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## CREATIVE IMAGINING AS PRACTICAL KNOWING

Reza Hadisi | [hadisi@arizona.edu](mailto:hadisi@arizona.edu)

University of Arizona

**Abstract.** I argue that practical knowledge can be understood as constituted by a kind of imagining. In particular, it is the knowledge of what I am doing when that knowledge is represented via extramental imagination. Two results follow. First, on this account, we can do justice both to the cognitive character and the practical character of practical knowledge. And second, we can identify a condition under which imagination becomes factive, and thus a source of objective evidence. I develop this view by extracting an account of self-knowledge via extramental imagination from the writings of Ibn ‘Arabi (1165-1240).

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In this paper, I consider two seemingly unrelated philosophical puzzles, one about the epistemic role of imagination, and the other about the concept of practical knowledge. I then argue that we can make headways on both fronts by recognizing the relationship between a species of imagination (which I will call *creative imagination*) and practical knowledge.

In section 1, I lay out the two puzzles. In section 2, I make a brief historical detour, and extract an account of imagination’s role in producing knowledge from Ibn ‘Arabi (1165-1240) in *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam [The Ringstones of Wisdom]* (1229). In section 3, I argue for my main thesis, namely that practical knowing is a kind of imagining. I then explain how my thesis helps us with the original puzzles of the paper.

### 1. Two puzzles

#### 1.1. The puzzle of imaginative use

Amy Kind and Peter Kung characterize the puzzle of imaginative use succinctly:

Imagination is sometimes used to enable us to escape or look beyond the world as it is, as when we daydream or fantasize or pretend. [...] Yet imagination is also sometimes used to enable us to learn about the world as it is, as when we plan or make decisions or make predictions about the future.

[...] But how can a single mental activity successfully be put to both uses?  
(Kind and Kung 2016, 1)

This puzzle is about the default epistemic status of imagination. On the one hand, we might be tempted to say that imagination is merely useful for fiction unless proven otherwise. For example, the rhetorical force of “it turned out to be a figment of my imagination” seems to signal that by default what is imagined is not real. On the other hand, there is a growing consensus among philosophers that imagination is not only a source for modal knowledge, but also a source of the knowledge of facts about the actual reality (Kind 2016; 2018; Balcerak-Jackson 2016; Aronowitz and Lombrozo 2020; Dorsch forthcoming; Munro forthcoming). I call the family of views that take imagination as a source of knowledge of facts about the actual world, the *I-actualist* theories of imagination. The puzzle of imaginative use most directly challenges the optimism of the I-actualists: How can the same mental activity that produces fictions and fantastical creatures also be a source of knowledge of the actual reality as it happens to be?<sup>1</sup>

To make our characterization of this puzzle more precise, I will highlight imagination’s role in providing evidence about the actual world by contrasting it to perception and belief. Let’s start with a distinction between objective and subjective evidence. We can think of  $p$  as an objective evidence for  $q$  if  $p$  is true and  $p$  favors  $q$ . By contrast, for an agent  $S$ ,  $p$  is subjective evidence for  $q$  if  $p$ , were it true, would favor  $q$ , and  $S$  takes  $p$  to be true. All else being equal, accepting a proposition based on objective evidence is more rational than accepting it on only subjective evidence; and accepting a proposition based on things we do not even take to be our evidence is less rational than either of the first two cases.<sup>2</sup>

Since perception is a factive mental state, what we perceive is part of our objective evidence. Of course, we could be mistaken about the relation between what we perceive and what is favored by that. However, at least trivially, since every fact favors itself, perceiving  $p$  always gives us objective evidence for  $p$ .

By contrast, since belief is not a factive mental state, many philosophers think what you believe is not part of your objective evidence (c.f., Harman 2003). For example, if I form the belief that the Pyramids were built by aliens, I do not thereby give myself objective evidence that they were so built. We cannot bootstrap our way to knowledge by way of believing. At the same time, beliefs seem to be part of our subjective evidence. That is so because truth is at least *a* standard of correctness for belief,

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<sup>1</sup> I say knowledge of reality “as it actually happens to be” to put aside the debate about imagination’s role in gaining modal knowledge. Arguably, there is a tight, and perhaps conceptual connection between knowledge of modal facts and imagination (Yablo 1993; Szabo-Gendler and Hawthorne 2002; Chalmers 2002; Williamson 2016). But notwithstanding imagination’s likely role in providing modal knowledge, our current puzzle remains intact: How could imagination be a reliable source of evidence for the actual world as it happens to be if it is also the source of daydreaming or fantasizing?

<sup>2</sup> That is, even non-evidentialists agree that we would be epistemically better off if in addition to non-evidential grounds, we also had evidence for what we accept.

and as believers we implicitly recognize this.<sup>3</sup> We can formulate this idea by saying that there is a subjective factuality constraint on belief in that if we take  $p$  to be false, then we either stop believing  $p$  or at least tag that belief as paradoxical (Moore 2013, 207–12). Arguably, this kind of subjective constraint limits our freedom in forming beliefs: if we take  $p$  to be false, then it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to believe  $p$  (Williams 1976; Hieronymi 2009). As a result, we can treat our beliefs as part of our *subjective* evidence (i.e., part of what we take to be true).<sup>4</sup>

Now, it is often observed that, ordinarily, imagination is not a factive mental state (Walton 1993, 20; Schellenberg 2013, 498; Kind 2016, 146–47; Liao and Gendler 2020). So, we might think that imagination is more like belief, and less like perception; it can at best give us subjective evidence. However, initially, the case for imagination looks worse because it looks as if truth is not even a standard of correctness for imagination. All else being equal, there is nothing wrong with adopting this attitude: “I imagine it is raining, but it is not raining.” Seemingly, to imagine is to represent something with no regard to the factuality of what is imagined. Thus, insofar as sensitivity to evidence goes, imagination seems to be worryingly unbounded and free.

Indeed, historically, what has made imagination’s default epistemic status more suspect than belief and perception is its alleged “freedom”. Hume famously claimed that “[t]o form monsters, and join incongruous shapes and appearances, costs the imagination no more trouble than to conceive the most natural and familiar objects” (Hume 2007, sec. 2).<sup>5</sup> To be sure, it is an exaggeration to claim that imagination’s freedom is absolute. As many have noted, there are at least some structural constraints on what we can and cannot imagine.<sup>6</sup> But to the extent that there is a consensus that there *are* structural limits on what we can imagine, these constraints are thought to guide us in gaining modal (metaphysical, nomological, deontic, *etc.*) knowledge. So, the usually invoked structural limits of imagination do not ease the worries about imagination’s freedom when it comes to knowledge of the actual reality. It looks as if we have an epistemically worrying degree of freedom in imagining what we want *as long as what we imagine does not violate a modal constraint on*

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<sup>3</sup> Shah and Velleman famously argue that truth is *the* standard of correctness for belief (Shah and Velleman 2005).

