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Imagination, Expectation, and "Thoughts Entangled in Metaphors"

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1. Introduction

The Reverend Casaubon, in *Middlemarch*, is an unsympathetic character. Nevertheless, Eliot asks us to sympathize, even as she describes some of what makes him unlikeable. One claim she makes on our sympathy is that Casaubon has made a certain kind of mistake, one to which we are all, apparently, susceptible:

> Poor Mr. Casaubon had imagined that his long studious bachelorhood had stored up for him a compound interest of enjoyment, and that large drafts on his affections would not fail to be honored; for we all of us, grave or light, get our thoughts entangled in metaphors, and act fatally on the strength of them.(79)

Casaubon, then, has some misguided notions about his future happiness because he somehow expects it to be greater in proportion to the unhappiness of his earlier life, and Eliot's diagnosis is that an entanglement with metaphor is the source of the problem.

There are many ways in which thinking can go awry—is getting "entangled in metaphors" one of them? Insofar as philosophers are interested in how we think well or badly, this kind of irrationality has not been detailed, nor is it clear how it would fit into our schemas for describing thought, action, or indeed metaphor. It does not really resemble, for example, commonly discussed types of irrationality, such as delusion, cognitive bias, or self-deception. Yet Eliot's description does seem genuinely to illuminate something about the way we think and act at least some of the time, especially when we make mistakes about complex or unfamiliar domains such as diseases, our bodies, the economy, relationships, and so on. Is there, then, a distinctive kind of mistake that we can make, which Eliot is picking out, and which philosophers tend to miss? I think there is, and that

we have. In particular, I think that both an important function of the imagination, as well as a pervasive way in which metaphor can affect it, have gone largely neglected, and looking at Eliot's example in detail helps illuminate both.

It is possible, of course, that this notion of getting one's thoughts "entangled in metaphors" is itself just a metaphor, striking and illuminating in some sense perhaps, but not truly explanatory. It is easy to suggest that some people act *as if* they believed that enjoyment were like money, but it is not obvious how we might defend the stronger claim, that an involvement with metaphor could be the actual source of the mistake. Traditionally, indeed, metaphors are treated as speech acts in which what is said is somehow quite distinct from what the speaker actually believes, or wants the hearer to believe.[1] Other work, especially more recently, has investigated them as important cognitive and communicative tools, alongside scientific models and useful fictions, but still of a sophisticated and on the whole helpful sort, rather than as a potential hidden source of everyday confusion.[2]

A thought similar to Eliot's, however, is voiced by Iris Murdoch (1993), who connects metaphor to morality by way of the faculty of imagination:[3]

> Discussion of the place of imagination and metaphor in our lives is not just about figurative writing or clarified metaphorical speech or explicit virtually verbal thought, but (also) about what our private unclarified but often very strong and present thinking and experiencing is like.(328)

This connection between imagination and metaphor is at the root, she thinks, of important features of our lives, including moral development:

> But we live normally and naturally by metaphors and pictures, some of which are in fairly clear and acceptable ways translatable into less figurative modes, while others seem 'deep' and resist analysis…. There is a continuous breeding of imagery in the consciousness which is, for better or worse, a function of moral change. (329)

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[1] This represents the starting point of discussion going back to Aristotle. Recent prominent and sustained attempts in this vein include Stern (2000) and Guttenplan (2005).

[2] See especially Black (1954, 1962, and 1977), and more recently Camp (2006, 2009, 2020).

[3] Camp (2020) offers an account of metaphor specifically in terms of an activity of the imagination (see e.g. Camp 2009), though she construes imagination quite broadly ("in the synthetic sense identified by Kant, of uniting a manifold of disparate elements into a coherent whole," p. 29), in order to distinguish it from activities like pretense.

I wish to take seriously the thought that Eliot is giving us more than an illuminating description, and that, by pursuing the connection Murdoch makes with the imagination, we can defend the stronger claim: that this kind of mistake is of a general type, and that metaphor can be an ineliminable part of its correct explanation. I shall argue that mistakes like Casaubon's involve the creation and maintenance of what we may call imaginative expectations, which are relatively stable, non-discursive (i.e. non-propositional) imaginative representations of future events or experiences, analogous to latent memories. These imaginative expectations, I argue, have a distinctive nature and involve a distinct function of the imagination, both of which have been overlooked. After clarifying their basic characteristics and contrasting them with other states like beliefs and hopes, I argue that their formation is subject to at least two norms, and that metaphor may be involved in explaining violations of either. This requires elucidating determinate roles metaphor can play in non-discursive imagination, but without requiring us to go so far as to treat metaphor as simply pervasive in mental representations more generally, as some have suggested. Making sense of Casaubon's case, then, allows us to understand important and common functions of the imagination and metaphor which have not been analyzed, and ways in which imaginative activity can be subject to rational criticism which have not been appreciated. It also, I shall argue, highlights an important mismatch in common philosophical approaches to the imagination, in that the cases we take as theoretical starting points are not well-suited to handle a function of the imagination that is central to our own practical and cognitive rationality.

2. Imaginative expectation

In order to understand how mistakes like Casaubon's might arise, we should be more precise about the nature of the mistake itself, since it is not at all obvious what kinds of mental states or capacities would be involved in thinking that one's earlier deprivations had somehow led to an account balance of enjoyment available for future withdrawals. Since Casaubon's case is fictional and

brief, my strategy will be to describe in more detail what I take to be a plausible rendering of it, in order to see what would be required for Eliot's diagnosis to be correct, and whether it could apply to all of us at least some of the time, as she claims.

The specific context of the case is that Casaubon, a desiccated, middle-aged scholar, is unsettled: having had his marriage proposal to the much younger, vibrant Dorothea accepted, he feels no particular joy or high spirits at the thought of his coming marriage, and is even saddened—or more subtly, "in danger of being saddened"(79)—by recognizing that he ought, in the circumstances, to be feeling something of the sort, because those circumstances are (objectively) happy.

