Belief-Like Imagining and Correctness

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Abstract

This paper explores the sense in which correctness applies to belief-like imaginings. It begins by establishing that when we imagine, we 'direct' our imaginings at a certain imaginary world, taking the propositions we imagine to be assessed for truth in that world. It then examines the relation between belief-like imagining and positing truths in an imaginary world. Rejecting the claim that correctness, in the literal sense, is applicable to imaginings, it shows that the imaginer takes on, vis-à-vis the imaginary world, the first-person perspective of a believer. Imaginings, it concludes, 'mimic' beliefs with respect to the property of being correct or incorrect by virtue of having true or false content.

1. Introduction

Belief-like imaginings are representational states that may arise in the course of pretending, mindreading, daydreaming, modal reasoning, responding to fiction, etc. They may also be conjured up, spontaneously or deliberatively, without any connection to these contexts. Theories of imagination usually accept that such imaginings are belief-like in *functional*

respects: they are related to other kinds of mental states in a manner akin to that in which beliefs are related to those kinds of states[1]; they are triggered by perceptual or perception-like states (e.g., mental imagery), and may generate emotional responses, conative states, motivations, etc. similar to those that would arise were the imaginer to hold beliefs with the same content. For instance, a child pretending that a neighbor is a monster, may, upon seeing the neighbor approaching, imagine that a monster is approaching; she may therefore have a fear-like emotion, or be in a desire-like state, 'wishing' the monster would go away, be motivated to escape, etc.

Accepting that imaginings are functionally similar to beliefs, this paper examines how correctness applies to imaginings. Correctness, which applies primarily to beliefs, is ascribed by virtue of their content: beliefs whose content is true are deemed correct, beliefs whose content is false are deemed incorrect. Various accounts of the correctness of beliefs have been adduced; some apply the norm of truth to beliefs.[2] My argument does not presuppose any specific account of correctness/incorrectness: it will assume the basic characterization of doxastic correctness, namely, that a belief with false content is erroneous, and a belief with true content is correct.

It is likewise widely accepted that beliefs differ in this respect from other kinds of mental representations. Conative states, for instance, desires, are not deemed incorrect by virtue of having false content. Cognitive states such as assuming, hypothesizing, considering, etc., with false content are likewise not deemed incorrect: one is not mistaken if one assumes, hypothesizes, etc., a falsehood.

Belief-like imaginings also belong to this group of cognitive states: one does not err by virtue of imagining a falsehood. We don't necessarily intend our imaginings to have true content, and when imaginings come unbidden, we don't expect them to represent real facts. Granted, in some cases, we may fail to imagine the truth, for instance, if we set out to

imagine the truth, or intend to follow an instruction to imagine the truth, but fail to do so. The failure ensues from non-fulfilment of this intention (a similar failure would ensue if we intended to imagine a *falsehood*, but imagined a truth). The claim that imaginings *in themselves* are neither correct nor incorrect is also supported by the fact that to a great extent, imaginings do not respond to evidence, need not be consistent with beliefs about real-world facts, etc.[3]

Nevertheless, the analogy between beliefs and imaginings vis-à-vis correctness (incorrectness) by virtue of having true (false) content should not be relinquished. Although belief-like imaginings are not literally correct/incorrect, their structure is such that, vis-à-vis correctness/incorrectness, they 'imitate' beliefs. To explain this idea, I will first elucidate a sense in which the *content* of imaginings can be assessed for truth: I will show that in imagining, being aware that the propositions we imagine are either true or false in a particular (imaginary) world, we 'direct' our imagining at that world.

2. Assessment of Content

In believing a proposition, we 'direct' our belief at the real world, being aware that the believed proposition is putatively assessed for truth in it; our belief does not render the believed proposition true *simpliciter*. In this section, I will argue that in this respect imaginings are like beliefs. In imagining a proposition, we 'direct' our imagining at a certain imaginary world, being aware that the imagined proposition is putatively assessed for truth in that world; imagining a proposition does not render that proposition true in the pertinent imaginary world. To defend this claim, I will adduce cases where there is a shift from imagining an 'imaginary falsehood' to imagining an 'imaginary truth.'

Consider the following three cases:

Case A (based on Walton 2015, p. 24; see also Chasid 2020): Reading a murder mystery, Mary imagines, as per the work's implicit instruction, that a certain butler is the murderer. It then emerges that the UPS deliveryman, not the butler, committed the crime. Mary responds accordingly, namely, by imagining that the UPS deliveryman, not the butler, is the murderer. Her second imagining is accompanied by a surprise-like feeling; she also experiences a relief-like feeling, since had the butler been falsely accused (in the mystery's world), his family would have suffered needlessly.

Case B (based on Walton 1990, pp. 37ff): Hiking through a forest, Greg and Eric play a game of make-believe in which they take tree-stumps to be bears. Greg sees something in the distance, and tells Eric that there is a bear at that spot. Both Greg and Eric *imagine*, as per their game's rule, that there is a bear there. Upon approaching, what had looked like a stump from afar turns out to be a boulder. "False alarm," Greg observes with relief. Their imaginings are altered accordingly: they no longer imagine a bear at that spot; they imagine that there isn't a bear there.

