

Wanting Things You Don't Want:

*The Case for
an Imaginative Analogue
of Desire*

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YOU'RE IMAGINING, in the course of a game of make-believe, that you're a cat. You don't believe that you're a cat. You are moved to say "Meow." This case illustrates something that a theory of imagination should explain: sometimes when you imagine something, you are moved to act.

Consider another case. You're watching a movie. A monster is on the loose and you are imagining, along with the movie, that it is attacking people willy-nilly. You do not believe there is a monster on the loose or that you are in any danger, but still you feel afraid. This case illustrates something else that a theory of imagination should explain: sometimes we have emotional reactions to things that we do not believe but merely imagine.¹

By "imagining" we mean what you do when you daydream or pretend or when you take on board, without believing, the contents of books or movies. We assume there is a single something you do in these three disparate activities, but we don't think much hangs on this assumption. We think imagining is distinct from supposing. Though we think that it is hard to imagine that killing babies for fun and profit is permissible, we have no trouble supposing this. We can easily suppose it for *reductio*. Though we think it is hard to imagine that Robert Stalnaker is the smallest prime number, we have no trouble supposing that he is.²

1. In the monster case, are you really afraid, or are you just feeling something a lot like fear? Walton (1997) argues for the second. Not everyone agrees. What is important, for our purposes, is that in these sorts of cases, people often have pronounced fear-like affective responses to what they imagine. This calls out for explanation — either an explanation of how it happens that people come to be genuinely afraid of things that they know do not exist, and states of affairs they know do not and will not obtain; or the postulation of an attitude that isn't quite fear but feels a lot like it, which people can bear to propositions or states of affairs that they know do not and will not obtain. We will remain silent in this paper about which of these options one ought to prefer, though perhaps the story that we offer fits most naturally with the second. For now, we will remain silent on another issue: When we say that people come to be afraid of things they know do not exist, we are not saying that there are some things that do not exist (and which are known to not exist) and that people are afraid of those things. So what are we saying? This issue comes up in section four, footnote 21.
2. Gendler (2000) convinced us of the need to distinguish imagining from

We think imagining is distinct from any propositional attitude that you can take only toward possibilities. You can imagine that you are a cat, but this is not possible. You can imagine that you were born in 300 BC, but this is not possible. So if clear and distinct perception of a proposition entails that the proposition is possible, then the mental state we are interested in is not clear and distinct perception. If conceiving a proposition entails that the proposition is possible, then the mental state we are interested in is not conceiving. It is a good question how closely related what you do when you daydream or watch movies is to what you do when you engage in thought experiments in, say, the philosophy of mind, but we do not try to answer that question here. We are mainly interested in accounting for the above-mentioned phenomena about motivation and affect.³ So while we admit that we are being unclear about what the imagination is, and we admit that we are assuming there is some such thing that is common to daydreaming, pretending, and going along with movies, the main points of the paper don't depend on the unclarity or assumption. What they depend on is that there are the above-mentioned phenomena.

To be clearer, the first phenomenon we think needs accounting for is that sometimes you are moved to act by something you imagine but do not believe. Children are a good source of examples of this phenomenon — they act on the basis of their imaginings a lot. When they

supposing and did so on grounds just like those pointed to. We do think that sometimes supposing that something is the case triggers the imagination. Supposing that so-and-so is President in 2008, you might begin imagining that so-and-so is. Or, in a referee's example, trying to work out what follows from your supposing that John comes to the party, you might imagine that John comes to the party and imaginatively go over some consequences. Or supposing that you are being chased by a monster might trigger imagining that you are, which might produce some affect. But still, supposing is not imagining.

3. Note that the claim that these phenomena call for explanation doesn't depend on their being *surprising*. Surprising or not, we think that they're extremely *interesting*, and (as we'll see) problematic for some otherwise attractive accounts of imagination. In any case, they are phenomena, which the correct theory of imagination will account for. The correct theory of imagination needs to explain the pedestrian as well as the remarkable.

imagine that they are cats or elephants or cops or robbers, this can give rise to all sorts of behavior.

A question we try to answer is: Why are we *ever* motivated to act when we imagine? When we suppose that something is the case, we aren't so motivated. Supposing for *reductio* that we are elephants does not motivate us at all; neither does supposing that we are immaterial souls or birds or When we entertain the possibility that something is the case, we aren't so motivated. Merely entertaining the possibility that John McCain will be president in 2009 does not motivate us at all. Neither does entertaining the possibility that we are cops or robbers or

Other, related questions that we try to answer are: How do imaginings motivate behavior? To what extent, and in what respects, is the behavior-generating role of imagination like the behavior-generating role of belief? Beliefs don't generate behavior all on their own; they do so in combination with desires. If imaginings play something like the role of beliefs in generating behavior, is there also some state that plays something like the role of desire? If so, what kind of state is it — a desire, or something else? And if it's a desire, a desire about what?

The other phenomenon that we think a theory of the imagination needs to account for is that we sometimes have emotional responses to what we imagine but do not believe. Go back to the case in which you are imagining, along with a movie, that a monster is on the loose, killing willy-nilly. You do not believe there is a monster on the loose, or that you are in any danger, but still you feel afraid. Why do you have any emotional responses to what you imagine?

In what follows, we will offer a (partial) theory of imagination that (begins to) answer the previously mentioned questions and to explain the previously mentioned phenomena. Our theory builds on work by Shaun Nichols and Stephen Stich, so first we will explain their view, paying special attention to how they account for the phenomena discussed above. Then we will criticize Nichols and Stich's theory. Finally, we will offer our own.

We consider these two phenomena — motivation and emotional

response — because we think positing a novel mental state can explain both. The state is not a desire but is in various ways like desire. When you are in it you can, to put it a bit misleadingly, want things you don't want.⁴

1

The theory that Nichols and Stich (N&S) endorse is simpler than ours. If correct, it would explain the phenomena we are interested in without positing the extra mental state.

Their theory claims that imagining, like believing, is a propositional attitude: it is a contentful mental state. N&S represent this by saying that there is an imagination box, just as there is a belief box.⁵ To imagine that Alan is a man is to put the proposition that Alan is a man into your imagination box. Likewise, to believe that Alan is a man is to put the proposition that Alan is a man into your belief box. However, the imagination box is not the belief box. The two differ in their connections to various mental mechanisms, such as the desire box and what N&S call “the Script Elaborator”, a mechanism that produces at will some of the content of what you imagine. For example, when you start imagining that you are a cat, the proposition that you are a cat is put by the Script Elaborator into the imagination box. The same mechanism can put a lot else into the box: that you have gray fur, that you have a hurt paw, etc.

