

The Humean Origins of the Representational Account of Imagining

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October 2009

Two of the main contemporary approaches to the nature of episodes of imagining – such as visualising an Arcadian landscape or imagining that the Earth is flat – are the *Agency Account* and the *Representational Account*. While the former tries to understand imaginings as instances of a special kind of mental agency, the latter attempts to characterise them as representations of episodes of cognition, such as perceptions, episodic memories or judgemental thoughts.¹ The various contemporary versions of the Representational Account differ both in how they conceive of the kind of representation in question and in which forms of imagining they restrict their claim to.² But many of them have in common that they have – more or less explicitly – been inspired and influenced by Hume’s approach to imagining, as it can be found in his *Treatise of Human Nature*.³

An assessment of Hume’s view on imagining is therefore worthwhile not only in its own rights, but also in respect of issues concerning the motivation for, and the prospects of, endorsing the Representational Account. It is of interest to ask how best to formulate this view on imaginings and what to preserve from Hume’s own position; and also to investigate to which extent the views of more recent proponents of the Representational Account may be understood as responses to or modifications of Hume’s original approach. In this essay, I confine myself to a presentation and criticism of Hume’s claims about imagining (sections I and II), as well as to suggestions of how to improve his view when aiming to formulate a promising version of the Representational Account (section III).

¹See Dorsch (2011) for a critical discussion of both views. Note, however, that I there treat what I call here the ‘Representational Account’ as a version of the ‘Epistemic Account’ of imagining – namely the one which describe the dependency (or ‘echoing’ relation) of imaginings on cognitions in representational terms.

²See (Dorsch, 2011, chs. 5 and 6) for a detailed presentation of the main differences.

³If not stated otherwise, all references in this chapter are to Hume (2007) and given in a notation picking out the book, part, chapter and section of the respective passages.

I.

For Hume, episodes of imagining belong to the class of ‘ideas’. And as such, they are taken to be dependent on the corresponding ‘impressions’ in the sense that they are ‘copies’ of these impressions. To understand this claim, it is necessary to take a closer look at some of the details of Hume’s theory of the mind. He divides the class of mental episodes (or ‘perceptions’ in his terminology) into impressions and ideas – or, as he also says, into ‘feelings’ and ‘thoughts’. The former comprise ‘sensations, passions and emotions, as they make their first appearance in the soul’ (1.1.1.1) – that is, perceptual experiences, bodily sensations, and basic feelings of desire and emotion. By contrast, the latter include ‘the faint images of [impressions] in thinking and reasoning’, such as imaginings and occurrent beliefs or judgemental thoughts.⁴

Hume characterises the difference between both kinds of mental episode in two different, though related ways. According to the first, impressions and ideas differ in vivacity: the former are said to be generally more vivid than the latter. Vivacity comes in degrees, however. And some impressions and ideas may be of almost equal vividness, so that we may sometimes be unable to distinguish them.

‘Those perceptions, which enter with most force and violence, we may name *impressions* [...]. [...] The common degrees of [impressions and ideas] are easily distinguish’d; tho’ it is not impossible but in particular instances they may very nearly approach to each other. Thus in sleep, in a fever, in madness, or in any very violent emotions of soul, our ideas may approach to our impressions: As on the other hand it sometimes happens, that our impressions are so faint and low, that we cannot distinguish them from our ideas. But notwithstanding this near resemblance in a few instances, they are in general so very different, that no one can make a scruple to rank them under distinct heads, and assign to each a peculiar name to mark the difference.’ (1.1.1.1)

The ‘near resemblance’ of instances of the two types of mental episode and our subsequent problems to tell them apart are still not meant to imply that some ideas might be more vivid than some impressions – they only ‘approach’ each other very closely.⁵

⁴See 1.1.1.1, and also some of the passages quoted further below. Memories are a special case and will be discussed separately further below.

⁵In 1.3.5.7, the focus is also on the effect a de- or increase in vivacity has on what we take a given episode to be. Hume also notes there the possibility that an imaginative episode may change into a cognitive one – that an often enough repeated idea of the imagination may become an idea of judgement or memory. But again, this makes clear that a sufficient de- or increase in vivacity leads to a different kind of episode.

