Conference

Imagination in the History of Philosophy

from Plato to Hume

ELTE | HUMÁN TUDOMÁNYOK KUTATÓKÖZPONTJA

NATIONAL RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION OFFICE
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Imagination
in the History of Philosophy

phantasia, *imaginatio*, imagination: from Plato to Hume

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ABSTRACTS

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Imagination in the History of Philosophy

phantasia, *imaginatio*, imagination: from Plato to Hume

Conference Topic

The conference traces the notion of mental representation (*phantasia*, *imaginatio*) in ancient, medieval, and early modern philosophy. The papers cover various aspects of the notion, including its role in cognitive activities – e.g., sense-perception, memory, imagination, dreaming, discursive thinking – as well as in moral psychology, especially as the bearer of motivational content both in humans and in other animals. By tracing the development of the notion from its ancient origins through its medieval reception until early modernity, we expect to gain a new perspective on the history of ideas of human cognition.

Organisers: Attila Hangai, Dániel Attila Kovács, Dániel Schmal

Scientific Committee: Attila Hangai, Dániel Attila Kovács, Dániel Schmal, Péter Lautner, Attila Németh

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Program

Day 1 – October 9

SESSION 1 – Chair: István Bodnár

9:00–9:45: Elena Cagnoli Fiecconi (London): *Elpis*, Reasoning and *phantasmata* in the Philebus

9:45–10:30: Diego Zucca (Sassari): Plato's Account of *Phantasia* and Aristotle's Criticism of It

SESSION 2 – Chair: Attila Hangai

11:00–11:45: Robert Roreitner (Prague): Dependence of Thought on *phantasia* in Aristotle's *De Anima*

11:45–12:30: Zihao Guo (Oslo): Contemplating the Image: Aristotle on Attention and Representation in Practical Deliberation

SESSION 3 – Chair: István Bárány

14:00–14:45: Vasia Vergouli (Thessaloniki): Artistic Representation and Character Formation in Aristotle's Politics

14:45–15:30: Attila Németh (RCH, Budapest): Epicurus' Notion of *prolēpsis*

SESSION 4 – Chair: Dániel Attila Kovács

16:00–16:45: Riin Sirkel (Tartu & Vermont): The Role of Imagination in the Stoic Practice of *premeditatio malorum*

16:45–17:30: László Bene (RCH, Budapest): *Phantasia* in Plotinus' Theory of Action

Day 2 – October 10

SESSION 1 – Chair: Péter Lautner

9:00–9:45: Matthias Perkams (Jena): Imagination and the Intelligence of Animals in Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas

9:45–10:30: Andreas Blank (Klagenfurt): Francesco Piccolomini on the Imagination of Insects

SESSION 2 – Chair: László Bene

11:00–11:45: Péter Lautner (Piliscsaba): Michael of Ephesus on the Representational Capacity

11:45–12:30: Nick Wiltsher (St. Andrews): From Aristotle's State to Avicenna's Process

SESSION 3 – Chair: Attila Németh

14:00–14:45: Patricia Calvario (Louvain): The Eschatological Transformation of Phantasia in the Beatific Vision

14:45–15:30: Luka Kuchukhidze (Tbilisi): The Epistemological and Metaphysical Dimensions of Imaginatio in Nicholas of Cusa's Thought

SESSION 4 – Chair: Dániel Schmal

16:00–16:45: José Higuera Rubio (Madrid): Dreaming as a Speculative Source: Exploring Phantasia and Its Cognitive Function in the Middle Ages

16:45–17:30: Melissa Frankel (Ottawa): Beyond Scepticism: Dreams in Early Modern Philosophy

Day 3 – October 11

SESSION 1 – Chair: Judit Szalai

9:00 – 9:45 Philippe Hamou (Paris): Wandering Thoughts: The Early Modern Invention of Mental Life

9:45 – 10:30: Vili Lähteenmäki (Oulu): Inner and Outer Cognition: Early Modern Theories of Ideas and Mental Representation

SESSION 2 – Chair: Tamás Pavlovits

11:00 – 11:45: Maxime Ilou (Lyon): Children's Imagination in Malebranche: Imagination, Memory and Childhood Psychology

11:45 – 12:30: Lucia Oliveri (Münster): Fortifying the Will with Play: Leibniz on Imagination in Learning and Education

SESSION 3 – Chair: Gábor Boros

14:00 – 14:45: David Harmon (St. Andrews): Spinoza and the Physics of Imaginative Error

14:45 – 15:30: Máté Juhász (ELTE, Budapest): The Individual as Object of Imagination in Spinoza

SESSION 4 – Chair: Tamás Demeter

16:00 – 16:45: Olivér Tóth (Heidelberg): Turning passiones Into actiones by Knowledge – Is Active Imaginative Practical Motivation in Spinoza Possible?

