

VII Imagination

Hume's distinctions

Impressions and ideas ('faint images' of the impressions)

Ideas of the memory and ideas of the imagination

Ideas of the judgement (beliefs or opinions) and ideas of the fancy (mere fictions)

Evidence for the faint image view: Shepard and Metzler on mental rotation: the time taken to rotate visual imagery seems to correspond to the amount of rotation needed. Visual pathways do seem to be engaged. Some variation: the Vividness of Visual Imagery Questionnaire.

Some more distinctions

(i) Visual v. non-visual (more generally, sensory v. non-sensory). Does imagination involve the visual system? More generally, does the visual involve mental images?

(ii) From the inside v. from the outside (compare *de se* v. *non de se*). distinguishing imagining that I believe that F, from imagining being F.

(iii) Imagining the world v. imagining our own state of mind. Different forms of attitude to the same content: imagining seeing that F, believing that F, wanting that F etc. How do we understand the last of these?

Desire in Imagination

Standard cases of imagination involve analogues to perception or belief. But what about the parallel to desire, from the inside? I desire something within a fiction; it's not that I want the fiction to be otherwise. But is this a standard desire? It doesn't lead to action; it's not sensitive to how the world is. So some posit distinct make-desires or i-desires. Likewise: I am imagining being a bird; I flap my wings. Presumably I don't really desire to fly. So this too might look like an I-desire.

Some reasons not to accept I-desires (Kind): they are hard to tell from real desires (contrast imaginary beliefs); it is normal for our actual desires to be inconsistent, so why can't we just add inconsistent actual desires in place of I-desires; our desires in imagination show us something about ourselves. But are we then to think of these desires as like acting? Kind's discussion of pretending to fly.

Other roles for imagination in gaining knowledge

- (i) Modal knowledge: conceivability (imaginability) as a (defeasible) guide to possibility;
- (ii) Knowledge of counterfactuals.
- (iii) Imaginative resistance.

Possible connections between episodic memory and imagination.

Laurie Paul on the limits of imaginative knowledge.