Philosophical Perspectives on Memory and Imagination

Edited by Anja Berninger and Íngrid Vendrell Ferran

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Chapter 12

Imagine What It Feels Like

Íngrid Vendrell Ferran

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Íngrid Vendrell Ferran

1 Introduction

Consider the following scenarios of a phenomenon that should be familiar to most readers:

> *Scenario 1: Pre-experiencing alternative emotions*. You are trying to decide what to do on Sunday afternoon. Friend A, with whom you always have fun, suggests going to the cinema to see a recent film. Friend B, who has a tendency to criticize others, which usually leaves you sad, invites you to have coffee at her place. You imagine the two scenes and adopt the perspective of your future self in each. You ponder the two options. You are able to anticipate feeling joy with A and feeling sad with B. It is on the basis of this pre-experience that you make a decision.
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> *Scenario 2: Figuring out parental love*. A friend, who has recently had a baby, describes to you the overwhelming feeling of love she experienced the first time she saw the newborn. Parental love, she says, is similar to falling in love but instead of romantic nuances, it has components of caring and protecting the other. Not being a parent yourself, you try to imagine how she feels by generating variations in the imagination of the qualitative feel of different forms of love with which you are familiar (e.g., romantic love, filial love, self-love).
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> *Scenario 3: Engaging with fictional humiliation*. You are reading a novel in which the main character is feeling humiliated. You have never felt humiliation, but you are acquainted with feelings of embarrassment, shame, being hurt, being unfairly treated, and other forms of being diminished in worth. On the basis of this acquaintance, you simulate the character's feelings. This enables you to participate in the novel and respond with pity for the character.

Imagining what a particular emotion feels like is a relatively common exercise in our everyday lives.[1] As the three scenarios illustrate, it happens in decision-making, in empathy, and in engaging with fictions, yet such acts

of imagining are also a central aspect of planning, daydreaming, affective forecasting, etc. In the respective debates in the philosophy of mind, the fact that we can imagine what a particular emotion feels like is often taken for granted. Yet, in the philosophical discussion on imagination, this kind of imaginings has received scant attention. Although it has been acknowledged that imagination comes in different kinds, with some of them – such as sensory imagination, belief-like imaginings, and imaginative desires – having been widely examined, imagining how an emotion feels has not been the focus of the philosophical agenda. While in the recent past, scattered discussions on such imaginings have been provided by Walton (1990), Moran (1994), Currie and Ravenscroft (2002), Goldie (2005), and Dorsch (2012), neither Kind's (2016) nor Abraham's (2020) recently published handbooks on imagination contain a single chapter devoted to the issue.[2] Against this backdrop, the aim of this chapter is to analyze the structure of imagining what an emotion feels like.

The chapter will proceed as follows. I begin by arguing that these imaginings cannot be explained exclusively by their content and that a focus on the mode of imagining is required. We not only imagine having emotions, but we also imagine them experientially. As such, we imagine feeling said emotions (Section 2). I then analyze the content of such imaginings in terms of the phenomenal properties of emotions undergone from a particular subjective perspective within the imagined scenario (Section 3). Next, I argue that the mode in which such emotions are experientially imagined requires other-oriented perspective-shifting and the re-creation of an emotion-like state (Section 4). I then go on to examine how we generate emotion-like states in two cases: when the emotion has been previously felt (Section 5) and when it has not been previously experienced (Section 6). The main findings are summarized in the conclusion (Section 7).

2 Experientially Imagining Emotions: A Question of Content and Mode

In the philosophy of imagination, it is customary to distinguish between propositional and experiential imaginings. While propositional imaginings have a structure akin to beliefs and judgements, – i.e., we imagine *that* such and such is the case – experiential imaginings are concerned with *experiences* of different sorts (visual, auditive, tactile, emotional, etc.) (Kind 2016, 5). Some authors such as Dokic and Arcangeli (2015) consider the experiential imagination to be a heterogeneous class encompassing different kinds such as sensory imagination, motor imagining, subjective imagination, and proprioceptive imagination. Though they do not mention the kind of imaginings at stake in the present chapter, I will work here with the idea that imagining what a particular emotion feels like has to be regarded as a kind of experiential imagining (similarly to Dorsch 2012). Indeed, when we imagine how an emotion feels, we do not merely imagine that it is

the case that we feel joy or sadness, that our friend feels love, or that the fictional character is feeling humiliated; we imagine the experience of these emotions. Though on certain occasions the experiential imaginings might be based on propositional imaginings, both kinds of imaginative exercises differ at least in their respective contents: the former is directed towards propositions, the latter towards experiences.

The particular case of experientially imagining an emotion can be regarded as a *subjective imagining* – using Dokic and Arcangeli's (2015) terminology – because these imaginings concern the experience of one's own mind.[3] More precisely, we imagine the "what it feels like" of such emotional experiences. In my view, an important feature of subjective imaginings of emotions is that the imaginings have themselves an *emotional character*. In generating the qualitative feel of an emotion in the imagination, we ourselves seem to undergo a kind of emotional experience. This has led some authors to speak of a "quasi-emotion", an "imagining with feeling", an "emotional imagining", or an imaginative counterpart of the emotion. A crucial question to clarify here is whether the emotional character of the imagining can be explained purely in terms of its content – i.e., the emotional experience – or whether other elements are responsible for it. Three answers have been provided to this question.

As argued by Moran (1994) and Dorsch (2012), Walton (1990) can be regarded as a proponent of the view that the emotional character of these imaginings can be explained exclusively by their *contents*. According to Walton, we feel a quasi-emotion about some aspects represented in the fictional work (we have quasi-fear triggered by some imagined object), we imagine having a genuine emotion towards the fictional entities (we imagine that we fear an object), and then we imagine feeling the genuine emotion towards the fictional entities (we imagine being frightened). We imagine our quasi-emotion to be a real emotional response. The emotional character of our imaginings is assumed to be part of what is imagined.

