

First-Person Imaginings

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Abstract: There are different ways in which imaginings can involve the first-person. I can imagine skiing down a mountain, looking down the slope, the wind whipping me in the face. I can also imagine myself skiing down a mountain from the outside, adopting the point of view of a spectator watching myself fly down the mountain. I can also imagine that I am someone else entirely, say Angela Merkel, skiing down a mountain. In this paper I develop and defend a new account of the content of first-person imaginings. I first look at two existing accounts, one proposed by Francois Recanati (2007a, 2007b) and the other proposed by Dilip Ninan (2008), and I argue that they lack the resources to model the rich and distinct types of first-person imaginings that we can have. I then present and defend a new account that reconstrues the imagining from the inside vs. imagining from the outside distinction and can accommodate the various ways in which imaginings involve the first-person.

1. Introduction

It is widely held that the content of first-person or *de se* beliefs differs in a fundamental way from the content of non-*de se* beliefs. For example, David Lewis (1979) argues that traditional propositions are insufficient for characterizing the content of first-person beliefs and argues for an account according to which the content of such beliefs is given by properties or centered worlds, rather than traditional propositions or sets of possible worlds. It is natural to think that just as such considerations motivate a distinction between *de se* beliefs and non-*de se* beliefs, they motivate a similar distinction when it comes to other psychological attitudes such as desiring, anticipating, and imagining. In considering the imagination, however, it turns out that things are much more complicated than merely a distinction between *de se* imaginings and non-*de se* imaginings. There are different ways in which imaginings can be first-personal. The aim of this paper is to consider various attempts at modelling the content of these different kinds of first-person imaginings and to make progress in figuring out how to best accommodate these distinctions.

Try carrying out the following imaginative exercise:¹

¹ These examples are based on similar ones given by Ninan (2008, Chapter 1).

(IE1) Imagine skiing down a steep mountain

Although there are different ways in which one might carry out this imaginative exercise, perhaps the most natural way is to imagine the scenario “from the inside”: in imagining skiing down a steep mountain, you look down the mountain through your ski goggles, you feel the wind hitting you in the face, you feel the bumps of the snow beneath your feet, your heart races with excitement, etc.

Now consider the following imaginative exercise:

(IE2) Imagine that you are skiing down a steep mountain.

You might go about this imaginative exercise in just the same way as (IE1), (especially since you were just asked to carry out (IE1)): you imagine yourself looking down the mountain through your ski goggles. However another way in which you could faithfully carry out (IE2) is to imagine the scenario “from the outside”: you see yourself flying down the mountain from above or from the side of the slope. “Look at me go!” you say to yourself. This suggests that there are two ways in which you can imagine yourself skiing down a mountain: you can imagine yourself skiing down the mountain from the inside in which you adopt the point of view of yourself looking through your ski goggles, or you can imagine yourself skiing down the mountain from the outside in which you adopt an external point of view from which you observe yourself flying down the mountain as if you were a spectator on the side of the slope. Although it is perhaps more natural to imagine from the inside when asked to carry out (IE1) and imagine from the outside when asked to carry out (IE2), I think both ways of imagining are compatible with (IE1) and (IE2). For the purposes of this paper, I will stipulate that (IE1) involves an imagining from the inside, and (IE2) involves an imagining from the outside.

Now consider the following imaginative exercise:

(IE3) Imagine Angela Merkel skiing down a steep mountain.

This also seems to be a case in which you imagine from the outside, but rather than imagining from the outside that *you* are skiing down a steep mountain, you imagine from the outside that Merkel is skiing down the mountain. “Look at her go!” you say to yourself.

Finally consider the following imaginative exercise:

(IE4) Imagine that you are Angela Merkel skiing down a steep mountain

This exercise is presumably also an imagining from the inside. You imagine that you are Merkel on a ski holiday looking down the mountain through your goggles, perhaps bodyguards flanking you on either side.

Both (IE1) and (IE2) involve the first-person but in different ways. (IE2) involves the first-person in that it is you yourself who you imagine flying down the mountain. It is one thing to imagine that you are skiing down a mountain and another thing to imagine Angela Merkel skiing down a mountain. But (IE1) seems to involve the first-person in two ways: it is you yourself who you imagine skiing down the mountain *and* you imagine yourself skiing down the mountain from *the first-person perspective*. A successful account of imagination ought to be able to accommodate these two ways in which an imagining can involve the first-person. I take it as a desideratum of an account of the content of imagination that it is able to accommodate the distinct sorts of imaginative exercises described above.

The rest of the paper proceeds as follows: First I will consider some existing proposals in the literature: Francois Recanati's account of the content of first-person imagination and Dilip Ninan's account of the content of first-person imagination. I will argue that, although I think Recanati is correct in adopting a property-based theory of such contents, the account lacks the resources to model the rich and distinct types of first-person imaginings that we can have. I then turn to Ninan's (2008) account which I think makes substantial progress in providing an account of the content of first-person imaginings and contains several important insights. But I think it misconstrues the imagining from the inside vs. imagining from the outside distinction and conflates the content of distinct imaginings. I then propose a new account that re-construes the imagining from the inside vs. imagining from the outside distinction and is able to accommodate the distinct sorts of imaginings I have in mind.

