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Imagination and Affective Response

‘...the question arises what it is to imagine someone feeling something or other and how this is related to feeling that thing. [...] Strange and awkward as it is, [the question] has, I feel—and here, of course, I only echo traditional opinion—many consequences for the theory of morals, for the theory of art, let alone for the theory of the person.’ (Wollheim 1973:60)

Our question won’t quite be Wollheim’s, but it is very close. Many exercises of imagination are in some way bound up with affective states or (as I shall also call them) feelings. How, exactly, does feeling enter into imagining? Is the feeling merely imagined, along with whatever objects for it we conjure? Or is the feeling real, a genuine response on our part to a merely imaginary scene? Perhaps there are other possibilities. And perhaps imagining exhibits them all, different possibilities obtaining on different occasions.

In *L’Imaginaire* Sartre offers a wonderfully rich discussion of these matters. In answering our question, we will take him as our guide. But first let’s see why the issue mattered to him. Whatever the question’s wider significance, Sartre had quite specific reasons for investigating it.

§1 Sartre’s Stake in the Matter

One of the central ambitions of *L’Imaginaire* is to distinguish imagining from perceiving. For Sartre, even when imagining is at its most perceptual, as for instance in visualizing, it has features quite different from those perception involves. One of the key differences he identifies concerns learning. While perceiving is the paradigm state that teaches us how things are, imagining is the reverse (2004 ch.1 §III). It is uninformative through-and-through.

Despite the occasional unguarded claim to the contrary (e.g. 2004: 9), Sartre does not mean that nothing can be learned from imagining. At the very least, imaginings can teach us about our ability to imagine things. If I want to know whether I can imagine a fugue in four parts, the obvious way to find out is to try. Equally, imaginings can indicate one’s wider state of mind. Finding myself recurring to images of suffering might teach me that I’m anxious, or depressed. Such commonplaces are not, I think, Sartre’s target. Now, in cases such as these we learn one thing (that we’re capable of a certain imaginative task, or that we’re depressed) by imagining another (a fugue, disasters, etc.). In perception, in contrast, we generally learn that things are a certain way by perceiving them to be that way. Sartre might hope to use this as the contrast between imagining and perceiving: only perception teaches us that things are as it represents them to be. However, this claim too faces difficulties. Suppose I try to work out whether the sofa will fit through the door by rotating it in imagination. Could this be a way to learn whether it will go? If so, the case involves learning that the sofa will fit by imagining that it does.

Perhaps Sartre would simply deny that imagining the sofa going through the door really can tell us whether it will fit. He doesn't say much about objections like this, and seems not to feel under pressure to counter them. However that may be, I think he is best read as making a claim that evades these challenges. The examples so far have focussed on whether imagining can teach us about *the world*. Whether it can or not, a further question remains. This is whether we can ever learn *how we have imagined things as being*. It is clear that Sartre thought not. The content of our imaginings is something to which we have immediate and infallible access: 'the object of an image is never anything more than the consciousness one has of it' (2004: 10). I suggest we take Sartre's claims about imagining's incompatibility with learning as expressing this thought. Imagining leaves no room for learning what we have imagined. So read, Sartre need not deny that imagining can inform us about the world in all sorts of ways (*contra* e.g. Taylor 1981). All he need deny is that we ever learn about the world by learning what we've imagined.

One might worry that refining the claim about imagining in this way ruins the contrast with perception. If imagining can teach us about the world, but not about the world as imagined, shouldn't the contrast turn on the idea that perception teaches us about the world *as perceived* (its teaching us about the world being neither here nor there)? But, while it's clear that perception is the paradigm source of knowledge of the world, it's less than clear that it teaches us about the world as we perceive it. Indeed, we might wonder quite what to make of this last idea. This is a sensible worry to have, but I think it can be met. (See Hopkins 2006 §1.)

At this point the theme of imagining's relation to feeling enters. In perception, there are two ways in which we learn about the world. We often do so simply by using our perceptual powers, by observing. However, we can also learn by responding affectively to what we perceive. I might discover that someone is attractive by finding myself aroused in that person's presence. I might discover that some creature or substance is disgusting by responding to it with disgust. Or I might discover the aesthetic properties of a thing by taking pleasure in it. I realize, say, that the tie goes with the shirt by trying the pair on, and finding myself pleased at the result. Thus I discover through feeling that someone is sexy, a creature disgusting, or that a tie and shirt look right together. Perhaps in these cases it is not always clear that what I discover has a bearing beyond my own case. Perhaps it would be safer to say that I learn that *I find* the person sexy, or that the animal is disgusting *to me*. But even if some such reference to the feeling subject is unavoidable, there seems no reason to deny that in such cases I learn how things are. A property, or at least an aspect, of what I perceive becomes apparent through my responding to it in a certain way.