Case C: Daydreaming at work, John imagines that he and his wife are enjoying a romantic weekend getaway. He proceeds to imagine making a startling discovery as they check out of the hotel: before leaving for the getaway, his wife was abducted by aliens, who replaced her with an alien doppelganger—an alien doppelganger with whom, he realizes, aghast, he has just spent the weekend.

An adequate account of cases A, B, and C must refer to the fact that, whether or not the imagined propositions are true or false *simpliciter*, they are true or false *in the pertinent*

imaginary world (i.e., the world of the work, game, or daydream). On a reasonable interpretation, the structural characteristic shared by the imaginative projects (an imaginative project being an imaginer's *overall* mental activity) in cases A, B, and C is that the subjects first imagine propositions which are false in the imaginary or fictional world, and subsequently imagine propositions which are true in that world (a complication regarding case C is discussed below). In all three cases, the imaginers respond to the shift from imagining a 'falsehood' to imagining a 'truth' much as they would respond to a shift in beliefs about similar real-world events, namely, with surprise-, discovery-, relief-, or horror-like feelings. The imaginers also ascribe a sort of 'incorrectness' to their initial imaginings: their having imagined those 'falsehoods' indicates some 'error' on their part.

These cases demonstrate that we can imagine both propositions that are true in the relevant imaginary or fictional world, and propositions that are false in that world. Moreover, regardless of how such a world is posited—spontaneously or intentionally, by following rules or instructions of a work or game, etc.—awareness that the imagined propositions are putatively assessed for truth in that particular world is part of the overall mental activity we engage in when imagining. This awareness makes possible shifts such as those exemplified by the three cases, and is also the basis for the imaginer's emotional, conative, and cognitive responses to such shifts—responses similar to those generated by shifts in parallel beliefs about the real world. In this respect too, imaginings are belief-like, since in believing, we are aware that the believed propositions are putatively assessed for truth *simpliciter*.

Before explaining this further, two comments are in order. First, I will use the term '*imaginary* world' ('i-world') to refer to the world we posit when we imagine, and the term '*fictional* world' for a world described by a *work of fiction*, which may differ from the world an imaginer conjures up in response to reading or watching that work. The term 'fictional

world' is thus inapplicable to cases where imaginings do not arise in response to works of fiction, for instance, daydreaming.

Second, my account is not committed to any specific theories about the metaphysics of either 'imaginary' or 'fictional' worlds. For convenience, I will use Walton's characterization of fictional worlds to characterize both imaginary and fictional worlds, taking every such world to be a "set of propositions" (Walton 1990, pp. 66-7). Walton identifies fictional worlds with "sets of *propositions-as-indicated-by-a-given-work*" (1990, p. 67), so that two fictional worlds may be composed of the same set of propositions yet differ because they are set forth in different works. Similarly, I will identify an i-world with the set of propositions posited by an imaginer in a specific imaginative project. Since an i-world is associated with the mental activity—the imaginative project—in the context of which it is posited, it is also individuated by the relations between imaginings and other kinds of mental states that are part of the imaginative project in question (emotional responses, conative states, mental imagery, etc.). Hence two i-worlds may be constituted by the same set of propositions, yet differ in that they are posited in different imaginative projects—projects involving different, and differently-related, sorts of mental states.

When imagining, we imagine propositions to be true in the i-world, just as, when believing, we believe propositions to be true *simpliciter*. But imagining a proposition to be true in the i-world does not *make* it true in that world, just as believing a proposition to be true does not make it true *simpliciter*. Rather, we 'direct' our unfolding imaginings at a particular world, taking their content to be either true or false in it (henceforth: 'i-true' and 'i-false'). In case A, Mary is aware that the content of her imaginings is putatively assessed for truth in the mystery's world. Similarly, playing the 'stumps-are-bears' game, Greg and Eric posit a world in terms of which they take the content of their unfolding imaginings to be assessed for truth. They posit that certain propositions are i-true *not* by imagining them, but

by stipulating the 'stumps-are-bears' rule. Indeed, what they posit to be i-true may differ from what they imagine. They may, for instance, completely overlook a stump, and thus fail to imagine the posited i-truth that there is a bear at that location. They may also persistently imagine the i-falsehood that there is a bear at a certain spot, due to a boulder that they repeatedly mistake for a stump.

A different interpretation of cases A and B, invoking Mary's, and Greg and Eric's, *beliefs* about the fictional or imaginary truths, might be proposed. Perhaps Mary first *believed* it was i-true that the butler was the murderer, and then *believed* it was i-true that the UPS driver was the murderer. Similarly, Greg and Eric first believed it was i-true that there was a bear at a certain spot, and then believed it was true that there wasn't a bear there. The aforementioned psychological reactions—the surprise-, discovery-, and relief-like feelings—can, so it is argued, be explained by the shifts in the imaginers' beliefs.