Its connection to the Script Elaborator is a clear way in which the imagination box differs from the belief box. Because of its connection

4. We are not the first to go in for the novel mental state. Kendall Walton (1990), Gregory Currie and Ian Ravenscroft (2002), and David Velleman (2000) do too. Walton calls the imaginative analogue of desire *imagining desiring*, and also postulates imaginative analogues of many other propositional attitudes. According to Walton, there are states of imagining X-ing for many propositional-attitude-verb values of X. (It might be surprising that we count Walton as a fellow traveler, since it's easy to misread Walton's talk about *imagining desiring* P as being about *including in the content of one's imagining the proposition that one desires* P. Currie and Ravenscroft [2002] point out that it is a bad idea to think of imagining desiring as imagining that you desire.)
5. N&S use the terms “pretense box” and “possible worlds box” for the imagination box.

to the Script Elaborator, all sorts of propositions can be put into the imagination box at will. By contrast, the belief box is not connected to the Script Elaborator and we cannot put much, if anything, into the belief box at will. (An interesting question that we will not take up here is whether the Script Elaborator can put *any* proposition in the imagination box at will. Answering this question bears on the puzzle of imaginative resistance (Walton [1994], Gendler [2000]).)

To account for motivation by imagination, N&S say that you sometimes desire that you act similarly to how you would if the things you are imagining were true.⁶ When you imagine that you are a cat, believe that cats meow, and desire to act similarly to how you would if the things you are imagining were true, then you are motivated to meow.

In the official terms of the N&S theory: along with an imagination box and belief box, there is a desire box. In the desire box is the proposition that you act as you would if what you were imagining were the case (p. 37).⁷ Hence, you want to act as you would if what you are imagining is the case. Say that the imagination box represents something as being the case — that you are a cat. The result is that you want to behave in a way similar to the way you would if you were a cat.⁸

Briefly, then, the N&S account of how imagination produces motivation goes: you imagine that X, producing a belief that you are imagining that X. You desire to act similarly to the way you would if X were

6. More exactly, we act on a desire that we behave in a way that is “similar to the way some character or object behaves in the possible world whose description is contained in” the imagination box (Nichols and Stich [2003], 37).
7. All page numbers are to Nichols and Stich (2003) unless otherwise noted.
8. Why “similar”? Why don't you behave as you would if you were a cat? Answering this question, Nichols and Stich mention an experiment in which they instructed participants to pretend that they were home alone at night and heard a suspicious noise in the basement (21). Doing so,

one participant picked up the phone that was available and dialed 911, the police emergency number. However, she took precautions to ensure the call did not really go through. She didn't want her behavior to be that similar to the behavior elaborated in the [imagination box]; she wanted to be sure that the police didn't really come. (p. 38; we have replaced “Possible World Box” with “imagination box”.)

true, and you believe you would act like *this* if *X* were true, so you want to act in a way similar to *this*.

To account for the fact that you can have emotional responses to what you imagine, N&S posit another connection to the imagination box. The imagination box is connected not only to the belief box, the Script Elaborator, and the desire box but also to various affect-generating systems. Furthermore, what you imagine is processed by these systems in similar ways to what you believe. N&S believe that if you imagine that something is the case, and this is processed by the same emotional systems as process our beliefs (and in a similar way), the emotional response to imagining that something is the case will be like the emotional response to believing that something is this case. This connection to you emotional systems allows that you can be frightened by what you are imagining. Believing that a monster is on the loose would frighten you. Hence, N&S predict that imagining that a monster is on the loose would frighten you.

The N&S picture of how imagination generates motivation and emotion, then, is this:

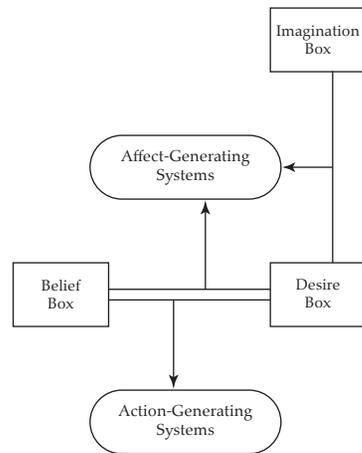


Diagram 1

(Here we omit much of the detail of N&S's official boxology, in order to

restrict our attention as much as possible to the elements about which we differ from them. For example, we omit the Script Elaborator.)

To preview, the picture we propose will look like this:

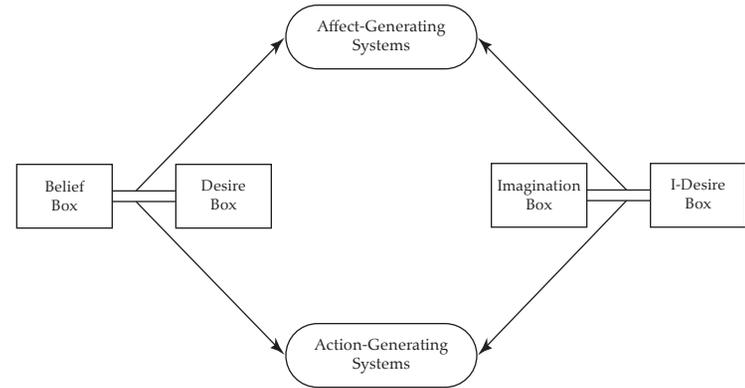


Diagram 2

(Here, too, we omit some detail in order to highlight our differences with N&S.)

The N&S picture is in many ways attractive. Our own theory of the imagination builds on it. In three respects, though, we differ very starkly from it. First, N&S hold that the desire-like state that motivates behavior when you imagine that you are a cat is a desire. We deny this. Second, N&S hold that the content of this desire-like state is that you act similarly to how you would if what you were imagining were true. We deny this too. Third, N&S hold that imagination produces behavior just by producing a belief, a belief that combines with a desire to produce behavior. We deny all this too.

In Nichols and Stich's theory, representations in the imagination box have functional roles that are, in important respects, like the functional roles of representations in the belief box. In particular, they have similar sorts of connections to affect-generating mechanisms. Also, like representations in the belief box, they combine with representations in the desire box to produce behavior. We can think of imaginings as

the imaginative analogues of beliefs. We can then wonder: Is belief the only propositional attitude with an imaginative analogue?

We think that the N&S picture of cognitive architecture is missing a box for an imaginative analogue of desire — call this an *i-desire*.⁹ We also think that the analogy between believing and imagining is closer than it is on the N&S picture.¹⁰ To skip ahead a bit, we think that *i-desires* play a motivational role much like the role of desires, and that imaginings and *i-desires* together produce behavior in very much the same way as beliefs and desires together produce behavior. And we think that *i-desires* play a role in the production of some affective responses to things imagined that is analogous to the role played by desires in the production of some affective responses to things believed.

Why think that we need to make room in our theory for *i-desires*? Why not think we can explain all the phenomena that need explaining with just the resources in the theory N&S offer? One reason comes from the explanation of action motivated by imagination. This will be the subject of Section 2. Another reason comes from the explanation of affect produced by imagination. This will be the subject of Section 4.

