

# Imagining Objects and Imagining Experiences

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**Abstract:** A number of philosophers have argued in favour of the Dependency Thesis: if a subject sensorily imagines an F then he or she sensorily imagines from the inside perceptually experiencing an F in the imaginary world. They claim that it explains certain important features of imaginative experience, in brief: the fact that it is perspectival, the fact that it does not involve presentation of sensory qualities and the fact that mental images can serve a number of different imaginings. I argue that the Dependency Thesis is false and that, in any event, it does not have the explanatory credentials claimed for it. Some of the features of imaginative experience are incorrectly specified, namely the absence of presentation of sensory qualities. With a more precise idea of what we need to explain, I argue that the explanation should proceed by noting that imagination and perception have phenomenally similar contents and that this is to be explained in terms of the similar kinds of representations in play. I trace the consequences of my discussion for disjunctivist theories of perception, Berkeleian Idealism and the characterisation of knowing what an experience is like.

If I imagine a small wooden chair in an otherwise empty room with white walls and stone floor, I am imagining the chair and not, or at least not necessarily, a perceptual experience of the chair. In asserting this, I place myself at odds with Christopher Peacocke and Michael Martin and in some agreement with Bernard Williams (Williams, 1973; Peacocke, 1985; Martin, this volume). Peacocke has argued that the following constitutive claim holds of imagination:

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- (D) If S sensorily imagines an F (or the F) then S sensorily imagines from the inside perceptually experiencing an F (or the F) *in the imaginary world* (Peacocke, 1985, pp. 22–23).

Following Martin, I will call this the *Dependency Thesis*. Although I have characterised sensory imagining and perception non-propositionally, the thesis could easily be characterised propositionally if that were the correct way to view imaginative content. Sensory imaginings are visualisations, imagining a certain tune or smell, and so on. They involve bringing to mind what is seen, heard or smelt rather than just thinking about it or supposing it to be the case. Hereafter, I shall just speak of *imagining* with this limitation in mind. There must be some restriction on substitutions in the place of F to rule out infinite iterations of the claim. If *perceptually experiencing an F* were allowed to be a substitution for F, then to imagine sensorily an F one would have to imagine a whole sequence of progressively higher order experiences. That seems implausible.<sup>1</sup> So we should not allow that, as a substitution for F, we can put in ‘a perceptual experience of F’. Such a restriction is quite compatible with taking the Dependency Thesis to record an interesting fact about the character of our sensory imaginings of objects and properties in the world.

The Dependency Thesis is a fairly natural characterisation of sensuous imagination. It is tempting to think that my talk of bringing to mind what is seen, heard and smelt should be cashed out as imagining that one is perceptually experiencing these things. In articulating what is involved in imagining perceptually experiencing something, it may appear as if we are committed to supposing that part of the imaginative project must be that an experience is going on in the imaginary world. But if that’s right, the Dependency Thesis is true. By contrast, the *Straightforward View* (as I shall, slightly tendentiously, call it) is that imagining an F is simply imagining an F and involves no imagination of a perceptual experience of an F. Of course, in imagining an F, we are having a certain kind of experience: imagining an F. But that is not the same as imagining a perceptual experience of an F. On this view, the natural line of reasoning I sketched in favour of the Dependency Thesis is mistaken.

There may appear to be room for an intermediate position. Williams argues that we should:

see what sense we can make of what is surely nearer the truth here, that we can in fact visualise the unseen, because the fact that in visualisation I am as it were seeing is not itself necessarily an element of what is visualised (Williams, 1973, p. 35).

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Peter Sullivan for pointing this out to me. I had seemingly forgotten about Peacocke’s footnote 5, p. 22 (Peacocke, 1985).

The passage, and related passages, suggests that he holds that:

- (D-) If S sensorily imagines a (or the) F then S sensorily imagines from the inside perceptually experiencing a (or the) F.

He differs from Peacocke in denying that a perceptual experience is supposed to be part of the imaginary world (Williams, 1973, p. 37). Williams does not explicitly endorse (D-) because his main concern is to deny the stronger, Dependency, thesis (D). Anybody who flirts with (D-) faces some significant difficulties. According to (D-), imagination involves imagining a perceptual experience which is not part of the imaginary world and yet presents that world from a certain perspective. Where do we imagine that the perceptual experience exists and how can it fail to exist in the imaginary world and yet present it from a certain perspective? When we imagine an F, I very much doubt whether we have something this complex in mind (see Currie, 1995a, pp. 178–179, for further discussion). This is an option of last resort.

The Dependency Thesis raises interesting issues about the nature of mental content and the phenomenology of mind. However, as I shall try to make clear, it is also relevant to a number of other debates. Recent discussion of it began by focussing on George Berkeley's claim that one could not imagine an unperceived object (Berkeley, 1710/1734, Pt 1, s. 23; Berkeley 1713/1725/1734, 1st Dialogue, p. 158). The Dependency Thesis is relevant to the assessment of one kind of argument in support of Idealism. Its truth or falsity also has repercussions for the correct characterisation of *knowing what an experience is like*, a key phrase in the debate over the truth or falsity of Physicalism. Perhaps the most striking consequence is the relevance of this thesis to the debate over whether some kind of Disjunctivism about experience is true. I shall devote the third section of this paper to tracing out these consequences with the implications for Disjunctivism receiving particular attention. The discussion will be vital to the proper formulation of the Dependency Thesis in any event. I have so far left inexplicit the notion of perceptual experience characterising the content of the imaginative project. This needs to be resolved. Although the matter will come up before the third section, we will not be able to arrive at a definitive conclusion until that section.

A good starting point for an assessment of the respective merits of the Dependency Thesis and the Straightforward View is to consider what we should make of what we might call the *Multiple Use Thesis*:

The same mental image may be used to fulfil different imaginative projects.

Imagining a suitcase and imagining a cat hidden from view behind a suitcase seem to involve the same mental image. Equally, imagining steering a yacht, imagining having a perceptual experience of steering a yacht, imagining being

stimulated by brain scientists to experience from the inside steering a yacht all may involve the same mental image (Peacocke, 1985, p. 19). The Multiple Use Thesis seems to point both in favour of and against the Dependency Thesis. One consideration in favour is, of course, that, since the same image may service both imagining an F and imagining a perceptual experience of an F, it will seem plausible that imagining an F is imagining a perceptual experience of an F. I will explain why, however plausible this might seem, it is, in fact, incorrect. One consideration against the Dependency Thesis is that the Multiple Use Thesis demonstrates that the content of our imaginings is not settled by the nature of the mental image in play. Instead, it is partly determined by the intention or supposition behind the use of the image. As we shall see, it is implausible that this will necessarily involve taking the mental image to imply the existence of a perceptual experience in the imaginary world.

One of the things these considerations brings out is that there are two potential focusses of discussion for settling matters in favour or against the Dependency Thesis: the nature of the mental image and the nature of the imaginative project which the mental image serves. In the first section of this paper, I will focus on how the character of imaginative projects is settled. The upshot of this section will be that the Straightforward View is more plausible. In the second section, I will turn to the nature of the mental image and see whether there is anything to be said in favour of the Dependency Thesis. Both Peacocke and Martin think so. I shall argue not. In the third and final section, I will indicate how the falsity of the Dependency Thesis relates to the other matters I mentioned.

## **1. The Nature of the Imaginative Project**

If I am imagining a suitcase, it does not follow that I am imagining a cat hiding behind a suitcase. There is some other factor (or factors) that sorts between the possible imaginative projects an image may serve and identifies the right one. Perhaps in this case the default position is that what is imagined is strictly in the image and we only need some additional factor to go beyond the image and suppose a cat is hiding. However, this point is hardly likely to settle the debate between proponents of the Straightforward View and the Dependency Thesis since what is strictly in the image is contested. The proponent of the Straightforward View will say that what is strictly in the image is just the objects imagined, for instance, a suitcase. We go beyond the image in asserting that there is also a perceptual experience in the imaginary world. The proponent of the Dependency Thesis will probably not go so far as to say that what is in every mental image is a perceptual experience, however they will suggest that the character of the mental image entails, or is best explained by, the fact that one has imagined a perceptual experience. I will focus on this claim about the nature of mental images in the next section. What should be

clear is that a simple appeal to what is, intuitively, strictly in the image is unlikely to settle the matter.