Another point is that Hume takes the vivacity of our mental episodes to be an aspect of their subjective characters which enables us to tell apart, from the inside, instances of the various kinds of mental episode. For he acknowledges that the vividness of mental episodes is part of how they appear to us in consciousness and of what lets us distinguish them from our first-personal perspective. This becomes apparent in the passages where Hume describe the subjectively accessible differences among ideas of three kinds, namely those of judgement, memory and imagination.

‘For tho’ it be a peculiar property of the memory to preserve the original order and position of its ideas, while the imagination transposes and changes them, as it pleases; yet this difference is not sufficient to distinguish them in their operation, or make us know the one from the other; it being impossible to recal the past impressions, in order to compare them with our present ideas, and see whether their arrangement be exactly similar. Since therefore the memory is known, neither by the order of its *complex* ideas, nor the nature of its *simple* ones; it follows, that the difference betwixt it and the imagination lies in its superior force and vivacity.’ (1.3.5.3)

‘An idea assented to *feels* different from a fictitious idea, that the fancy alone presents to us: And this different feeling I endeavour to explain by calling it a superior *force*, or *vivacity*, or *solidity*, or *firmness*, or *steadiness*. [...] [I]t is something *felt* by the mind, which distinguishes the ideas of the judgement from the fictions of the imagination.’ (1.3.7.7)

One may wonder whether the enumeration of different terms really already helps to ‘explain’ what vivacity amounts to. But Hume offers more, namely the claim that a higher degree of vivacity comes with two other important aspects: (i) an increased sense of presence or reality with respect to the objects and features presented⁶ to us by the episodes at issue; and (ii) a higher motivational (or rational, as one would feel inclined to say today) impact on our beliefs, emotions and actions.

‘This variety of terms, which may seem so unphilosophical, is intended only to express that act of mind, which renders realities more present to us than fictions, causes them to weigh more in

⁶My use of the term ‘presentation’ is meant to be neutral enough to allow for both intentional or relational forms of presentation of objects, as well as for the sensory or intellectual presentations of objects that may be given as past, present, actual, non-actual, and so on. The presentation of an object is, however, always taken to be a conscious presentation. The expression ‘representation’, on the other hand, is intended to highlight the fact that the represented perceptions or judgements are thereby not themselves present in the stream of consciousness, but instead merely re-presented by the respective episodes.

the thought, and gives them a superior influence on the passions and imagination.’ (1.3.7.7)

In the case of judgemental thoughts, their high degree of vivacity also ensures that they lead to the formation of a more stable and enduring belief.

‘It gives them more force and influence; makes them appear of greater importance; infixes them in the mind; and renders them the governing principles of all our actions.’ (1.3.7.7)

Accordingly, the subjective vivacity of a mental episodes reflects the closeness of its connection to perception and its impact on belief – which is, of course, in line with Hume’s thought that perceptions are the most vivid episodes that we enjoy, and that imaginings are characterised by the least degree of vivacity.

His second and less explicit characterisation of the difference between impressions and ideas introduces both the idea of a resemblance between the two and the notion of a causal dependence of the latter on the former.

‘Thus we find, that all simple ideas and impressions resemble each other; and as the complex are form’d from them, we may affirm in general, that these two species of perception are exactly correspondent. [...] Let us consider how they stand with regard to their existence, and which of the impressions and ideas are causes, and which effects.

The *full* examination of this question is the subject of the present treatise; and therefore we shall here content ourselves with establishing one general proposition, *that all our simple ideas in their first appearance are deriv’d from simple impressions, which are correspondent to them, and which they exactly represent.*’ (1.1.1.6f.)