<sup>4</sup> Among others Schroder (2011; 2015) and Whiting (2014) invoke the notions of “subjective reasons for belief” or “subjective evidence” (c.f. Pryor (2018, 121–22)).

<sup>5</sup> For a brief and useful overview of the European early modern accounts of imagination see (Kind and Kung 2016, 5–14).

<sup>6</sup> Even Hume thought of imagination’s freedom as freedom to “recreate” and “recompose” ideas that are given to us in perception. For example, he thought that we can freely imagine a pink elephant, but not one that has a color which we have never perceived (Hume 2007, sec. 2.8). In the contemporary literature, many have argued that our imagination is bound by emotional and aesthetic (Szabó-Gendler and Liao 2016), as well as logical and metaphysical structural constraints (Inwagen 1998; Gregory 2004). Of course, there are dissenting voices, too: it is not obvious that these constraints really limit our imaginative capacities, or if they do, they do so reliably and in a truth-tracking fashion (Kung 2010; 2016).

*imagination*. But this latter qualification seems to impose neither psychological nor rational constraints on imagining possible states of affairs that are not true in the actual world – indeed, we seem to be free in imagining what we take to be actually false. And if that is right, then imagination does not seem to give us even subjective evidence: What we imagine seems to fly free from any constraints to represent the actual world as it happens to be. So, how could imagination be a reliable source of knowledge of actuality at all? This is at the core of the puzzle of imaginative use.

Now, I quickly outline the standard line of response to this puzzle. I will also explain how my own proposal in section 3 could advance the debate.

As the I-actualists have pointed out, although by default imagination does not have a factuality constraint, we can put a voluntary constraint on its use to make it aim at truth. Thereby, truth becomes a standard of correctness for those episodes of imagining (Langland-Hassan 2016; Kind 2016; 2018; Munro forthcoming). To use an example from Kind, suppose you were trying to decide whether a car seat would fit in the back of your car. In that case, you choose to imagine in such a way that there would be something wrong with your imagination if what you imagined did not fit the actual world in the relevant way.<sup>7</sup> In our example, we choose to imagine in such a way that if we get the comparative dimensions of objects in the actual world wrong, and we learn this, then we would classify our imagining as problematic. That introduces a rational, and perhaps even psychological limit on imagination: There is an air of a Moorean paradox in saying that “I imagine *whether* the car seat would fit in the back of the car, although it does not.” Thus, in virtue of the specific use we put imagination to, we classify some episodes of imagining as veridical or non-veridical under at least one aspect of reality, and under these conditions, we classify the non-veridical cases as problematic. By so doing, we may start treating imagination as giving us subjective evidence.

My proposed solution to the puzzle of imaginative use (in section 3) will also be an I-actualist view, though I take the view one step further. First, I accept the general idea, namely that although imagination *per se* does not aim at truth, we can put a voluntary constraint on imagination to make it aim at truth. Following Munro (forthcoming), I call this *actuality-oriented imagining*. Note that advocates of this view do not postulate a distinct faculty of imagining. Rather, they specify a set of conditions under which what one imagines becomes part of one’s subjective evidence.

But second, I add: Although actuality-oriented imagining *per se* is not a factive mental state, when it is used for *intending*, it becomes a factive state. That is, although actuality-oriented imagining *per se* can only give us subjective evidence, there is a kind of actuality-oriented imagining that gives us objective evidence. Again,

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<sup>7</sup> As Munro (forthcoming) observes, the veridicality constraint on imagination seems to be different from the veridicality constraint on perception in the following way. When, for example, I imagine whether the car seat fits in the back of the car, I may imagine the car seat as blue, yellow, or any color. Since I am interested only in the size of what is imagined, there is no veridicality constraint with respect to the color of what is imagined. With perception, however, I do not seem to have the freedom to dismiss certain aspects of the object as unrelated to the question of veridicality.

I do not identify a different faculty of imagining, either. Rather, I specify a set of conditions under which, necessarily, what one imagines is true.

The I-actualist theories (including my own) can explain the puzzle of imaginative use by noting that, on the one hand, we are justified to think of imagination as a faculty which can afford neither subjective nor objective evidence about the actual world. That is, *unconstrained* imagination is neither factive nor is truth one of its standards of correctness. On the other hand, we are mistaken, and our mistake leads to the puzzle of imaginative use, if we conclude that for all distinct kinds of imagining, to imagine  $p$  is to represent  $p$  regardless of whether  $p$  is true. For example, when I imagine *whether* the car seat fits in the back, I treat that episode of imagining as evaluable by facts about the dimension of object in the actual world.<sup>8</sup> As a result, with actuality-oriented imagining, what I imagine is a source of subjective evidence. And as I will argue when we use imagination to form intention, to imagine  $p$  is to represent  $p$  only if  $p$  is true. Under these conditions, imagination gives us objective evidence.

Thus, although it makes sense to treat unconstrained imagination as not even giving us subjective evidence, there are conditions under which imagination can be a source of subjective or objective evidence. But to make the case for imagination as a source of objective evidence, I need to first introduce the puzzle of practical knowledge.

## 1.2. The puzzle of practical knowledge

The term *practical knowledge* has a long philosophical legacy, going back at least to Aristotle.<sup>9</sup> Variations of this term continued to have a certain pride of place for many medieval philosophers from al-Fārābī and Avicenna to Aquinas.<sup>10</sup> But famously, Anscombe complained that in the modern period, we have lost track of this notion:

Can it be that there is something that modern philosophy has blankly misunderstood: namely what ancient and medieval philosophers meant by *practical knowledge*? Certainly in modern philosophy we have an incorrigibly contemplative conception of knowledge. Knowledge must be something that is judged as such by being in accordance with the facts. The facts,

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<sup>8</sup> In some cases, we imagine whether something is true-in-fiction. For example, we imagine whether a dragon would fit in the back of our car.

<sup>9</sup> From Book I of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle emphasizes that practical knowledge is unique because of its relation to action, and its involvement of particulars. The thesis that practical knowledge is different in form and autonomous from theoretical knowledge is a trademark of even contemporary Aristotelian ethics (Nussbaum 1992; 2001).

<sup>10</sup> Arguably, al-Fārābī (Black 1995, 452–56), Avicenna (Black 1995, 456–60), and Aquinas (Schwenkler 2015, 10–17; 2019, chap. 6) depart from Aristotle by holding that ultimately, practical knowledge depends on theoretical knowledge. However, they can endorse the dependency of practical to theoretical knowledge, while maintaining a difference in form between the two kinds of knowledge (c.f. Black 1995, 458).

reality, are prior, and dictate what is to be said, if it is knowledge.  
(Anscombe 2000, sec. 32)

What is elusive and puzzling about the notion of practical knowledge for modern philosophy is its supposed different form, and not the subject-matter (Anscombe 2000, sec. 33). The difficulty with accounting for the form of practical knowledge can be framed as a dilemma: Given certain assumptions about what we mean by knowledge and what we mean by a “practical” mental state, it seems as if when a mental state is knowledge, then it is not practical; and if it is practical, then it is not knowledge (Small 2012, 134).<sup>11</sup> What are the assumptions that would get us here?