By contrast, Moran (1994) argues that given that we can imagine feeling an emotion in a dispassionate way, the emotional nature of such imaginings is not explicable in terms of the phenomenal features of the imagined content nor in terms of the self-referring content of the imagining. Rather, in Moran's view, the emotional character is due to what can be called an *emotional mode of imagining*. In particular, he argues that it is a question of the "manner" of imagining (1994, 85), which he describes as "imagining something with feeling" (1994, 93). According to Moran, a feature of this emotional mode of imagining is that in such imaginings, we not only imagine experiencing an emotion but we also really experience an instance of genuine feeling.

Dorsch (2012) presents his own proposal as a third option. His aim is to supplement Walton's account and explain the emotional character of such imaginings in terms of their contents. For Dorsch, the content and the manner of representation are inseparable aspects of a unified experience.

Given that such imaginings have emotional feelings as their contents, imagining such emotional feelings has an emotional character by virtue of representing the feeling as instantiated. As he puts it: such imagining "consists in non-propositionally (non-intellectually) imagining the instantiation of the phenomenal character of an episode of emotion" (2012, 337). In his account, the emotional character of such imaginings arises from what is imagined: the emotional feeling. More precisely, the emotional character is provided by the *representation of an emotional feeling in the imagination* and not by a genuine feeling, as in Moran.

In this chapter, I develop a fourth alternative which explains the emotional character of such imaginings in terms of an *experiential mode of imagining emotional contents*. I agree with Moran that the content alone cannot explain the emotional character of our imaginings. Not only can we imagine these contents in a dispassionate manner, as Moran claims, but – and this is my main argument against content-based accounts – the same content (the emotion) can be the target of mental states other than imagining. I can imagine feeling joy/sadness, but I can also desire feeling joy/sadness, I can remember feeling joy/sadness, I can believe that feeling joy/sadness is good or bad, and so on. If the same content can be the target of different modes, then the emotional character of the imagining cannot be fully explained in terms of having an emotional experience as content. Rather, we have to consider the mode in which the content is targeted when we experientially imagine it.

Is there an emotional mode of imagining "with feeling" as Moran claims? I think not. Among the many arguments that Dorsch (2012, 359) presents against Moran, two are particularly powerful. To begin with, it is not clear how the "feeling" when we imagine "with feeling" is connected to the imagining. If the feeling is the result of the imagining, then it is difficult to understand how the imagining is emotional in nature. We would have the imagining on the one hand, and the resulting feeling on the other, but the latter is not part of the former. Yet, as Dorsch argues, we expect both elements to be more unified. Second, how something is represented places some restrictions on what can be represented, but such restrictions are not given for the case of imagining "with feeling". For instance, while visual representations are restricted to visible entities (we can see or visualize only things which are visible, and the same can be said of other sensory modalities), there are no restrictions on what we can "imagine with feeling" because we can imagine visual, auditive, motor, action, etc., imaginings "with feeling".

How are we to understand the mode of imagining? Dorsch, who aims at developing an account focused on the content of imagining, ends up claiming that the emotional content is represented experientially in the imagination. In my view, the idea of a representation characteristic of the experiential imaginings of emotions should be developed in more detail. To that end, in this chapter, I will work with the idea that experiential imagining is a mode of representing contents to our mind and apply it to the case of emotional contents.

This view of imagining as a mode was widely extended among phenomenologists such as Husserl (2005) and Sartre (2010) to explain the nature of sensory imagination. Occasionally in this chapter, I will resort to some views of the former to develop my own account. More recently, loosely taking inspiration from this tradition, Arcangeli (2020) has elaborated an attitudinal account of imagining.[4] Her account is focused mainly on sensory imagination (e.g., imagining-seeing a flower) as a kind of experiential imagining. Arcangeli argues that what is characteristic of sensory imagining is not its content, but the attitude (mode) used to target the content. In her view, sensory imagination has to be understood as a modification of the attitude of imagining in terms of perception. Accordingly, she speaks not just of "imagining seeing" something but of "imagining-seeing" something so that it is clear that "seeing" modifies the way of imagining and it is not part of the content. In sensory imagination, the contents are imagined in a specific attitude, which she characterizes in terms of perception-like imagining. This attitude of imagining consists in "re-creating" or "mimicking" non-imaginative kinds of mental states.[5] As she notes, the literature refers to these re-created states, using the suffix "-like" and the prefix "quasi-" (e.g., perception-like, quasi-perception).

Though Arcangeli's account, like that of Husserl (2005) and Sartre (2010), is focused mainly on sensory imagination as a kind of experiential imagining, it provides a general picture of the mode of imagining typical of experiential imagination, which, in my view, is typical also of other types of experiential imaginings such as imagining what an emotion feels like. If imagining what an emotion feels like is a kind of experiential imagining, then we can expect it to exhibit similar features to sensory imagination. Yet, before developing this point in Section 4, it is first necessary to analyze the content of imagining what an emotion feels like.

3 Emotional Experiences, Phenomenal Properties, and Perspectives

What is the *content* imagined in the three previously mentioned scenarios? In the three cases, our imaginings are directed towards imagined emotional experiences. A great part of the content of our imaginings is of an *imagistic nature*. In fact, in each scenario, several instances of mental imagery of different kinds appear entangled. The notions of "image" and "imagery" concern not only *visual contents* but also contents in other *sensory modalities*. These images give you the object of your imagining. In the first scenario, you visualize your future self with friend A sitting in the cinema; you imagine watching the images on the screen, hearing the sounds, smelling and tasting popcorn, etc. You also visualize your future self with friend B sitting in her kitchen, seeing her face, listening to her while smelling and tasting the coffee, etc. You have a visual content of your future self, friend A, the screen, the movie, friend B, her kitchen, the coffee, etc. You have an auditive content of the sounds in the cinema, in the movie, of your friend's

voice, an olfactory and gustative content of the popcorn and the coffee. A tactile content of the seat, etc. Your imaginings might also have motor and proprioceptive contents, etc. Your imaginings also have *emotional contents*. In scenario 1, you imagine your future self feeling joyful with friend A and feeling sad with friend B.