2. Recanati's Account

In (2007a) and (2007b), Francois Recanati proposes a property account of the content of imaginings involving the first person.² David Lewis (1979) and Roderick Chisholm (1981) both independently

² Throughout this paper I will assume that the property account of content and the centered worlds account of content are equivalent and I will use them interchangeably. Recanati states his account in terms of properties and Ninan states his account in terms of centered worlds. I will assume that to stand in an attitude to a property *F* is equivalent to standing in that attitude to the set of centered worlds centered on all and only those individuals that are *F*. It is controversial whether these two accounts are in fact equivalent: one might accept an account of the metaphysics of properties such that there are centered worlds contents that fail to correspond to properties. But I ignore this issue here and if one rejected the equivalency; it would be straightforward to restate the views accordingly.

developed a property account of *de se* belief and Recanati extends this account to the imagination. According to Lewis's account, *de se* beliefs have properties rather than traditional propositions as their contents. In David Kaplan's well-known example, not realizing that I am looking at my own reflection in the mirror, I come to believe of the man in the mirror that his pants are on fire, and then soon realize that my pants are on fire!³ According to the property account, my realization involves the self-ascription of a property: the property of *having pants that are on fire*. Recanati claims that properties also serve as the content of first-person imaginings. When I imagine that my pants are on fire, the content of my imagining is the property of *having pants that are on fire*. When I believe that my pants are on fire, I ascribe the property of *having pants that are on fire* to myself. When I imagine that my pants are on fire, I do not ascribe this property to myself, but I stand in a different kind of attitude to the property. Recanati does not use this terminology, but let us say that in such cases I 'imaginatively ascribe' (henceforth 'i-ascribe') the property to myself.

Reflecting on (IE1), this seems like the right thing to say if one is already sympathetic to the property account of belief. If one thinks that properties are necessary to accommodate my *belief* that I, myself, am skiing down a mountain, it is natural to claim that in (IE1) when I imagine myself skiing down a mountain, I take a different attitude to the same content: the property of *skiing down a mountain*.

However, we noted that both (IE1) and (IE2) involve the first-person but in different ways. How does the account accommodate cases of imagining that involve the first-person like (IE2)? Recanati distinguishes between what he calls the *implicit* and the *explicit de se*. The explicit *de se* involves an "identification component" whereas the implicit *de se* does not (Recanati 2007a, 4). In implicit *de se* thoughts, the subject herself does not figure into the content of the thought: "Thoughts that are implicitly *de se* involve no reference to the self at the level of content: what makes them *de se* is simply the fact that the content of the thought is evaluated with respect to the thinking subject" (Recanati 2007a, 4). Explicit *de se* thoughts, on the other hand, do involve reference to the self at the level of content. Recanati draws on a case from Ludwig Wittgenstein to provide an example of an explicit *de se* belief: A man has been in an accident and his arm is in pain. He looks in a mirror and sees a badly broken arm and mistakenly takes it to be his. He forms the false belief that he would express by saying "My arm is broken". According to Recanati, this thought is *de se*, however it involves the subject (mistakenly) identifying himself with someone with a broken arm.

In 2007a, Recanati employs the distinction between implicit and explicit *de se* thoughts in order to distinguish between the two ways in which imaginings can involve the first-person. Whereas (IE1) is a case of implicit *de se* imagining and its content is a property: the property of *skiing*

³ Kaplan (1989).

down a mountain, (IE2) is a case of explicit *de se* imagining because the thought does involve reference to the self at the level of content: there is an identification component in thoughts like (IE2): “Look at *me* go!”.

I do not think that Recanati’s distinction between implicit and explicit *de se* thoughts succeeds in characterizing the distinction between the two ways in which imaginings can involve the first person as demonstrated by (IE1) and (IE2). Recanati points to an epistemic difference between implicitly *de se* thoughts and explicitly *de se* thoughts. Implicit *de se* thoughts, because they possess no reference to the self at the level of content, are immune error through misidentification. In the case of an implicit *de se* thought, I cannot ascribe a property *F* to an individual and mistake that individual for myself. When a subject has an implicit *de se* belief that she herself is *F*, the content of her belief, the property *F*, automatically gets ascribed to the subject. Whereas in the case of explicit *de se* thoughts, there is a reference to the self at the level of content and so mistakes in identification can arise as in Wittgenstein’s broken arm case. But this epistemic difference does not characterize imaginings like (IE1) and (IE2). I cannot imagine from the outside that I am skiing down a mountain, but be mistaken in taking the individual skiing down the mountain to be me. That it is me skiing down the mountain is as immune from error in (IE2) as it is in (IE1). So it does not seem that the distinct ways in which (IE1) and (IE2) involve the first-person can be understood in terms of an epistemic difference that the subject bears to the content.

Recanati provides an interesting account of imaginative exercises like (IE4), namely those in which I imagine that I am someone else. Here is what Recanati writes about imagining that one is Napoleon:

I have, therefore, coined the term ‘quasi-*de se*’ to refer to the type of thought one entertains when one imagines, say, being Napoleon. The type of imagining at stake is clearly first personal (it is of the ‘implicit-*de se* type’), yet the imaginer’s self is not involved — not even at the ‘evaluation’ stage. The properties that are imaginatively represented are not implicitly ascribed to the subject who imagines them, but to the person whose point of view she espouses. In other words, the person in whose situation the imagined state of affairs is supposed to hold need not be the imaginer himself; it may be anybody, including Napoleon, or the last man to be alive on Earth. The imaginer ‘sees’ the world vicariously, through the eyes of his imaginative target, just as the quasi-rememberer vicariously ‘remembers’ the experiences of another person (Recanati 2007a, p.20).

So imaginings like (IE4) have properties as their contents just like imaginings like (IE1), but they do not involve i-ascribing a property to oneself, but rather to Napoleon, Merkel, or whomever one is imagining being. When I imagine that I am Angela Merkel skiing down a mountain, I i-ascribe the

property of *skiing down a mountain* not to myself but to Merkel. According to Recanati, the imaginer's self is entirely absent from the imaginative scenario.

I think the move towards properties (or centered worlds) to capture the content of first-person imaginings is a move in the right direction, however I do not think that Recanati's account has the resources needed to provide an adequate account of the content of all the sorts of first-person imaginings that there are. One thing that strikes me as odd about this account is the difference it posits between i-ascribing properties to myself versus i-ascribing properties to someone distinct from myself. What are the conditions under which an imagining from the inside involves i-ascribing properties to an individual distinct from myself? It seems that I can imagine having all sorts of properties that I don't in fact have: I can imagine that I am an excellent downhill skier of a different gender who has won several gold medals in the Olympics. Does this count as a case of i-ascribing numerous counterfactual properties to myself or if the imagining is sufficiently rich, am I i-ascribing them to someone else? At what point do the i-ascriptions 'jump' from me to someone else?