This interpretation is problematic. First, Mary, and Greg and Eric, can be described as not only having beliefs about the pertinent i-world, but also as *imagining* the said content—as I, in fact, described them. And if cases A and B involve belief-like imaginings, they demonstrate my main claim, namely, that the content of imagining is not necessarily i-true, but merely assessable for i-truth.

Second, the aforementioned responses can ensue when beliefs about i-truths remain constant. Suppose that Mary reads the murder mystery a second time, that is, while knowing the i-truth that the murderer is the UPS deliveryman, not the butler. Nevertheless, in rereading the mystery and following the implicit directives of its early chapters, Mary can imagine something she now knows to be i-false, namely, that the butler is the murderer. Absorbed in imagining the recounted mystery, Mary again experiences surprise-, discovery- and relief-like feelings. Likewise, in case B, Greg might plan to imagine what it would be like to be surprised by a bear crouching behind him. Although Greg knows that there is a

stump behind him, and therefore that it is i-true that there is a bear behind him, he nonetheless imagines the i-falsehood that there is no bear behind him. Greg's intention to experience a surprise- or discovery-like feeling by consecutively imagining that i-falsehood and then the i-truth that a bear is right behind him, can be fulfilled though there is no change in his beliefs about what is i-true.

Thirdly, changes in beliefs about i-truths do not explain what generates the said psychological reactions. Suppose Greg and Eric's parents, who are hiking with them, and understand the game, have beliefs about its i-truths, though without imagining anything. They believe, say, that it is true in the game's world that there is a bear at a certain spot, and then (when they realize that what looked like a stump is just a boulder) that it is i-false that there is a bear there. The shift in the parents' beliefs will not generate a relief-like reaction; they may even be annoyed by this realization, since they suspect that Greg and Eric will refuse to go home without 'fighting a bear.' What best explains the said reactions are not beliefs about i-truths, but belief-like imaginings.

John's daydream (case C) differs from cases A and B in that it is spontaneous, involving no explicit instructions, rules, or intentions. At first sight, it does not seem to involve any 'standard' against which the content of John's imaginings can be assessed for i-truth. If nothing determines truth in the world of John's daydream, how can John be described as first imagining an i-falsehood (he is spending a weekend with his wife), and then an i-truth (he has spent the weekend with an alien)? Note that to account for John's horror- and discovery-like feelings, it suffices to describe him as shifting from the former imagining to the latter, without taking any specific proposition to be i-true. Similarly, to account for a reaction to a shift in *belief*, we need not consider which believed proposition is true: we only need to ascertain that the subject shifts from believing one to believing the other. Most importantly, John's ascription of a sort of 'incorrectness' to his first imagining (i.e., that he is spending the

weekend with his wife) can be based on the fact that he is *currently* imagining that she was abducted, etc.—again, without specifying which proposition is i-true.

For one thing, even if John's daydream is indeterminate with respect to the i-truth, it still demonstrates my thesis that imaginings do not render their content i-true. John's daydream shows that also when an imaginative project comes unbidden, the imaginer 'directs' her imaginings at an i-world, being aware that the imagined content is putatively assessed for truth in that world (much as she is aware that the propositions she believes are putatively assessed for truth *simpliciter*).[4]

For another, there is no reason we cannot describe John as positing, albeit implicitly and without much awareness, certain propositions to be i-true. For upon reflecting on our daydreams and spontaneous imaginative projects, we often realize that certain propositions we imagined were i-true, and others were i-false. Given that we ordinarily have a good grasp of those i-truths (i-falsehoods), it follows that in those projects, we must have implicitly posited i-truths. For instance, it is plausible that John grasps, upon reflection, that it was i-true that his wife was abducted, etc., and tells this to his therapist. Had John not posited that i-truth, but left the i-world indeterminate, he would probably have reported that he doesn't know which one of the propositions he imagined was i-true.

A further argument for the claim that i-truths are often posited implicitly is discussed in § 3. In general, given that the 'script' according to which spontaneous imaginative projects unfold is non-deliberative, the mental act of positing specific i-truths is also carried out unintentionally and without much awareness. We can therefore say that John left the i-world indeterminate with respect to the propositions he imagined (in this case, it is in virtue of his later imaginings that John ascribes a sense of 'incorrectness' to his initial imaginings). Or we can also say that at some stage in his daydream, John (implicitly) posited the i-truth that his wife was abducted, etc. It is even possible that John posited the i-truth that his wife was

abducted right at the outset of his daydream. For instance, intrigued by a movie he recently saw, John finds himself imagining its plot from the first-person perspective, despite knowing the i-truth throughout his daydream.