Casaubon, then, has misguided expectations: he expects to find enjoyment in middle age after having lacked it, for whatever reason, in his younger days—indeed, *because* of his having lacked it—and this much is enough for him to view his present circumstances as inadequate. The problem appears to be compounded, however, since, when he views his situation from an outside perspective, he judges that anyone in such circumstances ought to be experiencing joy, and the fact that he is not becomes a source of further distress, since he is unable to explain the "blankness of sensibility which came over him just when his expectant gladness should have been most lively"(79). These expectations which are now being disappointed will in turn have a variety of effects on the way he behaves leading up to and during his disastrous marriage.

So, if we think that this is a kind of mistake that deserves explanation, the explanandum is a mistaken expectation, or perhaps a connected series of them. Two kinds are specifically mentioned in the passage: (1) a personal expectation that one's future will be a certain way, and (2) a judgement based on an outside perspective that one ought, in the circumstances, to be having a certain sort of experience.

Expectations in general probably deserve more explicit philosophical attention than they have received. We spend a great deal of time and energy in active or latent expectation about how things

will or ought to go, and we deliberate, act, and react well or badly because of those states. If one expects an easy trip to the airport or a welcoming job market, and finds their opposites instead, one's reactions and behavior will be very different than if one had expected long lines and rigorous security, or stiff competition for scarce jobs. Political choices, too, depend in part not just on what we want but on how we expect things to go, and a lot of political craft goes into managing or manipulating those expectations. Further, we often judge our present experience in light of what we take to be an appropriate norm: a prior sense of what getting married or becoming a parent or losing one's job is *going* to feel like gets bound up with our experiences of those things themselves when they occur.

Some of our expectations may simply be beliefs about the future in a standard and robust sense of 'belief', and may be the result of relatively sophisticated and explicit thinking about what will or may happen (for example, thinking about this weekend's weather in light of the forecast and its tendency to be accurate in various circumstances). There are also, clearly, many other sources and types of expectation, and questions they raise, though they have not been carefully described in philosophical work.[4]

These expectations of Casaubon's, however, are peculiar. The kind of representation described here does not seem to be belief except in the widest sense of the term, one roughly equivalent to 'representation.' It is doubtful that Casaubon actually holds the proposition that enjoyment can be saved up like money to be true, not in the way he might well hold it to be true that *favors* are like

[4] For example, many expectations probably do not derive from specifically future-oriented thinking: some may be mostly derived from memory, while others are based on assumptions about what things are like at present, or on instinctive extrapolations of present experience (e.g. estimating the trajectory of a moving object). Thus, I expect to find milk in the fridge when I open the door, but only because I think that there is milk there now. Other expectations, such as a drive to work, probably involve integrating past experience with information about the present (e.g. the weather) or other expectations about the future. Some of these, but only some, would be "inductive" in the sense related to the classic Humean problem of induction. I only wish to claim here that an important class of expectations, one worth investigating in its own right, have the features I describe below. (All of the types mentioned should also be distinguished from the kinds of norms or standards marked by a different use of 'expectation': we expect all students to be on time, but are not surprised when some are late.)

money. Yet somehow he has a standing expectation that, because of his own prior deprivations, his own future holds a commensurately increased degree of enjoyment. (Indeed, Eliot notes that his expectations about happiness are at odds with his knowledge of "all the classical passages implying the contrary"(78).) Nor need the expectation that one's future will be happier than one's present take the form of an attitude towards that proposition, or any particular proposition that might describe one's future.

Many expectations seem rather to be states of the imagination, and may be better understood if we focus on them as a kind of representation distinct from paradigm cases of belief. (Eliot actually describes Casaubon's expectations as imagining, whether or not she uses the term advisedly.[5]) Some expectations can involve very concrete images: I hear a knock at the door and open it, expecting to see a colleague, and am surprised to see a student instead. Perhaps, somehow, when I hear the knock I have an image of a specific person on the other side, just as when, in a restaurant, I imagine what my food will look like when it arrives. This concrete kind of expectation is naturally thought of in terms of the so-called sensory imagination, as opposed to the "propositional" imagination, which, on standard treatments, involves taking up an imaginative attitude towards a proposition or state of affairs.[6]

Some expectations are vaguer than this, however. If I meet a personal hero for the first time, I may be surprised at how short or tall the person is: perhaps I expected him to be taller, but not because I had a false belief about his height, or even despite having a true belief about it (e.g. an athlete whose dimensions I know); nor need I have a sensory image of him as being of a specific

[5] She also seems to describe his disturbance as partly due to his emotional response to images: "Mr. Casaubon did not find his spirits rising; nor did the contemplation of that matrimonial garden-scene, where, as all experience showed, the path was to be bordered with flowers, prove persistently more enchanting to him than the accustomed vaults where he walked taper in hand"(78).

[6] Not that either the sensory or the propositional imagination is at all uncontroversial. For a recent survey of sensory imagination, see Van Leeuwen (2016). For a recent discussion devoted to the propositional imagination, see Sinhababu (2016).

height. Expectations can be much more complex, as well: what can we say of someone who, before getting married or getting a job or climbing a mountain, expects that experience to be joyful? Or someone who, thinking about their current situation, determines that a stranger or "arbitrary person" in the same situation would feel a certain way? Vaguer still, someone who expects her future to be happier than her past and present?

Imagination, however, can in these same ways be vague, complex, or both, and its many forms have been subject to an extensive and proliferating array of distinctions—so much so that some philosophers have despaired of reducing them to order or unity.[7] The most promising function of the imagination for vague and/or complex, but still non-discursive, representations of the future is so-called experiential imagination, i.e. imaginative representations of total or at least reasonably full experiences.[8] Discussions of "mind-reading" and of our ability to make judgments about counterfactual situations in particular have appealed to our ability to imagine what it would be like either to be an observer or an agent in a given situation.[9] These two types of experiential imagination—taking the so-called 'field' and 'observer' perspectives—correspond nicely to the two kinds of expectation Casaubon has.[10] Recently, this kind of imagination has been discussed in psychological work as "episodic future thinking," where 'episodic' is used in the special sense also applied to memory, i.e. pertaining to personal experiences, as distinct from "semantic" thinking (about events or experiences which do not involve oneself, such as remembering historical dates).[11]

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[7] On this problem, see Kind (2013).
[8] By 'non-discursive' I only mean that, as they are not beliefs, they also differ from beliefs in their content and structure.
[9] See Spaulding (2016) for a recent discussion of the former, and Williamson (2016) for the latter.
[10] The distinction is also applied to memories, reinforcing the analogy I wish to pursue; for a recent study of the distinction as applied to memory, see McCarroll (2018). The other most prominent type of imagination treated in recent work is the propositional imagination, but just as it seems odd to treat Casaubon as believing that pleasure is like money, it seems unpromising to think of him as imagining that proposition to be true in the way such imagination is typically described.
[11] See Atance and O'Neill (2001) for a presentation; they define it as "an ability to project the self forward in time to pre-experience an event"(537). They do not distinguish between observer and field perspectives in such thinking, but the distinction seems compatible with their view. I do not wish to assume the particulars of this sense of 'episodic', nor of their notion of "pre-experiencing," so will continue to the use the terminology of experiential imagination and imaginative expectation.