A more serious problem with the account is that it seems to conflate what are clearly distinct imaginative exercises. It is one thing to imagine that you are Merkel skiing down a mountain and quite another thing to imagine that you are Greta Thunberg skiing down a mountain. But on Recanati's account, the content of my imagining in each case is the same property: the property of *skiing down a mountain*. It is true that the property is i-ascribed to different individuals in each case, but the individual herself does not figure into the content.

One might attempt to defend Recanati's account by claiming that in imagining that I am Thunberg skiing down the mountain, different properties figure into the content of my imagining than when I imagine that I am Merkel skiing down the mountain. For example, in the former case I may also i-ascribe the property of *being a Swedish climate activist* and in the latter case I also i-ascribe the property of *being Chancellor of Germany*. Or perhaps in the former case I also i-ascribe the property of *being Greta Thunberg* and in the latter case I i-ascribe the property of *being Angela Merkel*. However, it seems implausible and *ad hoc* to *require* that there will always be features of the content of my imaginings that distinguish between the two individuals. Why suppose that, for individuals *a* and *b*, whenever I imagine being *a* the content of the imagining will contain properties that distinguish it from the content of an imagining of being *b*? Imagination does not seem to have any such requirement; such distinguishing properties may not figure into my imaginative exercise.

One might further attempt to defend Recanati's account by claiming that even though the same properties are i-ascribed, the imaginings are distinct in virtue of having distinct circumstances of evaluation: Although imagining that one is Angela Merkel skiing down a mountain has the same

content (the property of *skiing down a mountain*) as imagining one is Greta Thunberg skiing down a mountain, they are different imaginative exercises in virtue of the fact that one involves i-ascribing properties to Merkel and the other involves i-ascribing properties to Thunberg. But this won't always work. Suppose that Lindsey is an expert Olympic downhill skier who has suffered a serious skiing accident resulting in complete amnesia. After waking up from a coma and seeing the two casts on her legs, she closes her eyes and imagines from the inside herself skiing down a mountain. She then turns on the television and sees a highlight reel from the 2018 Winter Olympics in which, unbeknownst to her, she took part. Without realizing that she is watching herself, she imagines from the inside that she is the skier that she sees on television skiing down the mountain "Oh how great it would be to be her!" she thinks to herself. These two imaginative exercises seem to be distinct. Lindsey would report the first as "I am imagining skiing down a mountain" and report the second as "I am imagining I am *that* skier on television skiing down a mountain". They might also occupy different causal roles: the first might give rise to feelings of pleasure, whereas the second might give rise to feelings of jealousy. Lindsey's first imaginative exercise is just like (IE1): on Recanati's account she i-ascribes the property of *skiing down a mountain* to herself. For her second imaginative exercise she takes the skier on television to be someone distinct from herself. This case, it seems, should be treated like (IE4) and so Lindsey i-ascribes the property of *skiing down a mountain* to the skier she sees on television, not realizing that the skier she sees on television is herself. In each case the content is the same: the property of *skiing down a mountain*, however we cannot individuate the imaginative exercises by appeal to the circumstance of evaluation since it is the same individual, Lindsey, that the properties are being i-ascribed to.⁴

I conclude that, although I think adopting a property account is the correct way of modelling imagination from the inside, I do not think that Recanati's account has the resources to model the rich and distinct types of first-person imaginings that we can have. I now turn to Dilip Ninan's account which I think makes more substantial progress in accommodating the content of first-person imaginings.

⁴ The same objection could be made using a standard Frege Puzzle case; a case that isn't based on *de se* ignorance. I see a man creeping around the docks and I imagine that I am him skiing down a mountain. Later I imagine that I am the well-respected Mayor skiing down a mountain. Unbeknownst to me, the lurking man is the Mayor: Bernard J. Ortcutt. It seems that these are two different imaginative exercises but on Recanati's account they cannot be distinguished at the level of content or by the circumstance of evaluation.

3. Ninan's Account

Dilip Ninan also defends a version of the property or centered worlds account of the imagination. We noted that (IE1) and (IE2) are imaginative exercises involving the first-person, but that they seem to involve the first-person in different ways. Ninan's account is designed to accommodate the two ways in which imaginings can involve the first-person. He notes a type of imagining that incorporates both of these ways: Ninan calls such cases 'Lakoff cases' after similar examples provided by George Lakoff. An example involves an imagining that is reported as:

(IE5) I imagined that I was Zsa Zsa Gabor and that I slapped me.⁵

In such cases I figure into the imaginative content in two ways. There is who I imagine being from the inside: in this case Zsa Zsa Gabor, and there is who in the imaginative scenario I actually believe myself to be: namely [Author], the recipient of the slap. Ninan captures these two ways in which imaginings can involve the first-person by positing *two* centers in the content of imaginings: one to model what he calls "the counterfactual self" and one to model what he calls "the belief self". The counterfactual self is who one is imagining being from the inside in an imaginative exercise: in (IE5) this is Zsa Zsa Gabor. The belief self is "the individual in one's imaginary scenario who represents the individual one actually takes oneself to be" (Ninan 2008, 45): in (IE5) this is [Author].⁶⁷

Taking a step back, Ninan's suggestion is to take the content of imagination to be a function from centered belief worlds to sets of centered worlds compatible with what the subject imagines (Ninan 2008, 43). The content of a subject's imagining is given by characterizing a set of centered worlds compatible with what the subject imagines relative to each of his centered belief worlds. The worlds compatible with what the subject imagines are in a sense parasitic upon the content of the subject's belief.⁸ Features of a subject's centered belief worlds can get imported into the set of centered worlds compatible with what the subject imagines. For example, suppose I see a man

⁵ Lakoff (1972). My example differs in an insubstantial way from Lakoff's original example.

