

## IMAGINATION AND RATIONALITY

GEORGE DE CHARMS \*

## TRUE IMAGINATION AND FANTASY

In speaking of fantasy it is not our intention to consider pathological conditions such as produce psychic fears, neurotic psychoses, or any of the various forms of insanity. These would carry us far beyond the limited field of our own knowledge. We propose therefore to confine our inquiry to the basic philosophy as to the real difference between fantasy and true imagination.

We learn from the Writings that "there are two origins of all loves and affections, one from the sun of heaven which is pure love, and the other from the sun of the world which is pure fire" (*Divine Love* XLV). The sun of heaven reveals the Lord as the source of all life, but the sun of the world produces the appearance that man has life in himself. This is because, in the light of nature's sun the bodily senses perceive only the effects of life. They perceive objects in motion without disclosing the life force that moves them. Man also perceives within himself the power to move according to his own will, without realizing whence that power comes.

The truth is that all life belongs to God alone, and inflows from Him. Man is only a vessel, or an organ receptive and responsive to the influx. Only if man knows this truth and acknowledges it from the heart can he be inspired to love the Lord. Nothing else can open his mind to the light of the heavenly sun. In that light man sees truly. He sees what really exists, and perceives it in its true form. This is the love and the light that produces all genuine imagination.

The appearance that man has life in himself to use as he pleases is very strong and very persuasive, because it is supported by all sense experience. Nevertheless the direct opposite is the truth. If this appearance is confirmed it inspires the mind with the loves of self and the world. It makes it appear as if the pleasures of the body, the possession of material things, and the delight of supereminence over others, were the only source of happiness, and so doing it holds the mind in the delusive light of the natural sun.

\* Third installment of a series based on lectures delivered in 1947.

In that light man sees spiritual and eternal things as dreams without substance, and temporal things as if they were the only reality. Such is the love and the light that produce all fantasy and all insanity (see SD 3172).

All who are in heaven worship the Lord, acknowledging in heart that from Him alone comes all life and every blessing. Therefore they picture in their imagination things that really exist, things that are true because they have their being in God. The objects that appear round about the angels are spiritual realities, or real appearances. They are correspondential representations of things that actually exist in the kingdom of the Lord. They are forms of all the countless uses which the Lord foresees, provides and performs with ever-increasing perfection. Such objects are formed by the Lord in the imagination of the angels, moulded from the sense experiences stored in their memory into mental visions of exquisite beauty. In essence they are truths and goods perceived, felt, and understood, all of which have their origin in God. For this reason they are eternally true, and altogether real. These same real things may be seen dimly within the objects of nature, by men on earth whose minds are enlightened; for these natural objects are the same spiritual things, but clothed in garments of matter. On earth the spiritual things within them can be seen only subjectively, as abstract ideas of truth and good. But in heaven they are seen objectively, by every angel, not as a figment of the mind, but as something existing outside of himself, in the environment of the world in which he dwells. This is to see them truly, for they all exist in the Divine of the Lord which makes heaven. They are not created by the angels, but by the Lord, and the angels, by virtue of their imaginative faculty, are only touched, or moved by them. This is why the objects seen in heaven, although they are given perceptible form in the imagination, still really exist outside of the angels, having their inmost being, their *esse*, not in the angels, but in the Lord. So also, their *existere*, or forthstanding existence, is not from the angels, but from the Lord alone. Indeed, truly to see these heavenly objects is to see the Lord.

Just the opposite is the case with those in hell who in heart deny God and confirm the appearance that they have life, power, intelligence and wisdom from themselves. These see all things in the light of nature's sun, which, as we have said, is the light of the loves of self and the world. Whatever this light pictures

in their imagination is unreal, fantastic, false, having no real existence outside of their own minds. All the objects that appear around them are but objective reproductions of these same mental pictures. When seen in the light of heaven they are monstrous parodies of truth, distorted shadows of reality, the products of an insane mind. As seen by the evil spirits, however, they appear beautiful, and yet they have no more real existence than the dreams of the opium addict. As soon as the light of heaven falls on them they are seen in all their hideous deformity, like the squalor, the pain, the hopeless depression in which the opium addict finds himself when he awakes from his narcotic sleep. The objects of heaven and the objects of hell are formed in the imagination; yet one is real and the other is not, because one is formed by the love of what is true, and the other by the love of what is false. All truth and wisdom has its origin in God; but all falsity has its origin in the proprium of man, from which nothing can arise but the fevered delirium of spiritual insanity.

Such is the essential difference between fantasy and true imagination. Yet as here stated it is an over-simplification. This is because man has both an external and an interior mind, and the light of heaven may prevail in the external mind, while the false light of hell pervades the interior mind. Also, as we have previously noted, even when the mind is inspired by a genuine love of use, the image it produces in the imagination may be imperfect because of ignorance, or fallacies, and mistaken ideas accepted as true, or affections of the proprium not yet recognized as evil. For this reason the first concept of a use may be very vague, imperfect, and impractical. It must be corrected by further knowledge and experience before it can be adapted to the actual conditions of which at first one is quite unaware. Both in the case of mechanical inventions, and in that of artistic productions, knowledge, skill, and technique are all needed in addition to an inspired vision of the use to be accomplished. On the other hand, an evil love may cause one to envision a use. It may be perceived as a means to the attainment of a purely selfish goal. In such case the love will seize upon whatever may be discovered that gives promise of promoting its objective. This is possible because the understanding can be elevated into the very light of heaven, even though the will is evil. The mind can grasp intellectually the implications of both natural and spiritual laws. In striving to produce some mechanical invention, even an evil man can skillfully

and accurately analyze the problems to be solved, and can apply that analysis successfully to his project. He can also recognize the laws of moral and spiritual truth, as he receives these from others. He can understand them in a borrowed light, and can use them with consummate cunning for his own purposes. An evil man can acknowledge the power of a truly great idea, and he can give it artistic expression, but only as a means of promoting his own wealth or reputation. For this reason evil men can perform good uses, and indeed there is no criterion whereby any one can with assurance distinguish between the works of an evil man, and the works of a good man. The difference lies solely in the interior mind, too deeply buried for others to discover it. The inmost motives, that give quality to everything a man says and does, can be known only to the Lord. Concerning this we read:

“Man has external thought, and he has internal thought. A man is in external thought when he is in company, that is, when listening, or speaking, or teaching, or acting, and also when writing; but he is in internal thought when he is at home and gives free reign to his interior affection. Internal thought is the proper thought of his spirit within himself; but external thought is the proper thought of his spirit in the body. Both remain with man after death, and even then it is not known what the quality of the man is until external thought is taken away from him; after that he thinks, speaks and acts from his affection. The man who is of sound mind will then see and hear wonderful things. He will hear and see that man who in the world talked wisely, preached learnedly, taught with erudition, wrote knowingly, and also acted discretely, as soon as the external of their mind has been taken away speak, think, and act as insanely as crazy people in the world; and what is wonderful, they then believe themselves to be wiser than others. But that they may not continue in their insanity, they are at times remitted into externals, and thereby into their own civil and moral life in which they were in the world. When in company there, and in heaven, a remembrance of those insanities is given them; and then they themselves see and confess that they spoke insanely and acted foolishly; but the moment they are remitted into their interiors, that is, into what is proper to their spirits, in like manner as before they are insane” (*Divine Love* XV).

The same is true in this world, though it may not be obvious to others. For we are told that into man's general thought—the thought derived from his contact with others, and from their sphere—

“light flows in from heaven. This flows into the intellectual of man continually, if only he does not let himself down into his own light. He then

extinguishes the light of heaven, if such there be. There is a general perception of truth with all. But the love of what is lower casts man down from this height into the perception from his proprium. This is the material perception which communicates with the sight of the eye. It is fantasy or imagination" (CL 123).

The meaning is that a man who is interiorly evil may learn from others what is true. When he is present with them, or in their sphere, he can understand what is true, and can realize its power over the minds of others. This is because he is externally and superficially moved by their affections; and these he does not reject because from his evil love he perceives that they may be useful to his purpose. He may therefore accept them, profess them, obey them, purely for the sake of the advantages they may offer. But when he is alone, thinking from his interior evil affection he denies them, holds them in contempt, and so far as they are not necessary to the attainment of his goal, he rejects them. We all have this experience quite frequently. Especially in childhood and youth, when things clearly seen as right while one is in the presence of parents or teachers, are utterly disregarded when one is under the stress of some personal desire. At such times one can conjure up a thousand of reasons why what was seen to be right does not apply to the immediate situation. Again we read:

"There are men in the world who discharge their duties and offices with much zeal, and labor, and earnestness. Magistrates, overseers, and officers performing their functions with diligence and industry; priests, leaders, ministers, preaching with warmth as if from zeal; learned men who write books full of piety, doctrine, and learning; and others of like character; and thereby they perform eminent uses to the church, to their country, to society, and their fellow-citizens; and yet many do these things from natural affection alone, which is for the sake of self, that they may be honored and exalted to dignities, or for the sake of the world, that they may gain wealth and become rich. In some those ends so kindle affection for doing uses that they sometimes perform more excellent uses than those do who are in the spiritual affection of use" (*Divine Love* XVII; DP 250, 217, 220).

"That the difference between the uses of a good man and of an evil man cannot be known on earth is because that difference lies solely in this, namely, whether he shuns evils as sins against God; and this can be known to the Lord alone" (DP 215).

This inability rightly to judge of a man's internal quality by his outward acts, does not alter in the least the essential truth that all genuine imagination is produced by the love of use, in which alone there is the light of heaven; while all fantasy arises from the love

of self and the world which produces the illusion of self-life, and fills the inner mind with insane imaginations. The internal quality of a man's life, is determined by the motive that prompts his speech and action, and this motive resides in the interior mind, the nature of which with an evil man is described by the Prophet Ezekiel, as follows:

"And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall. Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door. And he said unto me, Go in and behold the wicked abominations that they do here. So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about. . . . Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the elders of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? For they say, The Lord seeth me not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth" (Ezekiel 8: 7-12).

Here is depicted the very seat of fantasy, the interior mind of man possessed by the loves of self and the world, as that mind appears when external pretenses have been stripped away, and the imaginary forms there produced are displayed under the searching rays of the sun of heaven. Yet such a man may clearly see truth, understand it, and act according to it, for the sake of his selfish ends. From this we may see how a man inwardly inspired by the love of self may be a genius, performing eminent services to his country, making an excellent contribution to the welfare of mankind, producing a truly great work of art, apparently in direct contradiction to the law that truth, beauty, and use can be given tangible form in the imagination only under the impulse of a good love. The reason is that a good love may be received from others, and harbored in the outer courts of the mind, where it may be used secretly to achieve an evil purpose. The fact remains, that, unless a man from the heart acknowledges that his life is not his own, and that all power, all wisdom, and all ability is a free gift from the Lord; and unless he loves truth and use for their own sake, and strives day by day to shun evils as sins against God, he cannot receive an internal perception of truth, nor can he in his inner self think sanely and judge rationally. He will continue to dwell in a world of pure fantasy.

*(To be continued)*