A description of case C that, I maintain, is *implausible*, is that John imagined only i-truths, that is, that he first imagined the i-truth that he was spending the weekend with his wife, and then the i-truth that she was abducted. On this description, John's imaginings seem to be directed at two different i-worlds, one in which he is with his wife, another in which he is with an alien. But if John posited two different i-worlds, why would he respond to the shift in his imaginings by having a surprise- or discovery-like feelings? Granted, a 'shift between worlds' may sometimes prompt a reaction; for instance, awakening from his daydream, the real-world fact that his wife is nearby may prompt John to feel relief ('it was just a daydream'), though not 'surprise,' 'discovery.' In general, it is difficult to account for the sense of surprise or discovery that arises in cases A, B, and C by invoking a shift from one i-world to another. Moreover, recall that in shifting to imagining that his wife was abducted, John ascribes a sense of *incorrectness* to his initial imaginings. But if the initial imaginings were directed at a different i-world, a world in which their content was i-true, why would John ascribe 'incorrectness' to them?

To support the claim that John's imaginings are all directed at the same i-world, they can be described in more detail, so as to exclude the 'two i-worlds' description. Suppose that John imagines that, *while* spending the weekend with his wife, he reads reliable documents which reveal that his wife was actually abducted by aliens, and therefore proceeds to imagine that he is with an alien doppelganger. Describing the daydream as unfolding in this way, it is plausible, indeed necessary, to describe it as incorporating one i-world.

Examples of shifts from imagining one proposition to imagining an incompatible proposition—where both imaginings are directed at the same i-world—abound. A subject

may find herself imagining that her favorite ring was stolen, rummaging in her bag for her eyeglasses, and finding her ring there. One may likewise imagine that one sees a gold nugget in a river, and that clouds slowly drift in front of the sun, revealing the object to be only a pebble that was illuminated by the sun. In such cases, a detailed description of the 'script' shows that one's imaginings pertain to the same i-world. They do not render the imagined propositions i-true; rather, the imagined propositions are assessed for truth in the (same) i-world. Some prove i-false, some i-true.

A more radical suggestion is that John posited an *impossible* i-world in which every proposition he imagines is true. Although I accept that it is possible, as in, for example, the tale of the Tower of Goldbach (Gendler 2000, pp. 67ff), to describe an i-world as including incompatible propositions, there is no particular reason to describe John's daydream as incorporating an impossible i-world. Recall that John can be described as reporting (correctly) that it was i-false that he spent the weekend with his wife, or that he doesn't know which propositions are i-true, recounting no impossibilities.

To recap, cases A, B, and C demonstrate that, in general, belief-like imaginings do not render their content i-true; if they did, imagined propositions would, *ipso facto* (i.e., by virtue of being the content of belief-like imaginings), be i-true. I am not denying that in imagining, we often posit that what we imagine is i-true. My claim is that even if most or all of the imagined propositions are i-true, the imaginer posits them to be i-true *in addition* to imagining them. From the perspective of imagining (believing), we are aware that the imagined (believed) proposition is putatively assessed for i-truth (truth).

3. Imagining and Positing

The mental act of positing i-truths is characterized functionally, by its role in the overall mental activity associated with imagining, namely, establishing the world at which one's imaginings are directed, the world in which the content of imaginings is putatively assessed for truth. There are various ways to posit i-truths. Understanding which propositions a work of fiction takes to be true in its world, the reader or viewer usually responds by positing them to be i-true, directing her unfolding imaginings at the world constituted by those propositions. Playing a game of make-believe, the players may posit specific propositions to be i-true, or stipulate rules that generate i-truths. Likewise, an imaginer can *intend* to imagine i-truths (i-falsehoods), thereby positing that what she imagines is i-true (i-false). Spontaneous imaginative projects (e.g., John's daydream) may also incorporate acts of positing of i-truths, though like the overall mental activity in such projects, these acts are carried out implicitly and without immediate awareness.

Why do I claim that spontaneous projects include implicit acts of positing i-truths? One reason, explained in § 2, is that we may often report, after reflection, which imagined propositions were i-true, and which were i-false. Even if we do not have infallible or privileged access to the content of our imaginative projects, there is no reason to argue that we cannot ordinarily (correctly) recount what the i-world was like, that is, whether what we imagined was indeed true or false in it, or left indeterminate.

Another reason to hold that i-truths are posited even in spontaneous projects reflects the fact that imaginative projects are partly determined by real-world facts, or beliefs about the real-world. In imagining, say, that the building one (really) saw yesterday is on fire, one probably implicitly posits that the building has many of its real-world properties. Likewise, in imagining that one owns a red car, it is plausible that one implicitly posits that the i-world redness is (phenomenologically and functionally) the same as real-world redness, and that one's i-world self has many of one's real-world properties. Granted, it is also possible to

describe such cases differently: perhaps one implicitly posits that the i-world building is illusory, the i-world color spectrum is inverted, and one is an 'i-superhero.' Ordinarily, i-worlds are posited to be like the real-world, or like what we believe the real world to be, even in spontaneous projects (see Chasid 2017). And if such implicit positing of i-truths is routine, it follows that it is *generally* possible to posit i-truths implicitly and without much awareness. What I take to be implausible is the claim that the positing of i-truths must be deliberate or explicit, and absent such conscious intention, an i-world will be totally indeterminate.