2

You are imagining that you are a cat and find yourself acting this out. (We will call behavior motivated partly by the imagination “pretending” or “pretense-directed behavior”.) Recall N&S’s explanation for what is going on here: You are moved in part by a desire. Which desire? The desire that you behave in a way that is “similar to the way some character or object behaves in the possible world whose description is contained in” the imagination box (p. 37). For example, when you pretend that you are a cat, you imagine that you are a cat and are moved by a desire to behave like a cat.

In order for this desire to move you to perform any particular action, you must have some fairly specific beliefs about how cats behave. If you want to act like a cat but know nothing about cats, you’d be at a

9. What we call “*i-desires*” are called “desire-like imaginings” in Currie (2002) and Currie and Ravenscroft (2002), work to which we are greatly indebted.

10. For more along these lines, see Egan (Forthcoming).

loss. By contrast, if you want to act like a cat and know that cats tread lightly, you’ll want to tread lightly. Your beliefs about how cats behave, and a belief that you are imagining being a cat, combine with a desire to act in a way similar to the way you would act if what you were imagining were the case to produce pretense-directed behavior motivated by beliefs and desires. That’s the N&S theory.

But it seems to us (and here we echo Velleman [2000]) that you do not need to have *any* beliefs about how something behaves (or is disposed to behave) in order to pretend that you are that thing. You certainly needn’t have any beliefs that are sufficiently determinate to call for any specific behavior. You can pretend that you are a cat without knowing anything about how cats behave. You might (but only might; see below) have to know *something* about cats. For example, you might have to know that cats are light and agile or that they are furry or small or But this sort of knowledge seems more to put *constraints* on your catty pretense-directed behavior than to *determine* it. You’re liable to act in accordance with the things that you know (or believe) about cats, but your beliefs needn’t be rich enough to single out any particular sort of behavior that you think a cat would be liable to go in for in the imagined situation. What often seems to happen instead is that you imagine being a cat, imagining being light, agile, and furry, and then that imagining moves you to act in a particular way. (You might thereby learn about catty behavior or at least form a hypothesis about it.) Having (much in the line of) beliefs about how a cat behaves is no prerequisite for pretending to be a cat. Velleman suggests that children can pretend they are animals without having beliefs about how the animals behave. If so, N&S’s theory is incorrect. Compare: In some *Law and Order* episodes, when detectives try to figure out how a criminal did something, they take what they know about the criminal, then start acting as he’d act. This enables them to learn how the criminal would behave; so they needn’t have had beliefs about it in advance.¹¹

11. A rival take on the *Law and Order* example, consistent with N&S’s view, is that the detectives have some implicit beliefs about how a criminal did something. In pretending to be the criminal, they merely make such beliefs explicit. The

Other examples make the same point: Having beliefs about how something acts is not necessary to pretend you are that thing. Pretend you are one of the undead. Doing so does not require having some beliefs about how the undead act or, we guess, any beliefs about the undead at all. What you do, at least, is draw on the conventions for pretending to be undead: walking with arms stiffly out, rocking slightly side-to-side, holding your mouth open.¹² Or pretend you are a cat. You might say “Meow”. This is not because you believe that’s what cats say. The noise you believe cats make is not “meow”, but “meow” is the pretend convention for cat-talk. (In other countries, the convention is different.)

Summing up, the example of the ignorant child pretending to be a cat, and the example of us pretending to be the undead, show that you needn’t have beliefs about how something would behave in order to pretend to be that thing. Since that belief seems to be necessary for you to be moved by a desire to act similarly to how the thing you are pretending to be would act, we think you are not moved by such a desire.

Here is another objection to N&S’s claim that, in pretending, you are motivated by a desire to act similarly to how the thing you are pretending to be would act. Even if you *do* have beliefs about how what you are pretending to be acts, you do not need to behave in

rival explanation seems phenomenologically off in two ways. First, it has it that in order to pretend that you are a criminal, you have to call on what you already know about how he would act. So the pretense itself shouldn’t lead to any sort of revelation. The revelation comes entirely from making explicit what you implicitly have known — namely, how the criminal would act — not from the pretense. Second, the revelation, according to the rival explanation, comes not from acquiring any knowledge but only from making explicit something you’ve known all along.

12. You could get by without knowing the conventions. Suppose that you and a friend are pretending. The friend wants to play at being the undead. You have no idea what the conventions are for how the undead act and no idea how the undead do act. But you see that your friend is playing at being the undead by opening his mouth, widening his eyes, and sprinting aimlessly. We think you’d act in a similar way. What is motivating you here might just be a belief about your friend’s beliefs about conventions and a desire to play along.

accordance with them. For example, the only thing you believe about how cats behave might be that cats tread lightly. You could still imagine that you are a cat without being moved to tread lightly. You could pretend that you are a cat and tread very heavily. N&S’s theory does not predict this.

Or consider our imagining that we are in front of a cobra. If either of us were in front of a cobra, we would run. That needn’t be what we pretend. We could, in fact, pretend to grab the snake, though we know that this is not the way we would act — nor is it at all similar to the way we would act — if we were in front of one.

When you imagine yourself being a certain way, it is common for your pretense-directed behavior to come apart from your beliefs about what the thing you are imagining yourself being would do in the imagined situation. When you imagine that you are a cat and this moves you to act, you need not act as you would if you were a cat, as you believe you would if you were a cat, or as you believe that the imagined cat would act in the imagined circumstances. N&S allow that you needn’t act in *just* that way, but in a way similar (recall the 911 case from footnote 8) to the way you think such a cat would act. But even this seems incorrect to us. For example, when you pretend you are a cat, you sometimes talk. Not just meowing, but speaking English. You wouldn’t speak English if you were a cat. Nor would you do anything terribly similar to speaking English. If so, it can’t be that what is producing your verbal behavior is a desire to act like a cat.

N&S can respond as follows: in the heavy-treading cat case, you are imagining not just that you are a cat, but that you are a heavy-treading cat and acting in a way similar to the way you would act if you were a heavy-treading cat. In the cobra-grabbing case, we imagine that we are much more courageous versions of ourselves, and behave as courageous-Doggett and courageous-Egan would behave. In the talking cat case, you imagine not just that you are a cat, but that you are a talking cat, and you behave in the way that a talking cat would behave. In general, when it seems as if we’re pretending to be *Fs*, but we’re not behaving in the way we think *Fs* would behave, what’s actually

happening is that we're pretending to be *F*s that are also *G*, and behaving as we believe *G F*s would behave.

