of the concept’ of imagination (4), represented by Adam⁸ and Prometheus.⁹ Especially in regard to ‘Adam’ one can question the justification of suspicion. His invention of names is a first act of human imagination, and not an illegitimate one.¹⁰ So, why should imagination in OT (or more precisely in the Priesterschrift/P^g) be suspicious? At any rate ‘the making’ of the OT is an impressive document of human imagination, not only in ‘Canticum’. A judgement about the ‘imagination in the scripture’ could not be oriented by the explicit remarks, but would have to be a research on the ‘work of imagination’ in the genesis of OT and NT. Green’s description of this tradition of suspicion shows critically, how the critique of a special use of imagination (the images of God and especially their veneration) narrowed the possible horizon of Christian culture, because the special aspect and the historical context of this critique seem to be forgotten. The suspicion of imagination thereby is not only pragmatically inconsistent but a severe undercutting of the opened horizon of imagination by the scripture.

Again a metaphorological remark: the imagination should not to be limited by remarks at the surface of scripture, but it is factually limited by the imaginations given by scripture (and its variety of ‘imagining God’). The *given* images and their *tradition* is a limiting background to imagination. But this limit does not only exclude imaginations, It includes and opens up further imaginations as

7. Beyond Goodman’s theory one finds fine studies on the images of the world in J.-J. Wunnenburger, *La vie des images*, Strasbourg 1995, cf. his theoretical background J.-J. Wunnenburger, *Philosophie des images*, Strasbourg 1997 (in regard to the question of limits s. 249–269: *La faiblesse de l’image*).

8. R. Kearney, *The wake of imagination: Ideas of creativity in Western culture*, London etc. 1988, 39–43 maintains, ‘the Original Sin is the “birth of the human power of imagining” (39)—which is simply wrong. Imagine only that Adam and Eva had not to imagine in naming all creatures.

9. See H. Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos*, Frankfurt a.M. 1979, is a reception-history of the Prometheus-myth.

10. And the ‘fall’ is not regarded as an act of imagination but of a betrayal in connection with the quest for cognition and life.

well. In this regard I would follow Green’s helpful ‘inversion of perspective’, not to reconstruct religious imagination as ‘expression of experience’ but vice versa as enabled and guided by the prior tradition in accordance with scriptural imagination.¹¹ Then it is not the question to find totally ‘new’ imaginations for ‘your own and new experience’,¹² but to become aware of the meaningful form of experience enabled by the traditional imaginations, helpful for its articulation. And this traditional background does not avoid innovation in imagination, because the traditional metaphors are not merely dead, but quite vivid if they are used imaginatively (against Ricoeur).

d. If one has chosen the too clear schema of mirror versus lamp, one could have the idea of searching for further metaphors to mediate the distinction. Kearney’s suggestion in this regard, the ‘labyrinth of mirrors’,¹³ seems to be inspired by his object of research, Romanticism. It fails in my opinion, not because of the reason Green gives, that it may be pessimistic, self-deconstructive and a merely negative answer to the challenge of limits and more differentiation. But first it lacks light, because a dark labyrinth of mirrors is difficult to distinguish from a cave without fire. Second it is just an ‘unlimitation’ of the mimesis by its self-reflectiveness. But farewell to the model of ‘original and copy’ is not merely a negative answer. Moreover it could be a way of losing the restriction of imagination by the original/copy-model.¹⁴ But this loss of a regulative ‘arche’ is a loss of limits. The (anti-idealistic) Romantic metaphor of a labyrinth of mirrors is a destruction of rationality’s primacy, opening philosophy and literature to the ‘dark side of life’, fascinated by human’s abyss after its repression by ‘enlightenment’.¹⁵ Kearney’s search for ‘a third way’ seems nevertheless to be induced by his suggestive distinction. That is rightly criticised by Green—but he seems to follow

11. G. Green, *Imagining God: Theology and the Religious Imagination*, New York etc. 1989, 118–123 (with G. Lindbeck). But this traditional background seems not to disallow new imaginations, not given by scripture, like Green’s own ‘lens’-metaphor. Transcending the given imaginations cannot be illegitimate. That is why the scripture (as it is rather a intrinsic pluralistic ‘limit’ with many ways of ‘imagining God’) is not the only limit of imagination, because it seems to be the *use and function* of imagination, what are decisive for its religious legitimacy. One remark on the ‘inversion of perspective’: I guess it is questionable to correct the expression-model by its mere ‘inversion’. If the schema ‘from experience to expression’ may be misguiding, its inversion ‘from expressions to experience’ may be so as well. I would suggest as schema the more or less imaginative *interrelation* of experience and expression, a *bi-directional dynamic*.

12. This suggestive implication of Ricoeur’s ‘metaphore vive’ is thoroughly questioned—as well by Green, even if he refers to Ricoeur’s early metaphorology. Instead of the desire for new, creative metaphors, there is the demand for the imaginative use of traditional ones (and what one normally takes for new is usually [not ‘merely’] a *imaginative variation* of tradition).

13. As Green notes (5). More precisely: ‘the postmodern paradigm is typified by the metaphor of the *looking glass*—or to be more precise, of an interplay between multiple looking glasses which reflect each other interminably . . . a labyrinth of mirrors which extend infinitely in all directions’ (Kearney, *Wake of Imagination*, 253). But for Kearney it seems to be more a hermeneutic and destructive use (not programmatic), and therefore plausible.

14. Cf. for the problem Ph. Stoellger, ‘Der Wert der Herkunft: Zur theologischen Vorgeschichte der Originalität und ihrer ewigen Wiederkehr’, in: J. Huber (ed.), *Kultur-Analysen*, Interventionen 10, Zürich 2001, 337–370.

15. H. Böhme/G. Böhme, *Das Andere der Vernunft: Zur Entwicklung von Rationalitätsstrukturen am Beispiel Kants*, Frankfurt a.M. 1983.

Kearney's constellation, when he gives his answer. The rejection of Kearney is justified by the thesis, that he dismisses 'a central feature' of imagination in the modern period: the focusing lens, but before this, Green reveals his view of the state of the imagination, not with reference to Descartes and Vico nor to Leibniz and Cassirer, but by reference to Kant.

1.2 Kant and the 'Einbildungskraft'

Green's main reference for 'placing the question of imagination at the centre of modern philosophical attention' is Kant (3ff). His 'discovery of the "productive" imagination can be seen as the watershed' (4), firstly because he sees its 'transcendental function' for mind and senses in connecting both, secondly because he explores not only its mediating function but its productivity (synthetical function), and in consequence thirdly raises 'the modern problem of limits' (4) by the thesis of the active, original role of imagination (4) with the question of warranty for its productions. The challenge then is 'to find norms' guiding the imagination 'into the pathways of truth' (5).

For Green the accent on the 'modern period' seems to be crucial. But his definition of this 'watershed' shows a rather broad river of the history of ideas and problems: The question of warrants for the products of imagination, raised by its productivity, and how trustful they are (4), is neither properly raised by Kant nor a (quite suggestive imagination) 'watershed' in the history of this problem. This question is quite older, remember the Mystic, the Renaissance and the Baroque traditions, or think for example of Descartes' problems with the 'genius malignus', and Vico's critique of rationalism and his rehabilitation of 'memoria, imaginatio, ingenium'.¹⁶ Imagination's productivity was not Kant's discovery, and the quest for reasonable limits not at all, rather his concept of the transcendental status of imagination, especially of its cognitive function (as 'synthesis intellectualis' of sensible perception and rational apperception by transcendental 'schemata') and of course the specifically critical quest for intelligible limits.

If one is oriented by Kant, one cannot avoid further location and precision of imagination in the two editions of his first critique. Green gains his thesis of the basic and central function of imagination for Kant by reference to the first critique, mainly to the first edition, in regard to which Heidegger formulated his thesis: In the Critique A Kant distinguishes three (subjective) sources of knowledge, the intuitive (sensible) apprehension, the imaginative reproduction and the conceptual recognition. Each of them is connected with a transcendental synthesis by which firstly the sensible impressions are apprehended, secondly past representations are reproduced and thirdly the past and the present representations are recognised as connected. Heidegger interpreted this threefold synthesis with Kant's threefold 'Bildung' (image-formation) and assumes that they all are functions of imagination: the synthesis of apprehension may be the 'Abbildung', the synthesis

¹⁶. In Descartes, imagination seems to be first of all a betrayal—and the humanistic and rhetoric-tradition from Vico onwards (to Klopstock, Schlegel, Humboldt and Herder) argues against his critical reduction. Literature and its paradigmatic function for the philosophy of language is not guided mainly by the Kantian tradition but – as far as I see – by Renaissance, Baroque and early Romanticism.

of reproduction with the 'Nachbildung' and the synthesis of recognition with the 'Vorbildung'. The crucial point of this interpretation is that the three 'syntheses' shall be the expression of the one power of a transcendental imagination, which shall be the invisible and unknown root connecting the two stems of experience.¹⁷ But the identification of this root with the imagination is not exegetically proved in Kant, as Henrich showed in his critique of Heidegger's interpretation, the one because the root remains unknowable and the second cannot be identified with any certain faculty.¹⁸ Heidegger's identification of Kant's precritical three ways of 'image-formation' with the three ways of synthesis is nevertheless a quite innovative interpretation, but Kant-exegetically wrong as also Makkreel noted.¹⁹ The precritical image-formation is empirical and associative, the three syntheses produce transcendental unities for representing experience.