16:45 – 17:30: Kevin Busch (Claremont): The Limits of Humean Thought

Elpis, Reasoning and *phantasmata* in the *Philebus*

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In the *Philebus*, Socrates and Protarchus engage in a conversation about what makes one's life good (11d, 21). The two obvious contestants are pleasures and knowledge, but it turns out that neither one is capable of making a life good on its own. What is needed is, instead, a mixture. This focus on the good a whole life, as opposed to momentary goods, prepares us for the attention the dialogue pays to how we engage with the past, the present and the future, particularly with respect to pleasure. In this paper, I focus on how the *Philebus* depicts our cognitive engagement with the future. I argue that this cognitive engagement involves reasoning and forming phantasmata, both of which can constitute a mental state called '*elpis*'. *Elpis* captures modal thinking about the future, with a focus on practical possibilities. I focus my analysis on the famous image of the painter and the scribe in the soul (39b–40c). I argue that both the painter and the scribe can form *elpides*. In particular, the work of the painter consists in producing *phantasmata* which depict future possible outcomes without necessarily assessing their likelihood. Yet, the painter depicts these outcomes as practicable for the agent, in part because his work is derived from memory and perception and in part because it involves self-representation. This characterisation of *elpis* suggests that '*phantastic*' cognitive engagement with the future in the dialogue is neither idle nor concerned with making predictions. All it presupposes is that the agent deems an outcome practicable for her in future.

Plato's Account of *Phantasia* and Aristotle's Criticism of It

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My paper will concern Plato's account of *phantasia* and Aristotle's criticism of it. First, I will reconstruct Plato's account of *phantasia* starting from some key texts contained in *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, *Republic,* and *Philebus*. Plato does not explore *phantasia* so systematically, yet he provides us with the elements to reconstruct a coherent conception of it: he proposes a *two-factors model* of *phantasia* (which is meant not just as imagination but more generally as 'appearing'), according to which *phantasia* is a complex mental state involving both a belief and a perception. On its own, perception is under the threshold of the truth-evaluability, so that only the doxastic component of *phantasia* is taken to be responsible for an appearance's being potentially true or false (see *Theaetetus* 184–186; *Sophist* 262a–c). But a *doxa* is the outcome of an act of thinking (*dianoeisthai*), which is defined as a discourse of the soul with itself (*Theaetetus* 189a–190a; *Sophist* 263e–264b), and this opens a problem for perceptual beliefs, to which 'appearances' are reduced to by Plato himself: perceptual appearence is a very exceptional type of doxastic representation indeed. Plato's position is really close to the so-called Belief-Theory of Perceptual experience developed by Armstrong 1968 and Pitcher 1970 (with some advocates nowadays, although they are a minority). Secondly, indeed, I will show how Aristotle's criticism of Plato's view in *De anima* III 3 is structurally analogous to the critical reactions to the Belief-Theory of perceptual experience (e.g., Crane 1988, 1990, Peacocke 1994): what is at stake in both cases is how to conceive the relation between perception and thought. According to Aristotle – as well as to the critics of the Belief-Theory of perceptual appearance in contemporary philosophy of mind – perceptual experience exhibits certain features which are incompatible with the way our system of beliefs typically works, namely, a normative, rational and holistic way. The so-called informational encapsulation, the cognitive impenetrability, and the insensitivity to collateral information, on the contrary, are structural features of perceptual appearance that can be accessed also (but not only) at a phenomenological level: in fact, our appearances are resistent to our beliefs, so that when we come to know that A is not F, A does not start appearing not-F to us, it rather keeps appearing (as though it was) F. But if Plato was right in taking *phantasia* as belief + perception, our doxastic life would involve contradictory beliefs on the same object at the same time: contradictory beliefs that we would know to be such! Thirdly, I will explore the details of Aristotle's argument in *De anima* III 3 and do justice to certain apparent oddities contained in it.

Finally, I will suggest some ideas about the way in which the debate between Plato and Aristotle may have shaped some posterior debates on the relation between perception and belief: my cursory suggestions will concern the relationship between the Epicurean two-factor model of false appearances (false belief + true perception) and the Platonic two-factor model of appearing (to a certain extent, recovered by Epicurus in such a way as to overcome Aristotle's criticism of Plato's version of it).

Dependence of Thought on *phantasia* in Aristotle's *De Anima*

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The claim that thought depends on *phantasia* plays a prominent role in Aristotle's *De Anima* – not least because Aristotle's answers to some basic questions about the unity and status of the human soul directly depend on it. But what consideration is the claim based upon? What kind of objects of thought and what kind of thought is it concerned with? The paper critically examines the main existing answers and sketches out an alternative, based on the observation that (a) the primary objects of thought are for Aristotle nothing less than essences and that (b) an essence can (with a few exceptions) only be properly grasped in a complex explanatory framework.