These functions of the imagination, however, are also typically described and analyzed in terms of episodes in the more usual sense: occurrent, temporally bounded stretches of imaginative activity, present to conscious awareness, analogous to discrete "mental events" like occurrent believing and perceiving. In general, the focus is also on deliberate acts of imagination which are broadly under our control, as in pretense and daydreaming, or when we have an immediate interest in figuring out how a thing will behave or a situation might evolve.[12]

However, imagining future experiences is not, of course, restricted to conscious, contiguous episodes over which we have broad control, or which are deliberate in the ways that characterize these standard cases like pretense. Much of the time we imagine the future in a rather sporadic and spontaneous way, without giving it direct attention. Like remembering the past, imagining the future, both proximate and distant, is an almost continuous feature of our waking states, part of our general experience of acting, planning, deliberating, and constantly re-evaluating potential courses of action in light of new experience. Sometimes we do so explicitly and in full awareness, sometimes not.

More importantly, this spontaneous, intermittent, semi-conscious activity can create relatively stable imaginative representations of future events or experiences, which endure even when we are not engaged in imagining their objects. We can and do return often to these images of future events over the course of days or even years, rehearsing and refining them by re-imagining them in much the way we do memories. Thus, I may have a roughly stable image of what returning to the classroom will be like when the pandemic has passed, but as time goes on (and on) my image of that event evolves and shifts. My suggestion, then, is that the type of mistake of which Casaubon's would be an instance pertains to a special kind of imaginative representation, one which is a standing

[12] These features are not, of course, held to be universal, but they are paradigmatic, and departures from them tend to be rare and only partial. Walton (1990) rightly distinguishes between occurrent and non-occurrent imagination, and between deliberate and spontaneous imagination, noting that the distinction is not a sharp one. However, he treats the notion of non-occurrent imagination as something like the implicit background beliefs, or quasi-beliefs, involved in acts of occurrent imagination (16-18). Similarly, he treats deliberate and spontaneous imagination as substantially the same, differing only as to their locus of control (13-16).

representation of the future, rarely a focus of direct awareness, and which can result from the kind of loosely organized, semi-conscious imaginative activity about the future that permeates much of daily life. They are the imaginative analogues of latent memories, in contrast to acts of remembering, to which I give the dull but informative name of "imaginative expectations." Because they are stable representations, they can influence actions and responses, and even give rise to beliefs, without themselves constituting beliefs in any robust sense.

Expectations like these should also be distinguished from other states that they might seem to resemble. Though not beliefs for the reasons noted above, they are like them in that they involve a kind of commitment to things' being a certain way. Since they involve commitment, they are also more robust than idle fantasies (we are not surprised or disappointed when daydreams or mere fantasies do not materialize). Nor are they hopes, even if hopes involve representations about the future. We can expect things we desire not to happen, of course, but more importantly, even if we restrict ourselves to positive expectations, hopes involve a belief that a given prospect is *possible*, rather than that it is going to be actual or likely, as positive expectations do.[13] Nor, clearly, are these expectations desires or quasi-desires: we do not fault someone or ourselves for desiring something she does not believe will happen, nor for feeling disappointed when her desire goes unfulfilled.[14] Nor, finally, are such expectations to be explained as simply an expression of a general optimism (or pessimism), bias, or self-deception, even though these attitudes may have a role to play. Individual mistaken expectations often have their own local explanations: we expect some specific future

[13] This much is the consensus of recent work; debate has centered around which further features are needed to distinguish hope from other attitudes. Martin (2014) contains further reasons to distinguish hope from expectation (29-33).

[14] On quasi-desires, see Doggett and Egan (2012), who introduce the notion of an "i-desire," which "stands to desire as imagining stands to belief"(278). Likewise, they are distinct from the various desiderative and affective states which have received more attention in recent debates about practical irrationality, such as alief, besire, and so on. In general, the states discussed in the self-deception literature aim to explain the way in which the self-deceiver is motivated to represent things a certain way, despite knowing, or also believing, that they are not. I am interested here, by contrast, in ways our imaginative representations go askew by accident, whether or not the resulting states also run contrary to what we believe.

situation to go a certain way because of our tendency to imagine that very situation as going that way, despite the fact that we recognize—or would if we thought about it—that we do not have good reason to believe it actually will.

I have not seen this sort of expectation given direct attention in recent philosophical work in general, nor in work specifically devoted to the imagination.[15] I doubt this is because many authors would reject the existence of such states, but rather because specific reasons have not been given for distinguishing them or giving them separate treatment. Philosophers dealing with ways we represent the future, on the one hand, may be comfortable folding all such representations under the general sense of 'belief'. Discussions of imagination, on the other, have tended to center around episodes like make-believe, daydreaming, and summoning sensory images—episodes which do more or less just end when we stop engaging in them, and so ignore the relevance of imaginative activity that yields a further, standing representation, or alters an existing one.[16]

However, there are good reasons for treating imaginative expectations on their own as non-discursive representations, and for examining the resultant latent states as distinct from the activity that produces them. First, while it may be true that these stable images depend for their existence on

[15] It is not described in Wiltsher (2019), despite his aim of being as broad as possible, nor in other attempts to grapple with the variety of phenomena described as the work of imagination, such as Kind (2013). Church (2016) does describe what she calls "predictive imagining" in a way that seems broadly consistent with what I say here, but her focus is on ways in which such imaginative activity, when occurrent, can infuse perceptual experience. It would fit naturally with much of the view laid out in Langland-Hassan (2015), especially § 3.2, but he does not describe it. There is, as usual, a vivid precedent in Plato, in the description of the two craftsmen in the soul: the scribe, who writes down what we judge to be the case in words, and the painter who follows the scribe, creating images (*eikonas*) in the soul of what the scribe writes (*Philebus* 39a-d), which bear particularly on the future. But whereas Plato's description has the painter follow the scribe, on the proposal below there can be influence both ways, and the imagination may yield expectations autonomously. It also, I think, bears a resemblance to the kind of stable grasp of an essence (*eidos*) that Husserl thinks eventually results from our imaginative "free variation," though applied to anticipated events or experiences rather than essences of types. (For an overview, see Jansen 2016, 76-78.)