In discussing imagining, Sartre concentrates on the idea that we learn from it by observation, by adopting to it an attitude analogous to that we adopt in observing the world perceived. His central claim is that this is not possible (2004: Part I Ch.1 §III). But what of learning from affective response? Does this have its equivalent in imagination? To suppose it does is to accept that the following is possible. I might imagine someone I know presented in a certain way, find the result erotically appealing, and thereby learn that as imagined that person holds a certain attraction for me. I might imagine some substance or creature, find myself revolted at the idea, and thereby learn that the thing (as imagined) would be disgusting. Or I might imagine that tie with that shirt, or that painting with the colours altered somehow, and, on the

basis of the responses thus elicited, learn about the aesthetic properties of those imagined combinations.

There are at least some grounds for thinking that things do happen this way. We do imagine in ways that are somehow bound up with these affects, and we do seem to use such imaginings to help us anticipate the erotic, repulsive, or aesthetic properties of things. Indeed, it is tempting to think that imagining is our only way to anticipate such matters. For the properties in question—beauty, disgustingness, erotic appeal—are not obviously governed by general conditions. What features are sufficient for some sartorial combination to be beautiful, or sufficient to render a creature disgusting? (See Sibley 1959.) But if these properties are not governed by general conditions, we can hardly anticipate which things will have them by knowing whether those conditions will be met. And, if not, how do we come by this knowledge? The idea that we use our imaginations, and then respond as we would before the correlative perceptions, at least provides a clear answer.

Prima facie then, in these cases we learn in the following way that an object or scene that combines a particular set of complex features, F, will also be G (where G is a property such as *disgusting*, *erotically appealing* or *aesthetically pleasing*, a property usually identified in perception via an affective response):

- (i) We imagine something F and respond affectively to that imagined object.
- (ii) We thereby discover that *the world as imagined* is also G.
- (iii) On that basis we draw conclusions about the world: anything F is (or would be) G.

Such cases thus pose a double challenge to Sartre. The specific challenge they offer is as counter-examples to his claim about imagining and learning. We refined that claim as the idea that it is not possible to learn about the world as we have imagined it. (ii), however, suggests that is false. Even if that threat can somehow be deflected, a more general challenge remains. The broad thrust of Sartre's thinking is that imagining and perceiving are very different states, playing radically different roles in our mental economy. The current cases seem counter-examples to that too. For in them imagination stands in relation to feeling very much as perception often does. Feeling can be provoked by presenting a suitable object either in imagining or in perceiving, and in either case the result is that some feature of the presented object is revealed.

§2 Two Views of Affective Imagining

Both the general and the specific challenge turn on a certain conception of imagining's relation to feeling. Let's call the imaginings that interest us, that is imaginings that somehow involve affect, *affective imaginings*. Both challenges to Sartre turn on the idea that what is really going on in affective imagining is this:

Response to Imagining Account: we imagine a certain object or scene and are thereby caused to respond affectively to that object or scene.

Claim (i) above clearly invokes this view. Since the specific challenge to Sartre relies on (ii), and since (ii) in turn relies on (i) to explain how learning about the world as imagined occurs, the specific challenge stands or falls with the Response to Imagining

view. But so, of course, does the general challenge. Unless imaginings can cause affective responses, as perceptions do, we lose a major point of similarity between the roles imagining and perceiving play in our psychological economy.

Sartre could thus block both challenges were he able to persuade us that the Response to Imagining view is false. What are the alternatives? Although various options will emerge, the main rival has already been sketched:

Imagined Response Account: we imagine a certain object or scene and also imagine responding affectively to that object or scene.

Some of what Sartre says in discussing affective imaginings (2004 Part IV §II) suggests sympathy for this view. He certainly seems committed to rejecting its rival. Considering the view that ‘images...can have the same effect as does a direct stimulation’, he says

Like it or not, this view implies that the image is a detached bit, a piece of the real world. Only a reborn sensation—undoubtedly more feeble than a perception, but of the same nature, could provoke the real and perceptible movement that is pupillary dilation. For us, who have distinguished from the outset between the real imagining consciousness and the unreal object, it is impossible to admit a causal relation that would go from object to consciousness. (2004: 136)

Sartre here concentrates on the image’s putative *bodily* effects, in particular dilation of the pupils. This is a partially distinct theme, to which we will return in a moment. Nonetheless, it seems clear that his objections to the thing imagined (the ‘unreal object’) having effects on the body ought to count equally against its having affective consequences. What does Sartre propose to put in their place? At least some of his discussion suggests the Imagined Response view. He claims, for instance, that in affective imagining ‘[m]y feeling...is wholly activity...it is played [*joué*] rather than felt’; and compares the situation to that of the psychasthenic suffering from algia, or imagined pain: ‘The distress is indeed there, no doubt, but *before* him, in an image, inactive, passive, unreal...’ (2004: 143 – translation altered).

Thus, although the exegetical situation will turn out to be complex, there are some grounds for treating Sartre as adopting the Imagined Response account. But how plausible is that account? It faces at least three serious objections.