Contemplating the Image: Aristotle on Attention and Representation in Practical Deliberation

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In *EN* VII.3, Aristotle notes that an akratic person fails to act according to their knowledge (e.g., someone who eats a sweet despite knowing it is unhealthy) because they fail to contemplate (*theōrein*) a particular, perceptual knowledge about the object of action—such as that featured in the minor premise "this is sweet and bad for health," alongside the major premise "everything sweet is bad for health." This act of contemplation is often understood as an act of attention that activates the relevant perceptual knowledge (See, e.g., Irwin 1999, p.345; and more recently, Nielsen 2020, p.161-163); without it, such knowledge remains merely potential and ineffective in practical deliberation. On the other hand, scholars have observed that, while not explicitly stated in *EN* VII.3, Aristotle's psychological and biological works suggest that the akratic person's failure also stems from a breakdown in representation. Under the sway of a dominant appetitive desire (*epithumia*), the akratic individual does not represent the object of action through *phantasia logistikē* (e.g., a conceptually rich, intellectual representation of the sweet as unhealthy), but is instead moved by *phantasia aisthētikē* (e.g., a more spontaneous, non-intellectual representation of the sweet as pleasant and good). (See e.g. Destrée 2007, Francis 2011) As with the act of attention, the representation provided by *phantasia logistikē* appears to be indispensable for activating the relevant knowledge of the object in question.

In this essay, I explore how the act of attention (*theōrein*) relates to the function of representation (through *phantasia*) in both the causation of akrasia and practical deliberation more broadly. My central claim is that, in order to represent the object of action as integrated within a particular piece of knowledge, one must attend to the image (*phantasma*) of the object in a specific manner—one that enables the information therein to be structured and processed in alignment with the cognitive content of the practical syllogism. My argument unfolds by tracking the use of the term "to contemplate" (*theōrein*) in Aristotle's psychological works, where it is consistently associated with the selective nature of attention and shown to be instrumental in shaping representation and activating knowledge. Key passages include: (1) *DA* II.1, where Aristotle describes the voluntary contemplation and activation of a chosen piece of knowledge; (2) *DA* III.8, where contemplation is linked simultaneously to an image and a corresponding thought; (3) *De Memoria* 1, where contemplating an image selectively leads to different representations of the object, including the representation of it as an object of thinking; and (4) *DA* III.9, where the contemplation in question is subtly situated within the process of the deliberation for action. By drawing these passages together and interpreting them in light of *EN* VII.3, I show how this form of attention is indispensable for the proper representation of the object of action in practical deliberation.

Importantly, this form of attention—understood in relation to representation—appears to exceed the scope of Aristotle's so-called "biased competition model" of attention, as recently reconstructed by Fiecconi (Fiecconi 2021; see also Ierodiakonou 2022). On this model, attention consists in a competition among multiple psycho-physiological movements or stimuli, resulting in different degrees of vividness in consciousness. By contrast, the *theōrein* form of attention does not directly involve such competition, but rather consists in the selective and deliberate processing of a single movement—namely, that of the phantasma representing the object of action.

Artistic Representation and Character Formation in Aristotle's *Politics*

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My aim is to focus on the role of *phantasia* in moral education based on Aristotle's *Politics* VIII.5, where he argues in favor of using music to shape character (following Plato's *Republic* II–III). This might come as a surprise given that character formation in Aristotle's ethics typically goes through habituation (ἐθισμός) in virtuous actions, by repeatedly practicing such actions ourselves and learning first-hand how to improve our emotional responses and, ultimately, how to feel delight or aversion in the appropriate way. Nevertheless, we should not be surprised, since in the *Ethics* his aim is to show what is up to us to do for the cultivation of virtue in our souls, whereas in the *Politics* his aim is to show what the polis can do to support moral education. From this point of view, *Politics* VIII.5 speaks of a complementary habituation process (συνεθίζεσθαι) of a special sort that operates through images, likenesses and imitations of character traits, such as courage and temperance.

In other words, artistic representations of virtues through melodies and rhythms, with or without the use of words—expressed by the terms 'image' (εἰκών), 'likeness' (ὁμοίωμα), 'imitation' (μίμημα) of feelings—are seen as contributing to the cultivation of appropriate emotional responses, especially in children. How does this work? In my view, it must be *phantasia* that is responsible for preserving not only the representational content of the perception of those images but also the affective component, namely the pleasure or pain that accompanies the perception of those images. Although the term *phantasia* or *phantasma* is not mentioned in *Politics* VIII.5 (nor anywhere in the *Politics*), my aim will be to show that this is what is at work in this context. In the paper, I will take *Politics* VIII.5 as a starting point and then examine passages in other Aristotelian works (primarily: *De Anima*, *On Memory* , as well as the *Rhetoric*) that allow us to see *phantasia* as a 'motivational bearer'.

I will then return to *Politics* VIII.5 and the idea that our ability to respond to real-life ethical challenges is enhanced through our emotional responses to representations of real-life ethical challenges. If indeed, as I see it, *phantasia* is at play in this process, then—far from being necessarily associated with error, illusion, or dreaming, as in other contexts (for instance, *De Anima* III.3)—it proves valuable, especially for children, to create and store in memory 'mental images' of things that are morally attractive or morally repellent. Along with the standard form of habituation described in the *Ethics*, and, later in life, this will provide a sound basis for forming desires about the right objects and for goal-directed action.