We have two complaints about this response. The first is that it seems to get the order of explanation wrong. You needn't always first imagine being a *G F* and then act like a *G F* would act. Sometimes, you act a certain way and thereby make out that the *F* you're portraying is a *G F*, and thereafter you pretend not just to be an *F* but also to be a *G F*. In some cases (improvisational theater is a good source of examples), the action seems to precede the imagining. You tell Alan to pretend he's an elephant. Alan presses his arm to his nose and lifts his arm thereby making out that he's an elephant lifting his trunk. Here Alan didn't first imagine that he was an elephant lifting his trunk. He imagined he was an elephant and acted this out. The Alan case is an instance of a general phenomenon that N&S's account, as stated, does not seem well equipped to account for: your aims in pretense-directed behavior are not always imitative. They're often *generative*: you aim to make something or other *true according to the pretense that's guiding your imaginative activities* (henceforth *fictional*). And you do so without either imitating things you have any particularly determinate beliefs about or first making out how you are going to act and then carrying out that plan.

A few more words about this are probably in order. Think about explicit games of make believe, like cops and robbers. In a game of cops and robbers, the players will be imagining some things. But in the game, the players are not free to just imagine any old thing — there are some things that they are called upon to imagine by the current state of play. For example, if I point my finger at you gun-wise and say "bang", you're called upon to imagine that your character has been shot at. So there is, at least potentially, a gap between what, in fact, the players imagine, and what they're called upon to imagine by the features of the actual situation in which the imagining is taken place. (See Walton (1990), (1993) for much more thorough discussions of this sort of phenomenon.) What's *imagined* by some participant in a game of make-believe is a matter of what sorts of psychological processes

are going on in that person's head. What's *fictional* in a given game of make-believe is determined by the combination of the actual state of the world and the game's rules governing the relation between what's actually the case and what's to be imagined. The point above is that often, the participants' aims in pretense-directed behavior are *generative* in that they're aimed at making some propositions fictional (and thereby, if all goes well, getting all of the participants in the game to imagine them).

When we say you are aiming to make things fictional, we don't mean you think to yourself, "How do I make a certain proposition true in the fiction I'm acting out here?" Children pretend without having a concept of fiction (so do adults). Children aim to make things fictional without deploying the concept *fictional* just as birds aim to fly south when it gets cold. When we think about what they are doing, we deploy certain concepts — *fictional*, *south* — that they don't deploy.

Our second complaint about the response we offered N&S follows up on the first. Consider this case: two children play cops and robbers. The player pretending to be a police officer points her finger at a player pretending to be a bank robber and shouts, "Bang! You're dead!" This is not what actual police officers do. Pointing a finger and shouting "Bang!" is not a good tactic in an actual gunfight. Children don't *believe* that police officers actually do (or would) point their fingers and shout "Bang!" at bank robbers. And while similarity is slippery, the things that real police actually would do, or that children are likely to believe that police would do, don't really seem to be terribly similar to the sorts of finger-pointing and "Bang!" shouting that goes on in games of cops and robbers. The finger-pointing and "Bang!" shouting are not an *imitation* of shooting: they are a fictional analogue of shooting.

(Better, and more generally: they are a way of making it fictional that the character being portrayed has shot. The imitation story, we think, seems attractive because a lot of fictional-making actions bear pretty close resemblances to the actions whose performance they make fictional. But the imitation story is wrong because (a) not all fictional-making actions bear *any* very interesting such resemblances,

and (b) many of them resemble the actions whose performance they make fictional much less closely than other things that it would be just as easy for the pretender to do, and which would be better things for them to do if what they were really interested in were *imitation*.)

We should note that we do not yet have an objection to the view that pretense-directed behavior is, somehow or other, generated in the usual sort of way by the interaction of beliefs and desires. What we have is an objection to a particular account of the sorts of beliefs and desires that would produce pretense-directed behavior — an objection to the claim that pretense-directed behavior is generated by *beliefs about what's being imagined*, together with *desires to act in a way similar to the way some object in the imagined situation would act*. An option available to the defender of an N&S-type cognitive architecture is to say that what the above considerations show is that we need a different story about just what the beliefs and desires are that are doing the work; in particular, that it's not a desire to act like some object in the imagined situation would act but a desire *to imagine that P*, or a desire *to make P fictional*, that's doing the motivating work (along with beliefs about what's being imagined, what's true in the fiction, and how to make things fictional). We think that this sort of view has better prospects than the view that N&S propose, while not giving up on anything that they would be terribly concerned about giving up. But while the prospects are *better* for this sort of view, we think there are still difficulties that can't be handled by this sort of revision.

Here we again echo David Velleman. Velleman (2000) criticizes the sort of view that N&S advocate, which he calls "the desire-belief explanation of pretending", on the grounds that it rules out a familiar sort of imaginative *immersion*. Here is Velleman discussing how an N&S-type theory describes the behavior of a child pretending to be an elephant:

As I see it, the desire-belief explanation of pretending makes the child out to be depressingly unchildlike. According to this explanation, the child keeps a firm grip on reality while mounting an appearance conceived as

such. He puts on an act — an elephant-act — conceived by him as a means of impersonating something that he is not

I call this explanation depressing because it denies that the child ever enters into the fiction of being something other than he is. In order to enter *into* the fiction, the child would have to act it *out*; and in order to act it out, I think, he would have to act *out of* imagining it, not out of a desire to represent it in action. A child who was motivated by such a desire would remain securely outside the fiction, thinking about it as such

One further drawback is that the desire-belief explanation fails to account for children's ability to invent and to understand novel ways of pretending. An especially imaginative child may come up with his own way of pretending to be an elephant, but not by considering which behaviors would be most suitable to an elephant-act, as if he were an impressionist honing some zoological schtick. Rather, the child's method is to imagine being an elephant — weighing a ton, walking on stumpy legs, carrying floppy ears — and then to wait and see how he is disposed to behave. (Velleman [2000]: 256–257; see also pp. 258–260)

A lot goes on in this passage. This is how we see some of it. One of Velleman's points, which we endorse, is that the N&S story doesn't allow for "losing yourself" in what you are pretending. On the N&S theory, it is as if every imaginer is an actor who consults his beliefs about how he should play a role. Before he pretends to be a cat, he thinks to himself, "What would my motivation be here? How would a tabby act in this situation?" or "What would it take to make this fictional?" It strikes us as psychologically implausible that you *have* to think this to yourself before acting. We are not just saying that it strikes us as implausible that you have to *consciously* think this before acting. We are saying that it strikes us as implausible that you have to think it,

consciously or otherwise. Note that we are also not claiming that it *never* happens that anyone acts on the basis of (a) beliefs about what's being imagined, or about what the actual situation calls for the participants in the pretense to imagine, (b) desires to act as some object in the fiction would act in the fictional situation, and (c) beliefs about how that sort of object would behave in such a situation. We think that this does indeed happen, and some instances of pretense-directed behavior really do fit this model.

What we are claiming is that this doesn't *always* happen — not *every* instance of pretense-directed behavior is like that. If we are right that not every pretender is this sort of belief-consulting, desire-consulting actor, remaining "securely outside the fiction, thinking about it as such", then N&S's theory is incorrect. And not every pretender *is* that sort of actor. Some good *actors* aren't that sort of actor. Some good actors' technique is to lose themselves in the characters they're playing — by which we mean, their thought processes do not detour through their beliefs about the character and their desires to act as that character would or their desire to make things fictional. They simply slip into character (by imagining that they are this character) and then *act*. The sort of theory offered by N&S cannot model this sort of pretense-directed behavior.