First, as Sartre has just implicitly conceded, imagining can involve genuine *bodily* changes. Imagining the erotic can lead to erection, imagining the disgusting to retching, imagining the fearful to sickness in the pit of the stomach, and so forth. These physiological changes are certainly not imaginary. Moreover, they are precisely the changes that generally accompany the affect appropriate to the imagined object or scene—arousal, disgust, fear and so on. The Response to Imagining view can easily accommodate these observations: since the affect is really brought about, so are its typical physiological elements or accompaniments. The Imagined Response view, in contrast, seems embarrassed by them. Why do the appropriate bodily changes really occur, if the relevant affect is merely imagined?

Second, what is it to imagine a feeling? Some deny that there is any such state of mind. Imagining affects simply *is* imagining objects or scenes and then really responding to them with some feeling. If this is right, the Imagined Response view is either false or a mere gloss on its rival.

Third, as we've been reading Sartre, he is motivated to adopt the Imagined Response view as a way to defend the refined claim about imagining and learning. The view is supposed to help him maintain that we never learn about the world as imagined, while conceding that imagining can teach us about the world. But can he really walk this tightrope? How can imagining teach us about the world without teaching us about the world as we've imagined it? The Response to Imagining view is part of a story about how it is possible to use imagination to learn about the world, the story told in (i) to (iii). What can the Imagined Response view put in its place?

In much of the remainder (§§3-5), I discuss each of these objections in turn. I attempt to find the resources to deal with them. Often those resources come from Sartre's own discussion of affective imagining, but I do not limit myself to those materials. Nor, indeed, do I restrict myself to the Imagined Response account—other alternatives to Response to Imagining will emerge. §6 discusses how far all these materials can be found in Sartre, and thus how far he had available to him the resources for resisting the Response to Imagining view. Of course, it is one thing to make space for alternatives to a view, quite another to show that they are to be preferred to it. In the final section (§7), I briefly review those of Sartre's claims that might be used to argue against the Response to Imagining account, and sketch how they might be developed.

§3 The Role of the Body in Affective Imagining

Let's begin with the issue of bodily changes. Sartre notes a range of such changes that imagining has been thought to provoke: dilation of the pupils when imagining darkness; eyes watering when visualizing the sun; discomfort and even retching brought about by picturing something disgusting; and erection in reaction to erotic imaginings (2004: 137). Like Sartre, while we might doubt some of these cases, we can hardly dispute them all. At least sometimes, imagining certain things involves a genuine bodily event. Naturally, this is not enough to prove the Response to Imagining view. Such physiological changes are elements in, or accompaniments of, affects such as disgust or arousal, not guarantees of their presence. Vomiting may occur without disgust, as in illness; and erection may occur without arousal. These phenomena do, however, pose a question for the view's rivals, and for the Imagined Response account in particular. Why do these real physiological changes occur if the corresponding affects are merely imagined?

One reply to this challenge draws on materials central to Sartre's account of imagining in general. Sartre holds that imagining involves an 'analogon'. This is a real physiological or psychological element that is a constituent of the imaginative state. The imagining subject is in some sense aware of this element, though not in such a way that its true nature is revealed to him. The subject uses the analogon to make present to himself that which is absent, the imagined object or scene. The case is similar to that of looking at a picture of something. Just as we are aware of the painted canvas or drawn lines, and use them to bring before us the depicted object, we use the analogon in a parallel way in visualizing or imagining sounds. In fact, Sartre

thinks these two sorts of case not merely similar, but fundamentally the same: they are both instances of imagining. They differ in two ways. First, whereas we are sometimes aware of the nature of the marks composing the picture, we can never be introspectively aware of the real nature of the physiological or psychological elements that provide the analogon for pure imagining. And second, while the picture is able to act as analogon only because it bears a certain resemblance to the thing depicted, the constraints on the analogon in pure imagining are far looser (2004: Part I, ch.2; Part II).

What plays the role of analogon in pure imagining? *Inter alia*, Sartre speculates, bodily sensations and movements:

..the image is not a simple content of consciousness among others, but...a *psychic form*. As a result, the whole body collaborates in the constitution of the image....It is not because the irreal object appears close to me that my eyes are going to converge; but it is the convergence of my eyes that mimes the proximity of the object. (2004: 137)

This view can be naturally extended to accommodate the physiological phenomena that currently concern us. Those phenomena (retching, erection, butterflies in the stomach) typically occur as elements in, or accompaniments to, certain affective states (disgust, arousal, fear). As noted, however, they can occur independently. The proposal is that one occasion on which we have one without the other is when these physiological changes serve as analogons for certain affective imaginings. The butterflies in my stomach are not part of a fear really felt in response to imagining some frightening situation. Rather, they are the means by which I imagine fear in response to it. Real bodily change is thus accommodated as a constituent of the imaginative state (2004: 137), and affect's role is limited to that which is imagined.