Since Hume describes this multi-faceted relationship between impressions and ideas also in terms of the latter being ‘copies’ of the former (cf., e.g., 1.1.1.5, 1.1.3.4, 1.3.7.5 and 1.3.14.15), it has come to be known as his *copy principle*. Simple ‘perceptions’ are thereby understood as ‘perceptions’ which cannot be further divided or analysed into smaller ‘perceptions’ (cf. 1.1.1.2). And since complex ideas are composed of simple ones, the former inherit their resemblance with and dependence on simple impressions from the latter. Hume thus maintains that we cannot think of, imagine or remember something, the various parts and aspects of which (e.g., their colours, shapes, etc.) we have not previously perceived. This does not require that complex ideas have to be actually caused by corresponding complex impressions. It is sufficient if they are constructed out of simpler ideas which are causally

dependent on precedent simple impressions (cf. 1.1.1.4f.). This entails that complex ideas – despite being possibly caused by corresponding complex impressions – causally depend for their occurrence only on the respective simple impressions.

Now, the causal derivation of ideas from impressions is not the only aspect of their relationship highlighted by the copy principle. One further aspect is that Hume also understands ideas as corresponding to the respective impressions by resembling them in all respects but their degree of vivacity (cf. 1.1.1.3). In particular, they resemble each other in which objects and features they present us with, albeit presenting them in differently vivid manners (cf. 1.3.7.5). Moreover, there is a third aspect which, like the causal dependence but unlike the resemblance, is asymmetric in nature: ideas are ‘images’ or ‘representations’ of impressions (cf. 1.1.1.1, 1.1.1.4 and 1.1.1.7).

That a given complex idea may be caused merely by several simple impressions, rather than also by a corresponding complex one, raises the issue of which impression(s) it is said to resemble. It seems plausible to maintain that the complex idea resembles each of the simple impressions in so far as it possesses parts (i.e., simple ideas) which resemble the latter. On the other hand, and as already noted, the resemblance at issue here concerns primarily the (non-mental) objects and features presented by the ideas and impressions compared. And this similarity is unlikely to hold between complex ideas and simple impressions, at least with respect to the presentation of objects and of higher-level properties. For Hume understands simple impressions as presentations of basic features, such as colours, tastes or smells (cf. 1.1.1.2). Hence, although complex ideas may resemble each of the respective simple impressions, this is not the kind of similarity referred to in the copy principle. Instead, what is meant is the resemblance of ideas on those impressions that present the same objects and features as the former – in this case, the resemblance of complex ideas on similarly complex impressions. However, it remains unclear which complex impression could be relevant in cases where a complex idea is not preceded by any corresponding complex impression. It is true that such ideas would resemble a complex combination of the relevant simple impressions, if any would actually come into existence. But this is not the same as saying that the complex idea resembles an already given impression.

The same set of issues does not arise with respect to the proposed representational link between ideas and impressions. On the one hand, in contrast with resemblance, representation need not be genuinely relational in the sense of requiring an actually given second relatum. And, on the other hand, a complex idea represents not simply individual simple impressions, but also their complex structure. Imagining a blue book on a brown table corresponds to seeing a blue book on a brown table, and not to seeing a brown book on a blue table, despite both complex impressions involving

the same simple ones. Accordingly, what complex ideas represent are complex impressions, though not necessarily particular ones (e.g., the one I had yesterday when looking at my friend's house).⁷

This suggests perhaps also some solution to the resemblance issue. The key thought is that ideas present certain (non-mental) objects and features precisely because they are representations of impressions which present those objects and features. Hence, it is not surprising that ideas resemble the impressions that they represent in so far as they present the same (non-mental) objects and features as the latter (albeit in a less vivid way). For they represent an impression with a certain property and thereby acquire themselves this property, or at least something very similar to it. A complex idea therefore resembles the complex impression that it represents. And although the latter need not enjoy actual existence in the past or present, it is clear which complex impression is relevant. Moreover, we do not generally find claims about the resemblance between actual and merely represented entities problematic. We may recognise similarities between friends of ours and characters in a film; or between a real person and our mental image of her which we have formed prior to meeting her or knowing anything about her appearance.

These considerations allow now for a more precise reading of Hume's copy principle. Since the symmetric resemblance between ideas and impressions is probably best understood as a consequence of their asymmetric representational link, we need not any more mention the former separately.⁸ According to the resulting interpretation, the principle maintains that particular ideas are copies of particular impressions in that they (i) causally depend on the latter, and (ii) are representations of the latter in such a way as to end up presenting the same (non-mental) objects and features. In the case of simple ideas, both relations hold between them and simple impressions. And they always represent a particular simple impression. Complex ideas, on the other hand, causally depend on each member of a certain set of particular simple impressions, while representing and resembling a complex impression – though not necessarily a particular one.