In the present section, I will try to build up a case for the Straightforward View drawn from considering the nature of imaginative projects. In brief, my case will be this. When we consider what characterises an imaginative project, it is clear that there are cases where the project is to imagine merely an F. Proponents of the Dependency Thesis don't have to resist this but, if they don't, they must insist that certain facts about the mental image override a subject's own characterisation of his or her imaginative project so that, in fact, what is imagined is a perceptual experience of an F. This is quite a strong claim to have to establish. We have seen that mental images may serve different imaginative projects. For instance, a mental image of a tree may serve the imaginative project of imagining being a brain in a vat stimulated to experience a tree. This possible interpretation is ruled out of court by an imaginative project of imagining a tree. Yet, the proponent of the Dependency Thesis must argue, a subject's imaginative project of sensorily imagining an F should not rule out interpreting him or her as imagining a perceptual experience of an F. Little attention has been devoted to arguing this point. In its absence, even if proponents of the Dependency Thesis were right about the nature of the mental image, they won't have established that imagining an F is imagining a perceptual experience of an F. All they would have shown is that imagining an F is imagining an F utilising a mental image also suitable for imagining a perceptual experience of an F. As a result, I explore the possibility that, although the proponents of the Dependency Thesis rest their case upon features of the image, perhaps these features imply something about the way subjects conceive the imaginative projects upon which they engage. I argue that there is little reason to suppose that this is the case.

Imagining an F is often something we do rather than something which happens to us. Of course, sometimes our imaginations run away with us and images pass before the mind more or less unsummoned. When an imagining is something we do, it is plausible to suppose that the intention we have in summoning a certain mental image to mind characterises our imaginative project and, thereby, helps to determine what is being imagined. This idea forms the basis of my first argument for the Straightforward View. It might be put as follows:

- (1) It is possible for a subject, S, to intend to imagine sensorily an F, to successfully produce an image to serve this imaginative project, and for the imagining to be a content-bearing mental action of S.
- (2) A successful content-bearing mental action should be attributed no richer content than that which either it independently possesses or is given by the content of the content-conveying intention behind it.

Therefore,

- (3) Some imaginings of objects need not be imaginings of perceptual experiences of objects.

We may call this argument the *argument from intended content*.<sup>2</sup>

A content-bearing action may be a speech act, the production of a work of art, or, as in the case of imagining, a mental act. In each case, content-bearing actions should be attributed a content, propositional or non-propositional, in virtue of the intentional properties they possess. It is by no means obvious that the intentions behind content-bearing actions determine the content-bearing actions' intentional properties. The content of a speech act might be determined by the conventions governing the use of the terms which constitute the act. A work of art might have its content determined partly by audience expectations or by what it is rational to suppose the artist intended the work to mean (regardless of whether or not he or she did), and so on. However, in the case of mental acts, it is more plausible that intention has the role envisaged. We have already seen that a mental image may have intentional properties that are not settled by the character of the image alone. So where do they come from? There are no obvious conventions which determine how mental images should be taken. The only plausible analogues to the audience are the producers of images themselves and their expectations are likely to be settled by their knowledge of their intention in producing the image. If the image may successfully serve the imaginative project the imaginer had in mind, then it is rational for the imaginer to self-ascribe the intention he or she actually had and, hence, attribute to the image intentional properties corresponding to the content of the intention. So, even if the kinds of considerations mentioned for other content-bearing actions were appropriate to consider in the case of images, they do not present an alternative to the subject's intentions being the sole additional source for the intentional properties of his or her acts of imagining.

When I try to imagine sensorily the chair, I try to form a picture of a chair in my mind's eye. I am trying to populate my imaginary world, as it were, with a chair. I don't have to believe that, in forming an image of a chair, I am imagining a perceptual experience of a chair. I believe that I am trying to have an imaginary experience but I do not have to believe that, in having an imaginary experience, I have got to imagine having an experience. So it seems that I may plausibly be taken to intend that I imagine an F without also being attributed the intention to imagine perceiving an F.

The points so far leave open the possibility that the mental image itself involves representation of the fact that a perceptual experience is taking place, in this case, a perceptual experience of a chair. But that does not mean that

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<sup>2</sup> Thanks to Antony Duff for making me see that my original formulation of this argument needed to be a lot better.

the content-bearing action of imagining a chair represents the presence of a perceptual experience of a chair independently of the intention behind it. Rather the intention selects which features of the image round out what is represented. My intending to imagine a chair may not be an intention to imagine a chair with a wicker seat. It just so happens that I did form a mental image of such a chair because I came across one in the past. Nevertheless that feature of my mental image becomes part of what is imagined because it is compatible with my intention and is a natural rounding out of what I am intending to imagine. I deny that the representation of a perceptual experience is a natural rounding out of what I am intending to imagine and so this representational property of the image, if indeed it is present all, does not transfer to the content-bearing action in which I am engaged.

It is at this point that Williams' analogy with film has some relevance. Williams notes that film presents things in a way which is similar to the way they are presented in perceptual experience. Yet he insists that this does not imply that the film represents perceptual experiences of the events unfolding in it. Here I'm taking it that he considers films as analogous to content-bearing actions rather than mental images which I am presently conceding, for the sake of argument, may represent the occurrence of perceptual experiences. The default assumption is that as the events of a film unfold they are not being seen by a character with the viewpoint of the film (Williams, 1973, pp. 36–37). Special filmic techniques are used to establish the opposite. For instance, the camera is taken through bushes, with branches getting in the way and pushed back, and sounds centred in the implied camera position, to suggest that it represents the viewpoint of a character in the film lurking in the undergrowth. In his discussion of this point, Martin writes as if special filmic techniques are needed to bring about the distancing. Otherwise, the assumption is that the scenes in a movie are from the perspective of one of the characters (Martin, this volume, p. 408). All I can say is that this does not correspond to my experience of movies. In the case of imagining, the intention determining the imaginative project sets the context in which the mental image plays a role. It selects the appropriate ways in which the mental image is supposed to contribute to the imagining by rounding out what is represented. My suggestion is that, if a subject is intending to imagine an F, the default assumption is that they are imagining just that and not, in addition, a perceptual experience. This would be an illegitimate rounding out of what is being represented in imagination. It's not how they view what they are imagining.

The argument I have just put forward concerned successful cases of imagining. In a successful case, we manage to produce the right kind of mental image. The content of our intention coincides with the content of the supposition which informs the image and determines its proper interpretation. Not every act of imagining is successful though. When I was very young and did not know any better, I intended to imagine myself scoring a goal in a football match, often somewhat sleepily in bed at the end of the day. I accurately

reproduced the kicking action which, in school games, failed to yield any satisfactory results and the ball skidded off at an angle once more. I missed. Action replays in my mind didn't help. I kept on making the same error. On those occasions, the content of the supposition does not correspond to the content of the intention behind the production of the image. In the case of unintentional imaginings, there is obviously no intention to appeal to. Nevertheless, the imaginer still may suppose that the mental image is to be taken one way or another.

Both of these cases suggest that a supposition concerning how an image is to be taken can determine the content of the imaginative project. So we need to consider the possibility that the suppositions we make about the mental image support the Dependency Thesis in spite of what I have argued. Imagining is always, to a degree, unsuccessful if it is intended to be merely an imagining of an F. In fact, the prospects of this response look dim. It seems that a similar argument to the argument from intended content favours the Straightforward View. It runs as follows:

- (1) It is possible for a subject S to suppose that he or she is imagining an object F.
- (2) An imagining should be attributed no richer content than that which is given either by the intentional properties the image independently possesses or by the supposition behind the image.