If one looks for Kant's opinion in regard to the *limits* of imagination, one has to distinguish his writings. Roughly sketched one finds first in the *precritical* writings three ways of 'image-formation' (Nach-, Ab- and Vorbildung); second in the *first Critique* two mediating functions of the 'synthesis speciosa',²⁰ the figurative syntheses and the schematism, producing not 'mere' images, but the sense of sensibility for the 'reading of the book of nature' by the determining use of judgment; and third in the *third critique* the reflective, 'playing' use of judgment in 'reading (and writing) the book of life and culture', or said with Cassirer, reading 'creation' in art and life ('Grundphänomen der Gestaltung').²¹ Fourth, in the later work, especially in his 'Anthropologie' precritical empirical features of imagination reappear like sensible fancy, association, and affinity (§28/§31). Two distinctions are basic in the later writings, the active imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) versus the passive fancy (*Phantasie*), and both versus the memory.²²

In addition to Green I would suggest to consider the question of limits also in regard to the third critique, at least because Kant's theory of imagination (as 'reflektierende Urteilskraft') is developed *there* with its mediating function (whether it is convincing or not). In regard to the first critique, the obvious limits are perception (given sensibility), the givenness of categories and the rules of synthesis, so to say the transcendental grammar of knowledge. In regard to the second critique one can extrapolate the transcendental grammar of the will as prescriptive rules, which imagination has to follow. The regulative ideas of God,

¹⁷. M. Heidegger, *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, Frankfurt a.M. 1973, 121–197, especially 170ff.

¹⁸. D. Henrich, 'Über die Einheit der Subjektivität', *Philosophische Rundschau* 3, 1955, 44–73, 62ff.

¹⁹. R.A. Makkreel, *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant. The Hermeneutical Import of the Critique of Judgement*, Chicago/London 1990, 20ff.

²⁰. Kant renames the 'Einbildungskraft' of the KrVA into 'synthesis speciosa' in KrV B to distinguish it from the rational 'synthesis intellectualis' (B 151f).

²¹. E. Cassirer, *Kant's Leben und Lehre*, Berlin 1921 (= Darmstadt 1975), 297, 289–384. For Kant's use of the metaphor of 'reading the book of nature' cf. Makkreel, *Imagination and Interpretation*, 50ff; H. Blumenberg, *Die Lesbarkeit der Welt*, Frankfurt a.M. 1981 (=1986), 186–201.

²². Cf. *Anthropologie*, §31 (AA §34); and *Reflexionen zur Anthropologie*, AA XV, 121–138, 146–150.

immortal soul and freedom are the three topics of imaginative activity, further sketched with regard to the exemplary role of Jesus in the treatise on 'Religion'.²³ There one could find the limits in the critique of dogmatics, transcending the moral-philosophical limits of imagination.

In regard to the third critique one finds a transcendence of the 'defining judgement' (bestimmende Urteilskraft) into the 'reflective' (reflektierende),²⁴ which is *unlimited* as 'free play' (KdU §9), producing arbitrary forms (KdU §22).²⁵ Nevertheless in the production like in the reception there is not an outer but an *inner order* of imagination in the inner fitting of the form judged by the sense of taste (purposiveness without purpose or perhaps one can say 'nonintentionality'). The limit is the regulative idea of beauty, not as outer correspondence, but as a form of inner coherence or fitting. In the case of nature it is the paradigmatic phenomenon of 'the sublime' (KdU §23–29) and in history the coherence with the (imaginative) order of teleology with culture as 'ultimate purpose'.²⁶

In these regards the judgement is not given by 'objective' criteria, but by subjective ones requesting objective validity. The 'free play' is *free in an order*, which limits imagination and is also created by it. But this order is not to be objectively proved. One can call it a *cultural order*, a 'subjective objectivity', regulating teleologically what is expected (or to be hoped for), what is beautiful and what may be the realisation of 'the good'. If one follows Makkreel, it is a 'way of life' felt by the 'sensus interior'²⁷ (as the 'feeling of life'), using the imagination to 'perceive' the 'focus imaginarius'. Thereby it is the *form of life in religion limiting the religious imagination*—but i.e. the quest for one clear and distinct, even objective limit is invalid.

Consequently, the question of limits is not to be decided only by a 'grammar of cognition or knowledge' or by a norm without context, but the question is pluralized in as many questions as there are orders, cultures and as well religious forms of life. Even within these different orders, the question will to be

23. A different approach to the practical function of imagination is given by P. Ricoeur, 'L'imagination dans le discours et dans l'action', in: *Du Texte à l'action. Essais d'herméneutique II*, Paris 1986, 213–236, where he considers whether the concept of imagination he developed in his theory of metaphor semantically could be used as well in regard to pragmatic questions (in social action).

24. Cf. AA XX, 220f (first version of the introduction in KdU).

25. By the way, I suggest challenging Kant's separation of the active imagination from the passive, the productive from the reproductive. Firstly because it is a version of Kant's dualism he evolved against Leibniz, and this dualism did not stand the test of time and *raised* first of all the quest for a 'bridging' of reason and sensibility. Cassirer (going back to Leibniz and Renaissance-tradition) challenged this dualism with his thesis of 'symbolic pregnancy'. Secondly because one basic dimension of imagination (even of the productive one) is the *association*, which Husserl explored in his 'Analyses of Passive Synthesis' (See esp. E. Holenstein, *Phänomenologie der Assoziation: Zu Struktur und Funktion eines Grundprinzips der passiven Genesis bei E. Husserl*, Den Haag 1972.).

26. Cf. Makkreel, *Imagination and Interpretation*, 130ff.

27. Makkreel, *Imagination and Interpretation*, 90ff. Cf. I. Kant, *Anthropologie*, §13 (AA §15), where he distinguishes the 'inner sense' (*sensus internus*) from the 'interior sense' (*sensus interior*). The first is just the ability of perception in empirical intuition, the second the feeling of pleasure and displeasure.

answered differently: think for example of the different limits in different sciences like aesthetics, theology and mathematics. There is no need and as far as I see no way to answer the question in the same way for different orders even in regard to the 'one' cultural order of sciences. And even in theology the question will be answered differently in exegesis, in dogmatics and in hermeneutics. But at any rate, the pluralism of possible and actual orders and limits is only a judgment by a spectator. Because someone *lives in* an order and within limits, they are (historical and cultural) *given* to him (as a gift?). And the symbols of this feeling of life are not only given by imagination in producing and reproducing representations (Vorstellungen), but more than perception, in the creating of presentations (Darstellungen).²⁸

If one reconstructs the limits of imagination (in theology) by an inner coherence of a form, by a fitting in a cultural order, one need not pretend to make a 'descriptive reference to a real' as the main limit of imagination, but just the internal relation to a regulative paradigm. That would mean for example, that not the (pretended) objective reconstruction of the historical Jesus is the limit of religious and theological imagination (and interpretation) but in beforehand the (itself imaginative) reflective judgement expressing a belief like 'the word of the cross'.²⁹ And if the historical reconstruction pretends to be merely a critique of theology's imaginative interpretation of this word,³⁰ it would thereby fall below the given limit of imagination (with the invalid pretension of transcending the limits to compare them). *The limit cannot only be exceeded but undercut as well*. Theology without imagination would be uninspiring, a mere 'definition- or description-machine'. The spectator-judgement would miss the symbolic cognition of God as the 'focus imaginarius' of Christian (feeling of) life.

The hint to Kant's third critique could get further explication in regard to Cassirer. He has explicitly drawn the outlined consequence of cultural distinction of the quest for limits. His main thesis of the 'symbolic energy of the mind' can be understood as a theory of 'culture by imagination', because this 'energy' is the (prepredicative) synthesis of sensibility and sense like in Kant's theory of judgement. For the development of culture it is the productive imagination discovering and inventing new perspectives and horizons (or new aspects on traditional ones). That is why Goodman's already mentioned 'ways of worldmaking' is 'grounded' by Cassirer: new worlds, or less hyperbolically new worldversions (new orders or variations of them), are anticipative imaginations of real possibilities. By Cassirer's principle, the productivity of imagination becomes omnipresent, not basically *limited*, but limits arise by *distinctions* of different 'forms' and 'functions' of imagination as cultural formation (Gestaltung). Limiting imagination is then drawing distinctions given by different symbolic forms and functions. Thereby

28. By the latter the 'primacy of representation' is transcended. The 'foothold in reality' of such presentations is life in its subjective objectivity.

29. Cf. for the 'historical Jesus' and imagination D. Brown, *Tradition and Imagination: Revelation and Change*, Oxford 1999, 279ff.

30. Think for example of the quite unimaginative struggle for or against the historicity of the (metaphor of) resurrection.

Green's thesis of *analogy* between science, art and religion³¹ could get further explication, not by a theory of analogy, but by a theory about the production of symbolic forms.

1.3 The lens and the paradigmatic imagination

Against Kearney, Green suggests³² the *focusing lens* (5ff, 9ff) (used equivalent with filter and a radio receiver [*fl*]), first to combine productive and reproductive imagination, second to avoid the loss of reference (like in the labyrinth of mirrors) in 'projecting ... a nexus of coherent images' (7), third to bridge sensibility and understanding (which according to Green Kant never succeeded in doing³³). By the metaphor of the lens the duality of production and reproduction becomes that of the perceptive and creative use of imagination (7)—parallel to the use of models 'of' and 'for' something. So the lens is not only useful in a microscope but also in a film- or slide-projector (7)—the light can come from the inside and from the outside. The lens-metaphor itself is focused on the role of imagination in *perception* and puts the stress on clear and precise *apprehension*³⁴ ('the intuited data is not supplemented or mixed with something foreign but rather organized in such a way as to make its [...] structure apparent', 8). But what has happened to the productivity of imagination? How can one produce new images with a mere lens?

a. One could remark that the lens cannot combine the aspects of mirror and lamp, because the 'enlightening' function of the lamp no longer appears in the lens-metaphor. Green seems to interpret the productive imagination no longer as productive but as 'focusing or filtering', directed by the opposition of perceiving the actual world against producing virtual ones. The lens seems not to be a

31. G. Green, *Imagining God: Theology and the Religious Imagination*, New York etc. 1989, 41ff, 61ff. For analogy see 68ff, 88f, 99f, 105f, 130ff.