Epicurus' Notion of *prolēpsis*

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Epicurus' epistemology presents a sophisticated account of cognition rooted in empirical realism. Central to this framework is the concept of *prolēpsis* (πρόληψις), traditionally translated as "preconception". While *prolēpsis* has long been recognised as one of Epicurus' three criteria of truth – alongside perception and *pathē* (affections) –, its precise nature and function remain contested. In this paper, I argue that *prolēpsis* is best understood not as a static image or propositional belief akin to a general concept, but as a dynamic process of recognition that unifies and complements sensory data within the rational soul.

The Role of Imagination in the Stoic Practice of *premeditatio malorum*

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The aim of the paper is to explore the role of imagination in the Stoic practice of *premeditatio malorum* ("the pre-meditation of evils"), with a focus on Seneca and Epictetus. Their paradigmatic example of this practice is the contemplation of death, either one's own or that of a loved one. Epictetus, for instance, writes: "Let death and exile and everything that is terrible appear before your eyes every day, especially death; and you will never have anything contemptible in your thoughts or crave anything excessively" (*Handbook* 21). This practice is thought to yield a range of benefits: it helps us prepare ourselves, free ourselves of fears or anxieties, make the best use of the time we have.

It is not obvious how we should understand this practice or what cognitive abilities it engages. However, it is reasonable to suggest that it involves the use of imagination – specifically, visual imagining. This seems a natural way to interpret Epictetus' exhortation to "let death and exile and everything that is terrible appear before your eyes". Indeed, this is a dominant interpretation among the Modern Stoics who, following William Irvine, refer to *premeditatio malorum* as "negative visualization" (*A Guide to the Good Life*, Oxford, 2009, ch. 4). Some authors have compared it to exposure therapy (R. Menzies and L. Whittle, "Stoicism and death acceptance: integrating Stoic philosophy in cognitive behaviour therapy for death anxiety". *Discover Psychology* (2022) 2:11). On this view, this practice amounts to visually imagining possible losses or worst-case scenarios.

If visual imagination plays a central role in *premeditatio malorum* and if this practice is central to achieving a good life and a settled mind, then it follows that imagination plays a profoundly positive role for later Stoics. On the other hand, their most explicit remarks about imagination seem to emphasize its negative aspects. It is portrayed as something that leads us astray, fosters false expectations or causes us to worry unnecessarily. As Seneca puts it, "often when no sign indicates that anything bad is on the way, the mind makes up its own false imaginings" (*Letters to Lucilius* 13.12).

I will explore whether and how these seemingly conflicting roles of imagination can be reconciled. Tentatively, I will propose that *premeditatio malorum* involves not only visual imagining but also, crucially, cognitive work with one's judgements, i.e., assents to appearances. At the same time, I will maintain that visual imagining has a role to play in this practice. This dual account helps to address a common objection to the Stoic cognitive theory of emotions, raised already by Posidonius, that judgements might be present without corresponding emotions if one is unable to imagine a given scenario. (See R. Sorabji, "Is Stoic Philosophy Helpful as Psychotherapy?" *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies,* 1997, pp. 197–209.) The Stoic position, I suggest, is compatible with viewing visual imagination as a skill that ought to be cultivated and appropriately constrained.

Phantasia in Plotinus' Theory of Action

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Although Plotinus did not develop a systematic theory of human action, his comments made on the subject in various psychological, cosmological, theological and ethical contexts suggest a highly coherent understanding of human agency. In my talk, I examine the role he assigns φαντασία in his discussions of human agency in a unusual framework. Two passages (IV.4.44 and VI.8.3) imply that Plotinus conceptualises human action in terms of the Aristotelian model of the practical syllogism. I spell out the implications of this perspective.

Unlike Aristotle, Plotinus employs the model of practical syllogism in the context of normative ethics. His focus on the major premise allows him to bring out the importance of the goal governing the action: various types of action can be distinguished, compared with one another and evaluated on the basis of the differences in the goals of action, the ultimate sources of motivation.

While the practical actions of ordinary agents act on "the premises of passion", virtuous action is based on the "premises deriving from Intellect". The φαντασίαι accommodated by the power for representation (τὸ φανταστικόν) have both a sensory character and propositional content. This faculty enables us to synthesise intelligible items and information coming from the outside world. In some contexts, Plotinus confines φαντασία so called in the proper sense (κυρίως) to appearances arising from bodily needs, and bound up with irrational desires, appetite and spirit. Taken in this sense, φαντασία is the cognitive side of our psychic operations which lead us away from our true self, since our appetitive and thymotic desires make us depend on external objects. By contrast, contemplation is an activity directed to internal objects. In contemplation, we share in the self-thinking of the divine Intellect. Plotinus makes practical action – in an un-Aristotelian fashion – directly dependent on contemplation. However, the syllogistic language of the "premises deriving from the activity of intellect" indicates that he considers the practical thought of contemplative agents to be a normal discursive procedure rather than an external activity that flows automatically from contemplation. I argue that the operation of the faculty of representation is also involved in such cases too.