⁶ Although imaginative exercises such as (IE5) might strike one as exotic, I don't think they are. I think they are quite common and they may well play an important role in empathizing with those we stand in various relations to. Reflecting on something I said to my partner this morning, I imagine that I am her hearing what I said. I conclude that I shouldn't have said it. Another case: a student comes to my office on the first day of the semester and I notice he is nervous as I am talking. I imagine being him, being lectured to by me across my desk about good work habits. I change topic and ask him about his summer. [Acknowledgement]

⁷ In "Imagination and the Self" Ninan argues that Recanati's account cannot accommodate Lakoff cases. I find his argument persuasive and take this to be another demonstration that Recanati's account lacks the resources to accommodate the various ways in which imaginings can involve the first person.

⁸ Due to Ninan's proposal, there is a resulting literature on so-called 'parasitic attitudes', e.g. Maier (2015) & Blumberg (unpublished)

walking through the park littering and I imagine walking up to him and scolding him. Each of my belief worlds contains a man with whom I am visually acquainted who is walking through the park littering. The worlds compatible with my imagining are characterized relative to these belief worlds. In such worlds, the individual I scold is the very individual with whom I am visually acquainted in each of my belief worlds.⁹ The centered worlds compatible with what I imagine “import” this individual from my belief worlds and it is him that I scold in my imagination worlds.

Ninan formulates his account in terms of a set of ordered pairs of centered worlds which he notes is equivalent to a function from centered worlds to sets of centered worlds (Ninan 2008, 43). He states his two-dimensional account of imagination as follows:

2D Imagination

“ $\langle \langle w', x' \rangle, \langle w'', x'' \rangle \rangle$ is compatible with what x imagines in w iff:

$\langle w', x' \rangle$ is compatible with what x believes in w , and $\langle w'', x'' \rangle$ is compatible with what x imagines in w relative to $\langle w', x' \rangle$

Then we can say that x imagines a two-dimensional centered intension p iff all the $\langle \langle w', x' \rangle, \langle w'', x'' \rangle \rangle$ compatible with what x imagines are contained in p ” (Ninan 2008, 44).

Ninan’s account has the flexibility to accommodate Lakoff cases in virtue of allowing for distinct representations of the counterfactual self (who I imagine being from the inside) and the belief self (who I actually take myself to be in the imagined scenario). So the content of the imagining in (IE5) involves a set of worlds centered on Gabor and also imports who I actually believe myself to be into the content as the recipient of the slap. The content is modelled on Ninan’s account as:

$\{ \langle \langle w, x \rangle, \langle w', x' \rangle \rangle : x' \text{ is Zsa Zsa Gabor in } w' \text{ and } x' \text{ is slapping } x \text{ in } w' \}$

In my imaginative exercise, my counterfactual self slaps my belief self.

Ninan uses the distinction between boring and interesting attitudes in order to formulate the imagining from the inside vs. imagining from the outside distinction. In “Attitudes *De Dicto* and *De Se*” David Lewis argues that sets of possible worlds are not always adequate for characterizing mental attitudes. Sometimes sets of centered worlds are needed. My belief that I am atop a mountain cannot be characterized by a set of possible worlds, rather it is characterized by a set of centered worlds in which the center of each world is atop a mountain. In order to uphold a uniform

⁹ Or it is his representative or counterpart in the imagination world.

account, Lewis proposes that the contents of all beliefs are sets of centered worlds, even when the center of the world is not doing any work. For example, my belief that bananas contain potassium is a set of centered worlds $\{ \langle w, x \rangle : x \text{ is in } w \text{ and bananas contain potassium in } w \}$. Every centered world in which the world is one in which bananas contain potassium is a member of the set. Andy Egan (2006, 107) introduces the label 'boring' for such sets of centered worlds. A set of centered worlds is *boring* just in case for any centers, x and y , of world w , $\langle w, x \rangle$ is in p if and only if $\langle w, y \rangle$ is in p . A centered proposition, p , is interesting just in case it is not boring. For interesting sets of centered worlds, such as the one that characterizes my belief that I am atop a mountain, only those centered worlds in which the center is atop a mountain are included in the set.

Boring centered propositions are equivalent to propositions as sets of possible worlds. Ninan uses the boring / interesting distinction to characterize the imagining from the inside vs imagining from the outside distinction. When I imagine from the inside skiing down a mountain, the set of centered worlds compatible with what I imagine (relative to a centered belief world) is interesting. When I imagine from the outside myself skiing down a mountain, the set of centered worlds compatible with what I imagine (relative to a centered belief world) is boring. Ninan states the imagining from the inside vs imagining from the outside distinction as follows:

- For all imaginings I , I is an imagining from the outside just in case the set of centered imagination worlds is boring (equivalent to a set of uncentered worlds).
- For all imaginings I , I is an imagining from the inside just in case the set of centered imagination worlds is interesting (not equivalent to a set of uncentered worlds) (Ninan 2008, 47).¹⁰

So the content of (IE1) is characterized by a set of centered imagination worlds that is interesting, whereas the content of (IE2) is characterized by a set of centered imagination worlds that is boring.

I think this account of imagination is on the right track. It has two features that I believe are correct and worth highlighting. First, it does justice to the observation that there are two distinct ways in which imagination can involve the first person: in imagination one can occupy a counterfactual first-person perspective and the imagined scenario can include who one actually takes herself to be. Second, it acknowledges the sense in which imagination relies on the content of

¹⁰ This is a slightly simplified statement of Ninan's (2008) formulation. Ninan distinguishes between i-boring content and b-boring content: the former applies when the set of centered imagination worlds is boring and the latter applies when the set of centered belief worlds is boring. The imagining from the inside vs. imagining from the outside distinction is given in terms of whether the set of centered imagination worlds is interesting or boring. Since this distinction is my focus here, I ignore here the b-boring / b-interesting distinction.

belief: belief contents can be imported into the content of imagination and I think this is essentially correct. Ninan's account avoids the main difficulty I raised for Recanati's account: when Lindsey wakes up from her coma, closes her eyes, and imagines from the inside skiing down a mountain, her imagination worlds are centered on who she takes herself to be in her belief worlds. When Lindsey later imagines from the inside being the skier she sees on television, her counterfactual self is distinct from her belief self: she believes herself to be someone distinct from who she imagines being from the inside. Modelling the subject's beliefs as part of the content of her imagining is crucial for distinguishing between these two cases.¹¹

Despite these virtues, I will argue that the account faces two substantial difficulties that require adopting a new account. The first difficulty is that the content of imagination fails to fully determine who in the imaginative scenario the subject takes herself to be. This results in the account conflating what are in fact distinct imaginings. The second difficulty is that the account misconstrues the imagining from the inside vs. the imagining from the outside distinction: there are straightforward cases of imagining from the outside in which the content of imagining is perspectival. I present the first difficulty below and the second difficulty in the next section.