Another key point pertains to a specific way in which i-truths are posited. As we saw in case B, i-truths can be posited by taking a real-world object to be a different object in the i-world. Greg and Eric take tree-stumps to be bears; similarly, a child might take a banana to be a telephone, a stick to be a horse, etc. Walton calls these real-world objects "props," and defines them as "generators of fictional truths" (see Walton 1990, pp. 37ff). Taking something to be a different object in the i-world is, Walton argues, a more basic act than belief-like imagining: it generates 'truths' that are *to be* imagined, truths that are posited, but not *ipso facto* imagined. The crucial point is that, by taking a real-world object to be a different object in the i-world, we posit certain i-truths.

4. Assessment for Correctness (First Pass)

We can now address the question of how correctness applies to imaginings. Given that their *content* is assessed for i-truth, a first-pass suggestion is that imaginings are assessed for correctness by virtue of representing the pertinent i-world, just as beliefs are assessed for correctness by virtue of representing the real world. On this suggestion, although imaginings, as explained in § 1, are not deemed correct (incorrect) by virtue of having true (false) content, they are deemed correct (incorrect) by virtue of having *i-true* (*i-false*) content.

This suggestion is akin to Walton's thesis about fiction:

Fictionality has turned out to be analogous to truth in some ways; the relation between fictionality and imagining parallels that between truth and belief. Imagining aims at the fictional as belief aims at the true. What is true is to be believed; what is fictional is to be imagined. (1990, p. 41)

On Walton's view, much as beliefs track truth *simpliciter*, imaginings track *i-truth*. When we engage in an imaginative project, we seek to represent, by way of imagining, 'facts' of the i-world, that is, we seek to imagine the posited i-truths. Hence, if we imagine an i-true proposition, our imagining is correct; if we imagine an i-falsehood, our imagining is incorrect. Furthermore, although imaginings are not responsive to evidence regarding truths *simpliciter*, they are responsive to evidence regarding i-truth. When Mary (case A), for instance, has evidence (gained by reading the mystery) that it is i-true that the UPS deliveryman, and not the butler, committed the murder, she revises her imaginings accordingly. Similarly, when Greg and Eric (case B) have evidence that it is i-true that there is no bear at the spot where they first imagined a bear, they revise their imaginings accordingly. Such revisions are made because the imaginer seeks to avoid error that ensues from imagining i-falsehoods, just as the believer seeks to avoid error ensuing from believing falsehoods.

It is also possible, though more complicated, to apply this literal sense of correctness (incorrectness) to spontaneous imaginative projects.[5] Suppose that John implicitly posited the i-truth that his wife had been replaced by an alien only when he imagined it, namely at the second stage of his daydream. On this scenario, his first imaginings were rendered incorrect only *at that stage*. Such incorrectness is somewhat similar to the incorrectness associated

with believing a proposition about the future: the subject is rendered mistaken only after the believed proposition's falsity is determined, namely (supposedly) only in the future. And even if John left the i-world indeterminate vis-à-vis the imagined facts, then since the imagined content is nonetheless *either* i-true or i-false, his imaginings are *either* correct or incorrect. As explained above, the fact that John's imaginings are putatively assessed for correctness is demonstrated by the 'incorrectness' John ascribes to his initial imaginings once he imagines that his wife has been abducted, etc., even on the premise that he didn't posit specific i-truths; he ascribes that incorrectness because he has revised his imaginings.

Even if the first-pass account of imaginative correctness can accommodate indeterminate i-worlds, another problem must be overcome.[6] If the correctness (incorrectness) of imaginings is *the same sort* of correctness (incorrectness) that applies to beliefs, our epistemic practices vis-à-vis imagining should presumably be like our epistemic practices vis-à-vis believing—but they aren't. Consider responsiveness to evidence. If we have evidence to the effect that a certain proposition is true, we are inclined to believe the proposition; absent evidence or beliefs to the contrary, we usually wind up believing that which we have evidence for. Moreover, consciously intending to err, namely to disregard straightforward evidence and adopt an incorrect belief, is deemed irrational. Of course, sometimes we do act irrationally, for instance, in self-deception. But we hardly seek, systematically and consciously, to deceive ourselves or adopt incorrect beliefs.

In imagining, we clearly do not seek to avoid representing i-falsehoods, as we do in believing. We can, and often do, imagine propositions despite knowing full well that they are i-false. Unlike the intention to *believe* falsehoods, the intention to *imagine* i-falsehoods is not deemed irrational. Recall the case of Mary's intending to read the murder mystery a second time, that is, while knowing that it is i-false that the butler is the murderer. If, as per the first-pass account, the incorrectness of her imaginings is the same sort of incorrectness that applies

to beliefs, Mary is deliberately planning to err: her plan to enjoy rereading the mystery is just like a plan to deceive herself. But this characterization is highly implausible. In general, those who seek to being correct would not eschew rereading fiction, or, more broadly, imagining known i-falsehoods.