Imagination and the Intelligence of Animals in Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas

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The paper discusses Albert's and Aquinas's explanations of intelligent behavior of animals. Both authors agree with Aristotle's claim that there are different degrees of intelligence in animals and explain them as well as the anthropological difference in more detail. The paper argues that Albert and Aquinas develop this theory by inserting it into a Neoplatonic framework and by applying to it their versions of Avicenna's theory of the inner senses, assigning a prominent place to imagination, memory and experience.

Francesco Piccolomini on the Imagination of Insects

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Renaissance thinkers were avid readers of ancient histories of animals and for this reason were very much aware of the astonishing abilities of insects—their ability to orient themselves in their environment, their ability to choose between sources of food and places of habitation, their differentiated interaction within populations, their skill in fighting off invaders, and their ability to react to changing weather conditions. Francesco Piccolomini developed a particularly complex analysis of the imagination of insects, focussing on the imagination of ants. His analysis covered three thematic fields: (1) The nature of the cognitive powers involved in the imagination of ants, in articular the question whether the observable behavior of ants presupposes a combinatorial structure of imagination, that is, the ability to put imagination images together in ways that were previously not experienced. (2) The place of the imagination of ants in the order of nature, in particular the question whether the cognitive powers of ants could be reduced to the causal powers of the constituents of their bodies. (3) The place of those human cognitive powers that we share with ants in the development of virtue, in particular the question whether physiological factors determine virtues. As to (1), Piccolomini argued in favor of the compositional, language-like structure of the imagination of ants. As to (2), Piccolomini argued in favor of analyzing the relatively simple powers of imagination found in ants as emergent powers. As to (3), Piccolomini argued that the cognitive powers humans share with ants are dispositions toward virtue but not yet fully developed virtues because they are instances of natural goodness that still lack the deliberate control of natural instincts.

Michael of Ephesus on the Representational Capacity

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There are two theses I am going to argue for. /1/ Michael feels an extra need to set apart the representational capacity (φαντασία) from other capacities related to sense-perception. Even if it is said to be the same as sense-perception and memory in substrate, it differs from them in account. In spelling out the difference, the commentator uses arguments that we do not see in Aristotle. As a result, his approach highlights features of the capacity that were not prominent in Aristotle's texts. /2/ The description of φαντασία in terms of psychic activities is accompanied with a statement of the physiological side of the activity. In general, the commentaries on *Parva Naturalia* and *De Motu Animalium* contain a clear hylomorphic approach to the explanation of cognitive phenomena. In discussing the representational capacity he draws attention to the physiological processes parallel to the cognitive ones in a way that includes the whole cognitive process from sense-perception to reasoning.

From Aristotle's State to Avicenna's Process

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The aim of this paper is to illuminate the transition from Aristotle's account of imagination to Avicenna's (Ibn Sînâ's) by applying a distinction among contempoary views of imagination. Recently, many have argued that imagination is fundamentally a representative state (the loci classici of this view are books by Currie and Ravenscroft (2002) and Nichols and Stitch (2003)). Some have instead suggested that imagination is fundamentally a mental process (Wiltsher, 2023). In relation to this distinction, we can think of Aristotle as a representationalist, and Avicenna as a process theorist.

On a credible reading, offered for example by Victor Caston, Aristotle introduces *phantasia* in *De Anima* to solve a problem: that of error in perception (Caston, 1996). It does so by providing error-prone sensory-like representations (*phantasmata*) that can be stored, recalled, concatenated, and otherwise manipulated by other faculties. Aristotle, then, thinks of imagination in relation to representative states. Avicenna, meanwhile, provides a quite different view in his own *De Anima*, despite his ostensible aim of merely interpreting Aristotle. Avicenna is concerned with a different problem: how exactly we get from perception of particulars to abstract thought. His solution, essentially, is that we do so by progressively refining perceptual representations such that they lose aspects of their particularity and become appropriate material for cognition. And the faculty which we use to do this refinement is the imagination.

This claim may seem peculiar, since Avicenna in fact posits a number of putatively imaginative faculties. However, according to Hülya Yaldir (2009), these are really stages or successive operations in the process of abstraction. And it is this whole process, she thinks, that deserves the name "imagination" in Avicenna. So we do not have numerous separate faculties: we have one faculty, united by a shared function, not by a kind of representation.

This is the key to seeing Avicenna as a process theorist. And with that distinction in mind, we can see why Avicenna develops this view from Aristotle's view of *phantasia*. Already in Aristotle, we have the idea that imagination is a productive faculty. The obvious question to ask is from where or from what it produces; those images do not come from nowhere. The obvious answer is that the images are derived from previous, retained apprehensions. But then, if images are capable of representing novelties, this derivation cannot be straight replication: it must be a form of manipulation, be it combinatorial, abstractive, or synthetic. And once you have the idea that imagination addresses the perceptual problem by performing such manipulations, it becomes attractively efficient to suppose that imagination also solves the abstraction problem by the same method. After all, it seems as though much the same power is in play, and a faculty just is a power of mind. So the focus shifts subtly from thinking of imagination primarily in terms of the states it produces to thinking of it primarily in terms of how it produces these states. The reasoning behind this shift might, in turn, be usefully reapplied to contemporary debate between process theorists and representationalists.