[16] Formal work has obvious reasons to use a bare notion of belief, for example, and much discussion of action makes use a simple belief-desire schema. A good example closer to the present topic is Lazar (1999), who discusses the influence of affect and imagination in self-deception, but under the general rubric of belief (see esp. § 4). Miceli and Castelfranchi (2015) contains substantial discussion of expectation (esp. 31-46), which they treat as a part of a cluster of anticipatory representations, all defined as either beliefs or belief-goal compounds. They are well aware, though, of the importance of imagery and memory in thinking about the future, and note that "future-oriented thinking is in need of further specifications"(130).

the temporally prior activity of imagining the future, yielding those images is arguably the function of much of this active imagining—they are not simply a by-product. If we are constantly surprised by the way things turn out, our imagination has failed in one of its roles; when it works well, things will tend in general, or at least more often, to turn out the way we expect, even when we are not actively anticipating them. In preparing for novel experiences and actions, there is a lot of imaginative work to be done in setting at least broad expectations of how they will go: e.g. in preparing for a job interview I expect to be met a certain way, questioned a certain way, and likewise for my own responses. Similarly, in actions that involve or are based upon routines, like driving to work or walking to class, I expect them to go a certain way, and for the most part I only take notice when something does not fit my expectation: e.g. if the roads are unusually crowded.[17] Certainly, a lot of our deliberate behavior would look very different if we did not have roughly stable images of what we will encounter when we act, how we will execute our actions, and how events will unfold, which are present even when an action unfolds over an extended period of time, and which derive from the activity of imagining how things will go. Thus, a full account of the various types of imaginative activity should recognize that at least one type of it has the specific function of producing stable representations of the future, and so we should understand those states to be explanatorily prior to the activity.[18]

[17] As noted above, not all expectations need be states of the imagination, and there are likely substantial inter-relations between what I have described and other sources and types of expectation.

[18] A comparison to Gendler's (2010b) view about the role of imagination in self-deception may also be in order, since she argues that in cases of self-deception an imaginative pretense can occupy the role typically played by belief, despite the fact that the person does not believe what the pretense represents. In her account, imaginative pretense still appears to be a kind of propositional imagination ("the self-deceiver imaginatively pretends that a certain proposition is true," 168), and imagination is treated as an essentially "projective attitude," in that it is not subject to norms of accuracy, evidence, or rational scrutiny (162). By contrast, I am describing a state which is non-discursive, but still representationally sophisticated, which has what Gendler would call an essentially "reality-sensitive" function, in that it plays a belief-like role as a matter of course, not by accident (and which has the other distinguishing features noted). As noted here, I think it is often, but not always, misleading to characterize such representations as beliefs; nevertheless, they are at least commitments, unlike Gendler's imaginative pretenses.

Second, treating these expectations under the broad category of belief is too coarse-grained for many purposes, especially with regard to classifying them as a type of irrationality. Because of their source in the imagination, these expectations have a distinctive causal profile both with respect to how they arise and how they may go wrong, as compared with beliefs based on, say, perception or inference. Assuming that cases like Casaubon's include cases of genuine conflict between one's imaginative expectations and what one believes, these would fall out necessarily as cases of conflicting beliefs. However, that result should not simply follow from using 'belief' as a catchall term.

These two reasons for treating imaginative expectations as non-doxastic states derived from experiential imagination, indeed as constituting a proper function of it, in turn have consequences for our theorizing about the imagination. Most treatments of the imagination include at a basic level some version of the distinction between sensory and propositional imagination, though the terms and precise distinctions vary somewhat.[19] The paradigm cases of sensory imagination, however, are less cognitively sophisticated than the experiential imagination at work in cases like this, whereas the paradigm cases of propositional imagination, such as pretense and fantasy, are rather more cognitively sophisticated (in addition to having the other typical features noted above). Moreover, both sets of activities as typically described fall outside the range of core human activities devoted to ordinary thought and action, however much they may be integrated into our daily lives. We and our lives would be very different without them, but they are to some extent peripheral to the basic tasks of living and acting rationally.[20] Further, they are reasonably treated as more or less self-contained episodes which may happen to lead to further states of mind, but are not generally supposed to do so in order to be successful instances of the type.

[19] For an overview of attempts to taxonimize the imagination, see Kind (2016b).
[20] For a clear instance of this kind of assumption, see Langland-Hassan (2020, § 1.1).

If I am right, this means that while experiential imagination and the expectations it forms constitute a core function of the imagination in our lives, they differ in significant ways from the core or paradigm instances of our philosophical theorizing about the imagination, and in fact seem to fall awkwardly between the two main types that govern it. While it may make sense for theorizing about the imagination to take vivid or simple examples such as pretense as starting points, if a core function has a very different causal profile than our paradigms, then those paradigms are apt to be misleading. If instead we were to take our paradigms of analysis starting from an assessment of imagination's primary functions in our mental lives, our theories might well look different, and, for example, cases of experiential imagination might take up a more prominent theoretical place.[21] (This worry is analogous to one about the role in moral theorizing of vivid, but rare, moral dilemmas.)