A moral that we want to draw from all of these cases is that we'd do well to have a theory according to which pretense-directed behavior is generated by imagination in very much the same way as regular, non-pretense-directed behavior (we'll call this 'serious behavior') is generated by belief — that is, by the same sort of interaction between imagination and some desire-like state as occurs between belief and desire in serious behavior, rather than via indirect interactions between imagination and desires about what to imagine (or what to make it appropriate to imagine), mediated by beliefs about what's being imagined (or what's to be imagined), and about how to bring it about that certain things are, or are appropriately to be, imagined. A further moral is that this desire-like state needn't be and often isn't a desire. The two candidate desires we can think of — the desire to act

similarly to how you would if what you were imagining were the case and the desire to make something fictional — aren't always needed.

3

We endorse a picture of the cognitive architecture different from N&S's. Once again, our picture, boxologically, looks like this:

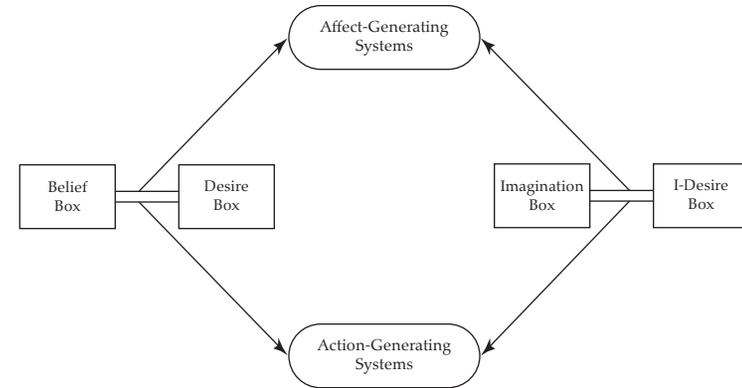


Diagram 2

There are two key differences between this picture and the one endorsed by N&S. First: we, but not they, have an *i-desire* box — that is, we postulate a class of mental representations whose functional role is analogous to, though not the same as, that played by desires. Second: we, but not they, have imagination producing action without being mediated by belief, and hence we, but not they, have imaginings and *i-desires* connected to the systems that generate affect and behavior in much the same way as beliefs and desires.

In *much* the same way — not in exactly the same way. One obvious difference between beliefs and desires on the one hand and imaginings and *i-desires*, on the other (about which we will say very little) will be in the division of behavior-regulating labor. The belief-desire system will typically generate a lot *more* of behavior than the imagination-*i-desire* system, and there will be some systematic (though

probably complicated) patterns of which aspects of behavior are generated by the different systems.¹³

Another difference, about which we will have more to say, is that the way in which the two pairs of representation-types interact to generate behavior will be importantly different. It would be very natural to think that, when you go in for some sort of pretense-directed behavior that is generated by imagination and i-desire, you are acting in a way that would make the things you i-desire true if the things that you imagine were true. This is not the best way to think about things, for two reasons.

The first reason is that this predicts *imitative*, not fictional-making, pretense-directed behavior. To return to an example from the previous section, when you are playing cops and robbers and you i-desire to shoot the bad guy, you do not act as you would if you were trying to make the proposition *that you shoot the bad guy* true. You say “Bang.” If you *wanted* to shoot a bad guy — if you were trying to make the proposition *that you shoot the bad guy* true — you would not say “Bang” to him.

So we suggest that pretend action is motivated by i-desires and imaginings, with the aim of making the i-desired things *fictional* rather than true. So i-desire and imagining are like desire and belief in the following structural way: People who believe that *P* are disposed to act in ways that would, if *P* were true, be likely to make the propositions that they desire true. People who believe that the bad guy is to the left, and desire that the bad guy is shot, are disposed to shoot to the left. If all goes according to plan, they thereby make it the case that the bad guy has been shot. People who imagine that *P* are disposed to act in ways that would, if *P* were fictional, be likely to make the propositions that

13. There are two kinds of possible pathology that wouldn't be surprising on this sort of model. First, behavior that *ought* to be under the control of the belief/desire system might fall, because of something's going wrong, under the control of the imagination/i-desire system instead. Second, cross-talk or leakage might occur: imaginings getting treated like beliefs, and interacting with desires in belief-y ways, and i-desires getting treated like desires, and interacting with beliefs in desire-y ways. See Gendler (2005), Gendler (2007), and Egan (Forthcoming) for more on these pathologies and the ways they complicate the boxology.

they i-desire fictional. People who imagine that the bad guy is to the left, and i-desire that the bad guy be shot, are disposed to point their fingers to the left and say “Bang!” If all goes according to plan, they thereby make it fictional that the bad guy has been shot. The common schema: People who bear belief-like relation *B* to *P* act in ways that would, if *P* had truth-like feature *T*, be likely to give the propositions to which they bear desire-like relation *D* the truth-like feature *T*.

Why is this helpful? First, because it explains the fact that, when we want to pretend that we are elephants, cats, etc., we don't usually act in the ways that we think elephants, cats, etc. would *really* act. We act in ways that will make it *fictional* that we're elephants, cats, etc. We might go in for behavior that fits a stereotype of that animal's behavior, or that has been traditionally associated with pretending to be that sort of animal, not necessarily for the sort of behavior that we believe that sort of animal would actually go in for. Second, the common schema gives us a better grip on the similarity and difference in functional role between belief and imagination, and between desire and i-desire.

Velleman, as we read him, endorses an account that is structurally similar to ours. He also postulates not just beliefs, desires, and imaginings, but in addition some desire-like states that interact with imaginings in order to motivate pretense-directed behavior in very much (but not exactly) the way that beliefs interact with desires in order to motivate serious behavior. (Velleman calls the desire-like things that we call “i-desires”, which interact in desire-like ways with imaginings, “wishes”.) A question that one might ask, of us and Velleman, is (using our terminology) “What distinguishes desires from i-desires?” Answer: Functional role. A further question is “In virtue of which of their other features do their functional roles differ?” One difference between Velleman's view and ours is that Velleman attempts to answer this second question, while we do not. We think that Velleman's answer is mistaken, and that the question is one that will have a neuroscientific and not a philosophical, or philosophical-psychological, answer.

We can illustrate both Velleman's view and the difficulty with it through another cat example. You are pretending that you are a cat

and pretending that you are licking your paw. This pretense involves imagining that you are a cat. What moves you to act so that you make it fictional that you are licking your paw? On N&S's account, a belief about what you are imagining and a desire to act in a way similar to the way some particular paw-licking cat in the imagined situation would behave. On our account, imagining that you are a cat and i-desiring to lick your paw. On Velleman's account, imagining that you are a cat and wishing to lick your paw.