Consider our injured amnesiac skier Lindsey. Suppose she is lying in her hospital bed imagining an alpine skiing event in which two skiers race head-to-head downhill. Suppose Lindsey has two imaginings from the outside: in both she imagines that the two skiers are racing each other down the mountain. In her first imagining, she imagines from the outside that she is the skier on the left who is winning the race. "Look at me leave the other skier in the dust!" she says to herself. In the second scenario she imagines from the outside that she is the skier on the right who is losing the race. "Look at me getting left in the dust!" she says to herself. That these are distinct imaginative exercises seems hard to deny. First, as I've suggested, Lindsey would give distinct verbal reports of each. Second, it seems plausible to suppose that they would occupy distinct causal roles: the first might give rise to feelings of vicarious pride, whereas the second might give rise to feelings of vicarious disappointment. The difficulty is that although these are distinct imaginative exercises, Ninan's account lacks the resources to assign them distinct contents. The belief set in each case will be the same: the set of centered worlds compatible with what Lindsey believes. In her current state of amnesia, Lindsey has no more reason to believe that she is in fact the skier on the right than she has for believing that she is in fact the skier on the left. Also, by stipulation, Lindsey's imaginative

¹¹ Ninan's account also can accommodate distinct imaginings in Frege Puzzle cases that Recanati's account cannot distinguish. My imagining that I am the man at the docks skiing down a mountain involves imagination worlds centered on a distinct individual in my beliefs worlds from when I imagine I am the mayor skiing down a mountain. Since my belief worlds take the man at the docks to be distinct from the mayor (even though they are in fact one and the same person): each imagining imports a distinct individual as the center of the imagination worlds.

exercises are both imaginings from the outside, like (IE2). Since both are imaginings from the outside, both imaginative contents are boring. Furthermore, the same set of qualitative, objective facts is being imagined in each imaginative exercise, so the set of worlds compatible with what Lindsey imagines is presumably the same for both imaginings. Although these are clearly distinct imaginings, Ninan's account of the content of imagination is unable to distinguish between them.¹²¹³

4. First-Person Imaginings: A New Proposal

Although Ninan's account contains many important insights that are necessary for characterizing the content of imaginings, I think it misconstrues the imagining from the inside vs. imagining from the outside distinction and, in so doing, conflates the content of distinct imaginings. Not all imaginings from the outside are uncentered; in fact it seems that few, if any, are. Few, if any, imaginings take the "view from nowhere". If we formulate the account in such a way that allows imaginings from the outside to have centered content, we can provide a more fine-grained and accurate account of the content of imagination; an account that can distinguish between different ways in which one can imagine oneself from the outside.

¹² The sort of case that Ninan's account is unable to accommodate need not involve an amnesiac: what's required is that the subject imagines from the outside being each of two individuals in the same scenario (in the sense that the same set of qualitative, objective facts obtain in both) and each individual is as much a doxastic possibility for the subject as the other. The same difficulty could be raised by considering Lewis's two gods who are omniscient with respect to non-*de se* truths yet ignorant with respect to *de se* truths. The god on the coldest mountain could first imagine from the outside that he is the god on the coldest mountain and then imagine from the outside that he is the god on the tallest mountain. Again these are distinct imaginative exercises, however the content of both will involve the same (boring) set of centered belief worlds, and the same (boring) set of worlds compatible with what the god imagines, and so, on Ninan's account, the difference between the imaginings won't arise at the level of content.

¹³ In conversation Dilip Ninan provided the following response: the set of worlds compatible with what Lindsey imagines are distinguished in each imaginative exercise by who Lindsey is in the worlds in each set. In Lindsey's first imaginative exercise, Lindsey is the skier on the left in the worlds compatible with what she imagines, and in her second imaginative exercise, Lindsey is the skier on the right. I see three difficulties with this response. First, the response presupposes haecceitism. By stipulation, the two scenarios Lindsey imagines are alike in all their objective, qualitative features, yet they differ with respect to who Lindsey is. If this is modelled by sets of worlds that are qualitatively indistinguishable, yet differ with respect to who Lindsey is, this entails haecceitism. As haecceitism is a substantial and controversial metaphysical thesis, it would be preferable to have an account that doesn't presuppose it. Second, it seems incorrect to describe the set of worlds compatible with what Lindsey imagines as *boring* given that they provide her with self-locating content. In fact the move to sets of *centered* worlds to capture first-person content seems unmotivated if we grant that differences in first-person content can be captured in terms of haecceitistic differences between sets of uncentered worlds. Third, it isn't clear that the move to haecceitism solves the problem. Suppose we grant that each of Lindsey's imaginative exercises is characterized by sets of worlds that agree on all the qualitative facts but disagree on who Lindsey is. How, then, do we distinguish Lindsey's two imaginative exercises in which she imagines that *she herself* is each of the two skiers from two distinct imaginative exercises in which she imagines *of Lindsey* that she is each of the two skiers? What makes the boring proposition that serves as the content of her imagining an imagining about *herself* rather than a *de re* imagining about someone she mistakenly takes to be distinct from herself?