The Eschatological Transformation of Phantasia in the Beatific Vision

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This paper investigates the role of *phantasia* in early modern scholastic accounts of the beatific vision, not as an operative faculty, but in light of its eschatological transformation. Traditionally responsible for supplying the images that ground human cognition, *phantasia* is suspended in the *visio Dei per essentiam*, where the divine essence is present to the intellect immediately, without species or representation.

Yet this exclusion raises further anthropological and eschatological questions. While the intellective vision of God transcends all images, early modern theologians affirm that the resurrected body will enjoy full sensory function and delight in beatitude, and that faculties such as imaginatio and the sensuous appetite will also partake in glory.

Lessius, S.J., and Arriaga, S.J., describe this participation both through the perception of glorified sensible objects and through a kind of sympathetic overflow from the intellect. Ripalda, S.J., insists on the possibility of intrinsically supernatural acts of sensation, such as the perception of light and taste, even when directed at entitatively natural objects. He argues that faculties such as the *phantasia* may be elevated to such acts either by infused habits or by divine concurrence, and that the supernatural character of these acts does not depend on the object being supernatural in itself. Furthermore, he maintains that, *in patria*, sensory acts may occur in a divinely unified mode, whereby the *phantasia* perceives in a single act what would naturally require many. This account reinforces the possibility of glorified sensory and imaginative faculties not as mere remnants of corporeality, but as active participants in the transformed modalities of embodied beatitude.

Rather than being irrelevant, these faculties come to define the limits of image-based cognition and the transformed modalities of embodied beatitude. The beatific vision thus not only uspends the need for representation but, paradoxically, reinscribes the lower faculties within a new structure of participation: *phantasia*, no longer mediating, is transfigured into a receptive power attuned to the overflow of intellectual and volitional delight, and capable, through divine elevation, of sustaining *phantasmata* beyond the limits of natural cognition.

The Epistemological and Metaphysical Dimensions of *Imaginatio* in Nicholas of Cusa's Thought

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This paper examines the multifaceted role of *imaginatio* within Nicholas of Cusa's comprehensive philosophical and theological works. In the first part of the paper, I argue that Cusa establishes *imaginatio* as a critical cognitive faculty indispensable for the mind's engagement with, and understanding of, the fundamental structure of reality, particularly the relationship between the finite and the infinite. I posit that Cusa's *imaginatio* is integral to the cognitive process leading to "learned ignorance," emphasizing its active contribution to the ascent of knowledge.

Subsequently, this paper substantiates imaginatio's pivotal epistemological and metaphysical function through close textual analysis of Cusa's primary works. In *De Docta Ignorantia* (e.g., I.11-12, II.2-3), *imaginatio* is shown to be essential for constructing mental models—such as the infinite sphere or the coincidence of geometric figures—which enable the intellect's initial, non-discursive apprehension of God's comprehensive unity and omnipresence. My analysis indicates that this active manipulation of conceptual images constitutes a primary cognitive operation, preparing the ground for intellectual apprehension. More specifically, in *De Coniecturis* (e.g., I.1, I.12-14), *imaginatio* is central to the method of conjecture, where the mind constructs conceptual frameworks across hierarchical levels. Through imaginative manipulation of sensible images and their proportional relationships (as Cusa delineates the ascent from *sensus* to *imaginatio* and then to *ratio*), this paper demonstrates that the intellect progresses from the known to the unknown, allowing human understanding to conjecturally trace the metaphysical order of the cosmos, mirroring the divine *explicatio* from God's *complicatio*. Furthermore, Cusa's *Idiota de Mente* (e.g., ch. 1, 6) explicitly shows how the "layman," meditating on concrete objects, employs *imaginatio* to transcend physical particularity and abstract universal concepts. I contend this process reveals the imprint of divine reason within created particulars, illustrating imagination's direct, empirical, yet intellectually formative role in actualizing the mind's inherent capacity to be a "living image" or "measure" of divine truth.

To further illuminate *imaginatio*'s role, this paper integrates and builds upon key insights from contemporary scholarship on Cusa. For instance, Philipp Rosemann (2010), in his work on Cusa's metaphorical theology, critically underscores the imaginative construction inherent in apprehending abstract concepts and divine attributes, providing a framework for understanding how *imaginatio* contributes to Cusa's unique symbolic language. Similarly, drawing on Johannes Hoff's (2013) exploration of Cusa's analogical rationality and the *complicatio/explicatio* dynamic, my analysis offers a further delineation of the specific cognitive and metaphysical mechanisms by which Cusa's *imaginatio* uniquely structures human understanding. Integrating these interpretations, I argue that Cusa's *imaginatio* is a pivotal cognitive heuristic, supplying the symbolic and analogical frameworks necessary for the mind to approach and approximate the ultimate nature of reality.