3. Norms of imaginative expectation

So if this is what Eliot has in mind as to the nature of Causabon's mistake—that we have imaginative expectations which may miss the mark in surprising ways and which may run contrary to what we believe or have reason to believe—she is right to make her general claim thus far. Many of us experience a similar kind of incoherence between how we believe the future will go and how we at least sometimes imagine it as going, and are surprised, disappointed, or aggrieved in such a way that our imaginative representation constitutes not merely a fantasy but an expectation, at least a weak one. We imagine various efforts—exercise, training, studying a language, interacting with others—as far more successful than we have reason to believe them to be. If we are asked what we believe we will accomplish, our answers might well be roughly right, but that does not prevent us from having an imaginative expectation for more or better, which creates a familiar kind of deflation. We may publish an article sincerely believing that, like most articles, it will go largely

[21] This, in turn, might have further theoretical value, if we were able to develop a more unified picture of the imagination, rather than one that bifurcates rather sharply between sensory and propositional imagination.

unread, and that anyone who does read it is liable to disagree, and yet still somehow expect others to have read it and to agree. Similarly, when a political choice can successfully be presented, reductively, as a choice between preserving the status quo and unspecified change, the side promising change benefits from our prodigious ability to imagine all sorts of possible but unlikely futures that we do not really believe will come to pass. Whether or not we believe their contrary propositions, we may judge ourselves or others to be unjustified in forming these expectations, in that they run counter to a sober, experienced way of approaching one's future.

It is not obvious how to characterize these mistakes as mistakes, however. If there is no belief, at least, there is no false belief, and the norms of belief-formation do not apply, nor is it quite clear what is actually represented when Casaubon imagines the balance in his enjoyment savings account. How, then, should we describe the way in which an expectation like Casaubon's is in fact mistaken, and subject to criticism, rational or otherwise?

Although imagination is often discussed in terms of ways in which it is normatively different from belief, e.g. as being essentially unconstrained by reality, more recently philosophers have focused on ways in which the it can be broadly informative, so that its exercise would therefore be governed by certain epistemic norms.[22] Kind and Kung (2016) draw a useful distinction between what they call "transcendent" and "instructive" uses of the imagination. Broadly, the former involves the ability to imagine in a way unconstrained by actuality or even normal possibility, whereas the latter, insofar as it aims to yield information about the ways things will or might be in actuality, must be so constrained. Daydreaming and make-believe are examples of the former, while mind-reading and evaluations of counterfactuals are potential examples of the latter.

[22] Ichino (2019), for example, accepts as part of the standard view that imagination is not subject to norms of reasons or evidence.

The distinction between transcendent and instructive imagination is helpful for elucidating the way in which experiential imagination about the future may yield misguided expectations. Though Kind and Kung frame their distinction in terms of two *uses* of imagination, my claim above is a stronger one (at least insofar as it is explicitly teleological), to the effect that forming expectations is a *function* of at least one type of imaginative activity. The notion of a function generates a norm by which the activity may be evaluated: our imagination is working well in this respect if it generates expectations that contribute to successful action and ensure that we are not caught off-guard by things our experience allows us to predict. This requires, minimally, a certain degree of accuracy and constraint by normal possibility. By contrast, daydreaming, fantasizing, and so on are also uses of imagination which may similarly involve presenting future possibilities, often in a repetitive and refining way, but their function is different, if they have one at all besides that of enjoying the imagining itself. These imaginings involve a transcendent function, since paying heed to what we would take to be the bounds of normal possibility is no part of what makes them good imaginings. These activities, perhaps, *are* supposed simply to end like a pleasure or a game of make-believe, in contrast to expectation-forming imaginings.

We may say, then, that there are two functions of the imagination, one instructive, one transcendent, whose component activities resemble one another very closely in their intrinsic characters. One broad way of accounting for Casaubon's mistake is therefore that the instructive function has failed, and yielded results that are typical of the transcendent function instead.

More specifically, there are two ways this failure might occur, given the functional claims above. He may have wrongly formed an expectation on the basis of what was, and should have remained, mere fantasy, i.e. transcendently functioning imagination, and thus applied the expectation-forming function to the wrong imaginative material. Alternatively, he may have failed to imagine things the way he should have, and thus failed to execute the expectation-forming function in the right way.

According to the first mode of criticism, the mistake would be analogous to forming beliefs about life in the 18th Century from reading period novels. This would amount to applying what we may call a Source norm: expectations should only be derived from imaginative activity with the right functional profile. An analogous mistake is well-known and pervasive with respect to memory: we recall some experience, re-imagining it with embellishments corresponding to the way we would have liked it to go, and sometimes as a result simply end up remembering it as actually having happened that way.[23]

What norms, though, govern the imagination in its instructive function of generating expectations? Broadly, one might think that one ought to imagine the future accurately, or in ways which agree with what one knows. However, in many cases, norms of accuracy and knowledge are not appropriate or salient, especially since we often need to generate expectations about domains we are only getting to know, and about events or experiences which have not taken place. Moreover, expectations need not and arguably should not be perfectly accurate in order to perform their function: they often serve to provide a baseline against which we can recognize novel or atypical phenomena. At least, we do not consider our expectations defective when we are surprised by something genuinely new or atypical, so we do not judge them as falling short merely for being imperfectly predictive.

A more apposite norm would therefore be a norm of Experience: imagining well, for this function of the imagination, requires having one's imaginings be continually responsive to our experience of the way things tend to go over time. Part of coming to have mature and morally developed relationships with others, for example, is to develop an ability to imagine their responses and one's future interactions in a way that responds to the feedback we get from previous

[23] The notion of imaginative contagion may also be helpful in this context, insofar as it applies to a way in which imaginative activity may have deviant effects on behavior (see Gendler 2010a), though she applies it to occurrent phenomena in line with standard examples such as pretense and engagement with fiction.

interactions, and part of what makes this difficult is that it is so easy to imagine them not only in ways that are guided by fantasy and wish, but which may simply remain fixed and insensitive to new information. (I may continue to imagine someone as cold and distant based on a first impression, even after having had enough interactions to get a sense of warmth and humor.)[24]

If this is correct, we should distinguish two broad ways in which we may approach the question of how imagination can be informative. First, we may ask, as with perception and thinking, how, given certain inputs, an accurate representation is produced as output. On this approach, which is quite common, we look for ways in which our normally free-floating activity may be constrained in the way it unfolds, so that it yields an accurate representation of some particular object, event, or fact (e.g. a modal fact)—hence the tendency to describe imagination as a kind of "offline" processing which may mirror "online" processing.[25] On this way of asking the question, imagination looks deficient relative to perception and thinking, because it is not supposed to be causally tied to what it represents (unlike perception), nor does it seem capable of explicitly handling truth-preserving rules of inference (though it may turn out to follow them under the right conditions).