On the one hand, it seems clear that knowledge is a cognitive mental state. At minimum, a mental state is cognitive when it has an “indicative” content – that is content that is truth-evaluable (Archer 2015, 176). In this sense, knowledge is in the same boat as belief or hypothesizing or even fantasizing – what I believe and hypothesize can be true or false, what I fantasize is often false, and what I know is always true. However, many philosophers seem to think if knowledge is cognitive, then it has a mind-to-world “direction of fit.” That is, its content is regarded “not as a representation of what is to be brought about, but rather as a representation of what is” (Velleman 1992, 12). It may then seem that cognitive states are always posterior to facts they aim to represent. We may think this because we think were there no facts as to whether  $p$ , then no one could know  $p$ . So, seemingly, if “practical knowledge” is knowledge, then it is truth evaluable, and its truth-value must be determined by the fact that it aims to represent – a fact that exists prior to the mental state of knowing that fact.

On the other hand, we might think that a mental state is “practical” when its constituting attitude is “conative” or has a world-to-mind direction of fit. Desires are the paradigmatic examples of conative states – that is, a mental state whose content is regarded as a representation of what is to be brought about, and not (necessarily) a representation of what is the case. Because of that, conative states do not seem to be truth evaluable. As Mark Platts puts it, “the fact that the indicative content of a desire is not realized in the world is not yet a failing in the desire, and not yet any reason to discard the desire; the world, crudely, should be changed to fit with our desires, not vice versa” (Platts 1979, 257). To be sure, there is a state of affairs that desires represent (e.g., me eating the ice-cream) – but that state of affairs is one that the mental attitude, if causally efficacious, brings about, and at least typically not one that exists prior to the mental attitude itself. And so, we might be tempted to say if practical knowledge is genuinely practical, then it is about a state that does not yet exist, and thus it is not constituted by a truth-evaluable attitude.

In short, “practical” and “knowledge” seem to pull in opposing direction: The first expresses our active relation to change the world, the latter our passive observation of it. So, how can we make sense of the juxtaposition “practical knowledge”?

Now, in the “ancient and medieval” account of practical knowledge, which Anscombe endorses, this seeming tension is stated unapologetically:

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<sup>11</sup> Small presents this as an apparent dilemma, and does not endorse it.

[...] the account given by Aquinas of the nature of practical knowledge holds: Practical knowledge is 'the cause of what it understands', unlike 'speculative' knowledge, which 'is derived from the object known'. (Anscombe 2000, sec. 48)<sup>12</sup>

Velleman speaks for many when he finds this account of practical knowledge “causally perverse” and “epistemically mysterious” (Velleman 2007, 103).<sup>13</sup> How can knowing  $p$  make it the case that  $p$ ? How can one know  $p$  if prior to forming the mental state there is no fact of the matter as to whether  $p$ ? How can knowledge of  $p$  be causally efficacious?

To be sure, it is easy to see how theoretical knowledge of  $p$  can be causally efficacious (Williamson 2000, 64). However, theoretical knowledge of  $p$  is causally efficacious only with respect to facts other than  $p$ . For example: I know there is an ice-cream in the fridge; I desire to eat it; I go and eat it. There is a sense in which both knowledge and desire can be employed to provide a causal explanation of my action: “He went to the fridge *because* he wanted an ice-cream, and he knew where to find it.” Here, the causally efficacious knowledge is theoretical because  $p$  (e.g., ice-cream being in the fridge) is not brought about by knowing  $p$ . What is brought about is a different fact than what is known. But in case of a causally efficacious practical attitude like desire, what is brought about (e.g., me eating the ice-cream) is the same thing as what is desired – so,  $p$  is brought about by desiring  $p$ . Thus, our question is more precisely this: How can knowledge of  $p$  be causally efficacious with respect to  $p$  itself? This is what I call the puzzle of practical knowledge.

In this paper, I focus on the character of the mental attitude that constitutes practical knowledge. So, my question is this: How can we characterize the mental attitude that constitutes practical knowledge in such a way that we do justice to both its cognitive character and its practical character?

Many of the contemporary philosophers that are inspired by Anscombe frame this question in terms of characterizing the nature of *intention*. On the assumption that intention is the mental attitude that constitutes practical knowledge, it is thus asked: How can we characterize intention in such a way that we do justice to both its cognitive character and its practical character?<sup>14</sup> I adopt this framework for the purposes of this essay.

Among others, Velleman (2007, 89), Setiya (2003, 371), and more recently Marušić and Schwenkler (2018, 309) try to solve this puzzle by identifying intention with a special kind of *belief*. To use the term employed by Marušić and Schwenkler, intentions are

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<sup>12</sup> Anscombe cites *Summa Theologica*, Ia IIae, Q3, art. 5, obj. 1. for reference.

<sup>13</sup> Though, eventually, Velleman is sympathetic to Anscombe’s idea.

<sup>14</sup> Of course, the non-cognitivists about intention just deny that intention has a cognitive character (e.g., see Bratman (1999)). For them, if there is a puzzle about “practical knowledge,” it does not translate into a puzzle about unifying the cognitive and practical characters of intention. Here, I put aside the non-cognitivist option. The paper thus concerns a debate within cognitivism.

“practical beliefs” – that is, beliefs about *what one is going to do* that are based on practical reasoning. Of course, one can also have a theoretical belief about what they are going to do (i.e., one could make a prediction about oneself). But on the Marušić and Schwenkler proposal, the difference lies in the grounding of that belief: the theoretical belief is formed by theoretical reasoning (i.e., reasoning about evidential relations), while the practical belief is formed by practical reasoning (i.e., reasoning about means-ends calculations). Some cognitivists emphasize Anscombe’s proposal that whereas theoretical knowledge of what one is going to do is grounded in observation, intentions are identical with knowledge of what one is going to do that is justifiable only non-observationally. For example, consider the difference between me knowing that I am drawing a face on the paper, and someone else observing what I am doing and inferring that I am drawing a face. My knowledge of this act seems to be non-observational in that I do not *need* to observe myself to know what I am doing. By contrast, the others who see me doing this, can know that I am drawing a face only by inference from observation.

What these accounts share seems to be this: Intentions are identical with beliefs that are grounded in a special way.<sup>15</sup> The fact that they are beliefs explains their cognitive character. The fact that they are grounded in a special way is supposed to explain their practical character. Since these accounts identify intentions with the cognitive attitude of belief, they are called “Strong Cognitivism.” By contrast, “Weak Cognitivists” hold that intentions include or entail beliefs but are not identical with them. Typically, weak cognitivists have a two-tier explanation: the belief component of intention explains its cognitive character, while the non-belief component explains its practical character (Paul 2009, 3; Clark 2020, 308).