Both sensory and emotional contents are informed by *non-imagistic propositional elements* such as suppositions and knowledge about the situations you imagine (see Gregory 2016, 100; Arcangeli 2020, 316). For scenario 1, this includes what you know about the looks of your friends, of the cinema or the kitchen, what you know about friend A (e.g., that meeting her has usually been fun) and what you know about friend B (e.g., she has a predisposition to criticize others), and so on.

Let's now zoom in on the particular object of imagining what an emotion feels like: the emotional experience – i.e., *the emotion*. Three constitutive moments of the emotions should be first distinguished.[6] First, emotions have a *cognitive-intentional moment*. Emotions are intentional states whose objects can be of different kinds: items, animals, persons, events, etc. The objects are presented to our mind by means of cognitive states such as perceptions, memories, imaginings, beliefs, suppositions, and so on (e.g., Goldie 2000, against classical analytical approaches that took only beliefs into consideration). Thus, when I claim to feel joyful or sad about something, these emotions presuppose that I perceive this something, remember or imagine it, that I have a belief or a supposition about it, and so on.

Second, emotions have an *evaluative-axiological dimension*. There is an intimate link between emotion and value. Though philosophers disagree about the specific nature of the relation between emotion and evaluative properties, such debates are not relevant here. Rather, the central issue for our purposes is that emotions target objects which are presented to us as being imbued with value – i.e., as inviting us to adopt a pro- or contra-attitude towards them. Thus, in joy, the object is presented under a positive light, while in sadness, it is seen in a negative one.

Finally, emotions have *phenomenal properties*. These cannot be reduced to their hedonic valence, i.e., whether an emotion is pleasant or unpleasant; rather, the phenomenal properties refer to the qualitative feel that is characteristic of each emotion, what makes it feel unique and what enables us to distinguish one emotion from another. There is something that it feels like to experience joy, just as there is something that it feels like to experience sadness.

When we imagine an emotional experience, the imagined emotion exhibits these three moments. However, some specificities result from the fact that the emotion is imagined. First, the imagined emotion is based on *imagined cognitive states* regarding the *imagined target* (for a similar point, see Goldie 2005, 134). If I imagine feeling joyful with friend A, the imagined joy is based on the imagined perception of the situation of going to the cinema with her (this involves imagined sensory perceptions of the

different kinds mentioned earlier), the imagined beliefs that the movie is a masterpiece, and so on. If I imagine feeling sad with friend B, this sadness is based on the imagined perception of the situation with B (which involves imagined sensory perceptions of different kinds), the belief that she is too critical of others, etc.

Second, the emotion is imagined as targeting an object which is presented as having an *imagined evaluative property*. For instance, joy is imagined as targeting a situation imagined to have a positive value and sadness one which is imagined as having a negative value.

Finally, the imagined emotion is *imagined* as having specific *phenomenal properties*. This involves imagining its specific qualitative feel. I imagine joy to be pleasant, to have a specific quality, to be linked to action tendencies such as an impulse to jump, etc. If I imagine the phenomenology of sadness, I imagine not only its unpleasantness but also the dejection, the lassitude, the blues, etc., which constitute its particular colour and which makes sadness distinguishable from other unpleasant states. The imagined phenomenology might end up evoking real phenomenal properties – you might end up feeling uplifted after imagining feeling joy and depressed as a result of imagining feeling sad – but this is a consequence of your imagining, which must be distinguished from the imagining itself.

It is this last moment regarding the *phenomenal properties of the emotion* that is at the core of imagining what an emotion feels like. This is consistent with Dorsch's (2012) idea exposed earlier – namely, that we imagine the phenomenal character of an emotion, which he refers to as emotional feeling. When I imagine feeling joyful with friend A and feeling sad with friend B, my imaginings are focused neither on the imagined objects and their imagined cognitive bases such as the perception of the screen or the coffee nor on the imagined evaluative properties such as being positive or depressing. In fact, they are focused on the emotional properties of the emotion in question. Thus, imaginings of what an emotion feels like are what Peacocke (2020) has labelled "phenomenal imaginings" – i.e., imaginings concerned with the phenomenal character of an experience. As she mentions, this expression is preferable to the expression imagining "what it is like", which is suggestive but too vague. Indeed, if I imagine what it is like to be joyful in the cinema with friend A, this imagining does not necessarily involve the imagining of the phenomenal properties of the emotion of joy. In fact, it can be the case that imagining what it is like to be joyful leads me to imagine the kind of thoughts that I would have, the kind of things that make me feel joy, and the kind of reasons that explain this, etc., but not necessarily what joy *feels* like. By contrast, when I imagine "what it *feels* like" to be joyful, this imagining has the phenomenal properties of the emotion of joy as its content. In what follows, the expression "imagining what a particular emotion feels like" should be understood in terms of imagining what the phenomenal properties of a particular emotion feel like.

Analogous cases can be construed for scenarios 2 and 3 where we imagine situations in which a subject different from us is feeling an emotion. While in scenario 1, you imagine a virtual future self feeling joy or sadness (one can imagine scenarios in which the one who feels the emotion is a past self or a hypothetical coetaneous self); in scenario 2, you imagine another self – i.e., your friend – who has recently become a parent and feels for the first time a novel form of love; and in scenario 3, you imagine a fictional character feeling humiliated.