Appeal to the analogon offers the Imagined Response view an interesting and potentially powerful reply to the challenge posed by bodily changes. However, that response is only as plausible as the doctrine of the analogon itself. Like many others, I consider that doctrine to be in some respects highly problematic (Hopkins 1998 ch.7 §2). This is not the place to review those difficulties. Suffice to say that they make it worthwhile considering whether there are alternative ways in which actual bodily changes might be accommodated. Not all of the moves we are about to consider will serve the needs of the Imagined Response account. All, however, offer a way to avoid the Response to Imagining view.

Sartre himself offers a quite different way to explain the presence of bodily changes in affective imagining. One repeated theme in his discussion is the idea that often the relevant affect *precedes* our imagining a suitable object for it:

‘Desire and disgust exist at first in a diffuse state, without precise intentionality. In being organized with a piece of knowledge into an imagining form, the desire is made precise and is concentrated. Enlightened by the knowledge, it projects its object outside itself. But it must be understood by this that it becomes conscious of itself.’ (2004: 139).

We are in the grip of some affect, though not really aware of it. The feeling expresses itself in our imagining something appropriate to it. We thereby become aware of what it is we are feeling. And, in consequence, the affect only then comes to find its natural physical expression—say, in vomiting (2004: 140).

Here Sartre effectively introduces a third account of imagining's relation to feeling:

Imagining as effect: We are in the grip of an affect, which causes us to imagine an appropriate object or scene (and thereby learn what we feel).

Unlike the Imagined Response view, this position concedes that we really do undergo certain feelings in affective imaginings. It can thus explain the bodily phenomena in the most straightforward way, as constituents or accompaniments of those feelings. Unlike the Response to Imagining view, however, it denies that these feelings are effects of our imagining. Rather, the causal relations go the other way round. There is thus no danger that imagining and perception stand in similar relations to feeling—feelings may colour our perceptions, but they hardly bring them into being. And there is no danger that we learn about the world as we've imagined it by feeling something in response. (Sartre accepts that imagining here leads to learning, but what I learn is *what I feel*, not how I have imagined things to be.)

This Crocean line has its attractions. Certainly we do often imagine in ways that reflect how we already feel (think of the imaginings that are naturally prompted by a heightened state of arousal, or those prompted by anger at some slight one has suffered). And these imaginings can educate us about our own feelings. However, plausible as it is for some cases, the Imagining as Effect view is not plausible for all. For why think that every case of affective imagining is one in which we already feel the affect, before imagining anything at all? Consider, for instance, the case of imagining the shirt with the tie. There seems no reason to suppose that if I do this and conclude that the two go well together, I must *already* have been experiencing aesthetic pleasure. At least some cases will, it seems, require other treatment.

I close this section by noting one more way in which bodily changes might be accommodated. In one of his discussions of affective imagining, Wollheim suggests that it often exhibits the following structure:

Wollheim's View: we imagine a certain object or scene, imagine responding affectively to that object or scene in some way, and as a result are caused really to feel that way (1984: 79-83).

Thus feeling a certain way is a response to imagining some appropriate object or scene. (Wollheim's example (1984: 82) involves an erotic encounter as the situation and arousal as the affect). It is not, however that the imagined scene brings about the feeling. Rather, the feeling is provoked by one's imagining feeling it. Wollheim thus construes these affective imaginings much as the Imagined Response account does. He adds the idea that nonetheless real affects might result from such activities. He is thus able to explain why real bodily responses are involved: they arrive with the feelings they usually accompany.

Wollheim was not sympathetic to Sartre's claims about imagining and learning (1984: 83-4). Some of his examples of imaginative projects might be taken to put pressure on those claims even in their refined form (1984: 87-8). Nonetheless, adopting Wollheim's View would allow Sartre to avoid the double challenge above. If imagining operates as Wollheim suggests, it differs from perception, since in the latter case the feeling is provoked directly by the presentation of the object or scene. So the general challenge is met. And, since imagining objects and scenes doesn't directly evoke feeling, stage (i) in the story above (§2) also goes missing. So the specific challenge also falls away. Thus, at least for those affective imaginings for which Wollheim's view is plausible, Sartre's claims about learning can be preserved.

§4 What is Imagining an Affect?

The last section explored various ways of accommodating real bodily changes without conceding that we actually respond affectively to what we have imagined. Not all of those suggestions are compatible with the Imagined Response view, but some are—in particular appeal to the analogon and Wollheim's View. Thus at least something can be said to defend the Imagined Response account from the first objection. I now turn to the second objection: that there is, really, no such thing as imagining a feeling.

This can strike one as bizarre: why would feelings not be the sorts of thing that can be imagined, given all the other things that can be? Nonetheless, I have met folk who expressed puzzlement at the idea of imagining a feeling. Moreover, there has been at least one attempt to articulate that perplexity and to defend it—Currie and Ravenscroft's *Recreative Minds* (2002: ch.9 §2).

