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***Introduction
to the visual philosophy
by René Magritte***



An imperial eagle, a figure of omnipotence, occupies the entire canvas, leaning on its sharp talons on top of a mountain where only plants with steel flowers grow.

The animal wears a garment that resembles a grated brown jacket. This garment leaves some doubt as to its civility, or even its humanity.

It is indeed a bird of prey, without rival, an emperor, a dictator against the background of a sky glowing with fire.

This painting is entitled *The Present*. If we combine the attempt to dress this eagle, the symbol of empires, with the title of this painting, *The Present*, produced in 1939, there is no doubt that this painting represents the rise of Hitler's dictatorship in Europe, or anything that might resemble it.

In the 20th century, we know that the jacket and tie are the clothes of the perfect dictator, who wants to be clean while he spills the blood of others. In the "best" case, he is photographed with a child on his arms... Fashion has not changed in the 21st century!

There may be a biographical echo in this painting: René Magritte's father was a violent man who cared about dressing well but who led his three sons into transgressive behaviour. René Magritte knew from his family background what a dictatorial father was.