This brings us to a related aspect of the content of our imaginings: imagining what an emotion feels like involves a subject feeling the imagined emotion. This subject can be an *implicit self*: when we follow the instructions to imagine what joy/sadness/parental love/humiliation feels like, these imaginings involve implicitly a self which undergoes such experiences. The subject can also be an *explicit self*, no matter if it is one's own (imagine you feeling joy/sadness) or another real or fictional self (imagine your friend's feeling of parental love, the character's feeling of humiliation). We imagine these emotions as belonging to an imagined subject within the imagined scenario. Thus, the *subjective perspectives* from which we imagine the emotional experience are perspectives *within the imagined scenario*. Both the imagined emotion and the imagined subject who experiences it belong to the content of our imaginings.

By contrast, the imaginer's self is not part of the imagined content. In fact, there are crucial differences between the imaginer's self and the imagined selves experiencing the imagined emotions within the imagined scenarios. These differences, which were noticed by Husserl (2005) and have recently been spelled out by Cavallaro (2017, 172) for the case of sensory imagination, can be applied to the case of imagining what an emotion feels like. First, the imaginer's self and the imagined self (regardless of whether this self is a virtual version of our self, another real self, or a fictional self) differ in their respective intentional contents. The imaginer imagines a scenario in which someone is having an emotion. This imagining might be motivated or accompanied by thoughts, memories, desires, and emotions of different kinds. In contrast, the imagined self is imagined as undergoing an emotion which is as such based on imagined cognitive bases, responds to imagined evaluative properties, and exhibits an imagined phenomenology. Second, and as a result, the imaginer's self and the imagined self are the subjective poles of different experiences. Third, the imaginer's self and the imagined self belong to two different temporal horizons. In scenario 1, the imaginer is in the present world, while the imagined self lives in the future. In scenario 2, I am imagining how my friend's self felt in the past, and in scenario 3, I am imagining how the fictional character is feeling in the fictional time. Finally, the imaginer might adopt a disentangled attitude towards the imagined scenario, or she can experientially imagine what the imagined emotion feels like. In contrast, the imagined self is imagined as experiencing the imagined emotion.

4 Perspective-Shifting, Imagining Feeling Emotions, and Emotion-Like Imaginings

As stated in Section 2, to imagine experientially is not only a question of the content but also of the *mode* in which we target the imagined content. It is time now to examine in more detail the specific mode in which we target emotions and their phenomenal properties when we experientially imagine them.

The mode in which we experientially imagine emotions involves first of all what has been called *imagining "from the inside"*. In fact, imagining "from the inside" has been regarded as the hallmark of experiential imagining (Walton 1990; Wollheim 1984; Goldie 2005; Kind 2016). In this kind of imagining, the imaginer adopts an internal perspective within the imagined scenario. Such cases of imagining are presented as the opposite of imagining "from the outside" in which the imaginer remains "external" – i.e., she does not adopt a point of view within the imagined scenario. However, as noted in the literature, the expression imagining "from the inside" is rather ambiguous. How, then, are we to interpret it?

Here I will argue that this kind of imagining requires first of all *perspective-shifting*. This moment is clearly stated by Kind:

> When we are engaged in experiential imagining, we project ourselves into an imagined situation and imagine the experiences – visual, auditory, emotional, and so on – that we would have. It is for this reason that experiential imagining is also often referred to as *imagining from the inside*.
>
> (2016, 5)

This specific meaning has been widely acknowledged in the literature. As Nanay puts it, "I take the most plausible way of analyzing imagining X from the inside to be imagining being in X's situation" (2016, 135; see, also Williams 1973). Applied to our case of imagining what an emotion feels like, these descriptions mean that we are imagining an emotion from the perspective of the imagined subject who experiences it in the imagined scenario.

As argued previously, the imaginer's self is not part of the content of the imagining. Yet, by virtue of perspective-shifting, the imaginer might adopt the perspective of one of the selves in the imagined scenarios. This issue needs clarification. Does perspective-shifting imply that the imaginer imagines herself undergoing the emotion? I think not. As argued by Coplan (2011), there are two forms of perspective-shifting. In self-oriented perspective-shifting, I imagine how it would be *for me* to be in your situation. In other-oriented perspective-shifting, I represent the situation from the other's point of view and imagine how it is *for the other* to experience it. Other-oriented perspective-shifting is a much more ambitious imaginative project than self-oriented perspective-shifting because prior to

perspective-shifting we have to imagine the other's perspective and this might involve getting to know her biography, her expectations, her way of seeing the world, etc., information which is not always available to us. Yet, the point is not that we are always successful in other-oriented perspective-shifting but that this kind of imaginative exercise is something we usually do. I imagine how my friend felt the first time she saw her newborn's face, and I imagine how it was *for her*. Though I can of course also imagine how it would have been *for me*, I try to reconstruct her situation as accurately as possible and then imagine her point of view before shifting perspectives. The same happens when I imagine how the fictional character feels. Although I can imagine what I would do in her situation, I try to imagine how it is for her to be humiliated, and to do so, I have to reconstruct her point of view.

My thought is that the *perspective-shifting* involved in imagining what an emotion feels like is always *other-oriented*. This is clearly the case for scenarios 2 and 3 where I adopt the perspective of a real and a fictional other. But other-oriented perspective-taking is also at work in cases like that depicted in scenario 1 in which I adopt the perspective of my virtual future self. This future self differs from my present self, and though there are some advantages when the imagined self is our own, we are neither transparent to ourselves nor can we foresee how we would evolve. Imagining the perspectives of our future (as well as of our past self or a coetaneous self in a different situation) selves can be as challenging as imagining the perspectives of other selves. In my view, perspective-shifting is also involved in cases in which the self is only implicitly imagined. When you imagine what joy or sadness feels like, to imagine the qualitative feel of these emotions, you adopt the perspective of an imagined virtual coetaneous self implicitly feeling these emotions in a virtual scenario. As a result, in all these cases, the emotion is represented to the imaginer's mind "as if" it were there.