Currie and Ravenscroft claim that some mental states are 'their own counterparts' in imagining. By this they mean that the only sense in which one can imagine being in such a state is to imagine some suitable object for it and for that state really to occur in response. Amusement plays this role, they say. To imagine finding some situation amusing is to imagine the situation and really to feel amusement in response. And the same, they speculate, is true of affective states more generally. (They mention disgust, anger and 'other paradigmatically emotional states' (2002: 190).) In this respect, affective states contrast with other states we can imagine, such as perceptions and pains. In imagining seeing something or feeling toothache, I do not do so by really seeing anything or by really feeling some pain. Perceptual and pain states are thus imagined by means of genuine counterparts: states of imagining that are distinct from the states thereby imagined.

Are Currie and Ravenscroft right that affective states are their own counterparts in imagining, or do they too have genuine counterparts, as pains and perceptual states do? If the Own Counterpart view is to be plausible, we need to get clear about exactly what it claims. Of course there is some sense in which I can imagine feelings without really feeling anything. I can imagine *that* that I'm angry, without having to engage any real desire or anger on my part. Currie and Ravenscroft don't deny that. Their point is restricted to experiential imagining, imagining that has a rich phenomenology, and that takes something other than mere propositions as its contents—visualizing is the prime example. Nor is it an objection to point out that I can (say) visualize myself being angry, without having really to feel any emotion or desire. The claim intended is restricted to experiential imagining of a given state *from the inside*: imagining that

captures the perspective of someone in that state, and captures some of its phenomenology (On imagining from the inside, see Peacocke 1985 and Wollheim 1984: 72-4.) It is when we restrict ourselves to this understanding of the task, proponents of the Own Counterpart view will say, that we realize that there is nothing more to imagining a given affective state than really feeling it in response to imagining some suitable object.

However, once the position has been clarified, the question remains why we should believe it. As Currie and Ravenscroft concede, many other kinds of mental state do have genuine counterparts in imagining. Why think that perceptual states and bodily sensations are imagined via putting oneself in other states, and yet insist that affective imagining can only operate by really bringing oneself to feel the relevant affect?

Currie and Ravenscroft might first seek an answer in the claim that the phenomenology of affective states can only be fully captured by really putting ourselves in them. However, even if true, how is that relevant? In general it is not required of an activity, for it to count as imagining some mental state from the inside, that it capture its phenomenology *perfectly*. Consider imagining bodily sensations. For some of them, imagining often merely approximates their phenomenology. My imagining seasickness, for instance, captures some of what it's like, but no doubt not all. Yet I have imagined it, from the inside, for all that.

A second unsuccessful answer claims that the Own Counterpart view explains something important about affective imaginings, that they necessarily involve imagining objects for the relevant affects. This last is true, at least for a fair range of affective states. It is also something the Own Counterpart view can explain. In general, these affective states can't really occur without an object—I can't, for instance feel fear or aesthetic pleasure without being afraid of, or taking pleasure in, *something*. According to the Own Counterpart view, imagining these affects involves their occurrence. Hence there has to be an object for them—an object imagining provides. The problem, however, is that we don't need the Own Counterpart view to explain this. Compare perceptual states. These too cannot be imagined (experientially and from the inside) without imagining objects for them. I cannot (in this way) imagine seeing, without imagining seeing something or other. What explains this? Not that the states imagined are their own counterparts in imagining, since that's not true. Rather, the whole explanation lies in the fact that perceptual states necessarily take (intentional) objects. But if that is the whole explanation here, it can be the whole explanation in the case of affective imaginings. We can explain why they necessarily involve objects without supposing that they act as their own counterparts.

A third and final response merits taking more seriously. In affective imagining, not only must there be some object for the affect to be directed at—that object must also be *suitable to* the affect. I cannot imagine from the inside fear, or disgust, or pleasure directed at just *anything*. What I imagine must, it seems, be suitably fearsome, disgusting, or pleasing. If affects are their own counterparts in imagining, this is readily comprehensible. To imagine a given affective state we must induce it in ourselves by imagining something else. Clearly, unless what we imagine is of a nature to induce that state, we won't succeed. If, in contrast, imagining affective states involves other, purely imaginative states as their counterparts, we might expect to be able to imagine any affective state directed at any object or scene. Why shouldn't a

given genuine counterpart (imagined fear, say) go with just any imagined object? Here, then, there is something for those who reject the Own Counterpart view to explain. Now, this objection to the idea of affective imagining as a distinct state is very close to the third objection to the Imagined Response view. *En route* to addressing both, let's start with the latter.