It seems that when one carries out imaginative exercises from the outside, such as when I imagine from the outside that I am skiing down a mountain, one adopts a particular *point of view*.¹⁴ Perhaps the point of view hovers over the slopes like a drone, or watches from the side of the slope, or from the stands at the bottom; perhaps the point of view switches from hovering above to slopeside during the imaginative exercise. Consider the following description of imagining from the outside by Kendall Walton:

When Gregory imagines playing in a major league baseball game and hitting a home run, he may imagine this from the inside, imagine feeling in his hands the shock of the bat connecting with the ball, and so on. But suppose he imagines hitting the home run from the perspective of a spectator in the stands. He visualizes the scene from that point of view, and his image of the field includes Gregory as he slams the ball over the center field fence and rounds the bases. This imagining is, I believe, best classified as *de se*. It is perfectly natural to describe Gregory as imagining hitting a home run, and as imagining that he himself hits one. (Walton 1990, 30).

The second imaginative exercise that Walton describes is contrasted with the first and is a case of imagining from the outside. Yet, Gregory's imagining is not plausibly described as uncentered: rather his imagining has a point of view: "from the perspective of a spectator in the stands" (Walton 1990, 30).

A passage from Zeno Vendler provides a similar description of an imagining from the outside that is clearly perspectival:

We are looking down upon the ocean from a cliff. The water is rough and cold, yet there are some swimmers riding the waves. "Just imagine swimming in that water" says my friend, and I know what to do. "Brr!" I say as I imagine the cold, the salty taste, the tug of the current, and so forth. Had he said "Just imagine yourself swimming in that water", I could comply in another way too: by picturing myself being tossed about, a scrawny body bobbing up and down in the foamy waste. In this case, I do not have to leave the cliff in imagination: I may see myself, if I so choose, from the very same perspective. Not so in the previous case: if I indeed imagine being in the water, then I may see the cliff above me, but not myself from it (Vendler 1979, 161).

Again, the second imagining is a case of imagining oneself from the outside that is clearly perspectival: Vendler looks down at himself *from the cliff* and sees himself bobbing up and down in the water below.

¹⁴ Although the phrase 'point of view' has visual connotations, I wish to understand it in a sufficiently broad way so that it also applies to non-visual imaginings: in imagining that a song is playing one also adopts a point of view in the intended sense.

Even though the second imagining described by Walton and the second imagining described by Vendler are both from the outside, both adopt a point of view: the point of view of a spectator for Walton and the point of view from the top of the cliff for Vendler. On Ninan's (2008) account, imagining from the outside always has uncentered content and so the point of view that one adopts in an imaginative exercise is not captured by the content. Instead, I propose that when we model these imaginings from the outside, we should do so using *interesting* sets of centered worlds: representational entities that are able to capture the perspectival nature of the imaginative content. Furthermore, it seems possible to imagine oneself from the outside from different points of view: Gregory can imagine himself hitting a homerun from the perspective of a spectator in the stands and also imagine the same scenario from the perspective of a passenger on the Good Year blimp. These seem like distinct imaginative exercises and interesting sets of worlds are needed to capture this difference in point of view.

Although I think Ninan's (2008) framework makes substantial progress in capturing the different ways in which imaginings can involve the first-person, we have encountered two substantial problems with it. First, it is unclear how the content of imagination determines who in the imaginative scenario the subject takes herself to be. This is the problem raised by the case in which Lindsey imagines that she is each of the two skiers in the head-to-head race. Without changing my beliefs about myself, I can imagine from the outside that I am one individual in a scenario and then imagine from the outside that I am a different individual in the very same scenario. In order to accommodate this, we need to include a representative in the imagination worlds who represents who one actually takes oneself to be.

Second, Ninan's account lacks the resources to accommodate the way in which imaginings from the outside can be perspectival. If we claim that all imaginings from the outside have boring sets of centered worlds as their content, we cannot capture the perspectival content of imaginative exercises such as when Gregory imagines himself hitting a homerun from the perspective of a spectator in the stands or when Vendler imagines himself swimming in the frigid water below from the perspective of the cliff above.

I propose solving both of these problems by holding on to Ninan's insight that content of imagination is a function from centered belief worlds to sets of centered worlds compatible with what the subject imagines, but enriching the centered worlds compatible with what the subject imagines to include *two* centers: one that represents who the subject takes herself to be in the imagined scenario and one that represents the point of view that the subject adopts in the imagined scenario. The examples considered by Walton and Vendler show that imaginings involving the self are centered in two respects: there is who you take yourself to be in the imagined scenario and

there is the point of view that you adopt in the imagined scenario. In the Walton example, Gregory takes himself to be the player who just hit a homerun and he imagines it from the perspective of a spectator in the stands. In the Vendler example, Vendler takes himself to be the man bobbing up and down in the water and he imagines it from the perspective of the top of the cliff. Rather than characterizing what a subject imagines in terms of *singularly*-centered worlds; I suggest using *pair-centered* worlds.¹⁵ A pair-centered world $\langle w, \langle x, y \rangle \rangle$ is compatible with what a subject imagines relative to one of her belief worlds just in case w is compatible with how the subject imagines things being objectively, x is compatible with who the subject actually takes herself to be in w , and y is compatible with the point of view that the subject adopts in the imaginative exercise. We can then provide the following account of the content of imagination:

$\langle \langle w', x' \rangle, \langle w'', \langle x'', y'' \rangle \rangle \rangle$ is compatible with what x imagines in w iff:

$\langle w', x' \rangle$ is compatible with what x believes in w , and $\langle w'', \langle x'', y'' \rangle \rangle$ is compatible with what x imagines in w relative to $\langle w', x' \rangle$.

x imagines an intension p iff all the $\langle \langle w', x' \rangle, \langle w'', \langle x'', y'' \rangle \rangle \rangle$ compatible with what x imagines are contained in p .