In addition to perspective-shifting, experiential imagining involves "*quasi-experiencing*", "*re-creating*" or "*simulating*" the imagined emotion from the particular perspective we adopt in the imagined scenario. When we imagine feeling joy or sadness, when we imagine the friend feeling parental love or the character feeling humiliation, we re-create these emotions in our imagination. The particular mode in which we imagine such emotions when we experientially imagine them consists in "*imagining feeling*" the emotion in question.

As a result of these re-creations, there arises an "*emotion-like imagining*". Such emotion-like imaginings play an important role in explaining the emotional character of our imaginings in terms of the mode of imagining. Yet, in the view presented here, we do not experience a real emotion. Emotion-like imaginings are not real emotions. This view gives rise to a *possible objection* against the existence of emotion-like imaginings. According to this objection, which is based on what I call "the transparency thesis", it is impossible to imagine the phenomenal properties of an

emotion because imagination is transparent to emotion. The objection argues that unlike other mental states such as belief and desire which have belief-like and desire-like states as imaginative counterparts, emotions do not have emotion-like imaginative counterparts. As Currie and Ravenscroft put it,

> [E]motions are peculiar states in that they are, so to speak, their own counterparts. In imagination we do not take on another's belief or desire; we take on a belief-like or a desire-like imagining that corresponds to those beliefs and desires. But when I put myself imaginatively in the position of someone being threatened, it is genuine fear I come to experience, not an imagination-based substitute for fear.
>
> (2002, 159)

In my view, this objection is groundless. The "transparency thesis" is false. There are two sets of arguments against it. The first set involves an *experiential argument*. As argued by Goldie, emotions might have imaginative counterparts because we can imagine having an emotion without really experiencing the emotion in question (2005, 131). Goldie develops this argument by drawing on Wollheim's example of sexual arousal during an erotic daydream (1984, 81). For Wollheim, we can imagine being excited without being excited. However, it can be that as a result of this imaginative project we end up really being excited (Wollheim calls this phenomenon "cogency", 1984, 70 and 89). An analogy can easily be drawn for the case in which we imagine emotions. We might imagine being afraid without being afraid ourselves, though as a result of this imagining, we might end up really being afraid.

The distinction between content and mode can provide some conceptual support to this argument. We should distinguish here between (1) the emotion which is the content of our imagining and (2) the mode in which we imagine this emotion and which generates an emotion-like imagining. In my view, it would be a mistake to reduce these two phenomena to a single one. Not only experientially, but also conceptually, the two phenomena are distinct. I can imagine my future self feeling joyful or sad. These imagined emotional experiences are part of the content of my imagining (1). Then, by experientially imagining this content, I re-create the feelings of joy and sadness of my future self generating emotion-like states (2). Note that (1) and (2) have to be distinguished from a third phenomenon (3), which is the real emotional response that might arise after experientially imagining an emotion. When I imagine feeling joy or sadness, this might lead me to a similar state, and I might end up with a real feeling of joy or a real feeling of sadness. However, this is clearly not always the case. Imagining feeling joy might lead me to really feeling uplifted and imagining feeling sad might make me feel really depressed. Yet, feeling uplifted is not the same as feeling joy, and feeling depressed is not the same as feeling

sad. In imagining the character's humiliation and re-creating its phenomenology in the imagination, I can respond to this emotion with pity instead of feeling humiliated myself. Here the emotional response of pity differs even more clearly than the previous cases from the imagined emotion of humiliation.

A second set of arguments concerns *structural differences* between imagining an emotion and really experiencing one. Though both are similar, the former is an imagining, while the latter is not. Why is the former an imagining? First, we can have such imaginings while being in a different emotional state: while being sad, we can re-create the imagining of being joyful, and vice versa. If the imagined joy were real, then we would have here cases of conflicting emotions or of ambivalence, yet when we engage in such imaginings, we do not have the impression of experiencing emotions that move in opposite directions. There is a difference between these two cases: I can really hate a person and imagine being in love with her, and I can hate and love a person. The former is not a case of ambivalence because a real emotion and an imagining of an opposite emotion do not conflict in the same way as happens in the latter case wherein two real emotions enter into conflict.

Second, the emotion-like imagining as an instance of imagining is easier to control than a real emotion. When I imagine feeling joyful or sad, I can manipulate this imagining easier than a real emotion of joy or sadness. For instance, stopping my imagining of what evokes the emotion, changing the imagined scenario, etc., can change the imagined emotion of joy or sadness, while changing the real emotion of joy and sadness is more difficult because it requires me to change the real causes of the emotion, to modify the real situations, etc.

Third, the phenomenology of the emotion-like imagining differs from the phenomenology of a real emotion. The imagining represents the emotion "as if" it were there, while when we emote, we really experience the emotion in question. The "as if" character of the imagining is responsible for the fact that in imagining experiencing an emotion, the emotion is represented to us with a pale and schematic phenomenology in comparison to the phenomenology of an emotion. Imagined sadness feels hollow in comparison to real sadness, just as imagined pains are lighter than real pains.

However, this phenomenological difference between imagined and real emotions is attenuated when the real emotion targets imagined objects such as fictional objects instead of real objects. In this case, the real emotions targeting imagined objects resemble emotion-like imaginings. Both feel "less firm and solid", to put it in Hume's terms (2008, 85). In Hume's view, the fact that we do not believe that the object of our emotion exists (and, thus, a fictional character does not really suffer, etc.), but merely imagine it, leads us to experience such emotions as less firm and solid. The differences of "weight" should be understood as a metaphor to refer to a relation between the subject and the emotion experienced. These emotions

are not anchored in the subject's psychology in the same way as emotions towards real scenarios. The subject might experience real fear towards the imagined threatening scenario, but she is not in the grip of this fear as she would be if the threatening scenario were real because then her fear would be accompanied by real perceptions, judgements, beliefs, desires, etc. (see Vendrell Ferran 2022). This phenomenological feature, which is character-istic of real emotions based on imagined scenarios, makes these emotions feel similar to cases of emotion-like imaginings. However, we cannot con-flate them because in one case, we have a real emotion (though one which is a response to an imagined scenario), while in the latter case, we have an imagined emotion and are dealing as such with a case of imagining and not of emoting.