§5 Constraints on Affective Imagining

We turned to the Imagined Response view as a way to allow Sartre to concede that affective imagining can teach us about the world without abandoning his claim that it cannot teach us about the world as imagined. The last of the three objections to Imagined Response above (§2) was that it is unclear how it allows us to meet the first of these ambitions. How exactly can imagining an affective response to some imagined object or scene teach me anything about the world? Can't I imagine whatever response I like to the situation I've imagined? Imagination in general is, after all, free to roam wherever I desire. I can imagine pretty much any object or scene I choose. And I can imagine being in pretty much any mental state with which I'm familiar. Why, then, can't I combine pretty much any imagined situation with pretty much any imagined affective state? But if I have that much freedom over the combinations I can imagine, how can imagining any one of them tell me anything about how things really are? I imagine the shirt and tie, and imagine taking pleasure in the result. But, given that I might, it seems, just as easily have imagined hating the combination, how does the fact that I happened to imagine finding it pleasurable show anything about whether the two really go together?

The underlying demand here is for affective imagining to be constrained in some way. Only activities and processes that are subject to constraint can be possible sources of knowledge. More particularly, their outcomes need to be constrained by the nature of whatever one hopes to use them to investigate. The problem for the Imagined Response view is that, on its construal, affective imagining seems to operate free of almost any constraints at all.

Contrast in this respect the Response to Imagining account. It takes affective imagining to involve the real occurrence of some affective state, brought about as a response to what is imagined. Not just any imagined object or scene will elicit that particular response. Affective imagining is thus constrained by whatever mechanism generates our feelings of disgust, anger, pleasure and so on in response to imaginings. But very likely that mechanism is the same as that governing the formation of affective states in response to perception. What shocks when seen, shocks when imagined; what pleases in the one case, pleases in the other, and so on. So affective imagining is not merely *somehow* constrained, but constrained by the very facts we use it hoping to discover: facts about what really (i.e. when seen) disgusts, frightens, pleases and arouses us. Hence there is no mystery, on this view, how affective imaginings can indeed inform us about these aspects of the world. The Response to Imagining view prospers precisely where its rival struggles.

To tackle this objection, we need to find some constraints on affective imagining, as the Imagined Response view conceives it. To uncover them, let's begin with some thoughts about the nature of affective states.

As noted above (§4), the affective states that are our concern (disgust, fear, pleasure, arousal and so forth) all take an object, some item at which they are directed. But more than this, they all involve that object being *presented in a certain way*. To feel erotic attraction for someone is for them to be presented to me in a certain light, i.e. as desirable. To feel disgust at some creature is for it to be presented under a certain aspect, as disgusting. To take aesthetic pleasure in something is for it to be presented as pleasurable. To fear it is for it to be presented as fearsome. Of course, these descriptions of how the objects are presented are not always very informative. The thought, however, is that, whether or not it is easy to say anything interesting about the way things are presented, there is such a way. Contrast bodily sensations, such as pain. These are experienced as mere accompaniments of the events and things that cause them. The nettle causes the stinging pain, but looks and feels no different in virtue of doing so. Affective states aren't like this. As well as having causes, they are directed at objects, objects they present to us in ways reflecting the feelings thus caused. More, the way the object appears and the feeling it provokes are inseparable.

Now let's return to affective imagining. Above (§4) we also saw that our interest is in *experiential* imagining (as opposed to merely imagining that something is the case), *from the inside* (as opposed, say, to visualizing oneself in the grip of some feeling). Now, if imagining a response were a matter of imagining that something is the case, or of experiential imagining from the outside, the inseparability of feeling from the way its object is presented would not matter. I can imagine that I am disgusted whatever I have imagined in other ways; and can visualize myself wrinkling my nose, etc., whatever else I have visualized. But if the relevant imagining is experiential, and from the inside, inseparability places a significant constraint on what response I can imagine having to what imagined object. The object must be imagined appropriately for the response to be imaginable. Not only can I not imagine disgust without imagining something to find disgusting; I cannot imagine finding just anything disgusting. The thing must be imagined as having an appropriate nature—or at least be presented in the right light.

Here, then, is the constraint on affective imagining the Imagined Response view needs. Note that it not only promises to solve the third objection to that view. It also allows us to tackle the only serious argument in favour of the Own Counterpart account. That argument also turned on the claim that, if imagining an affect were different from really feeling it in response to imagining some object or scene, any affect could be imagined with any object or scene. The considerations just given show that conditional to be false. Even though we merely imagine affects as directed at imagined objects, the nature of the objects we imagine constrains the range of affects we can imagine directed at them.

§6 Matters Exegetical

What of Sartre? How many of the ideas developed in the preceding as ways of defending him from the double challenge of §1 does he accept?