Therefore,

- (3) Some imaginings of objects need not be imaginings of perceptual experiences of objects.

We may call this argument the *argument from supposition*. The support for the first premise is derived from the simple fact that not everybody accepts the Dependency Thesis. In which case, those who don't fail to suppose that they are having a perceptual experience of an object in imagining an object. We know what we suppose is going on.

The determined defender of the Dependency Thesis may argue that, whatever I might explicitly suppose is going on, in fact, I tacitly suppose that what I imagine is a perceptual experience of an F. These tacit suppositions just need a little unearthing. The fact that the Dependency Thesis strikes us as plausible once stated suggests that these tacit suppositions are there to be unearthed.

If we were to attribute these tacit suppositions, then there appear to be some unhappy consequences. To imagine successfully an unperceived F, for instance a tree that nobody has seen, I would have to take on two imaginative projects. I would imagine a tree which, according to the Dependency Thesis, would be imagining a perceived tree. Then I would imagine all the perceivers in the imaginative world not being in a position to perceive that tree. I could

not just imagine the tree and suppose that nobody is currently looking at it. That would be incoherent (Peacocke, 1985, pp. 27–30). However, it seems pretty clear that we are much more inclined to do the latter than the former. That means that many of us are unwittingly engaged in incoherent imaginative projects.

Perhaps imagining unperceived trees is a little too exotic for confidence in an assessment of what is going on. Suppose you know an incredibly shy individual, Bobby, who blushes if he sees you looking at him. That does not stop you imagining Bobby's face full on with unflushed cheeks. Yet if you were really present in the imaginary world seeing Bobby in this way, he would see you looking at him and his cheeks would be flushed. To get round this type of case, Peacocke suggests that you would be imagining that there is some way Bobby's cheeks would be when he is not being looked at and that Bobby's cheeks are currently that way (Peacocke, 1985, p. 30). This seems to involve an imaginative project of some complexity. You might imagine the way in which Bobby's cheeks would be by imagining Bobby's cheeks and supposing that Bobby was no longer incredibly shy so they don't change when you perceive them. Alternatively, you may imagine qualitatively similar but, in fact, numerically distinct cheeks—those of Billy say—and imagine Bobby to have them. Neither of these options seems plausible for sophisticated imaginers let alone the unsophisticated.

The case of Billy and the unperceived tree are not just isolated cases. One important use of imagination, and its close cousin sensuous fantasy, is to imagine circumstances which we believe would not be present if there were someone perceiving them. All of these cases appear to reveal that we don't necessarily take our imagining to involve, as part of the imagined world, a perception of what is going on. They just reinforce the view that, as Williams suggested, sensory imagination is in this respect comparable to film in how we conceive it to operate. That does not mean that imagination is exactly like film. It might be that we are more prone to suppose that what is imagined is a perceptual experience of something than we are to suppose that films always involve perceptions of what is going on.<sup>3</sup> It is just that there are sufficient similarities in our attitudes to imagination and film to suggest that the Dependency Thesis is false. Of course, proponents of the Dependency Thesis can prosecute us for misunderstanding the nature of imagination. However the need to attribute widespread misconception is unfortunate. It undermines one potential justification for the attribution of the relevant tacit suppositions.

The Dependency Thesis is advanced as a constitutive truth. I take it that this amounts to the following:

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<sup>3</sup> Alan Millar and Susan Uniacke suggested to me that we might be more prone to imagine an experience of the taste of some food or an experience of the touch of a person's skin than the taste or skin itself. So there may be variation between the sense modalities on this score. I will come back to this point in the next section.

- (i) Metaphysically necessarily, if S sensorily imagines an F, then S sensorily imagines from the inside perceptually experiencing an F in the imaginary world.
- (ii) The metaphysical dependence recorded in (i) holds because of the nature of imagining an F.
- (iii) (i) and (ii) record a priori, conceptual, truths.

For the sake of argument I will assume that this understanding of a constitutive truth is tolerably clear. It is certainly what Peacocke has in mind (Peacocke, 1985, p. 21).

If the Dependency Thesis were a constitutive truth, then we could justify attribution of the relevant tacit suppositions by claiming that they were an articulation of the implicit structure of our concept of sensuous imagination. The need to attribute widespread misconception concerning the nature of imagination undermines the constitutive status of the Dependency Thesis. The plausibility of claiming that *p* is a conceptual truth diminishes once we note that those who might normally be thought to be masters of the concepts in play in *p* make habitual mistakes regarding these concepts. It is one thing to suppose that we misunderstand the nature of something. It is quite another to hold that many of us have an inadequate grasp of a certain concept as a result of which we repeatedly lapse into incoherence. A more plausible line would be to ascribe to us a grasp of a different concept which did not legitimate so many attributions of incoherence. But this would rob us of the very concept of sensuous imagination needed to justify the attribution of the tacit supposition that we are imagining a perceptual experience of an F when imagining an F.

The truth of the Dependency Thesis would also seem to have unfortunate implications for the kind of theory it is appropriate to develop to understand the minds of very young children (between 0 and 4), children suffering from autism, and animals. It seems plausible to suppose that all of these classes of subjects may enjoy sensory imaginings. For instance, some autistic children have considerable drawing skills and seem to draw what they are sensuously imagining (Sacks, 1985, pp. 204–223). Other autistic subjects, such as Temple Grandin, report that they largely thought in images from a very young age. If sensorily imagining an F requires supposing that there is a perceptual experience of an F, then it appears that each of these classes of subjects must possess the concept of perceptual experience in order to have such imaginings. Yet it is not obvious that they do.

The evidence concerning whether they enjoy the concept of perceptual experience is mixed. There is certainly evidence that subjects from these groups do not possess the concept of belief. Many autistic people and children below the age of 4 find it difficult to ascribe false beliefs. In a now famous experiment, they are shown Sally putting a marble in hiding place A, Sally leaving the scene, Anne removing the marble and putting it in another hiding place, B.

They are asked ‘Where will Sally look for her marble when she returns?’. They reply ‘B’. They fail to attribute to Sally a false belief (see Baron-Cohen, 1995, pp. 69–77 for a report of work in this area). One might think that this, also, throws into question whether they could have the concept of perceptual experience. They do not seem to recognise that, since Sally has not seen Anne remove the marble, her beliefs are unlikely to change. So they don’t seem to appreciate the connection between perception and belief which is part of our grasp of the concept of perceptual experience. Further evidence of this in the case of autistic children is that some fail to distinguish between the state of belief of someone who has just touched a box and someone who has looked inside it regarding the contents of the box (Baron-Cohen, 1995, pp. 77–78). It would be interesting to see whether they had a grasp of misperception through illusion, hallucination or distortion. If an autistic subject became aware that tinted glasses made things look green (say) and they saw somebody wearing tinted glasses, would they correctly predict that the person would say that a visually presented thing looked green (if it looked yellow to the subject)? As far as I know, an experiment of this kind has not been run. If a subject did not have a grasp of the notion of misperception and, in general terms, how it might arise, then it is arguable that the subject doesn’t have the concept of perceptual experience.

As I remarked, the evidence is mixed. There is also evidence that these classes of subjects do have the concept of perceptual experience. Autistic children can identify whether or not someone is looking at them and will describe that person as seeing. However, they will not track the person’s gaze or draw the person’s attention to something. Normal children by the age of 14 months do this (Baron-Cohen, 1995, pp. 48, 64–69). There is some evidence that chimpanzees find it difficult to distinguish between subjects who can see them and subjects whose vision has been obscured (Povinelli, 1996, pp. 314–321; see Smith, 1996, pp. 248–249 for concern about this evidence). This might suggest that they lack the concept of perceptual experience. However, chimpanzees have no problem with tracking eye movements and will attempt to draw things to the attention of others (Povinelli, 1996, p. 300; Gomez, 1996, pp. 335–338). This has been taken as a sign that they possess the concept of perceptual experience.