"Wishing?" On Velleman's account, wishes and desires are both species of a common genus, which we might (though he does not) call *wanting*. What distinguishes them is that you can *desire* only things that you believe are attainable; there is no such restriction on mere wishes. Whereas Velleman thinks you cannot desire that, say, twice two is six or that things that you know happened yesterday go differently, you can wish these things. (At least, as a rule you cannot desire such things: "I may occasionally find myself desiring patently unattainable things ... but such cases are exceptions to a rule I cannot simply and straightforwardly break" [(2000), fn. 31].)

So as we are interpreting Velleman's view, it holds that you are moved to act in our cat case by imagining that you are a cat and wishing to keep your paw clean. This moves you to lick your hand (which you are imagining is a paw). Since a wish is just like a desire, just not restricted to what you believe is attainable, it is a bit surprising that you have a wish to keep your paw clean. Velleman attempts to reduce the apparent oddness of this claim by saying that "it isn't an earnest or heartfelt wish; it's a faint and ephemeral wish of the sort that we might ordinarily call a whim" (*ibid.*, 260). But that you actually want to lick your paw doesn't seem any more likely than you actually believe you are a cat. We do not think it is made more plausible by saying that the wanting is directed at something you know you cannot have or that the wanting is faint or ephemeral.

There are many cases where it *does* seem plausible that you genuinely want things that you know are unattainable. You might think it would be a nicer mathematical universe if Peano arithmetic were

complete, or if there were a set of all sets. You might, because you got the exam question wrong, wish that $7+5$ really were 13. You pine over hopelessly unrequited love, and wish that you could take back some of your past words or actions. These sorts of wantings of the unattainable can, as Velleman notes, motivate certain sorts of behavior that seem, in some sense or other, not to be fully serious — not properly thought of as genuinely reality-directed. But this doesn't seem to be what's happening in the case of ordinary, explicit pretense. There's an important difference between these sorts of genuine wantings of the unattainable and the sorts of desire-like attitudes that we bear toward the fictional goals of our pretense-directed behavior, which is not captured by Velleman's account of the difference between wishes and full-blooded desires. Your attitude toward the licking of your paw in the cat-pretense case above isn't plausibly assimilated to these sorts of genuine wantings of unattainable things.

Two more concerns. First, Velleman's account needs to explain why it is not the case that *all* unattainable wants will be behaviorally efficacious in all pretense-directed behavior. At least in non-pathological cases, the vast majority of your unattainable wantings *don't* play any behavior-generating role in the cat-pretense. (It would be disastrous for the theater and cinema if this weren't the case. Actors would forever be portraying characters who were pursuing the actors' own frustrated ambitions, rather than — or at least, as well as — the sorts of goals that the characters are actually supposed to have in the story. And while we're certain that this sort of thing *sometimes* happens, we're equally certain that it doesn't *always* happen.) So unattainability can't be *sufficient* for being the sort of wanting that interacts with imaginings to generate pretense-directed behavior. Second, Velleman's account needs to explain why it is the case that there can be pretense-directed behavior motivated by a desire-like attitude toward something that *is* attainable. Velleman discusses the case of pretending to be an elephant and being moved to take a drink. You could perfectly well go in for this sort of pretense, even when any number of beverages are readily available. The wanted drink needn't be unattainable in order for the want

to interact with imaginings in a behavior-generating way. So unattainability can't be *necessary* for being the sort of wanting that interacts with imaginings to generate pretense-directed behavior, either.

We agree with Velleman that there is a need for a sort of desire-like representation, which interacts with imagination to produce pretense-directed behavior in much the way that desire interacts with belief to produce serious behavior. We do not agree with his account of what, aside from their functional roles — aside, that is, from their patterns of interaction with other sorts of representations — differentiates them from genuine desires. It might be that no such account is likely to be found at anything other than the neuropsychological level. For us, what is constitutive of the difference between desires and i-desires just *is* their functional role. The account of why various particular representations have the functional roles that they do will, we expect, have to do with complicated neurochemical facts about brains, and not with anything in the province of a philosophical or high-level psychological theory.

4

Where are we? We believe that pretending, like serious behavior, is produced by the collaboration of a belief-like state and a desire-like state. We believe the belief-like state is imagination. We believe the desire-like state at least sometimes is not a desire. When you pretend that you are a cat, licking its paw, you are not moved by the desire to act as you would if what you were imagining were true, for reasons discussed in section three. Neither are you moved by the desire that you lick your paw. We believe you have no such desire since you know you don't have a paw. But the *content* of this desire seems to be right. So we are looking for a desire-like state that is not desire that has that content. Our suggestion: i-desires.

We do not believe that *all* pretense-directed behavior is motivated by the sorts of "in character" i-desires that we have been citing so far — i-desires that you get by, approximately, imaginatively mirroring (or imaginatively generating) the desires of some character in the

imagined situation. N&S have a good explanation of why this cannot be the case. You can imagine being something that has no desires at all. For example, you can imagine being a dead cat.¹⁴ Or a tree. But dead cats and trees do not have desires. There are two options for accounting for the sort of pretense-directed behavior that goes on when you're pretending to be dead cats or trees. First, we can say that this sort of behavior is generated in the way the N&S model says that *all* pretense-directed behavior is generated — by the usual sort of interaction between genuine beliefs and genuine desires. (Though, as noted, we differ from N&S about what the content of the desire should be.) Second, we could say that not all i-desires need to be in-character i-desires. Either way, it turns out that there are i-desires and that sometimes they combine with imaginings to motivate pretense-directed behavior.¹⁵

So far, we have been arguing for the existence of i-desires on the basis of facts about pretense-directed behavior. The nature of our affective responses to imagined situations provides additional motivation for an i-desire view.

(Note: *Sopranos* spoilers follow.) At the end of season five of *The Sopranos*, Tony Soprano, head of a New Jersey mafia family, is caught up in a police bust and is forced to flee the scene on foot. Watching this scene, you are filled with anxiety that Tony will be arrested. What produces this emotional response?

Take an easier question. You are watching a football game. Your team is about to attempt a last-second field goal to win. You are filled with anxiety that they will miss it. What is producing this emotional response? Partly, your desire that the team win. Without that, there

14. N&S cite a case observed by Rosalind Gould. "Gould reports that one 3-year-old boy on a jungle gym ... said, 'I'm a pussycat. Meow, meow.' He then came down from the jungle gym and lay on the ground, saying, 'I'm dead. I'm a dead pussycat ... I got shooted'" (p. 20; see Gould [1972], 212). This case illustrates the importance of pretending's not always being imitative. Saying "I am a dead pussycat" is not a way of imitating a dead pussycat. It's a way of making it fictional that the pussycat that you are portraying is dead.