Sartre certainly recognized the challenge. When articulating his key claim that there is nothing more to the object as we imagine it than we ourselves are aware of (2004: 10) he closes the paragraph with a footnote acknowledging that one sort of apparent counter-example is provided by cases in which 'the image comprises a kind of

emotional teaching [*enseignement affectif*]. He promises that such cases will be considered later, and in the passages that do most to fulfil that promise (132-48) he does make some of the moves we have considered. It seems clear that he rejects the idea that affective states are always their own counterparts in imagining, when discussing the psychasthenic and the idea that more generally affects might be merely 'played' (143). (Interestingly, in a nearby footnote (142: n.10) he perhaps indicates that he himself had previously doubted whether imagining a feeling really differs from feeling it while imagining something else.) And in discussing the case of apparent aesthetic learning in imagining, he makes quite clear that he rejects at least some of the claims proponents of the Response to Imagining view are likely to make: 'what one can never see as imaged is *the effect* of a top hat *on* Pierre's face' (134). (The same presumably would apply to the tie and the shirt.)

However, there are also grounds for doubting whether Sartre would accept the thoughts we've offered him. Most significantly, at one point he is at pains to point out that he is not denying (at least for the cases then under discussion) that the feelings involved in imagining are themselves real:

Thus, from the very fact of the extraordinary difference that separates the object as imaged from the real, two irreducible classes of feeling can be distinguished: genuine feelings and *imaginary* feelings. By this last adjective we do not mean that they are themselves unreal, but that they never appear except in the face of unreal objects, and that the appearance of the real is enough to make them flee at once. (145)

In these cases, then, the feelings we have when imagining are genuine. They are not 'unreal', that is, not merely imagined. They do differ from the feelings we have before real things, in perception. The fact that a feeling is directed towards a person imagined, rather than perceived, affects its development, the demands it makes and its role in our wider mental economy. The passage continues:

These feelings whose essence is to be *degraded*, poor, jerky, spasmodic, schematic, need non-being in order to exist. Someone will hound his enemy in thought, make him suffer morally and physically; but will be defenceless when really in his presence. What has happened? Nothing, except that the enemy now really exists. Until now the feeling alone gave the meaning of the image. The unreal was only there to allow the hatred to objectify itself. Now what is present overflows the feeling completely and hatred is in suspense, derailed.... If I strike my enemy in image, blood will not flow, or will flow only as much as I would want it to. But before the real enemy, before this real flesh I anticipate that real blood will flow and that alone suffices to stop me. (145-6: translation altered)

Thus the development of my feeling when directed at my enemy as I imagine him takes a quite different course from that when he is really before me. But the feeling itself is just as real in either case.

Of course, if Sartre is right about the different economies of feeling operating in the face of the imagined and the real, learning about the world from affective imagining will be less common than we have so far assumed. However, this hardly banishes the

challenges to his position. Remember the three stage account of how, according to those who hold Response to Imagining view, such learning is possible:

- (i) We imagine something F and respond affectively to that imagined object.
- (ii) We thereby discover that *the world as imagined* is also G.
- (iii) On that basis we draw conclusions about the world: anything F is (or would be) G.

The point about different economies merely suggests that the conclusions drawn in (iii) will be false. That does nothing to dispense with the specific challenge, which turned on stage (ii). And nor does it help very much with the general challenge. Even if imagined scenes provoke different emotions from perceived ones, imagining and perception remain alike in one substantial respect: both provoke affective responses.

Thus Sartre concedes that sometimes we feel real affects when imagining, and any differences he describes between those cases and affective perceptions are insufficient to block the challenge with which we began. What, then, can Sartre do to meet that challenge? There are options open to him. He can concede real affects in imagining, but deny that that the imagining causes the affect (Imagining as Effect). He can allow that affects are caused by imagining, but insist that what does the causal work is not imagining the object, but imagining the affect itself (Wollheim's View). And, of course, in other cases he can deny that the affects are real: he may not adopt the Imagined Response view for all cases, but he certainly seems open to it for some. Anyone attempting to defend Sartre's account of imagining from the threat posed by its affective forms must hope that these three strategies together mop up all the cases.

§7 Why Resist Responses to Imagining?

One attractive feature of the Sartrean approach to affective imagining, as we have now reconstructed it, is that it treats the phenomenon as heterogeneous: different cases require different treatment. But why on earth, one might wonder, wouldn't at least some cases require treating as the Response to Imagining view proposes? Why would one deny that sometimes we imagine something and (without the mediation of imagined feeling) feel some or other affect in response? We've been working to make space for other positions, with a fair degree of success. But why, other than a desire to defend Sartre's claims about learning in imagination, reject completely the Response to Imagining view?

Sartre's own antipathy to the view seems driven by the thought that imagined objects are incapable of standing in causal relations. Remember his refusal (§2 above) to accept 'a causal relation going from the object to the consciousness'. We, however, are unlikely to find this consideration persuasive. Of course, what doesn't exist can't bring about anything. But distinguishing, as Sartre does, the state of imagining from the object imagined reveals the limited force of that objection. The imagined object may not be able to act as cause, but the imagining can. Now, any causal relation here needs to reflect the nature of the imagined object: the idea is that we are (e.g.) disgusted *because we imagine something disgusting*. But we can accommodate that without attributing a causal role to what does not exist. For what effects the imagining has is shaped by its properties, and in particular by its content—by its presenting us with some specific object or scene (in this case, a disgusting one). (At least, this is no

more problematic than the idea that quite generally the content of mental states can be causally efficacious.) The possibility that imaginings, in virtue of their content, cause us to feel certain things is surely quite enough for the Response to Imagining view. Sartre's strictures on a causal role for the 'irreal object', however reasonable, thus seem irrelevant.