If the Dependency Thesis rests on the claim that imaginers, at least tacitly, suppose that they are imagining a perceptual experience, then it links the capacity to imagine with possession of the concept of perceptual experience. In which case, the attribution of imaginings to the autistic, young children, and animals, becomes as doubtful as their possession of the concept of perceptual experience. We must first specify what is required to possess the concept of perceptual experience, and determine whether these classes of subjects possess it, before we can hope to appeal to their imaginings to explain aspects of their behaviour. This is unfortunate because appeal to their imaginings seems to have a useful role in explaining some of their behaviour and, indeed, may

have a role to play in the development of a subject's concept of mind by introducing the idea of different perspectives on the world (Currie, 1998; Currie, *Manuscript*). The Dependency Thesis restricts the kind of theories we can adopt in a way which seems theoretically disadvantageous. Unless there are very good theoretical reasons for endorsing the Dependency Thesis, this is another ground for supposing that it is false.

It might be argued that the classes of subjects I identified certainly have mental images yet this is not enough for full-blown imagination. I accept that it is more than likely that those who possess a greater range of abilities—including the concept of perceptual experience say—may have imaginations that are different in all sorts of significant ways to those without these abilities. But that does not mean that we should seek to draw the difference between imagining and merely entertaining mental images in line with possessing or failing to possess the concept of perceptual experience. The previous arguments suggest that we should not. In any event, this line of response is unlikely to be attractive to proponents of the Dependency Thesis since they rest their case on the character of the mental image and not on that of more sophisticated imagining. As a result, the argument from potentially concept-bereft creatures, as we might call the last set of considerations I have offered, reinforces the conclusion of the previous arguments.

Let me try to sum up where we have got to so far. An important determinant in settling the content of our imaginings is the intention behind the imagining or the suppositions at work in the imagining. It is pretty clear how these might have served to support the Dependency Thesis. I have sought to establish that it is very unlikely that imaginers do suppose that they are imagining perceptual experiences of an F in a whole range of cases. So the Dependency Thesis lacks this reasonably straightforward positive support. Indeed, the reverse is the case. When we consider the intentions or suppositions at work, it appears that there is reason to adopt the Straightforward View. As a result, proponents of the Dependency Thesis cannot appeal to the nature of the imaginative project to explain how representational properties of the mental image transfer to the nature of the imagining. Yet they need to provide some sort of justification of this shift.

Even so, if it turned out that mental images represented perceptual experiences of what they concerned, that would be an interesting result in itself. It would also put the position I seek to defend under more pressure. Perhaps there is some other justification of the shift from representational properties of the mental image to representational properties of the imagining. In the next section, I shall explain how proponents of the Dependency Thesis cannot even justify their position by reference to the nature of the mental image.

## **2. The Nature of Imaginative Experience**

The Dependency Thesis is advanced as the best explanation of a number of features of mental images. They are as follows:

- (I) A mental image of an F is a representation of an F from a certain perspective.
- (II) Mental images do not involve the presentation of sensory qualities, unlike perceptual experiences.
- (III) The same image will serve more than one imaginative project, for instance imagining an F and imagining a perceptual experience of an F.

Not all proponents of the Dependency Thesis would, or at least have, cited every one of these. In this section I will argue that some of the alleged features of mental images are incorrectly characterised, in particular, (II). I will also argue that the kind of explanation the Dependency Thesis offers is in need of support by what turns out to be a competitor explanation. When this is brought into focus, we will see that the explanatory credentials of the Dependency Thesis are rather poorer than it might initially have seemed. In what follows, I shall use mental image and imaginative experience more or less interchangeably. Moreover, I will not insist upon the distinction between properties of mental images and properties of imaginings. It would not help quick and clear presentation of the views of others if I did otherwise. Nor does it affect the line of argument of the present section. I hope the necessary qualifications would be obvious in the light of what I argued in the first section of this paper.

Let me begin by focussing on the explanation of the fact that a mental image of an F is a representation of it from a certain perspective. The proponent of the Dependency Thesis insists that, if we imagine an F from a certain perspective, what we are doing is imagining that we are perceiving an F before us. Sensory imagining is always from a point of view because perception is (Peacocke, 1985, pp. 24, 27–28).

The most sophisticated development of this line of thought is that of Martin (Martin, this volume, pp. 408–10). He explains in some detail how the perspectival nature of imaginative experience can be important in determining what we imagine. Here is the crucial line of thought which I shall dub the *argument from orientation*. As I understand it, it runs as follows:

- (1) If we imagine a spot of red light to the left and a spot of green light to the right, and then vice versa, we have imagined two distinct scenes.
- (2) The two imaginative projects represent distinct scenes only if they involve a perspective, or viewpoint, from which the lights are then shown in different places.
- (3) Our imaginative experience does not represent the positions of the red and the green lights as standing in relation to a certain viewpoint. Rather the viewpoint is the point at which the red and green lights are *perceived* as orientated to the left and right.

Therefore,

- (4) Imagining the red and green lights as described is imagining perceptually experiencing these lights.

In the absence of a fixed viewpoint, the two imaginings could represent the same state of affairs as seen from different points of view. Since the two lights are merely spots of light, there is no internal orientation which would display the distinct relations they bore to each other. A viewpoint by itself can be introduced without appeal to an imaginary experiencer. According to Martin, the imaginary experiencer is needed to capture the fact that we imagine the lights orientated to the left or the right. We don't imagine them as standing in a relation to a certain independently presented viewpoint. Given that the case Martin considers shows something about the general resources for representing perspective in imaginative experience, Martin's argument promises to give more substantial support for the Dependency Thesis than the specific character of his example might initially suggest.

Obviously the defender of the Straightforward View has got to provide a different explanation of the fact that sensory imagining is always from a certain perspective. I suggest that the beginnings of an explanation is to be found in what I shall call the *Similar Content Hypothesis*. The thought is that modes of sense perception, such as visual, tactual and auditory perceptual experiences, are phenomenally similar to equivalent modes of sensory imagining, namely visual, tactual and auditory sensory imaginings. Let 'M' stand for a certain sense modality. We may capture the thought with the following general claim.

M-perception of an F and M-imagination of an F have phenomenally similar contents. Talk of phenomenally similar contents is not meant to bring with it theoretically loaded attributions of qualia to experience or the like. Imaginings and perceptions may have phenomenally similar contents just because they both reveal how the objects and properties they concern look, sound, taste or whatever. Sensory perception and sensory imagination are not phenomenally identical. So much will be clear when we turn to consider the claim that imagination does not involve the presentation of sensory qualities (see (II)). Nevertheless, there are phenomenal similarities between sensory imagination and sensory perception which are absent between sensory imagination and thought. I suggest that the perspectival nature of both is one example of this.

My response to Martin's particular case has two components. Our imaginative experience's capacity to represent the lights in the way described is explained by the Similar Content Hypothesis. We distinguish between the two scenes imagined by imagining a possible point of view. To do this, we might draw upon our actual grasp of egocentric space. The phenomenally similar content plus our grasp of a possible point of view work together to yield the difference in imaginative content to which the argument draws attention. The difference in the images corresponding to the two different orientations of the lights represents different scenes because of the *supposition* that the two lights

are presented relative to a single viewpoint. The content of perceptual experience and imaginative experience allows for this kind of completion either by an instantiated (in the case of perceptual experience and imaginings of perceptual experiences) or by an assigned possible point of view (in the case of all other imaginings). There is no reason why such a completion must show up in the imaginative experience as a point of view to which the objects and properties imagined are related.