⁷The preceding considerations liken Hume's complex ideas to pictures, given that both allow for the presentation of some kind of object, without the need to present a particular and actual instance of that kind; and given that both may perhaps still give rise to an experience of resemblance. A painting may depict a man with a certain appearance, without depicting a particular man (e.g., Socrates or Napoleon); and it may perhaps still look like such a man (see chapter ??). This analogy may provide further support for the suggested interpretation of copies as reproductions similar to photocopies or photographs.

⁸At one point, Hume writes that 'impressions and ideas [...] are exact copies of each other' (1.1.1.5). This seems to equate the relation of copying with the relation of resembling. My different usage follows instead that to be found in the contemporary literature on Hume, as well as presumably in other passages in Hume's text (e.g., cf. 1.3.7.5). My aim is, in any case, a reconstruction, not of Hume's use of the word 'copy', but of his conception of the relationship between ideas and impressions.

Hume's conception of the relationship between simple ideas and simple impressions seems thus to be that the former are causal reproductions of the latter – perhaps not dissimilar to photocopies or photographs.⁹ For such reproductions combine the same three elements of causal dependence, representation and resemblance. It is constitutive of photocopies of sheets of paper that they are causally dependent on the respective original sheets, and also that they are photographic representations of the latter and resemble them in respect of what is written or drawn on them. Complex ideas deriving from complex impressions may equally count as causal reproductions of the latter – with the exception that they are not causally dependent on them, given that they might have come into existence without the involvement of the complex impressions. For those cases, the analogy of a collage of photocopies seems more fitting. If we glue together several photocopies, the resulting collage of copies is causally dependent on the initial sheets of paper, while representing and resembling a corresponding potential collage of the originals, though no particular one.

Drawing the analogy with photocopies may perhaps also offer an explanation of why ideas are less vivid than impressions – and therefore also of how the two distinct characterisations of the difference between the two types of mental episode fit together. In the case of photocopies, the contrast and saturation of the marks on their surface tend to be less than those of the marks on the original sheets of paper. Similarly, the vivacity of episodes might be understood as an aspect of their subjective character which is bound to decrease when mentally reproduced. That is, this reproduction might be of such a nature that it results not only in the episodes' inheritance of the presentation of certain objects and features, but also in a diminishing of their sense of reality or presence and of their impact on beliefs, emotions and actions.

We have finally reached the point where we are in a position to become more concrete about Hume's conception of imagining. Both his examples of imagining and his discussion of the difference between imagining and remembering something suggest that he takes imaginings to be complex ideas. Imagining 'the New Jerusalem, whose pavement is gold and walls are rubies' (1.1.1.4), or 'winged horses, fiery dragons, and monstrous giants' (1.1.3.4), means combining simpler ideas – whether the latter are still somewhat complex (such as the ideas of horses, wings, and so on) or indeed among the simplest (such as the ideas of colours, tastes, smells, and so on). Correspondingly, ideas of the imagination differ from ideas of memory in whether they preserve the order in which the relevant impressions occurred before (1.1.3.2).¹⁰ And this, again, presupposes that both are complex ideas pos-

⁹I follow here the interpretation of Mike Martin, presented in a research seminar on the *Treatise* at University College London in the academic year 2002/03.

¹⁰Note that this fact is not directly subjectively accessible (cf. the passage from 1.3.5.3 quoted above). It is interesting to ask whether the also postulated and subjectively salient

sessing an internal structure. According to the proposed reading of the copy principle, Hume therefore maintains that it is constitutive of imaginings that they represent complex perceptions and causally depend on the prior perceptual occurrence of the simple aspects of those perceptions.¹¹

II.

Hume's theory of the mind faces many challenges, some of which concern his theory of mental episodes in general. One of these has already been acknowledged by Hume himself, namely that it seems possible to have simple ideas (e.g., the one of 'the missing shade of blue') without having had before the corresponding simple impression (cf. 1.1.1.10). The universality of his copy principle becomes therefore questionable, even in its restriction to simple ideas and impressions.