32. In 'imaging imagination', i.e. in a second-order reflection on imagination, itself imaginable; cf. Green, *Imagining God*, 92. This pragmatic consistency is remarkable—and implies the metaphoricity of theology (whereas Green says 'scripture is a work of imagination; and therefore is an interpretation of imagination', ibid., 106).

33. That would be the point, where a view on Vico and Cassirer could be helpful. See for Vico: Ph. Stoellger, *Metapher und Lebenswelt: Hans Blumenbergs Metaphorologie als Lebenswelthermeneutik und ihr religionsphänomenologischer Horizont*, Tübingen 2000, 103–127; and for Cassirer: Ph. Stoellger, 'Die Metapher als Modell symbolischer Prägnanz. Zur Bearbeitung eines Problems von Ernst Cassirer's Prägnanzthese', in: D. Korsch/E. Rudolph (eds.), *Die Prägnanz der Religion in der Kultur: Ernst Cassirer und die Theologie*, Tübingen 2000, 100–138; idem, 'Von Cassirer zu Blumenberg: Zur Fortschreibung der Philosophie symbolischer Formen als Kulturphänomenologie geschichtlicher Lebenswelten', in: W. Voegle (ed.), 'Die Gegensätze schließen einander nicht aus, sondern verweisen aufeinander': Ernst Cassirers Symboltheorie und die Frage nach Pluralismus und Differenz, *Loccumer-Protokolle* 30/98, 108–149.

34. Green calls the 'mimetic task': 'reproducing in an organized gestalt whatever aspect of reality we are apprehending', and the 'creative task': 'forming the raw material of intuition into meaningful shapes and sounds that we can recognize' (9). Both aspects are directed by an 'apprehended reality' and by 'raw material', and not by creating the material by inventing new 'gestalts' for example. It is to be conceded of course, that no imagination is 'imaginatio ex nihilo', neither retrospective (memorial) nor prospective (expectations of the 'new'). Cf. for perception/apprehension in regard to imagination J. Sallis, *Force of Imagination: The Sense of the Elemental*, Bloomington/Indianapolis 2000, 106ff, 111ff.

combination and bridging, but a critical reduction of the twofold imagination into a twofold reproductive one. With the lens-metaphor there is firstly no light from imagination itself, secondly its function is orientated by perception of 'the real world', and thirdly – and that is why Green is right in his consequence that 'the problem vanishes' (8) (i.e. the relation of reproduction and production) – there is no longer a so-called production, or at least not the production Kant deals with.

This is shown when Green exemplifies the two uses of imagination, especially the 'truly productive fashion, to conjure images of the unreal, for example, in fantasy, fiction, projections of future possibilities' and calls it 'incompatible' (8) with the reproductive one (as not possible in the same act). But they are not only incompatible *at the same time*; they are furthermore not reducible to a focussing or projecting use of a lens. You will never get a fiction by mere focussing, no lens will produce the projected film and the receiver is nothing without the invented and sent music. So to say: no vision, no imagination by a lens itself. World-making is not merely a question of filtering and focusing.

This loss of productivity in the conceptual metaphor of imagination results in the consequence that Green sees in the 'lamp'-metaphor 'the danger that imagination will lose its foothold in reality and take flight in illusion or fantasy' (9). He seems to be guided by the difference of 'imaginary versus real' (10), with the normative accent on 'the real' as the decisive 'ens realissimum', whereas the imaginary is mere illusion. This accent on the 'realistic' use of imagination (bound to perception) with the critique of illusion (as non- or anti-realistic) resembles Kant's critique of fancy against the productive imagination. But, why should it be only a danger to 'take flight in fantasy'? Why should the imagination always get a 'foothold in reality'? And who is judging there? The interpretation of Christ by resurrection for example appears today to not just a few as without any 'foothold', and the significance of this interpretation cannot be proved by 'reality'. There is no 'way' of limitation without a perspective of its user, and his 'foothold' (his life-world) could be decisive for the function of transcending 'mere reality'.

By the way, it is to be noticed, that Green prefers *technomorphical* metaphors (lens, filter, radio receiver, slide projector, prescription glasses). On the one hand this is plausible, because imagination is a cultural *technique* (perhaps the main technique³⁵). One could say that by imagination technique is produced as in the invention of instruments, capable of what you cannot do 'by your hands' or by the senses. The lens focuses in a way the eyes are not capable of. So the products of imagination are used as metaphors for the productive power. It is the same manner of invention in the case of the mirror or the lamp: the inventions are (with Goodman) exemplifications and expressions for the inventive power, an imagination as metaphor for imagination. On the other hand, if one notes this genesis of metaphor, one could consider why there are not chosen other cultural fields than the technical one? Take for example the *fire* as natural 'donation' (imagined as divine origin), able to destroy and to produce, fascinating and dangerous, bridging nature and culture; or think of the *author*, be it the author of the 'book of life' or the 'book of nature', of 'scripture' or of 'scriptures'; think of *love*, full of

35. See H. Blumenberg, *Höhlenaustgänge*.

imagination, sometimes blind, but a profound way of creative perception; or think as well of the *artist*. There are many fields of imaginations, fitting as metaphors for imagination—and opening other perspectives and horizons of seeing and thinking imagination.

Green chooses products with the function of reproduction (inwards or outwards by the lens and the filter) or for getting information (receiver)—but not for products with the function of production or itself productive. The metaphor of the lens itself is an image for imagination to focus its function for perception. *Within* this reproductive aspect the intended bridging is simpler than the one between production and reproduction. It seems to me, that Green restricts the field of attention to a selection of products and only one aspect in order to make his guiding metaphor plausible. Opening the field again, extending the horizon, the problems would return.

b. In the explication of his ‘distinguishing the real from the imaginary, fact from fiction, reality from illusion’ (10),³⁶ Green refers back to Ricoeur’s early theory of metaphorical reference as redescription.³⁷ However, Ricoeur himself rejected this theory in his later works, because the model of description and descriptive reference does not fit the use and function of metaphors (for example as ‘con- and refiguration’ of ‘life-world’).³⁸ And a major function of innovative metaphors (I would add as well of the imaginative variation of traditional, topical metaphors) is not mainly ‘to refer to something given’, but furthermore to invent new perspectives, to transcend actual horizons, to become aware of contingency by the imagination of other possibilities etc. All of them are not mainly questions of reference, but of presentation of the unseen, the absent side of actuality (be it the past or the future or even what never will be ‘real’).

Green hints that the background to the lens metaphor is his theory of ‘paradigmatic imagination’ (does that mean, Green deals only with a special sort of imagination?). Paradigmatic is, according to him, ‘the human ability to apprehend meaningful patterns’ (9) and to recognize them. Again one can ask what has happened to the imagination as invention and creation of such patterns. Anyway, this paradigmatic ability may be ‘exemplary’ because it lets us ‘see one thing as another’.³⁹ This ability he defines: ‘paradigmatic imagination is the metaphorical or analogical faculty’ (9).⁴⁰

36. This parallelisation is to be questioned, because it suggests, that the imaginary is mere illusion. Greens lens-metaphor already goes beyond this problematic suggestion.

37. See Jeanne Evans, *Paul Ricoeur’s Hermeneutics of the Imagination*, New York etc. 1995.

38. See for further exploration of Ricoeur’s self-corrections Ph. Stoellger, *Metapher und Lebenswelt*, 243–252. And cf. as well his later critique of imagination (with the consequences for his earlier metaphorology); see below 2.5.

39. Again Green shows his orientation by explication: ‘to recognize ... the heuristic model that illuminates another ... aspect of the world’ (9)—and not to see the world in contrast to imagined virtual ones, to invent other worlds etc.

40. I don’t want to enter here the discussion about ‘analogy’, but I would suggest at least one precision in the concept of analogy, like E. Jüngel has given: one better should not refer theologically to the ‘analogia attributionis’, but to Kant’s ‘analogia relationis’. It could be discussed, whether one should abstain from analogy because of the implicit ontology, or one should adopt Vico’s tradition of ‘setting’ analogies in the ontological open horizon, especially in Green’s stressed

First of all, imaginations of a paradigm, like in scientific or aesthetic invention must be distinguished. Whether such an invention becomes a paradigm is not always a question of the ‘quality’ of this invention, but has also to do with the present conditions. That would be a question of ‘paradigm-theory’, not mainly of imagination. An other case is the imagination *within* a paradigm, which is no less relevant for us. But when Green explicates his definition as ‘the ability to grasp something unfamiliar by recognizing similarity, by seeing that it is *like* something else that we already know’ (9), the definition sounds more like Aristotle’s definition of metaphor⁴¹ than of a ‘scientific revolution’ by inventing or discovering a new horizon. Secondly, it is significant (like the technomorphical metaphor of the lens) that Green prefers *visuality*, however, it should not only be ‘seeing’, but also ‘tasting’ or ‘thinking’ etc. as well. I would suggest ‘to interpret ...’, because the range of semiotics is broader, and goes beyond the primacy of the eye and perception.