Dreaming as a Speculative Source: Exploring *Phantasia* and Its Cognitive Function in the Middle Ages

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Le Roman de la Rose, a significant work in vernacular dissemination of philosophical tradition, features an iconographic program that illustrates a character embarking on an experiential journey. The journey depicted in the illuminations is a metaphor for the medieval debate regarding dreams as a source of knowledge. We see the fictional character rise from bed and walk to a garden, where he engages in conversation and learns from personifications of virtues, including a character who identifies herself as "Reason." That encyclopaedic poem reflects a common medieval assumption about *phantasia* (from φάντος - phantos), understood as the faculty that makes visible the comprehensive representation of the body, perceptions, and emotions in dreams. The Pseudo-Augustinian work *De spiritu et anima*, attributed to Alcher of Clairvaux, literally describes how phantasia allows us to see ourselves in dreams despite having our eyes closed. It states that we can walk while simulating our body, feelings, and unknown places: *Clausi erunt oculi tui, videbit illa. Et ita in ea tota et integra cernetur similitudo carnis tuae. In hac similitudine quasi per loca cognita vel incognita discurrit, et sentit laeta vel tristia*. As a soul activity, dreaming becomes vital in medieval debates concerning knowledge, perceptual species, and divinatory prognosis. Works like Macrobius' *Somnium Scipionis commentary* and discussions among medieval masters about *De somno et vigilia* from *Parva Naturalia* are relevant sources that explore the contribution of dreams to human cognition. From a physiological perspective, dreaming is a natural process involving sensory stimuli, in which imagination projects absent objects of perception, like a mirror. *Phantastica cognitione* plays a role in future knowledge and our past perceptual experiences regarding the external world. This raises the question of how dreams generate knowledge compared to memory or perception: why do dreams feel as vivid as waking life? Medieval thinkers, such as Albert the Great, Simon Faversham, and Radulphus Brito, discussed the distinctions between dreaming and wakefulness. This paper will address Early Modern inquiries into sensory species and *phantasmata* to explore how dreams provide a source of cognition related to intellectual habits. Additionally, *Le Roman* utilises dreaming as a mental experiment to explore philosophical traditions and rhetorical tools. The multiple roles of dreaming and *phantasia*, as the faculty for projecting perceptual knowledge in contexts of simulation and symbolic representation, suggest a rich reflection on the cognitive influence of *phantasia* in the speculative habits.

Beyond Scepticism: Dreams in Early Modern Philosophy

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In this paper, I propose to examine the treatment of dreams by some early modern philosophical figures, and in particular, the way that dreaming, rather than being an extraordinary or deviant case, was thought to be located somewhere on a spectrum of sensory experiences that includes ordinary cases of sensation and imagination.

To the extent that contemporary philosophers have been interested in early modern conceptions of dreams, the focus has overwhelmingly been on Descartes's dream scepticism in the first *Meditation*. But against the narrow focus of the philosophical literature, I suggest that Descartes and many of his followers invoked considerations of dreams towards a myriad of philosophical purposes beyond thinking about scepticism and knowledge. Their treatment of dreams not only often came alongside discussions of other supposedly abnormal mental states, but also invoked wider accounts of a variety of normal sensory experiences. Descartes, for instance, links dreaming to madness and melancholia; meanwhile, his resolution of the epistemological dream concern involves not only considerations about other cognitive states, e.g., memory, but also his general account of physiology. His discussion of dreams at the end of the *Meditations* comes alongside a longer discussion of the general mechanisms undergirding sensation and the imagination, as well as an account of other seemingly abnormal mental phenomena such as phantom pains, which turn out to be explicable by way of the normal (rather than aberrant) laws of sensation. (Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, ed. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, and D. Murdoch, vol. 2, Cambridge 1985, 58–61.)

Interestingly, these are the discussions, rather than dream scepticism, that many later French philosophers picked up on from Descartes. Malebranche, for instance, mentions dreams only briefly, but as part of a much more extensive discussion of sensation more generally, in which he discusses seemingly aberrant psychological cases (including, again, phantom pains and madness) at length. (Malebranche, *The Search After Truth: With Elucidations of the Search After Truth*, ed. T. M. Lennon and P. J. Olscamp, Cambridge, 1997, 569–572) In Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie*, meanwhile, there are two philosophical entries on dreams, one of which focuses precisely on physiological accounts of different kinds of dreams (P.-J. Malouin, "Dream," in *Encyclopedia of Diderot & d'Alembert - Collaborative Translation Project*, trans. S. Harris, Ann Arbor, 2007, http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.did2222.0000.878.), and the other of which links dreams to the imagination, discusses it in reference to medicine and abnormal psychology (delirium), and only briefly alludes to the connection of dreams to metaphysical philosophy (and, incidentally, does not mention scepticism at all.) (Diderot (attributed), "Dream," in *Encyclopedia of Diderot & d'Alembert*)

The purpose of this paper, then, is not so much to try to solve any philosophical problem about early modern accounts of dreams, but rather, to try to trace some of the ways that, for Descartes (and some others), dreams were treated as linked to 'abnormal' mental states, but then also to try to trace some of the ways that those 'abnormal' mental states were treated as not truly abnormal at all. The result, hopefully, will enable a revitalised consideration of early modern conceptions of dreams – one that may help show the significance of the philosophy of dreams beyond the narrow confines of concerns about scepticism, for understanding the mind and cognition more generally.