In this paper, I argue for a different kind of Strong Cognitivism. My goal is to outline an view which, on the one hand, denies that intentions are beliefs or even entail beliefs. And on the other hand, it remains a “strong” form of cognitivism– that is, it holds that intentions are *identical* with a truth-evaluable attitude, namely creative imagination.

## 2. The *Akbariyya* background

The view that I am going to develop in section 3 gets its inspiration from the writings of the central figure in the history of Islamic Sufi thought, Ibn ‘Arabi.<sup>16</sup> To be sure, his full theory of imagination is multifaceted, and too complex for our purposes.<sup>17</sup> But I think there are good reasons to narrow our gaze and focus on a specific aspect

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<sup>15</sup> Though it is not obvious that for Anscombe, practically knowing *p* entails *believing p* (Small 2012, 143–46).

<sup>16</sup> Ibn ‘Arabi was revered as *al-Shaykh al-Akbar* (“the Greatest Shaykh”), and for that reason, his followers were called the *Akbariyya*. I use the phrase not in a strict sense, but similar to how philosophers use terms like Aristotelian or Kantian.

<sup>17</sup> For instance, Henry Corbin (2014) offers a book-length account of the relation between Ibn ‘Arabi’s account of imagination and his ontology.



of his theory of imagination here. I will argue that by so doing we can uncover an interesting and often neglected relationship between the notion of practical knowledge and imagining.<sup>18</sup>

Now, my reconstructive approach to Ibn ‘Arabi’s account of imagination loosely parallel Anscombe’s approach to Aquinas. As I mentioned above, in developing her view, Anscombe makes an explicit reference to Aquinas’ account of practical knowledge. However, in fact, in giving his theory of practical knowledge, Aquinas was much more concerned with offering an account of God’s knowledge of the created world than with an account of human action (Paul 2009, 2–3; Schwenkler 2019, 157). Anscombe extracted an account of our ordinary cognitive relation to our intentional actions from the Thomistic view of divine knowledge in creating the world. Likewise, I will focus on Ibn ‘Arabi’s account of God’s knowledge in creating the world in order to extract an account of ordinary human practical knowledge from it. I will briefly discuss the merits and limits of extrapolating an account of human practical knowledge from a theory of divine knowledge in section 4.

## 2.1. Knowing oneself by knowing what one does in the world

The first paragraph of the first chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ* contains a central doctrine of Ibn ‘Arabi’s theology. Commenting on the creation of Adam, he claims that God created mankind to know Himself<sup>19</sup>:

The Real, from the perspective of His Names, wanted to see the essences of His uncountable Most Beautiful Names (*‘asmā ḥusnā*), as they really operate, or if you wish, say to see His Essence, in an all-inclusive being containing all of them and qualified by existence. Through this being, His mystery will be revealed to Him. (al-‘Arabi 2015, 16 (48))<sup>20</sup>

Here, the “all-inclusive being containing all of” God’s Names is humanity. For Ibn ‘Arabi, the Names represent God’s manifest attributes, as he distinguishes them from His hidden attributes (Sells 1988, 137). On his account, each creation in the world reflects only a subset of God’s manifest attributes – but humanity reflects them all together.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> My aim here is a modest historical reconstruction of only one aspect of Ibn ‘Arabi’s epistemology of imagination. For a more comprehensive historical analysis, see William C. Chittick (1989).

<sup>19</sup> To keep things consistent with the passages from Ibn ‘Arabi, I will use capitalized masculine pronouns for God.

<sup>20</sup> I primarily rely on Abrahamov’s translation (2015), and I check it against Austin’s translation (al-‘Arabi 1980), and the original Arabic (al-‘Arabi 2001). The page numbers are from Abrahamov, supplemented with page numbers from Affifi’s Cairo 1946 edition in parenthesis.

<sup>21</sup> The thesis that humanity contains all of God’s Names (or, Essences) is a fairly familiar reading of the Quranic verses 2:30-33, where it is said that God taught Adam “the Names

For our purposes, the interesting aspect of this theological claim is this: Ibn ‘Arabi holds that God’s knowledge of His creation is a specific kind of self-knowledge. On the account that I will develop in section 3, our practical knowledge is a similar kind of self-knowledge. So, I want to reflect on the features of self-knowledge that, on the Akbaryya account, a creator can acquire through her creations.

In the sentences that immediately follows the above passage, we get a first glimpse of the character of this kind of self-knowledge that God gains by creating humanity:

For one’s self seeing is not like one’s seeing oneself in another, as it were in a mirror.<sup>22</sup> (The reason for this preference) is that the mirror reveals to the seer himself in a shape which is given by the substrate (*maḥall*) which one observes. If such a substrate does not exist and does not appear to the seer, he cannot see himself. (al-‘Arabi 2015, 16 (48-49))

Ibn ‘Arabi claims that by performing an action, namely creation, God acquires a kind of self-knowledge that otherwise would not be available to Him. Crucially, the claim is that, even God could not acquire this kind of self-knowledge had He not brought about something distinct from Himself in the world. What is being denied then is the identity of two kinds of self-knowledge. On the one hand, we have what we may call *purely reflective self-knowledge*. This is the knowledge that I may claim to have of myself in isolation from the rest of the world – maybe the Avicennian “floating man” or the Cartesian *cogito* exhibit such possibilities. Indeed, even if there are reasons to be skeptical that purely reflective self-knowledge is possible for finite minds like ours (i.e., to doubt that I can know myself without reference to any other object in the world), it looks as if God could know Himself that way. Ibn ‘Arabi is not denying this form of self-knowledge in general or for God. However, he is denying the identity of purely reflective self-knowledge with another kind of self-knowledge; we may call this latter form *external self-knowledge*. Presumably, prior to creation, God already has purely reflective self-knowledge. He knows all that there is to know about Himself in isolation from the created world. But on Ibn ‘Arabi’s account, God acquires a further form of self-knowledge via creation, one which is irreducibly distinct from what He already knew – otherwise the story about self-knowledge as the explanation of His creative act would fall flat.

As Ibn ‘Arabi puts it, for external self-knowledge to be possible, a “substrate” in the world must be realized which is distinct from the self that is the subject-matter of self-knowledge. And yet, in virtue of being produced by the subject of self-knowledge, this external substrate reflects something about the subject. His famous

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– all of them” to distinguish Adam from the other creatures. Ibn ‘Arabi also often cites a famous *ḥadīth* from the Prophet: “Whoever knows himself knows his Lord” (al-‘Arabi 2015, 37 (69)). If humans can know God by knowing themselves, it seems to follow that God’s essence is represented in humanity. Although the authority of this *ḥadīth* is disputed, it can be found in the main Sunni (*Al-Ṣiḥāḥ al-Sitta*) and Shia (*al-Uṣūl al-Arba‘a*) sources.