Another objection targets the fact that the differences in vivacity – and hence the resulting differences between mental episodes – are taken by Hume to be quantitative, and not qualitative. This contradicts the observation that perceptions, judgements, memories, imaginings, and so on, differ in kind, and not merely in degree. They differ, for instance, in whether they are sensory or intellectual, in whether they involve a cognitive attitude (i.e., whether they involve the claim that things are as they present them to be), or in whether they provide us with reasons for belief, or are responsive to them (see (Dorsch, 2011, ch. 3) and chapter ??). And these differences are not only subjectively salient (see chapters ?? and ??, but also distinguish the episodes concerned qualitatively, and not merely quantitatively.

Furthermore, it should be explained why some ideas (i.e., judgemental thoughts and conscious memories) are more vivid than others (i.e., imaginings) to such an extent that the former, but not the latter, have an impact on what we believe about the world in a way very similar to that of impressions. Especially Hume's discussion of episodic memories reveals that he himself struggled more or less explicitly with this problem. While generally assuming them to be ideas (cf., e.g., 1.1.1.4 and 1.1.3.1), he then moves them sometimes closer to impressions to account for the perception-like impact on belief. Thus, when trying to distinguish them from imaginings, Hume locates memories 'betwixt an impression and an idea', to reflect the fact that their vivacity is in between those of perceptions and imaginings (1.1.3.1). And when trying to specify why memories have the same power

difference in vivacity between memories and imaginings might be said to indirectly reflect this difference of how the two kinds of episodes are taken to relate back to the original perceptions.

¹¹I assume here that our perceptions are simple – that is, for instance, of a single colour and no other sensible quality – only in rare and artificial circumstances. Perhaps there may also be simple instances of imagining, in which case Hume's conception would have to be slightly modified as to allow for simple ideas of the imagination as well.

as perceptions to give rise to beliefs, Hume even speaks of them as ‘impression[s] of the memory’ (1.3.5.1) – though not without seemingly relativising this statement shortly afterwards by apparently reintroducing the contrast between perceptions and memories:

‘To believe is [...] to feel an immediate impression of the senses, or a repetition of that impression in the memory.’ (1.3.5.8)

If ‘repetition of an impression’ is understood here as meaning the literal reoccurrence of the original impression, the explanation of the memories’ impact on beliefs has the price of rendering them indistinguishable from perceptions. But if it is instead taken to denote, in accordance to the copy principle, the less vivid representation of a perception, the initial problem of accounting for the memories’ perception-like link to belief reoccurs. This illustrates that Hume has difficulties to accommodate the fact that memories are very similar to perceptions in their epistemic role, while also holding on to their differences in vivacity and immediacy – that is, their differences in how they present us with objects.

And finally, the first characterisation of the difference between impressions and ideas is in tension with the second one precisely because of this aspect of Hume’s conception of vivacity (and despite the explanatory link between the two mentioned above). For treating ideas as copies of impressions in the sense just specified means treating the two as being different in kind. Hence, it clashes with the claim that the only difference between the copies and what they are copies of is one of vivacity (cf. 1.1.1.3). In fact, this inconsistency seems already to be inherent to the copy principle itself, given that its second clause postulates a resemblance in all respects except vivacity (i.e., a difference in degree), while the third clause puts forward the idea of a representational link (i.e., a difference in kind).

Now, Hume’s theory of the mind is subject not only to general challenges to his theory of mental episodes. Some objections are also more specifically related to the particular incorporation of imaginings in his overall view of the mind. Hume claims that episodes of imagining are causal reproductions and therefore representations of their cognitive counterparts. In addition to the difficulties already mentioned, this thesis is problematic for at least two reasons.

The first is that it is unclear how to avoid the conclusion that all imaginings (just like all thoughts or judgements) involve some sensory or affective element, given that they are or include copies of perceptions with sensory or affective qualities. This idea makes sense in the case of affectively imagining a pain or of sensorily imagining something red: the character of the first episode contains some element of painfulness, and the second some quality of reddishness.¹² But we can suppose (or, more generally, think) that an object

¹²Though neither suffices to qualify the episode as a genuine experience of pain or

is a certain way without any sensory or affective element involved. The underlying problem is that Hume's theory cannot properly accommodate the distinction between sensory, affective and intellectual episodes, especially given that this distinction is one in kind.