(Perhaps Sartre here anticipates, at least in part, the more sweeping views of *Being and Nothingness* about consciousness and causation. There he sees consciousness as lying completely outside the causal order that governs the inanimate world of being-in-itself. Perhaps appeal to that broader position might do something to support his antipathy to the causal role of imaginings. Even if so, it would be helpful to be able to counter the Response to Imagining view without appeal to such heavyweight, and controversial, theoretical machinery.)

The sceptic about imagining's ability directly to cause affect would do better, I think, to concentrate on the unavailability, not of suitable causes for those states, but of suitable contents or intentional objects for them. As I've stressed, the affects we are supposedly brought to feel must be directed at something: disgust at some repellent object, pleasure in some pleasing configuration, and so forth. Can imagined objects really play this role? The worry that they can't might take two forms.

First, perhaps affective states require us to take the world to be a certain way. One feels fear, for instance, only if one believes oneself in danger; anger only if one believes oneself wronged; pity only if one believes that someone suffers, and so forth. Perceptual states can induce affects precisely because they claim to show us how things are, and thereby exert control over our beliefs. Seeing that I'm on the icy precipice, I believe that I'm in danger, and thus can feel fear. Imaginative states are fundamentally different in this respect. Picturing myself on the edge of a precipice precisely does not claim to tell me how things are. As Sartre puts it, while perception 'posits as existing', imagining 'posits as nothingness'—it presents me with objects and scenes while clearly not claiming that this is how the world really is (2004: Part I Ch.1 §IV). Visualizing that scene does nothing, therefore, to persuade me that I am in danger, and so cannot induce fear. (Some (e.g. Walton 1976) use similar considerations to argue against our responding to fiction with genuine emotions. Their debate with their opponents bears close parallels to that opening up here.)

There is much that is attractive in this line of thought. Nonetheless, I doubt that it moves the debate forward. One difficulty is that for at least some affective states, it is unclear what the content of the requisite belief might be. Fear arguably requires taking oneself to be threatened, but what of aesthetic pleasure? What belief does it presuppose? A more serious problem is that, even in cases where there is little dispute about what the relevant belief would be, it is controversial whether having that belief really is necessary for having the feeling. Indeed, those who doubt this will precisely take cases such as imagining myself on the precipice as proof that it is not. Thus anyone who holds the Response to Imagining view is likely already to reject the idea that affect involves taking the world to be a certain way. Appeal to that idea might help sceptics about such responses to flesh out their position, but it is unlikely to do anything to persuade their opponents.

The other form of the worry that imagining cannot provide suitable objects for our affective states is perhaps more promising. It turns on the various undeniable differences between the objects with which perception presents us and those objects as presented in imagination, differences that form a central theme of *L'Imaginaire*. Perception presents us with objects that have stable natures independent of our access to them and that outstrip that access at every point. Imagining, in contrast, presents us with objects the natures of which shift as our imaginings do, and to which there is nothing more than we have at any given moment conjured into being. (Of course, the letter of that last claim is part of what we've been debating here. But no one would doubt that it is *broadly* true: if there is ever more to what I've imagined than I currently grasp, the extra is limited and marginal, as the unperceived features of perceived objects generally are not.) As Sartre notes, the stability and independence of perceived objects is essential to the development of our affective responses, and determines the nature of those states (2004: 139). The very different structural features of objects as presented in imagining dictate a very different life story, and nature, for our responses to them (140). On that basis we might draw the interesting but relatively modest conclusion above (§6), that feelings before the imaginary, while just as real as those before the perceived, nonetheless exhibit a quite different economy. But might we not also use these contrasts to infer something stronger: that feelings before the imaginary don't count as instances of those affective states at all? The idea would be that all these states—disgust, aesthetic pleasure, arousal, fear and the other emotions—can only form in response to a world given as independent of them, as stable in the face of their development, and as at every point bearing determinate features that those affective responses have not shaped and have yet to reckon with. If so, then, affective imaginings cannot involve forming genuine affective states in response to imagined objects and scenes. The latter lack the sort of presence that the former require of the world at which they are directed.

This is only the sketch of a line of thought. I offer it tentatively, as the most promising way to try to argue that no cases of affective imagining are correctly described by the Response to Imagining view. I have, of course, offered various alternative accounts of what affective imagining might involve. I hope to have done something to argue that they correctly describe some instances of affective imagining. I do not pretend to have argued that those alternatives cover all the cases. To that extent, my defence of Sartre against the challenge with which we began remains incomplete.

Robert Hopkins
University of Sheffield

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