<sup>22</sup> Translation modified to match Austin’s rendering of the last clause (al-‘Arabi 1980, 50).

analogy of mirror makes the point more vivid.<sup>23</sup> Even if I could sense my own body without observing it (if I can know where my feet are without needing to observe them), there is another sense of seeing my own body when I look at a mirror outside myself – the mirror is a “substrate” or “location” [*maḥall*] for that which reflects me. Likewise, even if I could know myself as a floating man in void, there is a distinct form of knowing myself that I can achieve only if I get to know what I produce in the world as *my* doing.

In short, the first lesson I want to draw from the Akbariyya conception of divine knowledge of the created world is the distinction between purely reflective and external self-knowledge. Importantly, what God learns from external self-knowledge is *not* an account of what is already in His head: that is, it is not as if He observes external objects and then infers that He had this-or-that idea in His head. Again, prior to creation, God already knows all of His own ideas. Rather, with external self-knowledge, one learns something about oneself that is beyond and above the set of representations and ideas in one’s head. Thus, an underlying assumption of the Akbariyya view is this: What is there to know about oneself is not exhausted by knowing the content of what is “in one’s head.” Self-knowledge is sometimes knowledge of what one does in the world.

## 2.2. External self-knowledge by creative imagining

What kind of mental attitude constitutes external self-knowledge? To be sure, since it is a form of knowledge, the attitude in question must be cognitive (i.e., an attitude which is truth evaluable). However, as I noted earlier, cognitive attitudes are not limited to belief. Accordingly, we do not need to think that this knowledge is necessarily constituted by belief.<sup>24</sup> In what follows, I show that for Ibn ‘Arabi, *creative imagination* constitutes external self-knowledge.

Chapter six of the *Fuṣūṣ* contains a compressed account of Ibn ‘Arabi’s theory of imagination. In the first part of the chapter, Ibn ‘Arabi distinguishes between false imagination [*wahm*] and imagination proper [*khayāl*] (al-‘Arabi 2015, 55 (85)).<sup>25</sup> Though

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<sup>23</sup> Much has been written about this analogy and its different uses in the Sufi tradition. A recent book-length treatment can be found in Zargar (2017).

<sup>24</sup> Two notes are in order: **First**, I am assuming that knowledge is constituted by cognitive attitudes, but not necessarily belief. So, on my account, when I know imaginatively, it is not that I imagine *p*, then form a belief *p* on that basis which amounts to knowing *p*. Rather, I imagine *p* in such a way that it amounts to knowing *p* (and the same could be said about perceptual knowledge). **Second**, it is one thing to say that knowledge is constituted by belief, imagination, *etc.*, and another thing to say that knowledge is analyzable in terms of those attitudes. By analogy, I could hold that being a living human is a state that is constituted by having body parts, without holding that the state is analyzable by adding up those body parts.

<sup>25</sup> Though, his usage of *khayāl* and *wahm* in the rest of the text does not seem to reflect this distinction consistently.

what is more relevant to our question appears in the second part of this chapter, when he characterizes God's creation as an act of imagination. Notably, he starts by contrasting the creative aspects of ordinary imagination with the creative aspect of the imagination of a sage or the gnostic [*al-ārīf*]:

Through the power of fancy [*wahm*] every human being creates in his faculty of imagination [*khayāl*] that which has existence only in this faculty. This is the general matter. The gnostic creates through spiritual aspiration (*himma*) that which has existence outside the substrate of his spiritual aspiration [...] (al-'Arabi 2015, 57 (88))

Ibn 'Arabi starts by noting that in one sense, every act of imagination is creative. In the ordinary cases, when one imagines, an imaginary object is created in one's mind. However, this is *not* the sense of "creative imagination" that we are interested in.

Rather, as I use the term, *creative imagination* labels the kind of power that Ibn 'Arabi attributes to the imagination of the gnostic and God. Already in the above passage, Ibn 'Arabi contrasts the creative imagination of the gnostic with common imagination by saying that the *object* of the gnostic imagination is created in a "substance" in the world (and not merely in the mind). Here, crucially, he accounts for a mental activity whose final product is an extramental object in the world. The gnostic imagines (i.e. a mental activity) in such a way that its final product (i.e., the imagined object) is in the world.

By analogy, consider an artist who imagines a painting but never puts it on canvas. Here she uses a mental activity to create a mental object. But ordinarily, a painter's mental activity of imagining results in creating a representation as an extramental object in the world. To be sure, we could say that her imagination merely creates an object in the head, and then her body parts move to bring that object about. With that description, the painting on canvas is a physical object that is quite accidentally related to the painter's imagination. However, Ibn 'Arabi's account of the gnostic creative imagination seems to give us an alternative model for thinking about such creative acts. On this alternative account, even if there are mental objects that are used in the process of creative imagining, the final object of the mental act of imagination is "that which has existence outside the substrate of his spiritual aspiration." So, the created object outside the mind (in our example, the painting) is an essential part of the process of imagining, namely, it is the final created representation.

In this sense, Ibn 'Arabi's notion of creative imagining is what I call an *extramentalist* conception of imagination: it is a kind of imagining where the final product of the activity of imagining is not an image in the mind, but something in the external world. According to this extramentalist account, while representing is a mental activity, the final representation itself does not need to be mental. I can represent a bird by having a mental imagery in my head, or I can represent a bird by drawing it on a paper, or by waiving my arms. These are all representations, and they are products of my mental activity of representing – in one, I use mental images to represent, and in the others, I use a pen and paper, or my arms to represent.

Crucially, extramental representations can still be cognitive in that they can be evaluated for their veridicality and truth. For example, suppose I wanted to know how many birds are outside my window. I could imagine by constructing a mental

image of two birds, or I could imagine by drawing two birds on a paper. In either case, the representation is veridical just in case there are two birds outside my window.

In short, the attitude that constitutes Ibn ‘Arabi’s notion of external self-knowledge has an extramental character: While it is true that it is a form of cognitive representation, it is one that is realized in the world, as he puts it, in a “substrate”.

But the above example of drawing two birds on a piece of paper is somewhat misleading as an example of God’s creative imagination. That is so because in that example, what is presented extramentally can just as well be presented mentally. But recall that for Ibn ‘Arabi, God’s creative act gives him access to a form of self-knowledge that otherwise would not be available to Him. So, although my drawing of two birds on paper is an instance of extramental representation, it is not yet an instance of the Akbariyya conception of creative imagination.<sup>26</sup> So, what more is required?

As I use the term, a representation is *fully determinate* just in case for every property  $F$ , there is a fact of the matter as to whether what is represented is  $F$  or not. On the Akbariyya account, the difference between creative and non-creative imagination lies in this: Creative imagination is an extramental representation where the representation in question is necessarily fully determinate. Non-creative imagination, mental or extramental, is not fully determinate. Let me explain this.

First, it is easier to see how this view works for non-divine agents. For example, when I imagine a car seat fitting in the back of my car, the imagined object does not have an exact color shade, nor does it have an exact chemical constitution. Even when I put a factuality constraint to imagine the size of the car seat, it is likely that it will not matter whether the imagined object is 7.2222212 inches wide or 7.2222211 inches wide. But Ibn ‘Arabi’s claim is that, for what is created via creative imagination, a fully determinate representation is required. Why?