The second way of asking the question is this: given a faculty whose function is to produce broadly accurate or useful representations of a given sort and for certain purposes, and which generally does so successfully, what are the conditions that preserve this success and what are the

[24] Kind (2016a) elaborates some reasons for thinking that, when we aim to imagine what things will be like under certain circumstances, we are capable of constraining our imaginings by the way things are, and respecting the consequences of making certain changes, such that skepticism about imagination in general is unwarranted. These constraints differentiate epistemically significant from insignificant imaginings (146), performing a function similar to my Experience norm. Her proposal offers a useful contrast with mine, since it presents a different account of norm-governed instructive imagining, and since her main examples are predictive. Though they serve a similar epistemic function, the norms she describes as well as the epistemic significance of the results of our imagining are different from the ones I propose. This is at least in part because her claims are independent of the ones I argue for here. Her discussion relates to deliberate acts of imagination as sources of knowledge or justified belief, whereas I have attempted to describe a non-episodic function of the imagination which is usually non-voluntary, and which does not aim, at least in the first instance, at justified beliefs or knowledge of the future. More significant, perhaps, is the methodological difference I describe immediately below. (I thank an anonymous reviewer for drawing my attention to this parallel.)

[25] See, for example, the introduction in their volume devoted to the problem, Kind and Kung (2016) as well as other contributions, such as Langland-Hassan (2016).

factors that can lead to failure? The functional claim about imaginative expectation allows us to approach the question in the second way, according to which imagination is not so obviously deficient relative to perception and thought. There are norms that derive from the function of producing good or useful expectations, which, even though they are forward-looking, and even though accuracy of a general sort is still important, are more directly related to the way we assimilate experience over time, since there may be no particular object or fact to which we are attempting to be faithful, and perfect accuracy might in fact be a defect. These are the kinds of norm we apply to the ways we attempt to understand uncertain, unfamiliar, or complex domains. In that sense, the kind of mistake at issue is different from standard cases of irrational belief or action, especially those that are framed as failures to follow rather clear standards that apply to specific objects of knowledge, or domains in which we generally understand how to get things right.[26]

At the same time, these norms may typically be violated in familiar, unsophisticated ways. To take a relatively simple example similar to that of Casaubon: suppose that I am anticipating seeing a friend I have not seen in a long time, and I imagine how it will go, at varying levels of detail, resulting in a general expectation of an exciting shared experience. In the end our time together is pleasant but subdued. My expectations were misguided, though not because there is some specific event during our time together that I imagined going one way which instead went differently. My mistake may be simply due to a self-flattering fantasy about my role in my friend's life, making me suppose I was greatly missed (Source norm), and I then realize that it was silly to expect outsized enthusiasm. Alternatively, it may be because, in trying to anticipate my friend's actions and states, my imaginings have only taken account of experience of him from an even earlier, more enthusiastic

[26] Appropriate norms for such cases include: do not believe contradictions; do believe what sense perception and reliable testimony present unless you have reason to question them; ignore irrelevant features such as the order in which equivalent options are presented; if you judge something to be the overall best thing to do, do it; if you desire to X, and Y is a means to X, do Y, other things being equal. The standards of paradigmatic inductive inference would also be in this category.

stage of life, and passed over more recent experience with him in his more mature and preoccupied stage, perhaps because it is less vivid for me (Experience norm). In this case I do not feel silly for having flattered myself, but am instead reminded of the fuller picture of his life and my knowledge of it. The same misguided expectation can thus result from violating either norm, and may even result from violating both over the course of my imaginings, but the mistakes are not due to anything terribly sophisticated such as an involvement with metaphor. Indeed, they are not all that different from having outsized expectations, in the form of sensory images, of the amount of food that will be on my plate at a restaurant.

4. Tangling with metaphors

In a way, then, all this makes it harder to see how metaphor might play a genuine role in explaining deviant imaginative expectations of the sort I have described, which result from spontaneous, non-episodic, non-discursive imagining. On the one hand, metaphor is generally supposed to be a sophisticated conceptual tool of language or at least discursive thought, and while it is perhaps easy to think about ways our abstract thinking and our discursive imagination might get tangled up in metaphors, as when we overestimate ways in which our minds are like computers, it is not obvious how that would happen to our spontaneous, non-discursive imaginings of future experiences, any more than it might to other forms of non-discursive thinking. Arguably, if we have already accepted a metaphor at the level of discursive thought, this acceptance might exercise a "top-down" influence on the way we imagine the relevant objects non-discursively—perhaps a cognitive scientist imagines neurological structures differently in virtue of having accepted that the mind is a computer, for example. However, this amounts to having one's imaginings influenced by one's beliefs, and I have supposed that cases like Casaubon's represent a range of deviant imaginings that depend on metaphors one would reject, and which do not involve covert beliefs. Alternatively, if mistaken imaginative expectations of this sort may often be explained "bottom-up" in quite

simple ways that also apply to simpler sensory imaginings, we might wonder when there is any reason to suppose metaphor is at work. What need is there to occupy the middle ground, which, from this perspective, looks unstable?

Recent discussions of metaphor tend to divide roughly between those that treat it primarily relative to its role in language and communication, and those that treat it primarily as a mode of representation, i.e. relative to its role in thinking about objects themselves.[27] Thus, for example, the one kind of approach will investigate questions about the semantics of metaphorical statements and their implications for theories of meaning, whereas the other will ask how metaphor relates to other kinds of representational tool, such as models or analogies. Clearly, if metaphor is to play a role in our non-discursive imagination, it is at least initially more promising to focus on its aspects as a mode of representation.[28] Even on the representational side, however, discussion still tends to focus on linguistically and cognitively sophisticated acts, including literature and scientific inquiry, in which metaphors are serving a communicative function, whereas I am not supposing that imaginative expectations should be understood as a form of self-to-self communication.[29]

On the other hand, it is true that some views would posit metaphor at the root of, or not really distinct from, some of our most basic patterns of thinking, and hence, derivatively, speech, including literal speech.[30] These views are naturally controversial, but in any case for my purposes

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[27] The approaches are of course not exclusive. The former includes most the works in the classic tradition, and those cited above (n. 1). The latter includes, besides those noted above (n. 2), Hesse (1966), Gentner et al. (2001), and Fauconnier and Turner (2002).