The second motivation for being uneasy about the proposed claim about imaginings is that it can at best play only a minor role in an account of imagining. That imaginings are dependent on perceptions in the way described is not distinctive of them within Hume's theory. For the same is said to be true of episodes of memory, thought and judgement. This leads back to the worry that, ultimately, reference to degrees in vivacity is his only means to establish differences among mental episodes, while the more fundamental or significant ones of these are in fact differences in kind. In particular, a high degree of vivacity is implausibly meant to be the sole feature which is distinctive of all cognitive episodes (whether they are impressions or ideas) and distinguishes them strictly from imaginings.

III.

Hume's conception of imagining can be improved, however, without having to give up on the general idea that imaginative episodes are representations of cognitive ones.

The two most important modifications are, first, the introduction of the qualitative distinction between sensory and intellectual presentations; and second, the substitution of the qualitative differences in attitude and epistemic role for the quantitative difference in vivacity. Hume's contrast between impressions and ideas is thus replaced by the opposition of cognitions and imaginings, as well as the orthogonal opposition between sensory and intellectual episodes. As a result, not only perceptions, but also episodic memories and judgemental thoughts are taken to be episodes that do not represent others in the relevant way, but instead can figure as the objects of such a representation. And only imaginings – plus possibly memories (cf. below) and spontaneous images – continue to count as representations of cognitions.

These two modifications suffice already to solve several of the difficulties facing Hume's theory of the mind. The resulting version of the Representational Account can accommodate the fact that the various kinds of cognition and imagining differ in kind from each other, and along the dimensions outlined above. It also avoids any of the problems linked to the introduction of vivacity as an important element in an account of imaginings. Intellectual imaginings need not involve any sensory elements any more, since they can now be construed as representations of intellectual cognitions, such as judge-

redness, given that they do not present these qualities as actually being instantiated (see chapters ??, ?? and ??).

mental thoughts or occurrent beliefs. And the modified theory comes closer to the identification of a distinctive feature of imaginings which separates them strictly from cognitions and other non-imaginative mental episodes. For while it is said to be constitutive of imaginings that they are representations of cognitions, the same is not true of perceptions, judgemental thoughts, bodily sensations, feelings of emotion or desire, and so on.

The application to episodic memories may remain problematic, however. They still seem to fall in between perceptions and instances of sensory imagining. While they share their cognitive attitude and epistemic role with the former, they do not present their objects as being there before us in our environment and, in this respect at least, resemble the latter. This raises again the issue of how they can actually share their attitude and impact on belief with perceptions, despite their lack of the latter's direct connection to reality. And it also generates the question of which set of features is distinctive of imaginings, if it turns out that episodic memories, too, are best treated as representations of perceptions.

But the Representational Account may have the resources to deal with episodic memories (see Martin (2001)). If episodic memories are indeed representations of past perceptions, they may inherit the particular content of the latter. That is, they may also be presentation of the specific objects and features then perceived and, moreover, present these objects and features as they were once presented by one's past perception. In this way, episodic memories may provide us with access to particular aspects of the past. And this fact may very well explain why they involve a subjectively salient commitment to how things actually were, and why they influence our beliefs in roughly the same way as the original or other perceptions. They would still differ from the latter in that they do not present their objects as being there before us, but locate them in the past.

The contrast with sensory imaginings may then be established by arguing that they – although representing some perceptions – do not represent particular perceptions, let alone with objects from the present or the past. This would ensure that they do not bring us into contact with the actual world – something which is reflected by the fact that their objects are not given to us as actual, and that they do not show the cognitive attitude and impact on belief of cognitions. The Representational Account may therefore identify the representation of non-particular cognitions as the distinctive feature of imaginings. And this would not only suffice to distinguish them from episodic memories and other non-imaginative episodes, but would also promise an account of their lack of epistemic features.