The reason is that *creative* imagination is an extramental representation where the created representation is identical with what I happen to be creating in the world. That is, via creative imagination **(i)** *what* I create is a particular extramental representation; and **(ii)** *what is represented* is that which I create. That is, an episode of creative imagination gives us an extramental representation  $r$  of a *particular* object  $x$  where  $r=x$ . But since  $x$  is an existent object, its particular properties must be fully determinate. Thus,  $r$  is fully determinate.

This explains why Ibn ‘Arabi holds that even God’s mental images are not as fully determinate as His creative imaginations. To be sure, he maintains that *qua* universal [*al-umūr al-kulliyya*] or the intelligible [*al-ma‘qūlāt*], God’s thoughts are as determinate as thoughts about universals can be (al-‘Arabi 2015, 20 (51)). But he insists that God’s thoughts *qua* universals (i.e., God’s “hidden [*bāṭin*]” thoughts) cannot “admit particularization and division” (al-‘Arabi 2015, 21 (52)). Via creative

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<sup>26</sup> Remember that the painter example was just an analogy. Here I explain the limits of that analogy.

imagination, God manifests [*tajalli*] His hidden properties, and His universal ideas becomes “qualified by existence” (al-’Arabi 2015, 16 (48)). It thus becomes a “manifest [*zāhir*]” object and acquires “concrete existence” [*wojūd ‘aynī*]. But objects as concrete existences stand in particular relations (e.g., temporal relations, spatial division, *etc.*) to other particulars (al-’Arabi 2015, 20 (51)). As a result, there is a sense in which, even for God, objects of creative imagination are more fully determinate than the intelligible (al-’Arabi 2015, 20-21 (51-53)). They are fully particularized, otherwise they could not exist.

In short, creative imagination is supposed to be different from both mere mental imagination (e.g., when I create a mental image of a bird outside my window) and other sorts of extramental representing (e.g., when I draw a bird to represent a bird outside my window) in virtue of the fact that its content is fully determinate *because* (i) what it represents is a fully determinate particular object, and (ii) it is identical with what it represents. For example, when God creates a human being, say Ali, then Ali is the final product of God’s creative imagination (i.e., he is the extramental image). So, in one sense, Ali is a representation. But *what* does Ali represent? What is the extensional object of that representation? He represents all the properties that are fully determinate by Ali *qua* an existent object. Ali thus represents Ali. But, finally, to return to the original question of this section: How is this an account of God’s *self*-knowledge?

In Ibn ‘Arabi’s view, creative imagination is God’s way of knowing something about Himself that He could not possibly know via purely reflective methods. That is so because via creative imagination He learns what His mental ideas are *qua* fully determined particulars. Thus, God’s idea of humanity *qua* a universal is not identical with his idea of Ali, because the latter is fully determinate as a particular. Hence, when God creates Ali, he represents to Himself something that He could not know otherwise. Crucially, the idea is not that God observes Ali, and then forms a further representation in His mind which amounts to his newly gained knowledge of his ideas *qua* particular. That cannot be the right account because the images “in God’s head” would not be fully determinate. So, for Ibn ‘Arabi, Ali himself is the representation that constitutes God’s knowledge of His essence *qua* particular. To generalize, the extramental representations which are identical to what they represent (i.e., the final products of God’s creative imagination) are the representation that constitutes God’s external self-knowledge.

Thus, I suggest that we think about the Akbariyya view of divine external self-knowledge in this way: There are two sets of representations that God can have. One that is, so to speak, only in God’s head. These representations cannot be fully determinate because they are not themselves existent particulars. The other set are extramental representations. These representations in virtue of being extramental are existent particulars and *qua* object are fully determinate. And in virtue of the fact that represent themselves, they are fully determinate representations. Via these, God knows His own ideas *qua* existent particulars.

I now turn to show how we can extrapolate an account of ordinary practical knowledge, from this account of divine external self-knowledge.

### 3. Creative imagining and practical knowing

#### 3.1. Three desiderata

There are at least three desiderata that any account of practical knowledge must meet:

**D1.** Practical knowledge must be accounted for as a kind of self-knowledge. It is knowledge of *what I am doing*.

**D2.** Practical knowledge must be accounted for as having a practical character (i.e., it is knowledge that is causally efficacious with respect to what is known).

**D3.** Practical knowledge must be accounted for as being constituted by a cognitive attitude (i.e. a representation of what is the case in the world in a truth-evaluable way).

I have already argued for D2 and D3 in section 1.2. The point about D1 was quickly mentioned in the same section, but I should unpack it a little more. Reconsider this case:

**Circle:** You see me picking up a sheet of paper. I draw a circle. You think “he is drawing a car.” But I add a few more lines and you realize: “ah, he is drawing a face.”

Let’s suppose that Circle contains a description of an intentional action by me. Arguably, and I will assume this for the sake of this paper: I can intentionally draw a face only if I know that I am drawing a face.<sup>27</sup> Call this the *PKI* assumption. Granted the PKI, what is the character of the knowledge that is required for intentional action?

It helps to look at this via a contrast. In Circle, you come to know what I am doing by relying on observational evidence. And it seems natural to describe your attitude as coming to *believe* that I was drawing a face on the basis of that evidence. Your knowledge is, of course, theoretical because it is neither knowledge of what you are doing (contra D1), nor is it causally efficacious in the relevant sense (contra D2). But how should we characterize *my* knowledge of what I am doing?

First, in contrast to you, I do not need to rely on observation to infer what I am doing. That is, observational evidence does not ground my knowledge (Anscombe 2000, section 28). As we will see, I do not think this means that the ground of my practical knowledge is non-evidential (c.f. Small 2012; Marušić and Schwenkler 2018). Rather, on my account, the knowledge in question is quite literally self-evident, that is, what is known provides evidence for itself.

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<sup>27</sup> In section 1.2, I mentioned that this paper is written with the assumption that intention is a constitutive part of practical knowledge, and thus, intention has a “cognitive” character. Here, I am making the further assumption that intentional  $\varphi$ -ing entails having practical knowledge that one is  $\varphi$ -ing. For a classical defense of the view, see Anscombe (2000, section 6)

Second, consider the moment in time  $t_1$  when I intentionally start to draw the face. Even if at  $t_1$  you *could* know that I am about to draw a face (e.g., because you know my habits so well), I *must* know at  $t_1$  that I am drawing a face. Otherwise, given PKI,  $t_1$  would not be the moment in time where I *intentionally* start to draw the face. Of course, sometimes we change our plans. For example, suppose that at  $t_1$  I intend to draw a car, at  $t_2$  I draw a circle; but at  $t_3$  I change my mind and start turning the circle into a drawing of a face. Given PKI, the correct description of what I intentionally do is this: from  $t_1$  to  $t_2$ , I am intentionally drawing a car, and thus at  $t_1$  I must know that I am doing this – albeit this project never comes to an end.<sup>28</sup> And from  $t_3$  until I am done, I am intentionally drawing a face, and thus from  $t_3$  onwards I must know that I am drawing a face.