[28] I do not wish to endorse one or another account of metaphor here, though I am partial to the one propounded by Black (1954, 1977) and recently developed by Camp (2009, 2020), the broad outlines of which I more or less follow here. I will also continue to assume that experiential imagination is non-discursive, even though it is possible to develop a view according to which sophisticated features of imaginings are the result of their being "hybrid" states with both imagistic and conceptual components. For a view along these lines, see Langland-Hassan (2015).

[29] Black (1977) introduces a notion of metaphorical thought, though he discusses it only briefly, focusing on some examples of deliberately thinking about one type of thing as another, which seem in fact to be examples of conceptually sophisticated imagining (447-8). In a broader and more suggestive context, Black (1962) argues for an essential similarity or continuity between metaphors, theoretical models, and what he calls archetypes (241), though it is not clear whether we ought to treat these cases as matching the key features of metaphor, as opposed to other kinds of framing device.

[30] In very different ways Lakoff and Johnson (2003), and Fauconnier and Turner (2002) pursue this approach.

they obscure what would be special about metaphor as standardly distinguished from other phenomena: I wish to ask whether metaphor, in a sense that follows its familiar contours, can directly influence imaginative expectations, since this is what would be, on the face of it, somewhat surprising and worth understanding in greater depth. This would also represent a theoretically interesting type of case of metaphor at an intermediate level, if we could say in a more detailed way how it constitutes a mode of specifically metaphorical representation (as opposed to another type of framing device), and how it goes wrong, which would still be unlike standard cases insofar as it does not serve a communicative function.

Here we may take our cue from some of the options used to describe the positive role metaphors may play in producing discovery or insight. Three key features generally attributed to metaphor in recent literature, by way of a comparison to similes or analogies, are as follows:

—Frame/focus concepts: Like similes and analogies, metaphors involve a frame-concept and a focus-concept, such that the frame alters or guides the manner in which one attends to the focus.

—Applicability of norms of belief and truth: Unlike similes, a metaphor in some way is not to be taken as literally expressed. Standard similes express the speaker's beliefs in whatever way normal assertions do, and bear truth and falsity, accordingly, in an ordinary way. Most metaphors, by contrast, except by happy accident or clever design ("No man is an island" being a stock example), are not intended to be interpreted literally, or only literally.[31] Thus, whereas the norms of belief and truth govern expressions of similes in the ordinary way, it is usually agreed that these same norms do not govern uses of metaphor. Nonetheless, there are norms that govern metaphors, even if it is not obvious how to specify them.

[31] Some accounts (prominently, Davidson 1978) wish to dispense with the distinction between literal and non-literal meaning, but the overall phenomenon is the same: assertions containing metaphors do not function in the same way "ordinary" cases of assertion do.

—Irreducibility: For similes and analogies, there is an expectation that some specific aspect common to both the frame and the focus is being indicated, and so a given simile can therefore be reduced to a more literal series of statements expressing these comparisons. What makes at least the interesting cases of metaphor distinctive is that there is no such expectation or ability to reduce the metaphor to a series of comparisons without remainder. The metaphor is open-ended, in the sense that a whole variety of comparisons may be apt renderings of it, perhaps indefinitely many, where these need not describe beliefs that the speaker wishes the hearer to accept.

Further, if the function of a metaphor is to prompt or enable us to think about the objects falling under the focal concept using the frame concept, then it is relevant that, as Black points out, we have to do not just with an isolated concept but with a network.[32] Such a network will normally involve an array of connections and patterns of inference, and will resonate with various emotions and expectations. The concept of money involves one such network, linking further concepts like quantity, exchange, savings, desire-satisfaction, risk, and so on.

In Casaubon's case, minimally, the network related to money is being mistakenly applied to interactions with other types of good: his bachelorhood consisted of a great many opportunities for enjoyment passed up, and the resulting dissatisfaction was compensated for by a sense that the good was not being simply lost, but rather deferred. These goods being turned down, however—interpersonal relations such as warmth, affection, good will, and so on—are not subject to this kind of deferral. As a result, his experiential imaginings of his future life yielded an inflated expectation of future social pleasure.

Now, this pattern of spending/saving is actually very close to a different, more basic one we are supposed to acquire as children: the ability to control impulses, which we often learn to do by

[32] He refers to systems of "associated commonplaces," as well as systems and patterns of implications (287f.). His own metaphor for such systems and patterns, looking at the night sky through smoked glass on which some lines have been left clear, is taken up and elaborated in Camp (2020).

connecting restraint with expectation of future benefits. In this way we use our imagination as an aid to learning how to do what we judge to be overall best, where this involves not deferring a single good for later use but rather choosing one good instead of another. Despite this key difference, deferral (i.e. savings) is a helpful frame for getting a grip on the prudential practice of giving up one good for the sake of another, whose attractiveness may be less immediate or palpable. To that extent, imagining prudential exchange as a kind of savings is instructive.

This interaction between two networks can, however, lead to violations of either the Source or the Experience norm. Violations of the Source norm are perhaps simpler to describe, as being more familiar. We commonly engage in wish-fulfilling imagination not by accident, but rather just because it is enjoyable or relieves distress, and such activity may make use of whatever conceptual devices yield a more pleasant experience. One could imagine, in a case like Casaubon's, someone experiencing loneliness or contempt from others reaching for the imaginative device closest at hand, in this case a metaphorical frame, that allows him to treat the distress as in some way already alleviated. Thus far, applying the metaphorical frame is not objectionable in itself, but it is the metaphor which allows the imagining to transcend the range of normal, depressing possibility. The mistake would rather be for such activity to form or alter an expectation of how things will go, which would be a violation of the Source norm.