15. A third possibility was suggested in footnote 13: imaginings combining with desires.

would be no anxiety. You would be indifferent without this desire (or hopeful, if you desired that the other team win). Something, it seems, must play the desire role in the production of your anxious response to what you imagine. Just as beliefs don't, without some appropriate accompanying desire, have any anxious-making force, neither do imaginings, without an accompanying state to play the role that desire plays in the football case.¹⁶

16. The argument of this paragraph relies on the claim that it is impossible to feel anxiety about whether something will (not) happen without desiring that it (not) happen. Shaun Nichols (personal communication) proposed two interesting cases that seem to be counterexamples to our claim. First, couldn't the belief that your interests are in jeopardy suffice to produce anxiety? Second, couldn't the belief that someone you care about is in trouble suffice to produce anxiety? We think the answers are "no" and "no" but also think that even if the answers were "yes" and "yes", something like our argument could work. The argument could retreat to the weaker claim that it is impossible to feel anxiety about whether a certain team's field goal will be successful without desiring it to be (not) successful. From there, we would infer that while watching and imagining along with some sports movie in which a team is about to kick a field goal, you couldn't feel anxiety without something's playing the role of desire. Retreating to the weaker claim would obviously raise the question of why you need a desire-like state to produce anxiety in one case and not the other. Not knowing how to answer that, we prefer to defend the stronger claim. We do not accept that either of Nichols's proposed counterexamples succeeds, but there might well be others, so it is important to note that we do not need as strong a claim as we use in the paper.

We suspect that Nichols' cases, and cases that also seem to be counterexamples to our claim about anxiety and desire, are cases in which it's tempting to say that the affect-generating power of the belief doesn't depend on the presence of a desire simply because the desire on which their affect-generating power does in fact depend is one that very rarely goes missing. Or perhaps it's because you can't believe that something is among your interests unless you take yourself to have some desires about it, and one's beliefs about these matters are generally very reliable, so it's easy to forget about the possibility of *mistakenly* taking oneself to have the required desire. Either of these stories would be fine with us — these are also views on which a desire-like state is required to generate the affect.

Take the interests case. What is needed to produce anxiety over your interests? Is it enough to simply believe they are in jeopardy? We think not because we think you also need to want your interests to be satisfied. Imagine you lack this desire. Why would you feel anxiety about your interests' being in jeopardy? Compare: You are about to throw some trash out. This doesn't produce any anxiety in you because you don't care about the trash. You lack a desire to keep it around. (If you had this desire and someone else was about

We are not claiming that desire-like states are always needed to produce emotional responses, but we think they are in at least the anxiety case.¹⁷ Hence, we think that something like a desire is needed to produce affective response when you are anxious about something you are imagining. We hold that no genuine desire that you actually have can play the appropriate role.¹⁸ So the desire-like thing that's helping produce your emotion in response to your imagining of Tony's predicament must not be a desire but something like a desire. I-desires can do the trick.

We think that no desire can play the role. There are, as far as we can tell, three contents such a desire might have:

You might have a desire about the fiction of *The Sopranos* — say, a desire that in the fiction Tony be safe from the police. But you needn't have such a desire in order to feel the relevant anxiety. As a matter of autobiographical fact, we didn't have any such desire. We have enough confidence in the writers of *The Sopranos* to trust that whatever they decided about whether Tony is safe or not is what would be best for the fiction. (Perhaps a clearer example: we have no desire that in the fiction Steve Buscemi's character is safe. The show is better for

to throw the trash out, things might be different.) Again, it could be that it is built in to the notion of *interest* that you can't fail to desire that your interests be satisfied. Then this isn't a case in which no desire is required, but one in which the required desire is always present.

Now take the caring case. You believe that someone you care about is in trouble. Do you really care about this person? If so, then we agree that you will feel anxiety, but this is partly because your caring about the person involves the desire-like state of wanting things to go a certain way for him. Do you not care about this person? If not, the belief that someone you care about is in trouble (a false belief) won't produce anxiety. This would be a decent way to figure out that you don't actually care about the person. There he is, in trouble, and you feel no anxiety.

17. In his review of Currie and Ravenscroft (2002), Nichols points out that you do not need a desire to produce all emotional responses (Nichols [2004]). Griffiths (1997) makes the same point; see pp. 91–97 for discussion. Griffiths leaves open whether anxiety is an emotion that can be produced without desire.

18. Currie and Ravenscroft (2002) also deny this.

Steve Buscemi's character being killed, even though his being killed is wrenching.)

You might have a *de re* desire about Tony, the New Jersey mafia boss — say, a desire that Tony is safe from the police. There are two ways to understand this sort of proposal, and neither seems attractive. We could understand the proposal as saying that you have desires about Tony Soprano, the concrete, two-hundred-fifty-pound mafia boss who lives in our actual New Jersey. But there is no such person, and you are well aware of this. You have no *de re* desires about any real-world mafia boss named "Tony Soprano". You know that Tony does not exist.¹⁹

Alternatively, it could be a *de re* desire about Tony the fictional character, not Tony the real-world New Jersey mafia boss, that he escape from the police. But again, you needn't, and we didn't, have any such desire. Set aside issues about the ontology of fiction, and grant that there *is* a fictional character Tony Soprano to have *de re* desires about. The only way we can see to understand these sorts of desires about fictional characters is as desires about what the characters are like according to the fiction — that is, as desires about the content of the fiction. And as discussed above, we don't need to have the relevant desires about the content of the fiction (*i. e.*, that according to the fiction, Tony escapes) in order to experience the characteristic anxious affect.

(A bit more carefully: Having the desire about the fictional character entails, or at the very least rationally requires, that one have the corresponding desire about the content of the fiction, since the only way for the fictional character to have the property that we desire him to have is for the content of the fiction to make it so. The fictional Tony Soprano can't escape from the police unless, according to the fiction of the *Sopranos*, Tony escapes from the police. And one needn't be a victim of any sort of irrationality or poor mental housekeeping in order to experience the relevant affect.)²⁰

19. The argument of the previous two paragraphs has benefited from comments by Jonathan Weinberg and from Meskin and Weinberg (2005), which argues that there is no need to posit *i*-desires in these cases.

20. Less plausibly, but for the sake of rounding out the available positions:

Finally, the desire producing anxiety could be a *de dicto* desire that people who meet Tony's description, or that fictional characters that meet Tony's description, escape from the police. But again, you needn't have either of these desires in order to have the affective response: we didn't. We certainly don't desire that *actual* people who meet Tony's description escape from the police. We desire that they all be jailed immediately (well, as quickly as is compatible with due process). And again, it's hard to see what the *de dicto* desire about fictional characters could amount to except a desire about the contents of the fictions in which the relevant sorts of characters appear. And again (again), we needn't have such desires about the content of the fiction in order to have the affective response.

These are the three candidate contents for desires we can think of. Since it isn't plausible that you are anxious because of desires with these sorts of contents, we conclude that it isn't a desire that moves you. What is it?