Third, what I know in practical knowledge is a description of what I am doing. I take the description of what I am doing to be a description of the means I adopt for an end. So, for example, what I know at  $t_1$  has the content that I will use this pen and paper to draw a face.<sup>29</sup> Thus, insofar as I intentionally act, I know what I am doing, which is to say, I know what means I am adopting for what ends. Importantly, this is different from (a) knowing in general what means are suited for what ends, (b) knowing what means someone else has adopted for what ends. Both (a) and (b) are cases of theoretical knowledge because what is known in those cases (i.e., general facts about means-end relations, and particular facts about other people’s agency) are facts that exist independently and prior to the knower’s knowledge of them.

In short then, D1 states the following: Practical knowledge is non-observational knowledge that one has of their own intentional action. That is, it is the knowledge of what means I have adopted for what end.

Now, what I called the puzzle of practical knowledge in section 1.2. points to a tension between D2 and D3. Recall: if “practical knowledge” is practical, then seemingly it cannot be cognitive, and thus it cannot be a form of knowledge; and if it is knowledge, then seemingly it cannot be causally efficacious with respect to its own object, and thus it cannot be practical. Roughly speaking, the puzzle reflects the intuition that with practical attitudes the subject “determines” the object, while with cognitive attitudes the object “determines” the subject.

But notably, in self-knowledge the subject and the object of knowledge are identical. As a result, we can see that the solution to the puzzle of practical knowledge could lie in the fact that practical knowledge is a form of self-knowledge. Thus, my task is to expound D1 in such a way that it also explains away the tension between

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<sup>28</sup> It does seem paradoxical to say that “I am drawing a face but I will not draw a face.” Yet it is perfectly fine to say that: “I was drawing a face but then I stopped and did something else.” In other words, knowledge of what I am doing can very well be a bad prediction of what I will get done. For example, when I am buying a lottery ticket to get rich, I know full well that this is what I am doing – but it is one thing to know what I am doing, and another thing to know whether what I am doing will bear fruit.

<sup>29</sup> Of course, the description of what I am doing at each time is often embedded in much more complex means-end structures. For an account of the richness of these teleological structures see (Schwenkler 2019, chap. 3)



D2 and D3. In other words, not all kinds of self-knowledge would satisfy D1 in the right way. For instance, while purely reflective self-knowledge does present a case where the subject and the object of knowledge are identical, it does not seem to represent a practical state at all. So, we need to identify a special category of self-knowledge, one which relates to acting in the world directly.

Here, I will not discuss the other ways of making sense of the notion of practical knowledge that might meet D1-D3. Rather, I outline a positive proposal, one that tries to shift our focus from belief as the core cognitive attitude of practical knowledge to imagination. Of course, I have a specific species of imagination in mind, namely, creative imagining. I will thus employ the features of creative imagining that we unpacked from Ibn 'Arabi's work above.

### 3.2. Creative imagining as intending

My main thesis is this: *practical knowledge is external self-knowledge where an agent, via creative imagination, represents what they are doing*. I argue that when creative imagination is used to represent what I am doing, then the act of representing is the cause of what I am doing. That is, when my adaptation of some means to an end is represented by creative imagining, then my adaptation of some means to an end is caused by so representing. In what follows I unpack this main thesis.

Given D1, external self-knowledge amounts to practical knowledge only if it is knowledge of 'what I am doing'. As I explained, to represent what I am doing is to represent my adoption of some means to an end. So, external self-knowledge amounts to practical knowledge only if it is knowledge of my adaptation of some means to an end.

But my adoption of some means to an end can be represented mentally or extramentally. In the case of mental representation, for example, I can form a belief that I will use the pen to draw a face. This mental representation is to be sure not identical to the action of using a pen to draw face. As a result, the representation is underdetermined with respect to my actual action as it will happen in the world. For example, the representation does not determine which one of my pens I will use; it does not determine whether I pick the pen near the tip or further up; *etc.*

This is not yet to say that purely mental representations cannot amount to practical knowledge. Knowledge of *p*, in general, does not seem to require a representation that is fully determinate. I can know that it is raining, without knowing the exact number of the rain drops outside. Rather, I want to first establish that even if we can make sense of intention as a mental representation, if we make sense of intention also as an extramental representation, then the two will not be identical. That is so because intention as a mental representation will not be fully determinate with respect to what I am doing. But I will argue that, if veridical, then intention as an extramental representation must be fully determinate with respect to what I am doing.

So, what would it be like to use an extramental representation to represent my adoption of some means to an end? At the first sight, it seems as if we use extramental representations in much the same way as we use mental representation. For example,

I could represent that I am making oatmeal by doing pantomime, by drawing myself making oatmeal, *etc.* Like the previous case, my representation will be underdetermined – it will always be the case that what I am actually doing in the world is richer than how I represent it.

However, that kind of extramental representation of what I am doing will always be false. Because when I am pantomiming, it is not the case that I am making oatmeal. Rather, I am pantomiming. That is the case because extramental representing is itself always an action in the world – it is itself the adoption of some means to an end. As a result, an extramental representation of what I am doing is true just in case what it represents is self-referential. That is, an extramental representation of what I am doing is true just in case (i) *what* I am doing is creating a particular extramental representation; and (ii) *what is represented* is that I am doing this. That is, I can extramentally represent what I am doing and be right about it if and only if what I am doing is creative imagining. Thus, as an intention, an episode of creative imagination gives us an extramental representation  $r$  of  $x$  where  $x$  is a particular instance of me adopting some means to an end, and  $r=x$ . But since  $x$  is an existent action in the world, its particular properties must be fully determinate. Thus,  $r$  must be fully determinate.

To put the same point differently, suppose that intending was a kind of extramental representing. Since intending entails knowing what one is doing (PKI), then intending must be an extramental representation that comes from creative imagining. Otherwise, intending will always be a false representation of what I am doing. To say that creative imagination can be used to intend is to say that creative imagination can be used to represent that I am extramentally representing, where my representing is identical with what I am doing. In other words, to say that creative imagination can be used to intend is to say that my intentional actions themselves *are* a kind of representing.

So, although I could have a mental representation of what I am doing, that mental representation is necessarily distinct from an extramental representation of what I am doing (if these representations are true). That is so because the extramental representation must be identical with what I am doing. Moreover, when I do something in the world, what I do is a particular act, involving manipulation of particular existent objects. Thus, when I use creative imagination to intend, I must use a fully determinate representation of what I am doing. Hence, even if there is a sense to talk about intention *qua* a mental representation, *if* we make sense of intention *qua* an extramental representation, then the two senses of intention are irreducible to one another. One is a fully determinate representation of what I am doing, and the other is not.