Now, another difficulty for the modified view is that it is unclear whether the distinction between sensory and intellectual episodes is already sufficient to render the Representational Account applicable to intellectual imaginings (see (Dorsch, 2011, ch. 7)). It is at least questionable whether all instances of imagining that something is the case can or should be modelled on imagining

judging or imagining believing that it is the case. But if the answer to this question is negative, the Representational Account cannot hope to provide a unified theory of imagining, which should include intellectual instances as well. It may still be able to elucidate the nature of sensory imaginings – but presumably only by giving up on the idea that sensory and intellectual instances of imagining share a common nature. Properly answering the question of whether the Representational Account is indeed bound to fail to accommodate intellectual imaginings, however, requires a more extensive and thorough investigation than can be offered here.

In addition to the two modifications already mentioned, proponents of the Representational Account may also interpret the significance of the causal dependence of imaginings on cognitions in a slightly different way than Hume and, as a result, separate it more from the idea that imaginings are representations of cognitions. It may very well be true that we cannot visualise something blue without having seen something blue, or that we cannot imagine that water is blue without having formed judgements or beliefs about water (rather than, say, *twater*). But it seems that the dependence in question is not merely a causal one, it also – and primarily – concerns semantic aspects of the respective kinds of episode.

The thought is, more specifically, that our capacities to imagine something depend on our perceptual and conceptual capacities. And since episodes of imagining involve the employment of the former, while we acquire the latter by cognitively interacting with aspects of the world (including, say, the abstraction from sensory input, or conceptual analysis and construction), it follows that imaginings depend on our cognitions for their presentational power. And it is also to be expected that this dependence is underwritten by some complex causal chain leading from the initial cognitions, by means of which we learned to see and conceptualise certain things, to the final imaginings. But what is really of interest here is the semantic dependence. This is supported by the fact that reference to the latter can explain why we are in many ways limited in what we can imagine – notably in that we can sensorily imagine only perceivable items and features, and in that we can imaginatively refer to real individuals or natural kinds only if we stand in the right cognitive relation to them.¹³ Besides, it fits well with what has been said above about understanding imaginings as complex presentations of objects and their features.

However, since presumably many more presentational mental episodes rely in this or a similar way on our prior perceptual and conceptual capacities, the claim that imaginings are correspondingly dependent on cognitions becomes relatively uninteresting for a theory of the distinctive features of

¹³See also the idea that people, who are blind, cannot visualise (e.g., Scruton (1974, 104)). But note also that there is some empirical evidence in favour of the idea that even congenitally blind people enjoy mental imagery, or at least something very similar to it (see Thomas (2010)).

imaginings. The thesis may still help to elucidate the presentational side of the nature of imaginings, but it cannot contribute to an account of what distinguishes imaginings from other kinds of mental episode.

As a result, the representational clause from Hume's original copy principle becomes separated from its causal counterpart, and only the former remains properly at the heart of the Representational Account of imagining. This separation is reflected in the fact that, while imaginings are semantically dependent on relatively simple aspects of perception or conception, their representational element is said to concern more complete or complex cognitions. And it also highlights that the problem of the missing shade of blue is not a specific problem for the Representational Account. Imaginings may none the less continue to count as causal reproductions or collages of reproductions, given that the assumption of a causal dependence need not be rejected. So none of the objections to Hume's theory of imaginings provides a good reason to give up on its key idea: namely that episodes of imagining are mental representations of episodes of cognition.

Whether more recent versions of the Representational Account fare better as accounts of imaginings than Hume's remains still to be seen, though. I argue for the idea that visualising or emotionally imagining something means representing corresponding experiences of seeing or feeling in chapters ?? and ??, respectively. But I also think that imaginings have this feature in common with other sensory or affective presentations, such as episodic memories or spontaneous images. What is distinctive of the imaginative episodes and distinguishes them from the non-imaginative ones is, in my opinion, that they are instances of a special kind of mental agency aimed at the (partial) control of what is presented (see Dorsch (2011) and chapter ??). Accordingly, I endorse the Agency Account about imagining. While I think that the Representational Account is right about the nature of the sensory presentation involved in sensory forms of imagining, it is wrong about what renders them imaginative.¹⁴

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¹⁴I am very grateful to Mike Martin for comments on an early version of this essay.

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