Thirdly, concerning the ‘as’ (‘ability to see one thing *as* another’ [5, 9]) one could consider whether it is not necessary to distinguish the ‘everyday-as’ of any representation from more specific one, like the metaphor of the ‘paradigm’ seems to think of: It could be, as I would suggest, a *conceptual* or an *unconceptual* (like metaphorical) ‘as’.⁴² One can conceive one’s neighbour’s dog called Paul ‘as a dog’. In this case it is identified and conceptualised as a special sort of animal, subsumed under the term ‘dog’ in the porphyrian way of order. It is seen ‘as a dog’ (or one could object, it’s not *seen as*, but you see simply a dog, while the ‘seeing as’ is a reflective form of analysis). This terminological subsumption may be the same in the case of the rational function as in the conceptual metaphors ‘we live by’. But think of the name ‘Paul’ if the neighbour is one of those strange theologians which still deal with the old texts of the NT. The name becomes a resonance, an irritating interaction, perhaps with focus and frame, at any rate it is more than a mere quotation, it is a transfer with the structure of a metaphor (from individual to individual). To call a ‘mess-machine’, containing fleas and barking all the time you desire calm, ‘Paul’ indicates a quite individual view of Paul, be it St. Paul or the dog. Only the form of life could decide what is meant, the way the neighbour speaks with his dog or about St. Paul. Another neighbour, doing research on German literature, may be even more irritated, because Paul is a little black poodle, which his neighbour not only speaks to, but also seems to be sometimes a little bit afraid of. And the way Paul looks at him appears to the neighbour sometimes really diabolical.

At any rate, there is more than seeing similarities or seeing Paul as a dog. There are irreducible differences and semiotic dynamics, not to be conceptualized

‘modern period’.

41. ‘τὸ γὰρ εὖ μεταφέρειν τὸ τὸ δύοιον θεοφεῖν ἐστιν’ (Poetic 1459a) [<http://perseus.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Aristot.+Poet.+1459a>].

42. The German expressions, I have in mind are ‘begrifflich’ and ‘unbegrifflich’; vgl. H. Blumenberg, *Schiffbruch mit Zuschauer*, Frankfurt a.M. 1979, 79ff. One may combine this suggestion with Green’s, *Imagining God*, 139: ‘The grammar of *as* ... is not ontological but analogical. The point of using *as* is heuristic: not to affirm that something is or is not the case but rather to draw attention to one possibility among others by proposing an analogy’.

in the porphyrian way of order or in analogy. The ‘as another’ is more than subsumption. The stress should be on the ‘*another*’—because metaphorically you interpret one as ‘an *other*’, and not only ‘Paul’ by the term or concept dog. One could even consider changing the ‘as’ into ‘through’ or ‘by’, to indicate that there is not only a subsumption under a term, but an interpretive interaction (a play of productive imagination) of one and an always remaining different other, the concrete dog and the more or less individual and imaginative devil or the St. Paul given by memory. The relevant difference could be explained as well in regard to the ‘like’, with its implication of ‘unlike’ (as Peirce indicated with his concept of metaphor as parallelism,⁴³ and I.A. Richardson with his theory of ‘unlikeness’, further explicated by Ricoeur’s theory of ‘to be *and* not to be like’). There is basically an *unlikeness*, an irreducible *difference* of the known and the unknown, the old and the new, resisting against any subsumption of the new and unknown, responsible for the absurdity, if you take the metaphor literally. I suggest therefore an ‘indirect’ understanding of the imaginations: in the case of representation one can remember the ‘appresented’, the hidden and the forgotten—all of it limits of representation; in the case of metaphors one should not read them as descriptions (not even as redescriptions) but as *interpretations by significant difference with the ‘detour’ via the irreducible other*.

For the question of *limits* is a consequence: an imagination taken as description or as an assertion becomes absurd like a metaphor taken literally. Thereby the limit is not the pretended ‘realism’ of ‘redescribing’ the world. A limiting difference appears in regard to metaphor by its other, be it the term, the definition or the description. There are other semiotic strategies of interpretation, which cannot be reduced to metaphor—and similarly vice versa. Thereby the modes and functions of interpretation limit each other by distinction. A main distinction is the orientation *in* a horizon or to *transcend* it, by identity or difference, by identification in the world or by ‘dissemination’ through new possibilities. In regard to the function and dynamics of imagination as in metaphoricity I suggest a distinction between an orientation by *identity*, identification and further precision (like mostly in science), and the expanding of one’s horizon by discovering or inventing new aspects, in an orientation by *difference*, not already identified, with a productive vagueness (in innovation in science and in literature, for example).

In regard to the latter, I thoroughly agree with the consequence Green draws: ‘It is thus quite true to say both that imagination sets limits by its choice of paradigm and that imagination knows no limits, because of the open-ended nature of the analogy embodied in the metaphor or model’ (11). That is the relevant *paradox* of imagination: *living in an order—and transcending it*, like interpreting the OT imaginatively or giving rise to the NT by imaginative interpretation of passion and cross.⁴⁴ The genesis of a (new or variant) order arises by imagination, but following this imagination is within this (new) order. Imagination can give rise to an order—and can live within the old or the new one. It *can* be limited by

⁴³ Cf. CP 2.277; Chr. Strub, ‘Peirce über Metaphern: Zur Interpretation von CP 2.277’, in: H. Pape (ed.), *Kreativität und Logik: Charles S. Peirce und das philosophische Problem des Neuen*, Frankfurt a.M. 1994, 209–232.

⁴⁴ There appears the unavoidable *memorial* aspect.

its (or by an already given) order, but the order can be limited by the imagination of a new or variant order.

Green’s thesis of the ‘open-endedness’ I would understand by the hermeneutical reason of the openness of understanding, the infinite process of interpretation or in semiotics by the endless chain of signs and the difference of the immediate and the dynamic object (and *not* by the ‘nature of the analogy’). Anyway, if the innovating imagination can set new limits and (in this special case) ‘knows no limits’—does Green end finally with ‘Imagination Unlimited’?

1.4 Religious imagination and its norm

In regard to religious imagination, Green follows his orientation by ‘reality’ and the perceptive/apprehensive function with the primacy of the eye (11, ‘to view reality’). The religious difference according to him is (only or mainly?) made by the special objects of religion (11f), furthermore it shall be the religious offer of ‘a way of seeing the world as a whole’, i.e. ‘a way of living in the world’ (which is already much more than ‘seeing it as a whole’) by giving ‘an ultimate frame of reference for grasping the meaning of life’ and living in accordance with it (12). That means religious imagination gives a worldview implying an ethos.

The question of *limits* is raised – following Green in *this paper – theologically* by the invisibility of God. Thereby the limit of imagination is the divine *freedom* against all ‘pre-cision’ of images (13). This primacy of freedom I would question, because it seems to be a theistic principle, which is either limited or even revoked by incarnation, passion and death of Christ. In this way divine freedom is ordained by love not with the consequence that freedom limits love but vice versa, the self-precision of God in Christ limits his freedom—or better, is made precisely by his own love of the other, concretely of the sinner. And *this* limitation may also be taken as paradigmatic for the *ethos* of religious imagination: *not to enjoy merely the freedom of imagination but to use it imagining this love and in accordance with it*. Otherwise one would risk remaining in an ‘aesthetical existence’ (or would imagine even God as existing only ‘aesthetically’). So, if one searches for a *normative* theological limit, one could use the christological (i.e. trinitarian) perspective of the Christian religion to explore the limits. One implication is for example the justification of *anthropomorphism* in Christian religious speech (and as well in Christian theology)⁴⁵ and therefore a ‘principle’ (or better a point of view) critical against technomorphism if God is interpreted by the model of causality, or against several phytomorphisms interpreting God by the way of nature, or as well against a ‘mathemamorphism’ interpreting God ‘more geometrico’.

By the christological grounding it would become possible to explicate Green’s

⁴⁵ Cf. Jüngel, ‘Anthropomorphismus als Grundproblem neuzeitlicher Hermeneutik’, in: idem, *Wertlose Wahrheit: Zur Identität und Relevanz des christlichen Glaubens*, Theologische Erörterungen III, München 1990, 110–131. Anthropomorphism in theology also means metaphoricity in theology. If the βασιλεύς is articulated in parables as parables, the theological speech of the βασιλεύς cannot avoid parables (i.e. metaphors) as well. Cf. Kant, *Anthropologie*, §29 (AA §32): ‘Die Einbildungskraft ist indessen nicht so schöpferisch, als man wohl vorgiebt. Wir können uns für ein vernünftiges Wesen keine andere Gestalt als schicklich denken, als die Gestalt eines Menschen’; cf. ibid., §27 (AA §30).

programmatic remarks, that the question of limits requires 'a theology of the normative imagination' (14). If imagination is limited *normatively* (and no longer descriptively) in theology, the guiding metaphor cannot be mirror, lamp or lens only. Whereas Green seems to be guided by the distinction of imagination and reality, in his programmatic preview he changes the distinction to imagination and normativity. It is a change from a more descriptive to a strict normative direction. And Green sees the question for limits as answered by a normative grammar ('the grammar of the normative paradigm of the faith').