Similarly, in case B, if Greg knows that there is a stump—and therefore that it is i-true that there is a bear—behind him, he can nonetheless intend to imagine the i-falsehood that there is no bear behind him. Greg's plan to experience a surprise-like feeling by first imagining an i-falsehood, and then the i-truth, cannot be considered a plan to err. Greg is rational: it is implausible to ascribe to him the intention to violate a criterion of correctness.

In general, rational subjects can plan to imagine what it would be like to err, be surprised, discover something, etc. by intentionally imagining propositions that are incompatible with posited i-truths. In such cases, their imaginings are not deemed incorrect *in the same sense* in which beliefs are incorrect. Subjects can set aside their knowledge of i-truth without risk of error, just as they can set aside their knowledge that what they are imagining is false *simpliciter* without risk of error. It seems, indeed, that much as the imagining of falsehoods is not impeded by knowledge of incompatible *real-world* facts (that no murder occurred; that there are no bears in the forest), the imagining of i-falsehoods is likewise not impeded by knowledge of posited i-truths.

It is true that in the absence of intentions, rules, instructions, or other sorts of mandates to imagine i-falsehoods, if we are aware that a proposition is i-true, we proceed to imagine that proposition. But this by no means entails that imagining "aims at" the i-true, or that imagining i-falsehoods is *literally* incorrect. The first-pass account, in short, does not explain the crucial difference between 'correctness' that applies to imaginings, and 'correctness' that applies to beliefs.

5. Assessment for Correctness (Second Pass)

Although no *real* correctness applies to imaginings, there is a different, non-literal sense in which imaginings are correct (incorrect). I contend that imagining i-truths (i-falsehoods) entails correctness (incorrectness) *in the i-world*. That is, when we imagine an i-true (i-false) proposition, our real-world mental state—our imagining—is *ipso facto* taken to be correct (incorrect) in the i-world.

This idea requires clarification. As I explained in § 3, propositions are often posited to be i-true by taking real-world objects to be different objects in the i-world, as per Walton's "props." Tree-stumps can be taken to be bears (case B); sticks can be taken to be swords; the imaginer can be taken to be Napoleon; etc. Because the real-world object is taken to be an i-world object, albeit a different one, some propositions that are true of the real-world object entail i-world truths.

This mode of positing i-truths can also apply to *mental states*: certain (real-world) mental states can be taken to be different mental states in the i-world. A salient example is mental images. When mental images arise in an imaginative project, they are sometimes implicitly taken to be i-world perceptual experiences. For instance, during his imaginative interlude, John (case C) may call up a visual image of his wife, taking that image to be a visual experience, in the world of his daydream, of his wife. Taking the mental image to be an i-world visual experience generates certain i-truths: John visually experiences his companion as having various properties (say, curly hair, brown eyes, etc.).

Similarly, I contend, belief-like imaginings—the real-world representational states in question—are *ipso facto* taken to be i-world beliefs. When we imagine, we implicitly take our imaginings to be (first-person) i-world beliefs. It thus follows that, when we imagine an i-true (i-false) proposition, it is i-true that we *believe* that proposition, hence that posited belief is

correct (incorrect) *in the i-world*. Absent overriding intentions or posits, we will imagine that which we believe to be i-true, as per our i-world role of believers vis-à-vis i-truths. Since real-world evidence for i-truths is taken, *by default*, to be i-world evidence, it usually guides our imaginings, in line with their role as i-world beliefs. For in general, absent specific intentions or posits, real-world beliefs and evidence guide our imaginings: in imagining Paris at night, the 'i-world Paris' is, by default, taken to have the same features that we believe Paris has.

But we can also disregard our beliefs when we imagine. Specifically, we can disregard our beliefs about what is i-true, and imagine i-falsehoods. Taking imagining to be i-world believing does not entail that we *really* seek to imagine i-truths (as per the first-pass account), it just entails that we play the i-world role of seeking to represent what is i-true. By setting aside our beliefs about what is i-true, this role can also include—for the sake of enjoyment, learning, etc.—failing to represent *what is i-true*, namely representing *i-falsehoods*; that is, we can plan to hold *false* or *ill-informed* i-world beliefs. In carrying out such a plan, we disregard real-world evidence about what is posited to be i-true, not taking it to guide our imaginings. In such cases, our imaginings and posits are arranged so that we can fulfil the role of believing i-falsehoods or being ignorant of i-truths. This is, indeed, what happens in the cases discussed above, where imaginers plan to imagine propositions they know to be i-false. No real-world norm is violated in such cases; no real-world incorrectness applies to imagining i-falsehoods. The 'incorrectness' in such cases does not exist, much as the bears in Greg and Eric's game do not exist; it is only *i-world* incorrectness.