We might accuse those who urge the opposite of unequal treatment. Proponents of the Dependency Thesis argue that it is no objection to their position that a subject's experience is not presented in the imaginative experience, just the objects and properties of the experience. Their thought is that, if the imaginative project is to perceptually experience something *from the inside*, then the experience itself will not be presented in the imaginative experience. When we perceive the world, we don't perceive the experience (or, at least, not usually). Nevertheless, it is implicit in the mental image that the presence of the perceptual experience is represented. By the same token, since the point of view is not presented in perceptual experience, one would not expect it to show up in imaginative experience. This is just one more respect in which imaginative experiences and perceptual experiences have phenomenally similar contents. But that does not mean that a point of view is not implicit in the imaginative experience to be fixed by the supposition that accompanies the imagining. It seems a mistake (albeit perhaps a natural one) to assume that, if our imagination has a content similar to that of a possible experience from a possible viewpoint, then we must be imagining an actual experience from that point of view. It fails to take seriously the idea that perception and imagination genuinely do have phenomenally similar contents.

Perhaps it will be thought that the Similar Content Hypothesis provides no explanation at all of the perspectival character of imagination. Rather it just presumes that there is an explanation of some kind. There is something that is right about this challenge, however it is overstated. The Similar Content Hypothesis provides the beginnings of an explanation but only the beginnings. Here is an analogy. Suppose that we are asked why somebody cannot have a desire about a spanner unless they are also able to have beliefs about a spanner and vice versa. Suppose we are also asked why somebody cannot have either beliefs or desires about spanners without being able to have beliefs and desires about tools. The beginnings of an answer is that beliefs and desires both involve the same kinds of content, conceptual contents. Obviously we need to know more but this is a start. The claim that sensory perceptions and imaginings have phenomenally similar contents works at the same level of generality.

Both the proponent of the Dependency Thesis and the proponent of the Similar Content Hypothesis need to supply an account of the phenomenal content of perceptual experience in order to provide a full explanation of the perspectival character of imaginative experience. The difference between them is that the proponent of the Dependency Thesis then advances a certain claim

about content of imaginative experience to explain the shared perspectival character whereas the proponent of the Similar Content Hypothesis does not. Instead, the proponent of the Similar Content Hypothesis must return to the same materials that have been used to explain the phenomenal content of perceptual experience to explain the phenomenal content of imaginative experience. Suppose that the explanation of the phenomenal content of perceptual experiences lay in the characteristic representations these experiences involved. Then the proponent of the Similar Content Hypothesis would appeal to the same kind of representations to explain the nature of imaginative experience. For instance, Gregory Currie holds that imagination probably draws upon representations from visual memory—representations relatively late on in visual processing (Currie, 1995b, pp. 27–30). Alternatively, the proponent of the Similar Content Hypothesis could note that the representational character of both sensory and imaginative experience renders it suitable for feeding into motor responses and argue that the representations involved must be appropriate inputs for such responses.

The focus on attempting to identify similarities in the representations at work in perceptual experience and imagination sits well with certain empirical evidence. First, there are the familiar rotation experiments in which it was found that a subject's reaction time to make a judgement about whether figure A is congruent with figure B (where B is a rotation of A) was greater, the greater the angular separation of the two shapes. Indeed, the time to respond was a linear function of the angle of separation regardless of whether the angle of rotation was in the plane of the page viewed or perpendicular to it (see Block, 1983, p. 500, reporting Shepard and Metzler, 1971). Second, visual images display the McCollough effect. The McCollough effect shows up in vision in the following kind of case. Subjects are shown patterns of black vertical stripes against a red background and black horizontal stripes against a green background. These are switched back and forth for around 10 minutes. When presented with a pattern of black horizontal stripes and black vertical stripes against a white background, the subjects see the vertical ones tinged with green and the horizontal ones tinged with red. In the case of visual images, subjects are shown a red patch and asked to imagine black vertical stripes on it. They are shown a green patch and asked to imagine black horizontal stripes upon it. Again this is done alternately for around 10 minutes. They are then shown the same black and white pattern and, although the colours are fainter, they see the vertical stripes tinged with green and the horizontal stripes tinged with red (Finke and Schmidt, 1977; Finke, 1980, reported in Tye, 1991, pp. 49, 66). I don't mean to imply that proponents of the Dependency Thesis could not explain the experimental results just mentioned. Nor am I claiming that, if we found similar representations at work, then the Dependency Thesis would be false. The point is just that there are grounds for supposing that similar representations are at work and this shows that appeal to such similarities in explaining the similarity of content has some foundation.

Let me now turn to the explanation of the Multiple Use Thesis. Proponents of the Dependency Thesis claim that it is well placed to explain the fact that the same mental image can serve two imaginary projects because it can draw either on the fact that the same perceptual experiences would occur in the situation envisaged or on the fact that imagining an F is imagining a perceptual experience of an F (Peacocke, 1985, p. 24). To illustrate the first kind of case, we can use the same image to imagine a suitcase and a cat hiding behind the suitcase because we would not perceive the cat (that's the point of hiding) but merely the suitcase. To illustrate the second kind of case, there is no difference in the mental image we use to imagine a cat and to imagine a perceptual experience of a cat because imagining a cat is imagining a perceptual experience of a cat according to the Dependency Thesis.

Proponents of the Similar Content Hypothesis are not without explanatory resources of their own. In the first kind of case, they will explain the Multiple Use Thesis by citing the same fact that proponents of the Dependency Thesis cite: the Multiple Use Thesis is true if our visual experiences of what is imagined would be the same. Given that m-perception of an F and a m-imagination of an F have phenomenally similar contents, imagining something which would give rise to phenomenally similar visual experiences will require phenomenally similar imaginative experiences. Admittedly, this explanation has a loose end. We would need to explain how the content of visual experience would transpose itself systematically into a phenomenally similar content of imaginative experience. Nevertheless, it is pretty clear that there is no problem in principle with developing an explanation along these lines. To explain the fact that imagining an F utilises the same mental image as imagining a perceptual experience of an F, the proponent of the Similar Content Hypothesis will note that a consequence of his or her position is that imagining an F reveals what it would be like to have a perceptual experience of an F from a certain position. In this respect, the proponent of the Similar Content Hypothesis can agree with the proponent of the Dependency Thesis. Both hold that imagining an F reveals what it would be like to have a perceptual experience of an F. In the case of the Dependency Thesis, this stems from the insistence that we are imagining a perceptual experience *from the inside*. In the case of the Similar Content Hypothesis, it just follows from the identified phenomenal similarity of content. Where they depart is over their commitment to there being a perceptual experience in the imagined world. The Similar Content Hypothesis has no such commitment. That's what makes it compatible with the Straight-forward View.

At this point it is natural to wonder whether the Dependency Thesis and the Similar Content Hypothesis are genuinely distinct explanations. The challenge could arrive in two ways. First, it might be claimed that the Similar Content Hypothesis entails the Dependency Thesis. Second, it might be argued that the Dependency Thesis provides a deeper explanation of the

Similar Content Hypothesis. In fact there is no reason to believe that either of these is the case.

Regarding the claim that the Similar Content Hypothesis entails the Dependency Thesis, it is helpful to compare the case of imagination and perception with that of thought—in the sense of entertaining a proposition—and occurrent belief or judgement. It is plausible that thought and occurrent belief have phenomenally very similar contents. Nevertheless, the following is not true:

(DT) If S thinks that p, then S thinks that he or she occurrently believes that p.

It seems that holding that two kinds of content are phenomenally similar is not sufficient to establish a Dependency Thesis concerning the states which have these contents. Given that (DT) is not true, then there seems no reason to suppose that the Dependency Thesis concerning imagination and perception, (D), is true. It flies in the face of the distinction I made earlier. Imagining an F may involve imagining something which reveals what it would be like to have an experience of an F. That is not sufficient, though, to establish that it is an imagining of a perceptual experience of an F in the imaginary world.