This program has already been explicated a few times, for example in Jüngel's 'Metaphorische Wahrheit': his basic metaphor of theology is the 'identification of the resurrected with the crucified man Jesus. In so far as this basic metaphor is an expression for an event, which becomes understandable only in the history of God coming into the world, this basic metaphor remains reliant upon interpretation by further christological and theological metaphors'.⁴⁶ The beginning of Christian religion and its theology in this aspect is the metaphor of resurrection of the crucified. As beginning it is the limit, and what is interpreted is the dynamic object of the following imaginative interpretations. Its ground as its limit directs this 'great chain' of imagination: 'the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as event of the justification of the sinner. In this event the free choice of theological metaphors has its ground and its limit'.⁴⁷ The problem is simply, that on the one hand 'the ground' seems to be the *metaphor* of resurrection of the crucified, on the other the pre-interpretative self-identification of God with Jesus as an '*ontological-event*' of God's coming into the world. The status of the main metaphor and of the 'event' is ambiguous—and Jüngel seems to tend to a special ontological position (with a 'Seinsereignis').

If one searches for a *normative* founding of religious (and thereby theological) imagination, there arise at least three problems: *Firstly* an unmetaphorical founding of metaphorical speech, with the inconsistent revocation of the basic interpretativity of everything.⁴⁸ Likewise if one tries to found the religious semi-

46. Jüngel, 'Metaphorische Wahrheit: Erwägungen zur theologischen Relevanz der Metapher als Beitrag zur Hermeneutik einer narrativen Theologie', in: idem, *Entsprechungen: Gott-Wahrheit-Mensch*, Theologische Erörterungen, München 2¹⁹⁸⁶, 103–157, 152f: Die 'Grundmetapher' sei die 'Identifikation des Auferstandenen mit dem gekreuzigten Menschen Jesus'. 'Insofern diese Grundmetapher als Ausdruck für ein Ereignis dieses nur im Zusammenhang der Geschichte des zur Welt kommenden Gottes verständlich werden lässt, bleibt diese Grundmetapher allerdings auf die Auslegung durch weitere christologische und theologische Metaphern angewiesen'.

47. Jüngel, ibid., 150: 'das Leben, Sterben und Auferstehen Jesu Christi als Ereignis der Rechtfertigung des Sünders. In diesem Geschehen hat die freie Wahl theologischer Metaphern sowohl ihren Grund als auch ihre Grenze'.

48. That is (de facto) a problem of Jüngel's 'Metaphorische Wahrheit', *not* of Greens theory of religious imagination. He explains imagination as the 'how' of revelation, as the 'Anknüpfungspunkt' with E. Brunner (Green, *Imagining God*, 29–41, 62, 84–88, 99, 110)—where the problem arises that the revelatory 'imaginatio Dei' (in gen. subj!) may be limited by an 'anthropological constant'. But if revelation comes 'secundum modum recipientis', like Jüngel emphasizes, human imagination should not be overwhelmed—but perhaps it is given a horizon of real possibility never imagined by itself. The otherness of revelation is or has been beyond human imagination, that is why this 'locus' is expanded by God's revelatory imagination in a way that human imagination (of God) is not the same after revelation (cf. even the Jewish imaginations of the Messiah).

osis asemiotically, for example by an 'immediate' revelation (whatever that may be) or a preinterpretative 'event of being' (Seinsgeschehen). When everything is imaginative, revelation and truth cannot be 'nude'. But, one can object, because imagination is not everything, it is limited and directed by revelation, which have to be distinguished from all interpretative imaginations, like the dynamic object from the immediate one. But if the dynamic object and its rules of interpretation are only discovered by abduction (which seems to be the semiotical version of imagination), one can never go back behind this basic way of givenness—if one does not try to critisize religion in general as mere and void imagination. But within the chain of signs one can draw the distinction of the (itself imagined) ground of imagination and its imaginations. That would mean a selflimitation of imagination, in order not to overwhelm its ground, and this distinction itself is imaginative. This distinction would be an expression of the *initial otherness* by which imagination is directed, or by a creative passivity raising the activity of imagination. Otherwise the imagination could become a void image-machine.

Secondly, the problem of the relation between the religious and the theological imagination. I would suggest here a distinction: Theology participates in the religious metaphors, especially if it is directed by Christ as the 'paradigm of faith'. But the horizon and the methods of theology are different from religion's. That is why the limits of theological imagination are different from those of religious speech. To consider if and how 'resurrection' is an imaginative metaphor⁴⁹ could be offensive in religious contexts, but in theological science especially in a hermeneutical and semiotic perspective it makes sense (and is not mere 'anti-realism'). In exploring lost, actual or future possibilities of imagination, there is a (responsible) 'époque' of religious limits in theology.

Thirdly, to limit theological imagination *normatively* by the incarnation and resurrection *could* become too small a limit, which could be transcended by theological imagination (without missing the sense of revelation). If any considerations of possibilities are limited for example by a strict concept of heresy, so that the imaginative explorations become suspicious if they are not usual or orthodox enough, the imaginative development of speech or even Jüngel's own tendency to adoptianism would be preliminarily excluded. In regard to Green's thesis, one can doubt his metaphor that 'religions employ imagination' (11).⁵⁰ How do we know who is who's employee? Is there not a genuine productivity of imagination itself, not working only by instructions of religion? *The 'free play' of 'reflective judgement' cannot be strictly regulated in advance*—if one doesn't want to lose its imaginative power, its own dynamic. I guess religion lives by imagination, not only occasionally, but at any rate. Religion like theology without imagination could become uninspired and uninspiring, and that is why imagination should not

49. This hermeneutical suggestion of understanding the testimony/witness of resurrection is to be distinguished from the naive anti-realistic thesis 'there is no resurrection because it is not historically proven'. This wrong conclusion by a pre-hermeneutical way of 'historical critique' lacks any understanding of the 'absoluteness' and expressive character of basic metaphors.

50. And 'ceterum censeo': imagination just 'to view reality' (11) is too limited. Think for example of the eschatological imaginations, 'viewing' a 'reality' not already real. 'What can we hope for?' is a quest for imagination, not simply viewing something real.

be limited by a 'real reference' to interpret it as ordered.

Take for example Green's definition of religion 'seeing the world as a whole' (12). By imagination one could discover as well that the world is not 'a whole' but fragmented and not already 'perfect', but marked by sin. That is why we imagine what we hope in an imaginative anticipation. And in respect to the 'way of life in the world', the normative aspect of imagination hopes for a life, which is not already realized, but imagined (and just given by imaginative memory of Christ). Thereby one could be aware of the (too strict) limit of 'seeing as' and 'focussing' the 'real world'. Religious imagination is of course limited by the present state of the world, but especially in the Christian 'paradigm' it goes beyond this too limited actuality. One could even put in the place of a norm that religious (and theological) imagination should not be limited by the facticity of the present world, if they won't lose their imagination of the coming one—like that imagined in the parables of Jesus.

2 A few further remarks on quest for limits

2.1 Who's limits?

One 'grammatical remark' in advance—or at least: In the preceding few lines I followed mostly Green's decision to restrict the question of 'limits of imagination' to the gen. obj.: How imagination is or is to be limited. But to take the question in this aspect seems to presuppose that there is a chaotic power, coming out of the deep, raising the need to order the chaos.⁵¹ So far, so usual; but in the critical quest for the limits, there may appear as well the question, what is limited *by* imagination in the gen. subj.—for good or for bad. Think for example, that the small worlds of rationalism or the restriction of sense for merely 'real things' (if only what is to be counted counts) could be widened by a sense for the possible.⁵² Mere stabilisation, pure repetition or a solipsistic identity may be limited by the imagination, that it could be different and that there are others (possibly and really). But there appears already a limit of imagination (gen. subj.) in a negative sense: what is limited by imagination 'for bad' like the other person or God as well, as they are restricted by imagination, or the presence, past or future as limited by what I can imagine (and what I cannot). This negative limiting by imagination is usually to be criticised, but one shall remember the positive limiting as well. And at any rate one should keep in mind, that if there are 'upper' limits, imagination should or cannot go beyond, there may be as well 'lower' limits of imagination, one should not fall below. Lack of imagination could be a problem as well—and the problem is not always that theology becomes *too* imaginative.

51. Green himself seems not to hold this imaginative view, at least not in regard to the 'realistic imagination'. But I am not sure about his view of the 'illusory' one. Cf. Green, *Imagining God*, 62ff.

52. Cf. E.S. Casey, *Imagining: A Phenomenological Study*, Bloomington 1976, 119: 'Imagining is entertaining oneself with what is purely possible'.

2.2 Limiting imagination by imagination

Already imagination itself cannot be imagined as omnipotent; in otherwords, a major limit of imagination would be its *omnipotence*, i.e. the unimaginability of an omnipotent imagination (even this 'chimera' can be imagined, but not 'consistently', so it is probably not real). At first sight there seems to be no *self*-limitation of imagination, while it is omnipresent in every perception, judgement, conclusion, in any representation or speech, and even in everything we do or don't do. But in memory of the neoplatonic tradition I suggest an imaginative experiment: Imagine an omnipotent imagination, imagining everything, even everything just possible, and not only what will become real, but as well the infinite amount of unreal possibilities. What will happen to this huge power of imagination? I just cannot imagine, that it could imagine everything at the same time, so there would appear a sequence, at least within the imaginations. But even if it would be possible 'in uno et eodem actu', could the imagination distinguish what will become real? That would have to be an owned act of drawing distinctions. And if everything imagined would become real by an 'intellectus archetypus', it would loose the unreal possibilities (they would be unimaginable for the then not omnipotent imagination).