It is important to note that the i-world beliefs in question do not presuppose any specific description of the i-world believer. That is, absent additional posits, the i-world believer has no determinate identity. The posited believer's indeterminacy reflects the descriptively-lean manner in which one ordinarily ascribes beliefs to oneself from the first-person perspective.[7]

Attending to a related phenomenon will shed light on the thesis that imaginings entail first-person i-world beliefs. Consider cases where the imaginer explicitly posits herself to be part of the i-world, as happens, for instance, in case B, where Greg and Eric are posited to be i-world characters. Intriguingly, Greg and Eric's i-world beliefs are identical in content to their (real-world) imaginings. Greg sees a stump at a certain spot, and imagines, as per the game's rule, that there is a bear there. His doing so entails, *ipso facto*, that he *believes*, in the i-world, that there is a bear at that spot: his real-world imagining entails that, in the i-world, he believes the content of that imagining. Likewise, when Greg devises the plan to first 'err' about the bear's presence and then 'correct' that 'error,' he must first *imagine* that there isn't a bear behind him (though he knows that there is a stump behind him). Imagining the i-falsehood that there isn't a bear behind him is necessary because this imagining entails that he *believes*, in the i-world, that there isn't a bear behind him, as per his plan. When Greg shifts to imagining the i-truth that there *is* a bear behind him, this shift entails that Greg *believes*, in the i-world, that there's a bear behind him: his imagining entails that in the i-world, he believes the imagined content. The shift in his imaginings thus entails a shift in his i-world beliefs.

Similarly, imagining that he is spending the weekend with his wife, and then that he has spent the weekend with an alien, entails that John believes these propositions, consecutively, in the i-world. Imagining sitting in the sun, having an ice-cream, tasting the vanilla first and then the chocolate, one *ipso facto* posits that one *believes*, in the i-world, that one is sitting in the sun, having an ice-cream, etc. These i-world facts are gradually revealed to the imaginer in the i-world. As these cases illustrate, imagining a proposition entails that in the i-world, one believes the proposition, that shifts in imaginings entail shifts in i-world beliefs, and that in the i-world, one errs (does not err) by virtue of imagining i-false (i-true) propositions.

I am not denying that we can, and sometimes do, imagine that we believe a proposition *in addition* to imagining that proposition (e.g., when Greg and Eric imagine that there is a bear in a certain place, they may also imagine *that they believe* that there is a bear there). My point is that in imagining a proposition, *whether or not* one also imagines that one believes that proposition, *it is i-true* that one believes that proposition. An actor who plays, say, Henry V, and imagines that he is taking part in a bloody battle, need not, and usually does not, *in addition* to imagining that he is in the midst of such a battle, imagine that he *believes* that he (*qua* Henry V) is in the midst of a bloody battle. He simply imagines that he is in the midst of a battle; by virtue of this imagining, he is posited, in the i-world, to believe that he is in the midst of a battle.

It is more difficult to see how the proposed thesis, namely, that imaginings entail first-person i-world beliefs, applies to cases where the imaginer does not seem to have a presence in the i-world. In case A, for instance, the murder mystery's fictional world, like most fictional worlds, does not seem to include someone who believes the mystery's unfolding content. Moreover, a work can explicitly describe a world in which no relevant beliefs exist. Imaginative projects that, allegedly, do not involve beliefs whose content is identical to the content of one's imaginings, can also arise spontaneously. A subject could find herself imagining, as per the renowned Berkeleyian scenario, a tree that no one sees or thinks of. In such cases, the subject imagines that the tree exists though—so she imagines—no one believes that it exists, yet according to the proposed thesis, she implicitly posits, by virtue of imagining that the tree exists, that it is i-true that she believes that the tree exists. The problem, in short, is that we can apparently engage in imagining even in cases where the i-world does not seem to include any beliefs, whereas the thesis that we are, *qua* imaginers, posited to play the role of believers entails that an i-world always involves first-person believing.

The problem is solved by invoking the distinction between what we imagine and what we posit to be i-true. Positing that certain propositions are i-true does not entail that one *imagines* those propositions. As the examples demonstrate, one can imagine either a posited i-truth or an i-falsehood. It follows that it is possible to imagine that no beliefs exist. For the proposed thesis does not mean that it is *impossible* to imagine that no beliefs exist, only that imagining this involves an i-falsehood. We can, therefore, imagine that there is an unthought-of tree. But since by imagining that tree, we *ipso facto* play the i-world role of believing that there is such a tree, what we imagine is i-false. In other words, since the proposition 'there is a belief that the tree exists' is implicitly posited to be i-true by virtue of our imagining the tree, as per the proposed thesis, the proposition 'there is no belief that the tree exists' is an i-falsehood, though it can be imagined. (The explanation with respect to imagining in response to fiction is simpler. As noted in § 2, the world described by a work of fiction is not the same as the world that the imaginer posits in engaging with the work. Hence if a work of fiction describes an object—say, a tree—as something that no one has ever believed to exist, the proposition that there is such a tree—a tree no one has ever believed to exist—is *true in the work's fictional world*, though false in the i-world that the imaginer posits in response to reading or watching the work; see Chasid 2020, § 5).[8]