Having rejected the transparency thesis, we have good reasons to assume that there are emotion-like imaginings – i.e., that emotions have imagina-tive counterparts – just as there are perception-like, belief-like, and desire-like imaginings.

The mode of apprehending the emotion when we experientially imagine it consists then in "representing" to our mind an emotion "as if" it were there. In addition, these imaginings involve "imagining feeling" the emo-tion in question, where the feeling modifies the way in which we imagine, and as such, it is not part of the content. Moreover, when we experientially imagine an emotion, this imagining re-creates the emotion in the imagina-tion generating in this way an "emotion-like" state. This result is important because, as suggested in Section 2, it provides an argument for the view that imagining what a particular emotion feels like is a kind of experiential imagining analogous to some sensory imagination but which has its own specificities due to the fact that what we imagine is an emotion.

Yet, this result about the mode of imagining poses two questions about how to distinguish it from *similar modes* and these questions need to be addressed. The first question is, *How does the imaginer know that she is undergoing an emotion-like imagining instead of an emotion*? Besides the phe-nomenological distinction mentioned earlier, the fact that the subject can shift perspective and go back and forth from her perspective as imaginer to the imagined perspective prevents her from taking the emotion-like imagin-ing for a case of a real emotion. Thus, when I am imagining my future self feeling joy or feeling sad, I am aware that it is this imagined future self who undergoes the emotion but that I myself am not joyful or sad. Rather, I merely imagine feeling the emotion by virtue of perspective-shifting.

The second question concerns *how to distinguish experientially imagining from experientially remembering an emotion*. Here a look into Husserl's phenomenological proposal can be of assistance. Both are forms of repre-senting to our mind a content "as if" it were there. Both are what Husserl (2005; see Cavallaro 2017) calls "re-presentative acts" in which the object is re-presented "in image", and as such, they differ from "presentative acts" such as perception in which an object is presented "in person".[7] However,

as Husserl himself pointed out, while remembering aims at the reproduction of a past perception, the re-presentation involved in imagining is free and does not intend to reproduce how a past perception was. As we will see in the next section, this difference does not rule out the possibility that some imaginings are based on remembering.

5 Imagining Feeling Emotions Previously Felt

In this section and the next, I address the question of how such imaginings are re-created. Here, I focus on cases in which we have experienced the emotion that we seek to imagine, such as in scenario 1, and leave for the next section cases in which we imagine an emotion not previously experienced, such as in scenarios 2 and 3.

To imagine what an emotion which we have already experienced feels like, we first have to *identify* among our previous experiences the *specific emotional pattern* to imagine. (This emotional pattern is what you attribute to the subject of the emotion in the imagined scenario.) This identification requires you to subsume the phenomenal properties of the emotion to be imagined and those of the emotion you have experienced under the same category. For this subsumption, it is not sufficient that you have already experienced the emotion in question. As argued by Peacocke (2020, 7), to subsume different experiences under the same category you need to have *noticed* the phenomenal property in question. Only when you notice the phenomenal property can you form a phenomenal concept and subsume experiences under the same category. Peacocke observes that this process might happen voluntarily or involuntarily. This means that this process can happen quite automatically – i.e., it is not required that we are aware of it when it occurs nor that we make it happen deliberately. Importantly, she claims that while for some of our experiences we already have phenomenal concepts, for those experiences for which we do not have concepts, we can generate one by attending to such experiences and noticing a phenomenal property of the experience we had but that went unnoticed.[8]

My thought here is that when we imagine experiencing an emotion, we identify an emotional pattern by looking at the phenomenal properties of emotions already experienced. If we have already had the emotion, we will likely have a phenomenal concept. Yet, it can also be the case that the phenomenal properties of the emotions previously experienced went unnoticed – to use Peacocke's terms – and only by attending to them (deliberately or involuntarily) do we form the phenomenal concept. In any case, in scenario 1, when pondering two alternatives, we identify the emotional patterns to imagine because we have the phenomenal concept "joy" and the phenomenal concept "sadness".

Once the emotional pattern to imagine has been identified, we *re-create the phenomenal properties of the emotion* – i.e., we imagine how the subject in the imagined scenario is experiencing the emotion and generate in this

way an emotion-like state. What are these re-creations based on? In empirical psychology, Blackwell has noted that

> Generation of mental imagery […] involves the retrieval of the relevant sensory representations from memory which might be simply re-experienced […], or re-combined with other representations or knowledge to produce an image of a scene or object which has never been experienced.
>
> (2020, 242)

Blackwell's focus is on retrieving sensations in the imagination and how this can evoke emotions, rather than on how we can generate emotion-like imaginings. However, a parallel can be drawn to explain how we re-create the phenomenal properties of an emotion. This re-creation would require us to retrieve the qualitative feel of the emotion in question. Put otherwise, the re-creation is based on emotional memories – i.e., remembering what an emotion feels like.[9]

Yet, while it is non-controversial that we can remember details of emotional events, it is more controversial whether we can remember the emotional quality of the experience. Can we recall, retrieve, and revive the phenomenal properties of an emotion experienced in the past?

To answer this question, a distinction has to be drawn between "ideal" and "actual" revivability. While in "ideal revivability" you have a remembrance of what was felt, in "actual" revivability you generate a new emotion of the same kind (this terminology was introduced by James 1918/1890; see Christianson and Safer 1996, 230). In "ideal" revivability, the phenomenal properties experienced in, for instance, grief or rapture are presented as such to our mind. By contrast, in "actual" revivability, when we recall the qualitative feel of grief and rapture, we generate – as James put it – a new emotion of the same kind. In my view, neither option is acceptable.