However, the decisive point would be, that the imaginations would have to be imagined as imaginative by themselves. Otherwise for the omnipotent imagination there would be *imaginative otherness* unimaginable. If there are imagined imaginative imaginations, they cannot be as impotent not to imagine in their own way, not ordered by an 'all inclusive' imagination. By this own power and dynamic of the imagined imaginations, they are creating new and own orders. If they were always directed by the omnipotent imagination, it would imagine them incompletely and thereby would show its own incompleteness. That is why the autonomous power of the imaginations limits the omnipotence of an unimaginable omnipotent imagination.⁵³ Initially it cannot be 'complete' and omnipotent, only and perhaps it may *become* omnipotent finally. But if finally in an 'all inclusive' teleology all other imaginations are (re)integrated, there would be a loss of their deviation and their irreducible otherness—they would remain on the way of teleology as 'burned out finiteness'.

If such an omnipotent imagination is by itself inconsistent while unthinkable (if thinking is to be consistent), even logically impossible and thereby eternally unreal—it is nevertheless imaginable. It shows, that the possibility of imagination goes beyond the thinkable unreal possibilities of Leibniz. But this thesis entails that imagination need not to be consistent. If Leibniz argued for the unreality of 'mere indifference' and arbitrariness, that they are not thinkable (and I don't discuss the reasons of his argumentation), he nevertheless put this unthinkable *impossibility* in an imagination: the chimera—'unthinkable' but by imagination imaginable. He shows that imagination goes further than thinking—for good or

53. One could choose another view of imagination: as an 'objective' power, the imaginative dynamic of all imaginations. But than as 'integral' it would lack the concreteness of imagining, the individuality and irreducible difference. Such an imagined omnipotence would imply by its instantiations the genesis of difference and a succession—as well an irreducible difference to itself. Forms of such an idea are not imagination as $F_{(\text{subj.})}$, but as $F_{(\text{language})}$ or $F_{(\text{culture})}$.

for bad. It seems that the logical limits of imagination are not the same of those of thinking. One can imagine an entity with inconsistent predications, and one can limit such imaginations by rationality, but to imagination there is possible even the impossible.

2.3 No need to prove

The last imaginable limit of such an imagination would be that ‘everything is imagination’ and ‘life is a dream’, even the dreamers are dreamt. Remember Leibniz, when asked how we could distinguish life from a mere dream, answered that it really could be that life is just a dream.⁵⁴ But if we were not disturbed, if we don’t wake up or be awakened, there would arise no problem. That is why Blumenberg asked for his dream of happiness answered: not to wake up. This puzzling case of the baroque – in concrete the question ‘is there something independent?’, ‘is everything just illusion?’ – is since Descartes of course a background of all work to prove the ‘existence of an external reality’, of critique of the suspicion that everything could be illusion. But these proofs are themselves dependent on an imaginative conjecture. The ‘will to prove’ the real is provoked by imagination. If one lets oneself be confused by this suspicion, one shows the subtle power of imagination – while trying to reduce it to the real. To prove, what is usually usual, where no need to prove is given, is itself an effect of an intrigue of imagination. But, do we need to prove of ‘the other of imagination’? As long as I am not disturbed by intriguing imagination, I see no need to prove the difference. The fitting answer instead would be to follow the suggestive imagination, conceding that life could be a dream – while living with the difference, letting it unproved but quite clear enough to live by.

2.4 Three questions

In such an ‘ordinary’ way I would suggest three aspects of the limits of imagination, indicating three forms of limitation, each irreducible to the other: a. *What is not (to be) imagined*; b. *What you shall not imagine*; c. *What you cannot imagine*.

a. *What is not imagined* is first of all a *descriptive* question. Even if we say what we see, we see not only what we say, or we experience not only what is possible by language. If one understands imagination in the tradition of ‘*Einbildungskraft*’, i.e. as *power* of imagination, there immediately arises the question of *other* powers. And if you draw the distinction of inner and outer ones, you will ask for relations and balance of powers, of the inner powers and of their relation to the outer ones.⁵⁵

In the critical view these distinctions are of course made ‘from inside’, but nevertheless are necessary to avoid confusion. Awareness of contingency is pos-

54. According to him we would realize the difference just by the ‘little inconsistencies’ in the dreams.

55. By the way, it should be noted that not themselves imaginative limits of imagination are its media and the body/flesh of the ‘imaginator’. The theory of images developed by H. Belting, *Bild-Anthropologie: Entwürfe für eine Bildwissenschaft*, München 2001 (esp. 11–55) operates with these two limits.

sible by imagination, but it is as well awareness of facticity. You can imagine, what is not, or what could be different, but if you just imagine, what is, you are dreaming or you have a problem of perception. ‘Imagination unlimited’ would be a severe sickness. If one could not distinguish between usual perception and imagination, it could become a sickness even to death – which is immediately evident, if one were to try it. But to distinguish critically imagination from perception like the possible from the real is far less easy. The whole project of ‘enlightenment’ is an immense trial of ‘illuminating’ this difference, to distinguish the real and the unreal, being from seeming (Schein) or perception and true judgment from illusions and imaginations. Metaphors and concepts are imaginative and reflective answers to perception – while perception is guided by metaphors and concepts. There is an interpretative circle, reciprocity of conditions, where the distinction is not only descriptive but ‘regulative’, and a distinctive way of orientation.

Green’s strong distinction between ‘illusory’ and ‘realistic’ imagination⁵⁶ is an application of this basic distinction to imagination itself – and that is quite plausible. But what happens to ‘illusory’ imagination, imagining for example the unreal possibilities (like in fiction), which have been for Leibniz a decisive argument for freedom and morality?

To argue for an imaginative transcendence of the merely given, the ordinary reality and the actual world(s) and even the parabolic presentation of the βασιλεία only makes sense against (and in) this background of ‘ordinary life’ – but they are not exhausted by this background they are transcending. If Musil argued for a ‘sense for the possible’ (and thereby for a sense of the possible), it makes sense against the background of the ‘sense for the real’ and it makes sense for this real (to transform it for example). But if the possible would be restricted to be only legitimate as ‘real possible’, the imaginative transcendence would become too small.

b. The most common ways of responding to the quest for limitation are the various more or less normative ones.⁵⁷ They are itself at least threefold: the *epistemic*, the *ethical* and the *aesthetical* limits. To call all of them ‘normative’ is possible because they operate always with a critical restriction, whose principle of critique is not merely descriptive or just ‘analytical’ but dependent on a concept of reason, rationality, truth, freedom or ‘beauty’, itself implicitly normative (or with Green: dependent on a valid paradigm). Only by such a background-principle does the critique of certain uses of imagination make sense (like of the ‘dialectical pretence’, the betrayal and self-deception, or of functionalising art etc.). All of these limits are usually valid as well in religion, but as the differences show not culturally and historically invariable. The variability is not a case of arbitrariness,

56. Green, *Imagining God*, 62ff. The distinction itself follows the tradition like Husserl (*Phantasie, Bildbewußtsein, Erinnerung: Zur Phänomenologie der anschaulichen Vergegenwärtigungen*, Husserliana 23, Den Haag 1980, 16–30 etc. If imagination produces ‘Vergegenwärtigung’ (representation) and perception ‘Gegenwärtigung’ (presentation), the primacy of presence is grounded by the principle of the self-presence of ‘the self’ – and lacks this grounding if the structure of ‘idem’ is challenged by the ‘ipse’ or ‘ille’. The classic phenomenological principle ‘the self-presence’.

57. The question is of course not only to be put as ‘What...’, but also ‘How’.

but of factual contingency, appearing arbitrary just for an abstract spectator. For one who lives *in* and *by* these normative limits, they are ‘essential’.

The main example for such a limit in Green’s studies is *scripture* as the paradigmatic, classic and canonical ‘work of imagination’.⁵⁸ And he applies his main metaphor to this case: ‘The scriptures are not something we look *at* but rather look *through*, lenses that refocus what we see into an intelligible pattern’.⁵⁹ But – of course – are these lenses combined together like in a microscope or in a telescope? If you look *at* them, it seems not so. Only if you look *through* them, there is *by this use* (to live by them) a meaningful ‘unity’.⁶⁰

Green’s reference (or reverence?) to Calvin may evoke the connotation of ‘*tota scriptura*’, and raises again the question, whether scripture itself is the norm or whether the norm is a way of looking through scripture, where the ‘user’ is responsible.⁶¹ Luther’s canonical approach ‘whether they set forth Christ or not’⁶² is a focus, framing the scriptures and the use of them—but is in itself quite manifold. Don’t the Apokrypha ‘set forth Christ’, or the gnostic writings as well? Evidently it is implied ‘*how* to set forth Christ’ and how to do so in the *use* of scriptures. And for this normative implication scripture’s user is responsible for. In other words: the norm is not given like a book. The responsibility for the norm cannot be delegated to an object, but the Christian himself is responsible for ‘setting forth Christ’. Otherwise the scripture could be overcharged by a kind of ‘sacramental’ view: if *scripture* ‘is the revelatory point of contact between God and the people of God’.⁶³

Thereby the question of limits appears in a new aspect: the selectivity and exclusion by scripture and by its use draw the line between *orthodoxy* and *heresy*, so to say between orthodox (legitimate) and heretical (illegitimate) imagination. Green himself is engaged in the stabilisation of this distinction, of the sharp line between ‘in’ and ‘out’,⁶⁴ and that makes sense if (like in the second century) the Christian paradigm is questioned or even unknown, not at least by Christians themselves. But I would hesitate to respond only by stabilisation and with reference to an ‘objectively’ given normative limit. Not only because scripture in itself is not ‘orthodox’, but also because the actual and future life of Christian tradition(s) depends on the imaginative use of it. And imagination is not mere *stabilisation* (that is moreover a semiotic tendency of definitions and ‘orthodox’ terms) but furthermore *labilisation*. Of course one risks ambiguity by imaginative labilisation of a tradition, but to avoid this risk would limit imagination too strictly and could prevent future possibilities or even the possibility of future. If you begin

58. Green, *Imagining God*, 106. Revelation is an ‘act of imagination’ (who’s?) and theology the ‘interpretation of imagination’ (*ibid.*).