It might be thought I would need to revise my conclusion if John Searle's account of the nature of perceptual content were correct. He holds that the objects and the properties which are represented by the experience are represented as causes of that very experience (Searle, 1983, pp. 48–50). He thinks that this is necessary for capturing the fact that a perceptual experience may be of one of two phenomenally similar kinds or individuals (Searle, 1983, pp. 67–71). Currie cites this reason for supposing that the Dependency Thesis is true (Currie, 1995b, pp. 36–37).

In fact, Searle's position seems orthogonal to the question of whether the Similar Content Hypothesis entails the Dependency Thesis. Searle writes:

when I say that the visual experience is causally self-referential I do not mean that the causal relation is seen, much less that the visual experience is seen (Searle, 1983, p. 49).

Searle's caution is quite right. The causal-reflexive claim does not capture the phenomenal character of perceptual experience. That's why it would not be appropriate to say that one perceives the perceptual experience itself.<sup>4</sup> Even if the causal-reflexive claim were taken over as part of the content of imaginative

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<sup>4</sup> It is also not mandatory to getting the fulfilment conditions of perceptual experience right. Instead, one can claim that the existence of the appropriate causal connection between F and some internal state S makes it legitimate to attribute to the perceiver a perceptual content concerning F rather than phenomenally similar F' (Burge, 1991, pp. 200–202).

experience, that would not be sufficient for it to be the case that imagining an *F* is imagining a perceptual experience *from the inside*. All that would follow is that a perceptual experience is imagined to be part of the imaginary world. The Dependency Thesis requires the former. But, in any event, the concession I've just made for the sake of argument is not forced on the proponent of the Similar Content Hypothesis. He or she can just claim that the causal-reflexive element is not part of the content of imaginative experience. Nothing in the characterisation of the Similar Content Hypothesis suggests that the causal-reflexive element must be one of the ways in which imaginative experience and perceptual experience is phenomenally similar.

The Dependency Thesis does not provide a deeper explanation of the Similar Content Hypothesis. We can bring this out by comparing perception and imagination with perception and occurrent belief or thought. Occurrently believing that one is perceiving an *F* or thinking that one is perceiving an *F* are phenomenally dissimilar from perceiving an *F*. This shows that merely having *perceiving an F* as part of the content of an occurrent mental state does not make that occurrent mental state phenomenally similar to perceiving *an F*. So the Dependency Thesis alone cannot hope to provide an explanation of the Similar Content Hypothesis. Of course, it is open to the proponent of the Dependency Thesis to argue that there is something special about figuring in the content of imaginative experience. The problem is that then the explanatory work seems to be done by this special feature. If the special feature were the kind of representations used in imaginative experience we would be back in the same territory to which the proponent of the Similar Content Hypothesis must appeal. What we don't have is the promised explanatory depth.

A related point throws into question the explanatory credentials of the Dependency Thesis regarding the Multiple Use Thesis. My thought that I am perceiving a suitcase and my thought that I am perceiving a cat hidden behind a suitcase seem to have phenomenally different contents. The fact that we would have the same perceptual experience in each case seems beside the point. So there must be something special about imagining that makes phenomenally identical perceptual contents show up as phenomenally identical imaginative contents. The Similar Content Hypothesis provides us with the first step towards that explanation. It is unclear how the Dependency Thesis takes us any further forward without appealing to a special factor about imaginative experience that the proponent of the Similar Content Hypothesis may well use to develop his or her favoured explanation further. For precisely the same reason, an appeal to the Dependency Thesis to explain the perspectival character of imaginative experience seems suspect. Again merely having *perceiving an F* embedded into the content of an occurrent mental state does not make that mental state perspectival. Once more the special character of imaginative experience is at work.

The considerations from the first section of the paper support the distinction

I've drawn in this section between imagining something which reveals what it would be like to have an experience of an F and imagining a perceptual experience of an F in the imaginary world. Put together, these observations reinforce the analogy that Williams drew between imagination and film. The issue of whether a perceptual experience is imagined depends upon the supposition behind the mental image just as the question of whether an experience is represented in the film is determined by various factors including (perhaps) the intention of the director and the format of the film. In both cases, a contribution is made to the proper interpretation of the image. Our engagement with various imaginative projects that presume an experience is not going on reveal the representational character and resources of imagination. Peacocke rejects the analogy on the grounds that:

it is in the nature of the sensory imaginings with which we are concerned that to imagine something is, in part, to imagine an experience from the inside; while it is not in the nature of theatrical [or cinematographic] representation that to represent something . . . is, in part, to represent an experience from the inside (Peacocke, 1985, p. 29).

Once the distinction above has been made, it is hard to see this passage as anything other than either insufficient to establish the Dependency Thesis or question-begging. It is insufficient if it is just an assertion of a consequence of the Similar Content Hypothesis. If I imagine an F and the Similar Content Hypothesis is true, then what I imagine is very similar to the content of a perceptual experience. In that sense, imagining something is imagining an experience from the inside. However, if the thought is that imagining an experience from the inside is imagining that there is an experience of an F in the imaginary world, then the passage just begs the question against the position defended here.<sup>5</sup>

Many proponents of the Dependency Thesis emphasise that it captures the fact that imaginative experience is like perceptual experience but does not involve the presentation of sensory qualities (i.e. (II) above). Thus Martin writes:

we seem to be caught both saying that we should think of imagining an itch as experiential and like a sensation of an itch and hence the same, and yet denying that they are the same, since in having a sensation of an itch, there is an actual itch of which one is aware, while in imagining an

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<sup>5</sup> In the light of this, it might be wondered whether Peacocke meant anything more than I mean by the Similar Content Hypothesis. It seems clear that he does. He writes 'when he imagines a tree, the S-imagined conditions entail that, in the imagined world, some tree is perceived' (Peacocke, 1985, pp. 28–31) and contrasts that with the nature of film and places himself in opposition to Williams's position.

itch there is no such itch. . . if we treat imagining an itch as a representing of an experience of an itch, then we can both accept that the relevant quality is before the mind, as it is in experience itself, while yet denying that there has to be an actual instance of it, in contrast to the case of experience (Martin, this volume, p. 406).

The first point to make is that, unlike the other two features of imaginative experience, it is not at all clear that this is a necessary feature of it. Perhaps there could be vivid imaginers who experience their mental images as presentations of objects and properties. If so, then proponents of the Dependency Thesis can scarcely use this feature to establish the constitutive truth of the Dependency Thesis. The right response here seems to be to insist that the Dependency Thesis would still characterise a particular type of imaginative experience. I shall work within this qualification in the discussion that follows.

Taking imaginings of an F to be imaginings of experiences of an F seems to provide a good halfway house between claiming sensory qualities are presented in imaginative experiences and claiming that they are merely represented in imaginative experiences (in the same way they might be represented in our beliefs about them). It seems to me that this presents the most favourable consideration for the Dependency Thesis. However, I think there are severe difficulties with making good on this original promise.

The fundamental problem with the Dependency Thesis is that it provides a uniform answer where there seems to be variation. As I have already noted, the Dependency Thesis varies in plausibility depending upon the sensory modality we consider. It is more plausible when we consider what is involved in imagining the feel of somebody's skin or the taste of bacon. Our capacity to imagine these things seems to rest upon our capacity to imagine our experiences of these things. The proponent of the Dependency Thesis needs to explain why it is more plausible in these cases given that the Dependency Thesis holds across the board. My guess is that the proponent of the Dependency Thesis might try to argue that the variation in plausibility depends upon contingent psychological facts about what we find easier to consider independent of experience. The issue is whether we should search for an explanation there rather than in the objects and properties imagined. If the feel of someone's skin or the taste of bacon imply the existence of corresponding perceptual experiences in contrast with other objects of imagination, then the Dependency Thesis cannot be true for all sensory imaginings.