Insofar as remembering, unlike perceiving, is a "re-presentative" and not a "presentative" mode, the kind of revivability provided by remembering cannot be "ideal" – i.e., you do not retrieve the past emotion as it was felt, but re-present it to yourself has having been there (for an alternative critique, see Debus 2007). The revivability provided by remembering is also not an "actual" one in James's sense of generating a new emotion because then instead of a memory of an emotion, we will have a real emotion. However, memories are memories, not emotions, and though remembering an emotion might evoke the emotion in question, both states should be kept apart. The arguments to distinguish remembering an emotion from really undergoing an emotion are similar to those introduced earlier to distinguish between imagining an emotion and really undergoing one. First, if James is right, then our emotional memories would quite often lead to cases in which we end up experiencing simultaneously opposite emotions. However, it might occur that you remember your grief while

being joyful, or your rapture while being depressed, without feeling ambivalent. Indeed, in these cases, we do not have the impression of experiencing contrary emotions. The remembered emotion is given to us as a memory, though it might influence our current affective state. Furthermore, the remembered emotion is not anchored in your mental economy in the way that a real emotion is: it does not have actual cognitive bases, etc. Finally, its phenomenology is that of a memory, and as such, it differs from the phenomenology of an actual emotion. To remember an emotion feels different from really feeling one: the remembered emotion feels less "firm" and "solid" than the emotion really undergone. Thus, the remembered emotion can be "actual" only in the sense of being re-presented, re-created, simulated, etc., but not in the sense of being really there, either as the past emotion or as a new emotion.

The picture I am proposing here does not aim at reducing remembering to imagining. As we have seen, phenomenologically speaking, both aim at re-presenting to our mind something absent to the senses, but while remembering aims at a reproduction of the past, imagining is not constrained to reproducing a past mental state. That said, the re-presentation of the phenomenal properties of an emotion provided by remembering can play an important role in imagining what an emotion feels like. Indeed, once we have retrieved the phenomenal properties of an emotion by remembering them, we can via imagining freely attribute these phenomenal properties to new objects and situations. In particular, there is a mechanism of "transposition" of the qualitative feelings you are familiar with to other objects and situations. This transposition can take place deliberately or automatically.

Let's go back to scenario 1. Once you have identified the specific emotional patterns to imagine in terms of "joy" and "sadness", you imagine how your future self will feel with friend A and with friend B and re-create an emotion-like state. You do so by virtue of mentally retrieving how joy and sadness feel, and then by means of the mechanism of transposition, you apply the retrieved phenomenal properties to the specific imagined scenarios in which objects and situations other than the actual are involved.

6 Imagining Feeling Emotions Not Previously Felt

If what we can imagine depends on what we have experienced, how are we to explain scenarios 2 and 3 in which we imagine, respectively, how parental love and humiliation feel, though not having previously experienced these emotions? Such cases are challenging. On the one hand, we have the strong intuition that such cases are not only possible but constitute an important part of our everyday lives. In hearing about the emotional experiences undergone by another person or in engaging with fiction, we can imagine the qualitative feel of emotions not previously experienced. On the other hand, there is widespread agreement that imagining is constrained by

experience. Indeed, a condition to imagine is that you know what is to imagine. Given that – as noted by Kind (2020) for a series of authors "from Jackson to Lewis to Paul" – undergoing an experience is the best or the only way to know what an experience is like, you cannot imagine experiences you have not undergone. Applied to our case, this means that you need to have felt the emotion you want to imagine, otherwise you do not know what to imagine. This is what Peacocke calls the "experiential constraint" (2020, 3).[10]

In line with Kind and Peacocke, I will work here with the idea that the experiential constraint does not necessarily restrict the content of our imaginings such that they have to be identical to what we have experienced. In fact, what we have experienced can be taken as a point of departure to imagine experiences which are new to us. Though you cannot imagine an emotion that is completely different from what you have experienced, resorting to the matrix of emotions previously felt, you can imagine emotions which differ from them to some extent.

The processes and mechanisms that govern such imaginings are similar to those that explain our imaginings of emotions previously experienced. To begin, also in cases in which we have not experienced the emotion that we want to imagine, it is necessary to *identify the emotional pattern* to imagine. However, since you have not experienced the emotion in question, what you identify is an emotional pattern of emotions which are *similar* to the emotion to imagine. Given that you cannot imagine "ex nihilo", you look among your previous experiences for an emotion which is similar to the one to imagine. Analogously to what I have explained in the previous section, you can have a phenomenal concept for this similar emotion, or you can form one by attending (deliberately or not) to them.

The identification of an emotional pattern of a similar emotion enables the subsumption of both emotions – the one you have to imagine but have not experienced, on the one hand, and the similar emotion you have undergone on the other – under the same category. However, this category will be broader than in the cases presented in Section 5. For instance, in scenario 2, you do not know what the emotion to imagine – "parental love" – feels like but recognize a pattern of similarity with other forms of love you have experienced such as "romantic love", "filial love", and "self-love". This enables you to subsume these emotions under the broad category "love". If you had experienced parental love, you could identify exactly the pattern to imagine as "parental love", but since you have never experienced this particular emotion, you can identify your friend's experience only in terms of "love". In scenario 3, you do not know what "humiliation" feels like, but you are able to identify a pattern of similarity with other affective states such as embarrassment, shame, etc. Here you subsume all these emotions under the category "feelings of diminution of self-worth".

Having identified a similar emotional pattern, you can *re-create the phenomenal properties of the emotion* to imagine. Yet, given that you have not experienced the emotion, you cannot retrieve its phenomenal property via

remembering it either. Rather, what remembering re-presents to your mind is the qualitative feel of the broad emotional category to which both the emotion imagined and the emotion identified as similar belong. You employ emotional memories to re-present to yourself the phenomenal property of "love" in scenario 2, and of "feeling diminished in worth" in scenario 3.