59. Green, *Imagining God*, 107.

60. Cf. Green, *Imagining God*, 113ff.

61. Cf. as well Green: ‘The choice of scripture, like the choice of eyeglasses, is personal but not therefore simply private or arbitrary’ (*Imagining God*, 108).

62. Cf. Green, *Imagining God*, 118.

63. Green, *Imagining God*, 125.

64. *Ibid.*, 116ff (with reference to Luhmann!). Green objects to the ‘expression-model’ (from Schleiermacher to Tracy) as not able to draw this line (*ibid.*, 121)—and thereby it seems that they themselves appear to him a bit heretical.

with imagination, you cannot be sure in advance to get an orthodox result—the openness implies as well an openness to heresy. And how do you know whether an actually heretical imagination will remain heretical? The parables of the βασιλεῖα for example have been quite heretical in their time.

c. The third question is an intriguing one, normally ‘appresent’ and often (regarded as) not worth being aware of. In imagination’s work, there is an invisible limit, you cannot transcend, and which ends your possible world(s).⁶⁵ What you cannot imagine is not only a relevant limit; it is also significant for your perspective and horizon. *What you cannot imagine is the limit of your world*—limits you cannot or at any rate you don’t go beyond.⁶⁶ ‘What you cannot imagine’ is beyond your horizon, always ‘appresent’. That is why your *horizon* is a limit of your imagination not ‘merely’ normative.

What one *perceives* is given to the senses; what one cannot perceive, one can *imagine*, for example the backside of the perceived other. But what is the reason for this ‘ultimate’ limit of imagination? Why does our imagination end somewhere, remarkable only ex post and often first by others? It seems to indicate a historically variable difference within the realm of possibilities. The possible sometimes becomes real—but is impossible to be imagined at a certain time and in a historical perspective. It shows, that imagination is only possibly capable of all possibilities, and this ‘possibly’ is void without historical context and individuality. Therefore it is a main challenge for historical understanding, to become aware of what has been possible in and for a time, and furthermore how and when new possibilities arose. Such historical exploration of possibilities is for example the main question of Blumenberg’s (imaginative) phenomenology of histories (of science and modernity) like in the case of ‘The Genesis of the Copernican World’.

This limit of ‘what you cannot imagine’ appears equally synchronically in the ‘case’ of the *other*. The irreducible difference of the other as other (called ‘radical’ otherness) is a possible subject of imagination (like of reflection), but *itself* is ‘beyond imagination’. ‘What you cannot imagine’ is the irreducibly different. Otherwise it would become only a function of one’s imagination—and imagination would forget the unimaginable. Therefore I would suggest as the other of imagination not in general ‘reality’, ‘perception’ or ‘facticity’, but *the unimaginable*. And that may have quite different forms of ‘appearance’—remaining absent, appresent or at last ‘beyond one’s horizon’. And, I guess, this limit is of major interest for religion and theology, because although ‘revelation’ will be located (or locative), it is in a salvific way unimaginable, if it is not a mere function of expectation or hope. I would even suppose to imagine that it remains in a certain way unimaginable, i.e. inexhaustible to imagination. Since it has taken place in the world, it is not to be reduced to a ‘fact’ or ‘event’, rather it remains a challenge to imagination as to memory to imagine the meaning of revelation.

65. The limits of your *actual* world are *not* the limits of your imagination, because you can transcend the limits of actuality like of reality. That is why a ‘realistic’ imagination may be *too* limited and why the ‘illusory’ imagination is intrinsic and necessary in order to live by imagination, also in religion.

66. The limit between what you do and what you cannot is of course not to be observed, not a visible line.

2.5 Memory as a limit of imagination

A main limit of the huge company of Imagination Ltd., omnipresent, engaged in every interpretation, but never definitively taking responsibility for ‘reality’, may be memory—to remember what could become overwhelmed and forgotten by imagination. In his book *La mémoire, l’histoire, l’oubli*⁶⁷ Ricoeur discusses the old topic of rhetoric, that memory and imagination are intimately linked to each other. What you can remember, you need not to imagine. But whenever you remember, you are more or less imaginative. And when nothing is given to memory, no testimonies, no documents, no further information, there you mainly imagine and you have to do so, like in regard to any ‘beginning’, may it be of the world, of humanity, of culture or of your life.⁶⁸

Probably the problem arises for Ricoeur in the discussion of his theory of history, especially around his reference to Hayden White’s typology of history. Because, if history is emplotment by tropes, historians argue against the dominance of literature, narration and thereby fiction over the past and the facts.⁶⁹ Ricoeur for his part does not re-enter the discussion of ‘reference to the real’ or, like Green that of ‘realistic’ imagination, but instead he asks for the limits of *representation* (not without a sidelong look to poststructuralism) against the traditional ‘colonialisation of memory by imagination’.⁷⁰ The question is, what happens to the past like to the other, if it becomes a mere function of imagination? Ricoeur is in my opinion not wrong to challenge the dominance of representation in the view of the past: ‘la présence en laquelle semble consister la représentation du passé paraît bien être celle d’une image’ and therefore ‘la mémoire [devient] une province de l’imagination’.⁷¹ Against this ‘héritage grec’ he develops a critique of imagination and tries to distinguish both as two different intentionalities. There appears the well known aporia, how to represent the absent and the past, if not by representation and imagination. And is not memory just an image of the past (*image-souvenir*)? But Ricoeur’s response to this aporia is not a mere reprise of Plato’s *τεχνή εικαστική* (as true mimesis), nor an epistemic or ontological ‘realism’, but a search for a ‘trustful’ memory (‘ressemblance fidèle’⁷²)—that is to say an *ethic* of memory, how to do justice to the past.⁷³

With regard to the aporia of representation in the presence of imagination there appears already in Aristotle (according to Ricoeur) the ‘trace of the other’ of presence and representation: ‘L’absence, comme l’autre de la présence’!⁷⁴ The traces of otherness as of absence in the presence of representation appear at the

67. P. Ricoeur, *La mémoire, l’histoire, l’oubli*, Paris 2000.

68. Cf. Blumenberg, *Höhleausgänge*, ch. 1.

69. It is of course an old tradition since Plato divided the *τεχνή μημητική* in *τεχνή εικαστική* and *φανταστική*, and only the first was related to truth by him.

70. P. Ricoeur, *Das Rätsel der Vergangenheit. Erinnern – Vergessen – Verzeihen*, Göttingen 1998, 88.

71. P. Ricoeur, *La mémoire, l’histoire, l’oubli*, 5.

72. Ibid., 15. See for further explication the important study of B. Liebsch, *Geschichte als Antwort und Versprechen*, Freiburg/München 1999.

73. Cf. Kant, *Anthropologie*, §31 (AA §34): ‘Phantasie, d.i. schöpferische Einbildungskraft, muß sich nicht darin [in das Gedächtnis] mischen, denn dadurch würde das Gedächtnis *untreu*’.

74. Ricoeur, *ibid.*, 21.

border of imagination—and indicate its limits. In his interpretation of Aristotle’s thesis ‘The memory is blessed with the past’⁷⁵, Ricoeur stresses that ‘the past’ means, that memory is affected by time and in between the experience and the memory comes otherness and anteriority. I would suggest, that memory has a dimension of *passivity* by which it comes to consciousness. And insofar memory is affected by time and by the diachrony of past, Husserl could call it a form of ‘passive syntheses’ (like association). Thereby this dimension of passivity should become relevant for *imagination* as well like it is in association.⁷⁶

But what happens to imagination in Ricoeur’s study after the memory is liberated from its primacy? It seems to be forgotten among the memory of memory: ‘un oubli de l’imagination’. After the scrutiny of past’s conquest by imagination, it seems to rest aside as a successfully ‘killed’ emperor—while the freed memory is reconceptualized as a trustful response to the claim of the past. There is no new understanding of imagination—in severe discordance to Ricoeur’s earlier works referring emphatically to it. And I wonder why Ricoeur does not recur to the schema of ‘chiasm’ to correlate memory and imagination.