In order to clarify the proposed account, let us see how it distinguishes between the two imaginative exercises (IE1) and (IE2) introduced in section 1. In carrying out (IE1), I imagine from the inside that I am skiing down the mountain. The content of my imagining is given by the set of ordered pairs $\{\langle \langle w', x' \rangle, \langle w'', \langle x'', y'' \rangle \rangle \rangle\}$ such that the first member of the ordered pair, $\langle w', x' \rangle$, represents my centered belief worlds: w' is compatible with how I believe the world to be and x' is compatible with who I believe myself to be in w' . The second member of the ordered pair, $\langle w'', \langle x'', y'' \rangle \rangle$, represents my pair-centered imagination worlds: all the worlds, w'' , are compatible with how I imagine things being objectively: they contain a ski slope, skiers, a chair lift, falling snow, etc. The first center, x'' , of the pair-centered worlds compatible with what I imagine is centered on who I take myself to be in the imagined scenario. In the case of (IE1), the first center is centered on a skier flying down the mountain. The second center, y'' , represents the point of view that I adopt in the imagined scenario. In (IE1) the point of view I adopt coincides with who I take myself to be: I take myself to be a skier flying down the mountain and I also adopt the point of view of that skier. So the second center, y'' , is

¹⁵ Pair-centered worlds are introduced by Ninan in his (2012) in which he uses them for a different purpose. Sets of worlds with more than one center—so-called ‘multi-centered worlds’—are introduced and used in an account of assertion in Torre (2010) and Ninan (2010).

also centered on the skier. In general, in cases in which one imagines oneself from the inside, the two centers of the pair-centered imagination worlds are centered on the same individual.

This can be contrasted with a case of imagining oneself from the outside such as (IE2). If we suppose that I have the same beliefs when carrying out (IE2), the first members of the set of ordered pairs, $\{\langle w', x' \rangle, \langle w'', x'' \rangle, \langle y'' \rangle\}$, will be the same as the case of (IE1). Let us suppose that in carrying out (IE2) I imagine the same objective scenario as (IE1): a scenario that contains a ski slope, skiers, a chairlift, snow falling, etc. So all the worlds, w'' , compatible with how I imagine things being objectively will be the same in (IE2) as in (IE1). The first center, x'' , of the pair-centered worlds compatible with what I imagine is centered on who I take myself to be in the imagined scenario: a skier flying down the mountain. The difference between (IE1) and (IE2) is a difference in point of view: in (IE1) the point of view is that of the individual I take myself to be, whereas in (IE2) the point of view is external to the individual I take myself to be: let us suppose I imagine myself skiing down the mountain from the perspective of the bottom of the slope. This difference between (IE1) and (IE2) is captured by the second center, y'' , of the pair-centered worlds. Rather than y'' being centered on the individual I take myself to be in the imagined scenario as in (IE1), it is centered on the bottom of the slope, the perspective from which I imagine myself skiing down the mountain.

The examples of imagining oneself from the outside given by Walton and Vendler are modelled similarly: the first center of the pair-centered imagination worlds, x'' , is centered on the homerun hitter in Walton's case, and the swimmer in Vendler's case, representing who the subject takes himself to be in the imagined scenario. The second center, y'' , of the pair-centered imagination worlds is centered on the spectator stands in Walton's case and the top of the cliff in Vendler's case, representing the point of view from which the scenario is imagined. So, the proposed account successfully distinguishes between imagining oneself from the inside versus imagining oneself from the outside, while allowing that imaginings from the outside are perspectival and that the perspective of the imagining can vary.

There is a debate in the philosophy of imagination about whether imagining is fundamentally experiential in nature: does imagining from the outside fundamentally involve imagining a particular subjective experience?¹⁶ For example, does imagining that a monkey is riding

¹⁶ Proponents of the view that imagination is fundamentally experiential in nature include Peacocke (1985) and Vendler (1984). Peacocke states that "to imagine something is always at least to imagine, from the inside, being in some conscious state" (1985, 21). Discussing the view that "all imagining is fundamentally experiential in nature", Amy Kind (2016) writes "imagining that a monster is chasing you is really to imagine seeing a monster chasing you. This might be imagined from your ordinary perspective, as when you look over your shoulder, or it might be imagined from an external perspective, analogous to how the scene would be depicted by security camera footage of the incident". Note that the second case described by Kind is what I've called a self-imagining from the outside and can be accommodated on the proposed account. For discussion of

on the back of a giraffe involve imagining *seeing* a monkey riding on the back of a giraffe? My proposal seems to pick sides in this debate by claiming that imaginings from the outside involve adopting a particular point of view. Although I find this claim about the nature of imagination plausible, the account of the content of imagination that I have proposed is not committed to it. Perhaps not all imaginings from the outside involve adopting a point of view. If so, this can be accommodated on the proposed account by adopting sets of pair-centered imagination worlds in which the second center, the one that models point of view, is *boring*: for any centers, a and b , of world w'' , $\langle\langle w', x' \rangle, \langle w'', \langle x'', a \rangle \rangle\rangle$ is in p iff $\langle\langle w', x' \rangle, \langle w'', \langle x'', b \rangle \rangle\rangle$ is in p . I think it would be difficult to deny that *some* imaginings from the outside are perspectival in nature (how else are we to understand cases like those presented by Walton and Vendler?) and so I think a center that represents the perspectival nature of such imaginings is required.

The proposed account also solves the other problem with Ninan's account: that it fails to distinguish between imaginings in which a subject imagines that she is distinct individuals in the same scenario. The proposed account is able to distinguish between the cases in which Lindsey imagines that she is each of the two downhill skiers. Let us suppose that she imagines both scenarios from the point of view at the bottom of the slope. The belief worlds will be the same in both cases. They will all be doxastic possibilities for Lindsey: she believes herself to be in a hospital bed with two broken legs. The difference between the two imaginative exercises concerns who Lindsey takes herself to be in each imagined scenario. This is captured by the first center of the pair-centered worlds compatible with what Lindsey imagines. In the first imagining in which she imagines that she is the skier on the left who is winning the race, the first center of the pair-centered worlds compatible with what she imagines is centered on the skier on the left:

$$\{\langle\langle w', x' \rangle, \langle w'', \langle \text{left skier}, y'' \rangle \rangle\rangle\}$$