An *i*-desire. In particular, an *i*-desire that Tony is safe. Is this subject to the same criticism we had of the desire that Tony be safe? No. The objection to the idea of your desiring that Tony the fat boss be safe depended on the claims that you don't desire that things you know don't exist be safe and that you know Tony doesn't exist. By contrast, it isn't surprising that you have *i*-desires about things you know don't exist. Compare: It isn't plausible that you have beliefs that someone you know does not exist — Santa Claus, for example — is standing in front of you. It isn't surprising that you imagine that someone you know does not exist — for example, Santa Claus — is standing in front of you.²¹

Perhaps the thing that you hope escapes arrest — not according to the fiction, but *actually* — is some abstract object, the fictional Tony Soprano. Maybe so, but it would be awfully strange if you desired that *an abstract object* escape arrest. (Where would the police find it?)

21. If there is no Tony Soprano, then when you *i*-desire that Tony is safe you are not bearing that attitude towards a singular proposition. If so, then perhaps the proposition is just descriptive. It's one you don't desire to be true but do *i*-desire to be true. This issue about the apparent unavailability of the relevant singular propositions isn't a special issue about *i*-desire. Exactly the same issues arise for imagination, regardless of whether *i*-desires are in the

We grant that not all affective responses to what is imagined need to be produced in part by *i*-desires, because there are some cases where real desires, maybe desires about the fiction, do the work (see Nichols [2005]). In fact, we are happy to grant that something stronger is true: There are some affective responses to fiction that it's much easier to account for in terms of real desires about what's to be imagined.

But of course, the fact that we can, and indeed should, account for some affective responses to imagination in terms of real desires about what is to be imagined is no threat to an *i*-desire view. Our argument uses the premises that *some* affective responses require a desire-like state, and in some cases that the state is not a desire; it concludes that for some affective responses this state is an *i*-desire. *The Sopranos*, *Othello*, and *Romeo and Juliet* provide some good cases of this kind, where you don't seem to *have* any of the real desires, either about nonexistent people or about the course of the fiction, that would be candidates to explain your hope that Tony gets away, that Othello will discover that Desdemona has always been faithful, and that Romeo and Juliet successfully elope and live happily ever after.

(The *Sopranos* case differs from the Shakespeare cases in two respects. An appeal to the general desire about mobsters escaping

picture. The point we've just been making is this: Whatever it is that you bear the *imagining* attitude toward when you're properly described as "imagining that Tony Soprano is safe from the police", it is not something that you plausibly need to *desire* in order to feel anxious while watching the chase play out on your TV. It is plausibly something that you need to *i*-desire in order to feel the relevant sort of anxiety. We happen to think that a descriptive proposition is a good candidate, but nothing much hangs on this.

Returning to an issue put aside in footnote 1, it is clear you can be afraid of things that don't exist. Or anyway, it is clear that we can say something true with sentences like, "Jane is afraid of Freddy Krueger", in which there's a non-referring name. One of us used to be scared of the sharks in a neighborhood swimming pool. (There weren't any.) Does this commit us to thinking that there are certain things — sharks in a swimming pool — and these things do not exist? We don't think so. Our view is that one of us bore a certain attitude — fear — toward a proposition that isn't a singular proposition. What puzzled us in footnote 2 is that you can continue to bear that attitude towards that proposition even when you are aware that there are no sharks in the swimming pool.

justice is less plausible than an appeal to a general desire about love-lorn teenagers eloping. And an appeal to a desire about the fiction is less plausible in the Shakespeare case than in the *Sopranos* case. You know that the story goes better if things go badly for Romeo and Juliet, whereas you don't have a desire one way or the other about how *The Sopranos* fiction goes.)

We believe, then, that affective responses to fiction can't just be explained by appealing to desires about fiction rather than *i*-desires. We also believe that they can't just be explained by appealing to *i*-desires rather than desires about fiction. Some mixed affective reactions to some fictions speak in favor of appealing to both *i*-desires and desires about the fiction. See *Othello*, *The Sopranos*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, in which you have on the one hand what we might call an *imaginatively engaged* affective response, something-like-wanting that Desdemona's name will be cleared, that Romeo and Juliet live happily ever after, etc.; and on the other hand, an *aesthetic/evaluative* affective response, something-like-wanting that the fiction is such that Desdemona is not cleared, that Romeo and Juliet die tragically, etc.

5

You sometimes are moved to act by your imagination. You sometimes are afraid of what you imagine but don't believe. What happens in such cases? We have argued that the imagination is an imaginative analogue of belief, and that *i*-desires are imaginative analogues of desires. As beliefs and desires can produce motivation and affect, so can imagination and *i*-desires. Slightly misleadingly, this is how you want things you don't want.

Our way of thinking about the issues owes a lot to work by Nichols and Stich and in some ways our view is like theirs, but it deviates from theirs in three ways.

First, N&S go for imaginings but not *i*-desires. We think that the correct account of imagination will go for analogues of *both* belief and desire.

Second, whereas N&S think the imagination produces motivation

by producing beliefs and desires, we think it does so more directly: i-desires combine with imaginings to produce motivation, and at least some of the affect, that accompanies imagining.

Third, unlike N&S, we deny that the content of what moves you is *that you act as you would if what you are imagining were true*. When you imagine that you are a cat, what moves you might be an i-desire *that you lick your paw*. Further, your aim here need not be to act as you would if what you were imagining were true. It might only be to act in a way that makes what you are imagining true in the fiction you are acting out.

Introducing i-desires is fruitful for explaining certain phenomena having to do with the imagination. Besides mattering in the ways already noted, if there are i-desires this would make a difference in the debate between theory theorists and simulation theorists. Simulation theorists posit i-desires; theory theorists don't. If we are right that there are i-desires, at least part of the simulation view is correct.

Introducing i-desires might also be fruitful in metaethics in three ways. First, denying that all motivation is produced by belief-desire pairs opens conceptual space for the possibility that some state beside a desire — say, a besire — provides moral motivation. (Smith [1994] argues against besires.) Also, the existence of i-desires might be useful for moral fictionalists. They can explain why people are motivated to act morally even when they think morality is a fiction. Motivation (sometimes) goes through i-desires, not desires. (We have in mind fictionalists like Joyce [2001] or Kalderon [2005]). Third, we have said nothing about how i-desires are produced. Can imagination without help from a desire-like state produce i-desires? For example, can imagining you are a cat without help from a desire-like state produce the i-desire that you lick your paw? If so, this could bear on the controversy in metaethics about whether belief can produce desire without the help of a desire-like state. (Nagel [1978] provides an argument for this possibility; Smith [1994], an argument against it.)²²

22. Thanks to Tamar Szabo Gendler, Shaun Nichols, Jamie Tappenden, J. David Velleman, Kendall Walton, Jonathan Weinberg, and an anonymous referee for this journal.

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