Even if there is no new view of imagination developed, there are implications in this direction: one could reconceptualize the imagination of the past (as in the case of the religious memory in Christianity) as directed by the ‘trustful memory’, that is to say as a (use of) imagination *responding* to the quest for present and future interpretation last and not least of the passion narratives. I would suggest, that the imagination can fruitfully be understood in accordance with the ‘*mémoire fidèle*’—and one could understand Green’s ‘faithful imagination’ as further explication in this direction.⁷⁷ But if Green says apodictically ‘Only in faith does the imagination correspond to God’,⁷⁸ one could hesitate as in the case of the sharp line against ‘heresy’. Does that mean, that ‘faithless’ imagination never ‘corresponds to God’? A productive understanding could be, that the imagination, even the illusory one, corresponds to God—for good or for bad. And this

75. Aristoteles, Περὶ μνῆς καὶ αναμνεσῶς, 449b (γενομένου), according to Ricoeur, *Das Rätsel der Vergangenheit*, 92.

76. It is remarkable that Husserl developed his theory of passive syntheses with reference to Kant’s theory of productive imagination. He saw in Kant’s productive syntheses of imagination that what he calls ‘passive Konstitution’ as ‘Zusammenspiel der sich beständig höher entwickelnden Intentionalitäten des passiven Bewußtseins, in denen sich passiv eine überaus vielgestaltige immanente und transzendentale Sinngabe vollzieht und sich organisiert zu umfassenden Sinnestalten und Seinsgestalten’; cf. E. Husserl, *Analysen zur passiven Synthesis: Aus Vorlesungs- und Forschungsmanuskripten 1918–1924*, M. Fleischer (ed.), Den Haag 1966, 275; cf. E. Holenstein, ‘Passive Genesis: Eine begriffsanalytische Studie’, *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* 33, 1971, 112–153, 117f. That is why the emphatic accent on the productivity and activity of imagination shows a limit of the concept of merely ‘productive’ imagination, lacking a sense for passivity. But, cf. Kant, *Reflexionen zur Anthropologie*, AA XV, 133 (no. 338): ‘Einbildungskraft ist aktiv. wir spielen mit ihr. Gesetz der association. – Phantasie ist passiv. Sie spielt mit uns. Gesetz ist noch nicht bekannt, e.g. Der Vollendung’. Just the negative connotation in regard to the later is questionable.

77. Green, *Imagining God*, 126–152. ‘Christian faith can be characterized accordingly as *faithful imagination*—living in conformity to the vision rendered by the Word of God in the Bible’ (134, cf. 112f). Cf. G. Green, *Theology, Hermeneutics, and Imagination: The Crisis of Interpretation at the End of Modernity*, Cambridge 1999, 187ff, esp. 199ff.

78. Ibid., 112.

critical distinction becomes (a bit) clearer in the view of faith, but concerning the correspondence, faith can ‘judge’ only with severe self-limitation. There is no spectator-view from which one can ‘judge’ about ‘correspondence to God’.

If one reads Green’s ‘faithful imagination’ against the background of Ricoeur’s ‘La memoire’ there is – vice versa – a lack of memory as limit of imagination in Green’s view. In accordance I would suggest that his theory of imagination should be combined with a theory of memory, which could ‘limit’ and direct the imagination. This part is done in Green’s theory by revelation and scripture—but why not by *memory*, especially by the ‘memoria passionis’? One could for example interpret the metaphor of ‘resurrection’ as an imaginative memory of the crucified, and if this *memorial* dimension were lost, there would arise severe theological problems.

2.6 Otherness as a limit of imagination

As already hinted in regard to Ricoeur, otherness is a decisive limit of imagination. It provokes imagination, but is never to be exhausted by it. As evident as that may be, to ‘reflect’ on otherness as limit is nevertheless intriguing, because reflection ‘reduplicates’ it (like a mirror of culture), without being ‘capable of’ it, and is itself limited by otherness as a limit of reflection.⁷⁹ But imagination is vice versa as well a way of the presence of otherness, opening up the self or the ‘old’ world to become ‘an other’.

M.J. Ferreira⁸⁰ points out with Kierkegaard that imagination is the vivid ‘renewal’ of the self—which has implications for its necessity for any eschatology and soteriology. The transcending vision of a ‘new’ world, becomes by imagination an other than the old world.⁸¹ Therefore only imagination shall be able to hold together the tension of ‘has been/now’ and of ‘now/not yet’.⁸² But as was remarked with regard to memory, the ‘has been’ is not exhausted by imagination. There is a *loss* of the past as of the other by ‘only’ imagining it.

That is why one should consider Ferreira’s view of renewal of the self according to Kierkegaard: ‘The paradox of re-newal is implied in the claim that in the choice which constitutes the ethical a person “becomes himself, quite the same self he was before, down to the least significant peculiarity, and yet he becomes another, for the choice permeates everything and transforms it”’.⁸³ It sounds like Ricoeur’s refiguration as transforming the self by the (imaginative) configuration. But are this ‘choice’ and the ‘re-newal’ possible by one’s imagination *alone*? If

79. ‘Otherness’ in this regard is of course not the ‘alter ego’, but the so called ‘radical otherness’, inexhaustible by any representation, reflection or imagination.

80. M.J. Ferreira, ‘Repetition, concreteness, and imagination’, *Philosophy of Religion* 25, 1989, 13–34.

81. But *not as* in apocalyptic or gnosis as another world. Christian eschatology imagines this world as creation in eschatology transformed—and not creation revoked by an obscure ‘world’s end’.

82. Ferreira, ibid., 24: ‘Imagination alone makes re-newal possible because it alone can hold oppositions – old-yet-new – in tension’. What has happened here to memory? And what to ‘the other’? The ‘alone’ marks *one necessary* condition, but not more as I suppose.

83. Ferreira, ‘Repetition’, 24f, with S. Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, vol. II, trans. W. Lowrie, Princeton 1959, 227.

there is not the other, one could never come from *idem* to *ipse-identity*. The imagination by ‘myself’ is not capable of the inexhaustible other, who is basic for the *ipse-identity*. In this regard I guess, *finitum non capax infiniti*. And does it not lack memory if Ferreira notes, ‘we cannot do justice to non-ideal or concrete objects except through imagination’?⁸⁴ One may hold the view, that only the inexhaustible imagination is capable of the inexhaustible other—like *infinitum capax infiniti*. But is not the other infinite for us—and not exhaustible to our finite imagination? That is a plausible reason for “our incapacity to do justice to the uniqueness of each object or event”⁸⁵, especially to the other.

There appears an irritating *paradox of imagination* exemplifying its power and its limit together: By inventing and presenting *other* possibilities (and possible others) imagination can change your point of view, perhaps even yourself and your form of life. Imagination imagines an other self and an other life. But imagination is not capable of the irreducible other, especially of the so-called ‘radical’ *otherness*. One may try to solve this paradox with the insight that imagination together with memory is the form of the other’s presence to myself. But this reduplication of the other in an ‘inner’ and an ‘outer’ is not produced by productive imagination alone, even if the other is imagined. There is an *exteriority* at stake ‘*more exterior*’ than imagination can imagine.

The possible use of imagination (as of memory) to open one’s self to the other shows that imagination (like representation) is not to be restricted to the often-criticised domination or control of it. But imagination gets easily into the danger of it. There remains the important difference (and thereby the limit) between the *imagined other* (as in the other possibility imagined) and the *unimaginable other*, irritating and transcending the imagined one.

I would suggest understanding ‘*revelation*’ for the reason of this limiting difference as the religious origin of the awareness of this difference. And thereby one could understand the difference in the genetivus subjectivus of ‘*imaginatio Dei*’, not in a metaphysical sense, but as a difference of the imagination of the other and the other’s imagination.⁸⁶ Of course this difference is itself imagined, but it is *imagined as not only imagined*, rather as given to imagination by memory.

To apply the paradox of imagining otherness to the theological topic of ‘imaging God’ I would suggest to put it in the duplicit (paradox?) rule: *aliquid quo maius imaginari nequit et maius quam imaginari possit*. You cannot imagine anything more perfectible than God, but he is always more than you can imagine. The positive dynamic of excellence-imagination is at the same moment negated because this other is beyond every imagination. *What is beyond imagination, you cannot imagine—even if you do so* (and you cannot avoid to do so).

84. Ibid., 26.

85. As Ferreira, ibid., 29 quotes R. Unger, *Passion: An Essay on Personality*, New York 1984, 210.

86. By this hint, one could challenge Green’s interpretation of ‘*imago Dei*’ as ‘*imaginatio Dei*’ only in the gen. obj. Cf. *Imagining God*, 84–104. If the *imago* is the (power of) imagination, God himself may be imaginable as well—and as well *imagining us*. That is why I understand the title of Green’s study as well in a second sense. Thereby the *imaginatio Dei* should be read in the double genitive. And the difference of the gen. subj. to our gen. obj. is a theologically important limit of our imagination, the difference of the imagining other to the imagined one.

Just as a final example for this intriguing paradox, I suggest recalling Ricoeur's final trope of 'forgiving' as a kind of 'memory (and imagination!) for good'. Forgiving the other is not possible by forgetting as a loss of memory, but by a 'renewing' imagination of his future. The structure is to 'délier l'agent de son acte'⁸⁷ and that shall be possible by a new view of the other, expressed in the words 'tu vaux mieux que tes actes'.⁸⁸ I am not quite clear about 'how that works', at any rate it is highly imaginative,⁸⁹ imagining the other in the light of his future possibilities 'for good'. But one limit is quite clear, this renovation of the other is *not* possible by one's imagination *alone*; it becomes possible and hopefully real just by a 'work on memory' and by the 'renewing' presence of the other. One could consider that both need another other to succeed in the renewing imagination. Because, how far does our capacity of forgiving go? Where is the limit of the imaginative 'Tu vaux mieux...'? It is Derrida, who questioning Ricoeur's view in advance, writes: 'il faut, me semble-t-il, partir du fait que, oui, il y a de l'imardonnable. N'est-ce pas en vérité la seule chose à pardonner? La seule chose qui *appelle* le pardon?'⁹⁰

87. Ricoeur, *La memoire*, 637.

88. Ibid., 642.

89. What does Ricoeur not remark as imaginative! But cf. Ferreira, *ibid.*, 27: 'The old cannot be made new without a vision of possibilities', an inclusive vision and finally actualised.

90. J. Derrida, 'Le siècle et le pardon', *Le Monde des Débats*, 12/1999, 10–17, 11.