In the second imagining in which he imagines that she is the skier on the right who is losing the race, the first center of the pair-centered worlds compatible with what she imagines is centered on the skier on the right:

$$\{\langle\langle w', x' \rangle, \langle w'', \langle \text{right skier}, y'' \rangle \rangle\rangle\}$$

In both cases, the second center, y'' , is centered on the bottom of the slope since that is the point of view she adopts in both imaginings. By positing a center that represents who the subject takes

difficulties for the view that imagination is fundamentally experiential in nature see White (1990) and Kind (2016).

herself to be in a given imagined scenario, we can accommodate cases in which a subject imagines from the outside that she is distinct individuals in the same scenario.¹⁷

Let us return to the Lakoff case in which I imagine that I am Zsa Zsa Gabor slapping myself. In such a case, the individual I actually take myself to be in the imagined scenario is the one getting slapped, and the point of view I adopt is that of Zsa Zsa Gabor. This is nicely captured on the proposed account by taking the first center of the pair-centered worlds compatible with what I imagine to be centered on [Author] and the second center to be centered on Zsa Zsa Gabor. There are two insights that come from considering Lakoff cases such as this one. The first is that whether an imagining counts as being from the inside or the outside *is a relative matter*. Is the Lakoff case an imagining from the inside or an imagining from the outside? It appears to be both: I imagine myself, [Author], from the outside, but I imagine being Zsa Zsa Gabor from the inside. So imaginings are not from the inside or from the outside *simpliciter*: I can imagine myself from the outside, but I may do so by imagining being someone else from the inside. Rather than a binary distinction between imagining from the inside and imagining from the outside, these considerations motivate a four-way distinction as follows:

- 1) *Self-imagining from the inside*: when I imagine that I am myself in a given situation and I adopt the point of view of myself in that situation (such as when I imagine from the inside skiing down a mountain as in (IE1)).
- 2) *Other-imagining from the inside*: when I imagine that I am someone I take to be distinct from myself and adopt the point of view of that individual (such as when I imagine from the inside that I am Merkel skiing down a mountain as in (IE4)).
- 3) *Self-imagining from the outside* when I imagine myself from a point of view distinct from my own in the imagined scenario (such as when I imagine from the outside myself skiing down a mountain as in (IE2)).

¹⁷ The similar example from fn.11 involving one of Lewis's two gods imagining that he is each of the two gods is handled in a similar way. Because the god is omniscient with respect to non-*de se* truths, there are only two centered worlds compatible with what the god believes: where 'a' is the world the god inhabits, the two centered worlds compatible with what he believes are <a, god on the coldest mountain> and <a, god on the tallest mountain>. In his first imagining, the first center of the pair centered world compatible with what he imagines is centered on the god on the tallest mountain and in his second imagining the first center is centered on the god on the coldest mountain.

- 4) *Other-imagining from the outside* when I imagine someone, y, who I do not take to be myself, from a point of view distinct from y's in the imagined scenario (such as when I imagine from the outside Merkel skiing down a mountain as in (IE3)).

Once we recognize that imaginings involving the self have two centered components: who in the imagined scenario I take myself to be and the point of view that I adopt, we see that merely drawing an imagining from the inside versus imagining from the outside distinction is too simplistic.

The second insight is that there is a fundamental similarity between a self-imagining from the outside such as (IE2) and a Lakoff case. In both cases, I view myself from an external point of view. The difference is that in the Lakoff case, the external point of view is much more fleshed out. In our example, the point of view is that of Zsa Zsa Gabor. In the more run-of-the-mill self-imagining from the outside, such as when I imagine from the outside myself skiing down a mountain as in (IE2), the point of view does not correspond to a particular individual. It need not even be associated with any person; it could just be a spatial location. So the second center of the pair-centered worlds compatible with what the subject imagines can be centered on a particular individual, corresponding to the point of view of a particular individual, or can be centered on various individuals who share a point of view (such as Walton's case in which Gregory imagines hitting a home run "from the perspective of a spectator in the stands" (Walton 1990: 30), or it can be centered on a spatial location from which the point of view emanates.

These considerations suggest an additional argument for taking the content of at least some imaginings from the outside to be centered. First, consider a Lakoff-style case in which you imagine being Zsa Zsa Gabor watching yourself skiing down a mountain. Next, imagine a case like (IE2) in which you imagine from the outside yourself skiing down a mountain. There is undoubtedly a substantial similarity between the two imaginative exercises; in fact things may even 'look' the same in both imaginings. On Ninan's account, however, the first imagining is classified as an imagining from the inside and has interesting, centered content and the second is classified as an imagining from the outside and has boring, uncentered content. But this misconstrues the substantial similarity between the two cases. It isn't the case that when one goes from the first imagining to the second, one's perspective shifts from a subjective view from Zsa Zsa to an objective view from nowhere. Both are inherently perspectival in much the same way.

5. Conclusion

I have highlighted the different ways in which imaginings can involve the first-person. I considered two existing proposals for modelling the mental content of first-person imaginings:

Francois Recanati's (2007a, 2007b) account and Dilip Ninan's (2008) account. Although I agree with Recanati's insight to use centered content for capturing first-person imaginings, I argued that his account does not have the resources to accommodate the different ways in which imaginings can involve the first-person. I think Ninan's (2008) account is more successful and contains a number of insights essential for modelling the content of first-person imagination. However I identified two problems with it: 1) it cannot distinguish between cases in which a subject imagines from the outside that she is distinct individuals in the same scenario and 2) it mischaracterizes the imagining from the inside vs imagining from the outside distinction. Imaginings from the outside are oftentimes, perhaps always, centered.

I claim that imagining from the inside vs imagining from the outside should be understood as a relative matter: In a given imaginative scenario I can imagine myself from the outside while imagining being someone else (Gabor) from the inside. I proposed a modification of Ninan's account that makes use of pair-centered worlds: one center models who the subject actually takes herself to be, and the other center models the subject's point of view in the imagined scenario. I claim that such an account solves both problems: it can distinguish between certain imaginative exercises that Ninan's (2008) account is unable to distinguish and it allows that imaginings from the outside are perspectival.

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