Lastly, it must be kept in mind that i-truths can be posited implicitly and without much awareness. This also applies to the posit that imaginings are i-world beliefs. Even when imagining is intentional rather than spontaneous, we are not necessarily aware that in imagining, we are *ipso facto* posited to believe, in the i-world, the content of our imaginings. Becoming fully aware of our implicit posits may not be a simple psychological task. Imagining, as per the Berkeleyian scenario, that there is a tree that no one sees or thinks of, the imaginer might initially think that she is imagining an i-true proposition. She might reason that, since it is easy to *imagine* that there is a tree that no one believes to exist, this

proposition is indeed i-true. She might realize that she is wrong, however, if, for instance, she proceeds to imagine that prickly nuts are falling from the tree. For in response to this imagining, she may be disposed to flinch. Her disposition to flinch is the sort of reaction that might teach her that, despite having successfully imagined the unthought-of tree, in doing so, she posited herself to be part of the i-world, believing (from the first-person perspective) that the tree exists.

6. Conclusion

Focusing on belief-like imaginings, I have explored the sense in which correctness applies to imaginings. First, by analyzing salient examples, I showed that an imaginer 'directs' her imaginings at a particular i-world, being aware that their content is putatively assessed for truth in that world. I explained that i-truths can be posited in various ways, either intentionally or spontaneously, and that positing i-truths differs from imagining them. Next, I considered a first-pass account of imaginative correctness inspired by Walton's theory, and showed it to be inadequate: having i-false content does not render imaginings *literally* incorrect. I then proposed a second-pass account of imaginative correctness, arguing that imagining a proposition entails that it is believed in the i-world. This entailment was clarified by examining a specific way in which i-truths can be posited, namely, by taking a real-world object to be a different object in the i-world. Similarly, I argued, real-world imaginings are taken to be i-world beliefs. If we imagine an i-true (i-false) proposition, it is i-true that we *believe* that i-true (i-false) proposition, hence the posited i-world belief is correct (incorrect).

The proposed account can be developed in several directions. One related issue is the characterization of belief-like imaginings. On the account presented in this paper, imaginings are partly analyzed in terms of positing i-truths. Specifically, the mental capacity to take

(real-world) objects to be different objects in the i-world—as Greg and Eric do in applying the stumps-are-bears rule—seems to be prior to, and constitutive of, belief-like imagining. If so, the belief-like states we call 'imaginings' are not primitive states, but rather, are informed by this mental capacity.

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Notes

[1] See, e.g., Currie and Ravenscroft (2002); Doggett and Egan (2007, 2012); Gendler (2003); Kind (2011); Langland-Hassan (2012); Liao and Doggett (2014); Liao and Gendler (2018); Nichols (2004, 2006a, 2006b); Nichols and Stich (2003); Schellenberg (2013); Van Leeuwen (2011, 2013); Walton (1990, 2008, 2015). Another claim is that imagining also has sensory

components; see, e.g., Kind (2001); Peacocke (1985); cf. Schellenberg (2013), p. 499. My argument is compatible with this claim, though my focus is belief-like imagining.

[2] Mental states to which correctness applies, and beliefs in particular, are deemed to be 'assertoric,' 'strong,' or 'stative' representations; to have a 'mind-to-world' direction of fit; to 'aim at truth'; and so on. See Gluer (2009, pp. 306ff), especially note 16; Langland-Hassan (2015).

[3] Kind (2016) argues that imaginings may involve error. Kind's argument is compatible with my claim that *having false content* does not render an imagining mistaken. In this paper, I do not address the question of why, *regardless* of whether the imagined propositions are true or false, imagining sometimes involves real-world error.

[4] In fact, an i-world that is posited in response to engaging with fiction may also be indeterminate: a murder mystery, e.g., may not specify the murderer's identity. See also the 'that thing with the cup' example in Gendler (2000, pp. 71ff).

[5] Walton (1990, pp. 44-45) contends that spontaneous imaginings, too, presuppose a mandate to imagine "the fictional," and argues that the mandate is established by what we *actually* imagine. However, Walton (2015, p. 28) briefly mentions that we "*decide*" which spontaneously-imagined propositions are i-true (i-false), thus rendering our imaginings correct (incorrect). My account of positing i-truths may clarify this idea.

[6] Walton (2015, ch. 2) acknowledges that his initial idea raises certain problems, adducing cases that demonstrate its deficiencies.

[7] The imaginary first-person perspective comes up in various contexts (see, e.g., Williams 1973, Peacocke 1985, Walton 1990 § 1.4, Martin 2002, Nichols 2008). Nichols (2008) provides a comprehensive analysis, arguing that the first-person perspective is anchored in the psychological 'I-concept,' which refers to how one thinks of oneself (p. 522).

[8] The distinction between a work's fictional world and the i-world that the imaginer posits in response to engaging with a work is similar to Walton's distinction between "work worlds" and "game worlds" (1990, p. 216ff; 2015, pp. 33ff): the latter include the imaginer whereas the former do not. Walton's distinction, however, does not apply to imaginings in general.