More striking still is the variation in phenomenal differences between different cases of imagining an F and having a perceptual experience of an F. Imagining a pain or an itch is phenomenally very dissimilar from experiencing a pain or an itch. The former don't hurt or itch. By contrast, although there are phenomenal differences between imagining a red object and perceptually experiencing a red object, the differences are not quite so sharp. It is not clear to me that we haven't got a truncated presentation of redness when we imagine

something red. How can the proponent of the Dependency Thesis explain this variation bearing in mind that we are just supposed to be imagining a perceptual experience in each case? We are not just talking about some kind of phenomenal variation here. We have a variation in precisely the thing that the Dependency Thesis is supposed to explain: variation in the degree of presentation in an imaginative experience.

In addition to the problems just mentioned, there is obscurity in the explanation provided by the Dependency Thesis. It rests upon the idea that the experience is represented in imagination. But it is unclear how to cash this out. We don't have a case of *re-presentation* of the content of experience otherwise imagining an F would be phenomenally identical to perceptually experiencing an F. We don't have a simple case of representation of the experience as one would in the case of belief. That would lose what is distinctive about the character of sensory imagination. Nor do we have the kind of representation of experience characteristic of introspection of our experiences. Introspection of our experiences seems to be transparent. It presents us with the sensory qualities of experience in the service of characterising the kind of experience we are undergoing. The proponent of the Dependency Thesis is left claiming that the representation of experience in imagination has a quite distinctive character which correctly expresses the way in which sensory qualities fail to be presented in imagination in the way they are in perceptual experience. It is hard not to think that all the explanatory work is being done by the nature of imagination and the kind of representation which serves it.

What is the alternative line of explanation to which the proponent of the Straightforward View can appeal? The variation in phenomenal differences suggests a partial explanation is available in terms of the idea that imagination involves the reduced use of the same kind of representations present in perceptual experience. In the case of our imaginings of pain and itches, the representations are very much attenuated. In the case of visual imaginings of objects and properties much less so. An intriguing fact which seems to support this is that the phenomenal difference between what we foveate and what we visually imagine is much more pronounced than the phenomenal difference between what we see at the periphery of our visual field and what we visually imagine. The phenomenal difference corresponds to a difference in the richness of representations utilised. I admit that the explanation is only partial. There is much more work to be done. However, I think it is clear that there is little role for the Dependency Thesis in developing the explanation further.

If I am right that the Similar Content Hypothesis provides a good first step for developing explanations of the characteristic features of imaginative experience outlined at the beginning of this section, then it seems that the last grounds for believing the Dependency Thesis have been removed. Indeed, the independence of the Similar Content Hypothesis from the Dependency Thesis suggests a final argument in favour of the Straightforward View: an *argument from the nature of perceptual experience*. It runs as follows:

- (1) It is possible for S to have a perceptual experience of an F without having a perceptual experience of a perceptual experience of an F.
- (2) M-perception of an F and M-imagination of an F have phenomenally similar contents.

Therefore,

- (3) It is possible for S to imagine an F without imagining a perceptual experience of an F.

Now that we have seen no reason to suppose that the nature of imaginative experience requires the Dependency Thesis to be true, there is nothing to stop this datum about perceptual experience transferring to imaginative experience.

### 3. Consequences of the Falsity of the Dependency Thesis

Let me now turn to the three consequences of the falsity of the Dependency Thesis I mentioned at the beginning.

#### 3.1. Disjunctivism and the Dependency Thesis

The Disjunctivist about experience holds that we should not think of perceptual experience as a common kind of mental state instantiated in perceptions, hallucinations and illusions. Instead, we should hold that there are at least two types of mental states in play across these cases: *either* there are mental states which involve the world appearing to the subject *or* (as we might put it) there are mental states which involve mere appearance. As this formulation of the position reveals, corresponding to a disjunctive theory of the experiences instantiated in perception, hallucination and illusion there often comes a disjunctive theory of appearances (although this can be questioned, see Martin, this volume, p. 16).<sup>6</sup> The precise characterisation of the theory varies across its exponents but the differences will not concern us here (see Hinton, 1973, pp. 103–104; McDowell, 1982, p. 472; Snowdon, 1981, p. 185; Snowdon, 1990, p. 131).

Martin holds that we can find an argument in favour of Disjunctivism by considering the following three propositions:

- (1) If S imagines an F, an F exists in S's imaginary world.
- (2) S imagines an F if and only if S imagines from the inside perceptually experiencing an F in the imaginary world.
- (3) A perceptual experience of an F does not imply that an F exists.

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<sup>6</sup> What I call Disjunctivism here is that adopted by a Naïve Realist. There are other kinds of Disjunctivism, as Martin points out.

The problem is that merely imagining a perceptual experience of an F does not seem to be enough for there to be an F in the imaginary world. On the assumption that (1) captures what we are up to when we imagine an F, the options appear to be that we must either deny (2) or (3). The denial of (3) is taken to lead to Disjunctivism. It suggests that perceptual experience of an F involves an F appearing to the subject of experience. So, if that's right and if denying (2) turns out not to be an option, as Martin believes, we would have an argument in favour of Disjunctivism.

Martin's defence of the Dependency Thesis is an essential component of his defence of (2). Obviously, if I am right that the Dependency Thesis is false, Martin's argument for Disjunctivism fails. So that's the immediate consequence of the previous discussion. However, it pays to focus on the other essential component of his defence for it reveals a further way in which the Straightforward View is attractive.

The Dependency Thesis alone does not entail (2). The Dependency Thesis holds that, if S imagines an F, S imagines a perceptual experience of an F in the imaginary world. It does not say that that is all that S imagines. This gives Nondisjunctivists a possible way of dealing with the problem of how to imagine an F in the imaginary world if the Dependency Thesis is true. They can imagine a perceptual experience of an F and suppose that the perceptual experience is veridical. By Martin's lights, the problem with this suggestion is that it does not seem to get the epistemology of imaginative experience right. The justification for our belief that there is an F in the imaginary world would not be rooted in the imagined perceptual experience of an F. Instead, it would depend upon our recognition of the supposition that the imagined perceptual experience is veridical. This doesn't capture the fact that the content of our imagining presents the imagined world to be a certain way to us and, thereby, provides grounds for believing that it is thus and so. I believe that there is a donkey walking across a sand dune in the world I am imagining because my mental image presents the donkey to me. I don't consider whether I have antecedently supposed that the image is a veridical perceptual experience. Martin suggests that the only way to capture the epistemology of imagination while retaining the Dependency Thesis is by rejecting (3) and adopting a disjunctive theory of experience. That way, when we imagine a perceptual experience of an F, we imagine a presentation of an F in the imaginary world. Our imagined experience makes it manifest that there is a donkey walking across a sand dune because it is a perceptual experience of a donkey (see Martin, this volume, pp. 410–11).

I think it is open to doubt whether Disjunctivism can deal appropriately with the issues concerning the epistemology of imaginative experience when coupled with the Dependency Thesis. The Disjunctivist's key idea is that:

The experience has the influence that it does over one's beliefs about how things are in one's environment precisely because how things are in

that environment is made manifest to one in having the experience (Martin, this volume, p. 414).

The question is whether we can make sense of the idea that the imaginary world is manifested in the perceptual experiences we imagine of it.

Here's one way of expressing the worry. If the Dependency Thesis is true, then it is not possible that there could exist an F as part of the imaginary world without there being an experience of an F. This would seem to make the objects and properties of the imaginary world dependent on the existence of experiences of them in that world. The imaginary world would be a world for which Idealism is true. But how do we then make sense of the idea that the objects and properties of the imaginary world make themselves manifest in experience rather than are merely constructed out of experiences?

The Idealist can reconstruct the distinction between experiences of objects and properties and mere hallucinations (say) in terms of those experiences which are world constructing, and those which are not because they fail to display the right systematic relations to other experiences. But it is quite unclear that, in this reconstruction, we will have a use for the notion of manifestation to which the Disjunctivist appeals. Implicit in the latter's characterisation of manifestation is the thought that there is a mind independent world which makes itself manifest in experience. Experience is an openness to the world. Experiences justify beliefs about the world because the world configures these experiences by showing up as part of the experience. I don't pretend I find this picture entirely clear but I think it is reasonably obvious that the objects and properties of the Idealist do not have the specified character. At best, it seems that only facsimile versions of the disjunctive theories of experience and appearance will be available. Moreover, there is considerable pressure to say that the primitive element in an Idealist world is that of an experience understood as that which is common to perception, hallucination and illusion. We reconstruct the different kinds of experience to which the Disjunctivist appeals from these basic elements.