These re-presented phenomenal properties provided by remembering are used to re-create the phenomenal properties of an emotion whose specific phenomenology is novel to you. Here the mechanisms at work is more complex than a mere "transposition" of a familiar phenomenal property to a new object or situation. A mere transposition does not explain how we can generate the specific shade of parental love or the specific nuance of humiliation by merely changing objects or contexts. What are the imaginative mechanisms at work here?

A look into different discourses on the epistemic powers of imagining is instructive in this regard. In the debate on how the imagination works in empathy, Matravers has observed that elements of one type of emotion which is familiar to us can enter into other emotions which are unfamiliar, and in so doing they can make a particular or unexpected phenomenology accessible to us (2011, 25). In her analysis of imagination in fiction, Peacocke claims that by using existing phenomenal concepts, we can "recombine, in thought" feelings we had experienced first-hand (2020, 18). In the debate on the epistemology of imagination, Kind argues that you can know what an experience is like by virtue of imagining it. She describes a process of "imaginative scaffolding" which consists in imagining combinations of additions, subtractions, and modifications of experiences we have already undergone (Kind 2020). And as we have seen, Blackwell claims in the case of sensory imagination that one can recombine relevant sensory representations to produce an image of something not previously experienced (2020, 242).

Underlying these debates are two central mechanisms by means of which we can re-create the phenomenology of emotions not previously felt: "combination" and "variation" (both might happen deliberately or involuntarily). By means of the mechanism of "combination", we bring together, in a novel manner, phenomenal properties previously felt. The result is that we can become aware of properties that vary in different degrees from those already known. This is what happens in scenario 3. Having re-presented to my mind the phenomenology of "feeling diminished in worth" via remembering, I re-create the specific shade of humiliation by combining the phenomenal quality of being ashamed, being embarrassed, being hurt, and feeling unfairly treated. These combinations are guided by the fictional work, and we might adjust, correct, and change these combinations according to the descriptions we find in the fictional work.

By means of a "variation", we generate variants of a phenomenal quality already experienced.[11] In scenario 2, you generate the shade of parental love by means of generating variants of the broader category love[12] and adjusting them to your friend's testimony. For instance, you generate the

variant of filial love, which is known to you, and realize this is not what your friend is describing because parental love has different nuances of caring and protecting that derive from its superordinated relation from parent to child so that you adjust these imaginings accordingly until you generate a variant that is close to parental love.

Besides the role that fiction and testimony might play in guiding our imaginings, there is a series of factors that can help us in their re-creation. A person who has experienced a variety of emotions will be in a more advantageous position than a person who has not. Moreover, a person who is emotionally mature and who possesses phenomenal concepts for these emotions will be better placed than a person who has undergone many experiences but has not attended to them. In addition, someone who possesses propositional knowledge about an emotion will be better suited to imagine the nuances of its phenomenology than a person who does not have this knowledge.

7 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has explored a particular kind of experiential imagining: imagining what an emotion feels like. I have analyzed the content of such imaginings in terms of emotions imagined as belonging to a subject within the imagined scenario. The mode in which emotions are apprehended in experiential imagination consists in imagining feeling them so that, as a result, an emotion-like imagining is generated. I have argued that to re-create their phenomenology, we must resort to emotional memories and to mechanisms of transposition, combination, and variation.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1 This chapter focuses on emotions (a question I do not address here is whether, with the pertinent adaptations, parallel cases could be construed for other affective states such as feelings, moods, etc.). Imaginings of what it feels like are not restricted to affective states. We can also imagine what a particular sensation feels like.
2 In the later handbook, Blackwell (2020) examines, from the perspective of empirical psychology, the related phenomenon of "emotion mental imagery" – i.e., how mental imagery (retrieving or generating mental visual, auditive, tactile, etc. sensations) evokes emotion. Yet, the scenarios posed earlier are not of actual emotions evoked by mental images, but imaginings of emotional experiences.

3 Their use of the term differs from Vendler's use (1984), which they interpret in terms of explicit and implicit self-involvement.

4 As is usual in analytical debates, Arcangeli's use of the term "attitude" is synonymous with "mode". "Attitude" in this sense should not be conflated with the use of the term in the expression "attitudinal imagining" to refer to propositional imaginings (Kind 2016, 5) and in Langland-Hassan's approach (for instance, in this volume) whose main focus is the content.

5 Like Arcangeli (2020), I will use the term "re-creation" instead of "recreation". As she notes, while recreationists (Currie and Ravenscroft 2002) endorse simulationism, re-creativists are neutral regarding whether re-creation involves simulation.

6 The term "moment" refers to a facet, side, or aspect of the emotion and not to "components" or "ingredients" of the emotion. To claim that emotions have moments is not the same as defending a componential theory of the emotions according to which emotions are ontologically constituted by different elements.

7 The term "re-presentation" translate "Vergegenwärtigung", which means literally to presentify to our mind something which is absent to the senses (in order to distinguish this use from the term "representation", a hyphen following the "re" prefix is often used).

8 Peacocke's aim is to show how literature can make us draw attention to phenomenal properties we had but which went unnoticed. However, I think that her idea is applicable more broadly since we can draw attention to phenomenal properties by other means such as being guided by the testimony of others.

9 Memories of the feelings experienced should be distinguished from memories of the event that aroused these feelings (for this distinction, see Christianson and Safer 1996) and from "autobiographical emotions directed towards past events" – i.e., emotions directed towards past experiences (Debus 2007, 760). When past emotional events are recalled, we can react emotionally to them in different ways (you might recall your anger and then feel ashamed about it).

10 Note that Peacocke's experiential constraint concerns the phenomenology of the experience (you need to have had that) though you do not necessarily need to have a phenomenal concept for it.

11 Given that we cannot imagine something completely alien to what we already know, I prefer the term "variation", which refers to the generation of variants of the same phenomenon without altering its essential features, rather than the term "modification", which suggests that we relinquish the identity of what we imagine and transform it into something completely new.

12 For a different development of the example of love, see Kind (2020).

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