But how can we make sense of intending as an extramental representation? At the first sight, this sounds bizarre. It does not look as if when I intend to cook oatmeal, I intend to represent anything at all. That is right, and it is consistent with my proposal. The claim is not that I intentionally act *in order to* extramentally represent something. But rather that I intentionally act *by* extramentally representing. Or more precisely: my intentional action just is an extramental representation.

For example, suppose I intentionally pour the ingredients in the bowl in order to make oatmeal. The particular event that takes place in the world is my intentional action of pouring ingredients in the bowl to make oatmeal. Since the particular event

in the world is an intentional action, it must be caused by my intention (D2). But now, on my proposal, to intentionally to do something just is to create a veridical extramental representation of what I am doing. But the only way to extramentally represent pouring the ingredients in the bowl to make oatmeal veridically is to pour the ingredients in the bowl to make oatmeal. Doing anything else with myself would make the extramental representation false because then I would be doing something else. But if so, when I use creative imagining for intending, then my creative imagination becomes the cause of what I do. Creative imagining is the mental activity that results in the extramental representation of what I am doing; and the resultant representation is true just in case what I am doing is identical with that episode of extramental representing.

But how does this amount to *knowledge* of what I am doing? First, the created extramental representation is necessarily true. Because the representation aims to represent what I am doing; it represents that I am creating an extramental representation of adopting some means to an end; and what I am doing is creating an extramental representation of adopting some means to an end.

Second, and consequently, the extramental representation in question gives us objective evidence because creative imagining is factive. When I creatively imagine *p*, then *p* is true, because *p* represents that I am creatively imagining *p*. Since every fact favors itself, creatively imagining *p* gives us evidence that *p*. Thus, intending *to do x by means of y* via creative imagining that I am doing *x* by means of *y* gives us objective evidence that that is what I am doing. Again, that is the case because with creative imagining what is represented is identical with the representing itself. Thus, D3 is also satisfied.

In short, if we use creative imagining to represent what we are doing, then we have practical knowledge of what we are doing. That is, we have an extramental representation of what means we have adopted for what ends. And the representation that constitutes this knowledge is the cause of us adopting the means for our end. We can make sense of this by saying that we extramentally represent what we are doing *by* adopting some means to an end. As a result, when extramental imagination is used to intend, imagination becomes a source of objective evidence.

#### 4. Conclusion

In *Intention*, Anscombe introduces the discussion of practical knowledge with the aid of an example:

We can now consider ‘practical knowledge’. Imagine someone directing a project, like the erection of a building which he cannot see and does not get reports on, purely by giving orders. His imagination (evidently a superhuman one) takes the place of the perception that would ordinarily be employed by the director of such a project. He is not like a man merely considering speculatively how a thing might be done; such a man can leave many points unsettled, but this man must settle everything in *a* right order. *His* knowledge of what is done is practical knowledge. (Anscombe 2000, sec. 45)

It is striking that Anscombe's first example of practical knowledge is a case of knowing by imagining, and yet it is rare to find a sustained discussion of imagination in the rest of that book, or in the literature that ensued her seminal work. Why is that?

A good scholarly reason for ignoring the imagining part of this example is that Anscombe herself did not seem to take it seriously. But I think the other reason is that we tend to think of imagination merely in the mental sense of creating images.<sup>30</sup> But one of Anscombe's main achievements was to show that the object of intending is directly in the world, and not first in the head and just subsequently in the world (Anscombe 2000, sec. 29). For example, when I raise my arm intentionally, it is true that my intention is a mental activity, but what my intention *does* is not a mental event. I do not intend *to think* that I am moving my hand and *then* somehow execute the thought in the world. I intend to move my hand, and that is the final product of my intention.

However, I have tried to show that one species of imagination involves extramental representing in such a way that although imagining is a mental activity, the final product of these episodes of imagining is a representation in the world. Our analogy to painting was supposed to deliver this message.

The idea of extramental imagination gave us the necessary tools to make sense of an external object as a representation that is ours. But then, I followed Ibn 'Arabi's lead to see if extramental imagining can be used as the representational medium to account for a special kind of self-knowledge. In particular, I was interested to see if we can use it to account for knowledge of what I am doing in the world. My analysis suggested the following: Extramental imagining can be used to make sense of knowing what I am doing (i.e., practical knowledge) only if we identify doing what I am doing with extramental representing.

This proposal came at a cost: It required us thinking that every ordinary action that I carry out in the world is at the same time a kind of creating a representation. That might sound too demanding, especially if we think of representing as deliberate activity. Indeed, Ibn 'Arabi's original discussion of God's and the gnostic creative imagination emphasizes that creative imagining is a deliberate act.<sup>31</sup> It is for this reasons that, on his account, the gnostic engages in creative imagining only sporadically, while God is perpetually engaged in the activity of creative imagining.<sup>32</sup> He writes:

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<sup>30</sup> Kind argues that indeed all imagining must involve creating mental images (Kind 2001).

<sup>31</sup> To be sure, perceiving is a kind of representing, and it would be bizarre to think of perceiving as a deliberate act. However, the worry is that extramental representing might be different from mental representing in this respect.

<sup>32</sup> For Ibn 'Arabi, the passage from every moment of the world to the next is a moment of creation and re-creation. Since God's creation is through imagination, God's engagement with creative imagining is perpetual. He writes: "As for the people of unveiling, they believe that God reveals Himself in every breath and never repeats his self-manifestation. They (also) believe from witnessing that every self-manifestation bestows a new creation and removes a preceding creation" (al-'Arabi 2015, 92 (126)).

When the gnostic does not pay attention to the preservation of this created entity, it disappears. [...]Real is always attentive, while the servant does not escape inattentiveness to something. (al-'Arabi 2015, 57-58 (88-89))

On Ibn 'Arabi's account there is an endurance condition on creative imagining – that which is created exists only as long the imagining agent “concentrates” and deliberately “maintains” the object over time. In short, Ibn 'Arabi seems to think of creative imagining as a deliberate act.

However, I think at least part of this worry can be put aside when we note that on my proposal, (i) we do not act *in order to* extramentally represent. But rather, (ii) we extramentally represent and that *is* our acting. To be sure, the second part of this claim is shared between my proposal and Ibn 'Arabi's account of divine creative imagination. And as far as I can see, the second claim is logically independent from the first one. However, I do worry that perhaps the notion of 'extramental representation' has a grip on us only when we think about the first kind of case (e.g., we think about drawing a bird in order to extramentally represent a bird, or pantomiming in such and such way in order to extramentally represent what I was doing yesterday). So, I want to close by acknowledging that my accounts hangs on making sense of our ordinary actions as being a kind of extramental representing, where we do not act in order to represent, but our acting just is representing.

If we can make sense of that notion, then I tried to show that my proposal can account for D1 to D3. Subsequently, I can account for a use of imagination, where I imagine  $p$  only if  $p$  is true.

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