We can also tell a story, however, according to which what may begin as an instructive use of one network as a frame for another (e.g. deferral for prudential exchange), can deviate, so that the content of the imagining involves a violation of the Experience norm. If we use a savings metaphor in dealing with others as a way of keeping track of fairness, for example, we must eventually learn that expecting a direct quid pro quo tends to go badly, and that the reason to treat others well is not in fact to secure future advantages. This further development may be stunted, however, if we are not sensitive to subsequent interactions, and sometimes it is precisely the (initially) useful metaphor that

occludes our experience of them, simply because the frame is more familiar, seems more predictable, or yields predictions which are more pleasant to entertain. To have a useful framing device whose very familiarity prevents us from registering ways in which it is inaccurate would indeed be to get our thoughts entangled in metaphors.

This type of metaphorical frame might arise in various ways without a metaphorical proposition being uttered or entertained, and indeed there need not be an explicit connection made between the two domains at all. While someone might explicitly use the language of savings to teach prudence and impulse control, a person could also learn to apply the frame implicitly, by following a role model whose behavior in social situations evokes monetary transactions, for example, or simply because it is handy, being already familiar as a way of accepting temporary restraint. Indeed, there is a plausible two-way connection between implicitly and explicitly used and adopted metaphorical frames: a useful but implicit frame may prompt one to make it explicit and eventually conceptual, just as an explicit conceptual frame may come to condition our non-discursive imaginings, as suggested above. This possibility is a natural extension of treating metaphor primarily with respect to its representational characteristics rather than its communicative ones, and it has the theoretical benefit of allowing us to treat its more sophisticated instances as developments of a more basic capacity for framing representations.

Both the Source norm and the Experience norm may thus be violated in ways such that a metaphor plays an irreducible explanatory role—though of course there may be many other ways in which they go astray as well, as noted above. There are several challenges we might raise to these possibilities nonetheless. (1) One might question whether and how we can have evidence that the use of a metaphorical frame-concept is indeed a source of irrational expectations in a given context, for a given person. After all, there are many reasons for which someone may come to have inflated or self-flattering expectations. (2) We might think the connection to metaphor is not necessary, if

we identify the phenomenon more broadly as one of mis-applying a given pattern of inference to a situation. Why not describe a case like Casaubon's more simply as a misapplication of a conditioned reflex (anticipating a reward after abstaining), without any essential connection to a frame/focus distinction? (3) We might wonder whether Eliot's example, compelling as it may be, is actually an instance of a broader phenomenon; perhaps something about the way we can be tempted to treat pleasures like money is a peculiar and circumscribed form of mistake we are prone to make. (4) Finally, one might argue that the distinction between (instructive) expectation-forming imagination and (transcendent) imagination of future possibilities for its own sake cannot be sharply drawn—especially if there is nothing internal to the experience itself that would allow us to tell which is which.

Regarding (1), it is true that there are a variety of reasons for which one may end up with overly optimistic expectations without realizing it. It is significant, nonetheless, if we can isolate different sources of these, especially ones that lead to the kind of irrationality described, in which our expectations conflict with what we judge ourselves to have reason to expect. If applying the wrong conceptual network in our experiential imagination is one such source, then it is worth understanding in its own right.

Regarding (2), we do lose something of explanatory value if we describe cases like Casaubon's simply as mistakenly treating X the way one ought to treat Y. It is true that in practice it is difficult to distinguish between someone who imagines pleasure through the frame of deferrable goods like money, and someone who simply has, in the newly popular phrase, a transactional nature. Here again, both types of mistake are possible; they may even be actualized together, and it would surely be impossible to isolate them. It is nonetheless important to distinguish this way of treating one thing as another from both a purely cognitive one in which one accidentally applies the wrong concept, and a purely reflexive one, such as a tendency to treat pets like people or vice versa.

Regarding (3), it is also true that Casaubon's example is especially well-suited to the kind of mistake I have attempted to describe, since the deferring reflex is so fundamental to moral habituation. Nevertheless, the parallel with positive uses of metaphor is instructive. If, as many have pointed out, we rely on and acquire insight using metaphors or models especially when an object is complex or poorly understood or both, we might look for irrational imaginative expectations in similar contexts. Other such domains could plausibly include bodily and mental health, relationships, economic predictions, politics, and creative work. These are also domains about which, given their importance to our daily lives, we are practically required to form expectations, but given their complexity and our limited understanding of them, we often rely on metaphors for getting a grip. Widespread habits of treating bodily health in terms related to balance and purity, or thinking about the economy as though it were an organism, are plausible examples of such metaphorical imagination.

Regarding (4), it is enough for imaginative representations about the future to have these two discrete functions, one instructive, one transcendent, if (a) we can give clear accounts of how such activity can serve different ends, and (b) we can, at least sometimes, clearly and deliberately do them independently. Both of these criteria seem satisfied, even if, in everyday life, we have a tendency to shift back and forth between the two types of activity a little too loosely.

5. Conclusion

We often represent one thing through the frame of something else. At one end of the spectrum we do so in explicit, deliberate, cognitively sophisticated ways, as with literary metaphors, scientific models, and acts of pretense. The other end of the spectrum has not been well described, and I have argued that Eliot's example can help illuminate it. We engage in a kind of loosely organized imaginative activity whose function is to provide us with relatively stable images of the future, but which normally does so in the background of ordinary thinking, planning, and mental

free-play. This functional role in turn yields some distinctive norms that apply to their formation and maintenance. Despite being non-discursive, these expectations and the experiential imagining that generates them deploy some of the same representational tools involved in more sophisticated forms of reasoning, including framing devices like metaphor. Finally, there are at least two ways of accounting for errors of imaginative expectation according to which Eliot's diagnosis turns out to be genuinely explanatory, rather than itself simply a striking metaphor. One type of mistake occurs when we form expectations on the basis of imaginative activity which is structured by a metaphorical frame, for the sake of allowing the imagining to proceed independently of normal possibility. Another occurs when a metaphor which governs some of our instructive imagination prevents us from being sensitive to experience in ways that would otherwise allow us to leave it behind. I would not make a claim, of course, as to which mistake fits Casaubon's case most accurately; if he is like us, he is probably frequently guilty of both.

Taken separately, each of these claims represents a modest but real extension of the functions and activities associated with the imagination, as well as metaphor, relative to recent literature. Taken together, they add up to the claim that an important part of our imaginative activity and its role in the ways we think and act well or badly has been neglected. Further, they imply that our theoretical paradigms for studying the imagination in general would be improved if they were expanded or altered to be able to capture this function and its importance.

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