It might be argued that I am wrong to suppose that the Dependency Thesis implies Idealism about the imagined world. There is no entailment if the experiences the Dependency Thesis concerns are experiences in which a world is made manifest to a subject. However, the proponent of this objection has got to justify the claim that it is legitimate to take across this notion of experience into the imagined world. They might argue that this is up to the imaginers. If imaginers suppose that they are having a perceptual experience and their conception of a perceptual experience is of the objects of the experience making themselves manifest in experience, then that's the kind of experience they are imagining. But this would place the objector in an unfortunate position. In the first section of this paper, I argued that we should take seriously what people suppose they are imagining: objects and not experiences of objects. Proponents of the Dependency Thesis counsel otherwise. They do

not challenge the claim that this is what people often take themselves to be imagining. They just claim that it is implicit in the nature of imaginative experience that they are imagining an experience of an object. I'm just making the same kind of point against those who seek to combine Disjunctivism and the Dependency Thesis. If the Dependency Thesis is true, then it is implicit in the nature of imaginative experience that Idealism is true of the imagined world and the Disjunctive Theory of Experience is not applicable. When we imagine a perceptual experience of an F, the perceptual experience we imagine cannot be as the Disjunctivist says we should understand it.

In point of fact, it seems that, when the Idealist implications of the Dependency Thesis are worked through, the Nondisjunctivist has an answer to the problem raised by those who favour Disjunctivism. The distinction between the imagined world manifesting itself in experience and mere appearance has to be cashed out in terms of the systematic relations between certain experiences as a result of which they are world constituting. In which case, the imaginer has only to imagine a suitably related experience displaying the right kind of content, and they have imagined part of imaginary reality. The whole point about Idealism is that it purports to make the world more accessible to those who think that we have the same kind of entity—experiences—common to perception, hallucination and illusion. If the Dependency Thesis were true, we could join Martin in rejecting (3), giving the notion of perceptual experience an Idealist construal.

Endorsement of the Straightforward View circumvents the difficulty canvassed in this section while retaining a realist view of the imaginary world and the epistemology of imagination Martin favours. If we imagine an F, then we are genuinely taking there to be an F in the imaginary world. There is no perceptual experience to get in the way. Nor is there a perceptual experience upon which the F depends. Moreover, since our imagination of an F is merely an imagination of an F rather than a perceptual experience of an F, our imagination directly presents to us the F in the imaginary world. It retains the primacy of the presentation of objects—albeit imaginary objects—in imaginative experience to which Disjunctivists appeal in the case of perceptual experience. If I am right that the Straightforward View has all of the advantages with none of the costs, then it seems as if we have alighted upon another argument in its favour, this time *from the epistemology of beliefs about imagination*.

### **3.2. The Straightforward View and Berkeley's Idealism**

Berkeley writes:

But say you, surely there is nothing easier than to imagine trees, for instance, in a park, or books existing in a closet, and nobody by to perceive them. I answer, you may so, there is no difficulty in it: but what is all this, I beseech you, more than framing in your mind certain ideas

which you call *books* and *trees*, and at the same time omitting to frame the idea of anyone that may perceive them? But do not you yourself perceive or think of them all the while? This therefore is nothing to the purpose: it only shows you have the power of imagining or forming ideas in your mind; but it doth not shew that you can conceive it possible, the objects of your thought may exist without the mind: to make out this, it is necessary that you conceive of them existing unconceived or unthought of, which is a manifest repugnancy (Berkeley, 1710; 1734, Part 1, s. 23, pp. 83–84).

In this passage, Berkeley is not so much presenting an argument in favour of Idealism as presenting an objection to a particular way of opposing Idealism (as Stoneham (forthcoming), Appendix IV, emphasises). The opponent Berkeley has in mind is one who claims that it is coherent to suppose that there is a mind independent world because he or she can imagine or conceive of objects which are unperceived and unconceived.

Berkeley's response seems to be that the opponent cannot be conceiving or imagining an unconceived or unperceived object because the very act of conceiving or imagining it makes it conceived or perceived. If Berkeley's response were sound, then the correctness or incorrectness of the Dependency Thesis is orthogonal to the debate. However, it seems clear that Berkeley's response is inadequate. While it might be true that, if we conceive of an object, then it cannot be unconceived, it does not seem that if we imagine an object it cannot be unperceived on the grounds that imagining is perceiving it. Imagining something is not perceiving it. The Dependency Thesis, if true, would be a way of bolstering Berkeley's reply at this point. It would make a perception of the object part of the content of what is imagined (see Gallois, 1974, pp. 63–69). Given that the Straightforward View is true, this way of bolstering Berkeley's response to the objection does not work. In which case, the objector can insist that his or her claim to be able to imagine an object which is unperceived should be taken at face value. Moreover, the objector can cite the content of his or her imagining in justification of his or her claim to be able to conceive of an unperceived object. An imaginer does not have to suppose that the object is unperceived. This would imply that he or she already possessed the concept of an unperceived object. All he or she needs to do is imagine the object without imagining it perceived. In considering an objection of this kind, Peacocke argues that:

Since this opponent is hoping to argue from imaginability to possibility, he needs a concept for which it is independently plausible to hold that what is imaginable is possible. That is plausible for imagination as characterized [by the Dependency Thesis]: the plausibility rests upon the two ideas that what can be experienced is possible, and that experiences that can be imagined are possible (Peacocke, 1985, p. 31).

He thinks that, if the Dependency Thesis were not true of imagination, we could not use imagination to justify the modal claim that there might be unperceived objects. So, we would be no further forward.

The first thing to note in reply is that the legitimacy of appealing to imagination to establish that something is possible can be based on the fact that it has worked well in other cases. We don't have to relate imagination to something else, perceptual experience, with the attendant claim that what we experience is possible. Nevertheless, we can. I have suggested that the content of imagination is phenomenally very similar to a possible content of perceptual experience. If we can imagine an F, then, in general, it is possible to perceptually experience an F. Hence it is possible that an F may be the way that we perceive it to be.<sup>7</sup>

### **3.3. The Straightforward View and knowing what an experience is like**

Some Physicalists have tried to capture what we know when we know what an experience is like in terms of (centrally) an ability to imagine the experience (Lewis, 1988, pp. 285–286; Carruthers, 1986, pp. 143–145; Nemirow, 1990, pp. 492–494). If the Dependency Thesis had been true and imagining an experience had been the primary form of imagination, then this proposal would be relatively straightforward to assess. However, if the Straightforward View is true, there appears to be a potential dilemma that deserves scrutiny. If the requisite ability to imagine is characterised as the ability to imagine the experience, then it seems that the subject may have to possess the concept of experience in order to know what his or her experience is like. This raises the issue of how we should characterise the mental life of subjects who perhaps fail to possess the concept of experience. Alternatively, it may be argued that a subject knows what an experience is like if he or she is able to imagine the objects of the experience. For instance, I know what an experience of a red tomato is like by being able to imagine a red tomato. I believe that we should pursue this last option (see Noordhof forthcoming). In which case, we need to explain why being able to imagine what is experienced (rather than the experience) provides knowledge of what an experience is like. This may be the basis for an argument in favour of a Representationalist account of phenomenal properties but I shall resist the temptation to pursue the matter further here.

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<sup>7</sup> There are obviously some problematic cases as Rob Hopkins pointed out to me: e.g. electrons and Escher staircases. However, to the extent that they present a problem for me, they also present a problem for the connections to which Peacocke appeals in the quoted passage.

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