Wandering thoughts: The Early Modern Invention of Mental Life

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This contribution seeks to make sense of the specificity of the early modern approach to what may be termed ‘mental life’. Among early modern authors, I would argue that the concept of imagination/fantasy takes on new meaning and importance due to the realisation that mental representation or imagination has a proper dynamic. This dynamic is especially visible in "reverie" or wandering thoughts, which show that, when left to itself, thought obeys specific laws (such as inertia and association) and follows a course that is somehow independent of both the will and sensory impressions.

While "daydreaming" may still sometimes be morally condemned (as in the case of the "roving thoughts" denounced by Robert Boyle) or characterised as a pathological manifestation of a melancholic temperament, it tends to be recognised by British philosophers such as Hobbes, Locke and Hume as the most basic expression of a mental flow, or, in Lockean terminology, a "train of ideas" that characterises all sorts of thinking. A constant succession of ideas is seen as fundamental to the process of thinking, including when it takes the higher forms of attentive, directed (or rational) thought, as well as reflective self-consciousness.

Inner and Outer Cognition: Early Modern Theories of Ideas and Mental Representation

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This talk examines how some early modern philosophers, including Descartes and Locke, sought to preserve the Aristotelian idea of a metaphysically robust cognitive connection between mind and world within their theories of ideas. While this view has gained increasing acceptance in recent scholarship, the mind's relation to itself is still widely regarded as fundamentally different from its relation to extramental objects, since inner cognition is assumed to be immediate in a way outer cognition is not. I will challenge this division by arguing that both inner and outer cognition are structured by a single ideational model of the relation between cognizer and cognized.

Children's Imagination in Malebranche: Imagination, Memory and Childhood Psychology

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This paper aims at providing an overview of Nicolas Malebranche's conception of children's imagination. To do this, I will draw on an internalist analysis of Book II of *The search after truth*, named "On Imagination", in order to consider the function played by the analysis of children's imagination in particular. This approach leads me to defend two theses: on the one hand, the paradigmatic case of children's imagination is a revealing case, or a magnifying mirror for analyses of human imagination in general. On the other hand, Malebranche's conceptualisation of children's imagination at different stages of their development leads me to see in these texts the premises of a developmental psychology, the origin of which historiography usually attributes to Rousseau.

The second book of *The search after truth*, still little studied, has attracted the attention of commentators who emphasise, in particular, the fundamental place of physiology in the development of Malebranche's science of man, and who comment on Malebranche's conceptual innovation about the *contagion of imaginations* (the way in which what is imagined by a human being is communicated to others) and on *strong imaginations* (individuals in particular who manage to communicate or even impose their imaginations with force, which partly explains relations of authority or domination).

Nevertheless, no work has yet been done on the place of the child in this book, or in Malebranche in general. We will show that Malebranche considers the development of children's imagination, starting with the foetus, by focusing on the nature of the *links* – a fundamental notion that we will explain – that it has with his mother: according to Malebranche, foetuses 'see what their mothers see' and 'imagine what their mothers imagine': the child's imagination is shaped from intrauterine life, which will determine his likes and dislikes (the question of imagination thus intersects with that of memory). Once born, the specific nature of the child's link with his parents or nurses explains the exemplary contagion of imaginations, thus explaining what we would today call "social reproduction". Malebranche's mechanistic anthropology, also based on a physiological explanation of the child (especially the characteristics of his brain fibers) and taking into account the specific nature of the links that bind him to his environment, offers a new and original conceptualisation of children's imagination at different stages of their development.

The implications of this work are manifold. Firstly, from the point of view of the history of imagination, it highlights the conceptual innovation of mechanistic anthropology in the Early Modern period, in particular that of Malebranche, which articulates the theory of the imagination with a new psychophysiology. Secondly, from the perspective of Childhood Studies, it sheds light on a little-known episode in the history of childhood. Finally, from a historiographical point of view, it replaces Malebranche in the history of childhood psychology and developmental psychology, whose role has been neglected.

Fortifying the Will with Play: Leibniz on Imagination in Learning and Education

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"Human beings are never more ingenious than in inventing games; the mind is at ease here." ("Les hommes ne sont jamais plus ingenieux que dans l'invention des jeux; l'esprit s'y trouve a son aise." *Leibniz to Pièrre Remond de Montmort*, 17 January 1716, LBr. 769 Bl. 1).

„ ...one can also teach serious subjects in a playful way. And so they are more effective." („...man kan ja ernsthaffte dinge auch spielend vorbringen. Und da würcken sie beßer." (*Aufzeichnungen nach einer Lektüre von »ZUFÄLLIGEN GEDANCKEN«* 1691, A IV 4 608)

Leibniz devoted most of his intellectual effort to finding remedies to the limitations of human lives, both personal and societal, with the aim of enabling individuals and communities to achieve happiness: a society comprised of happy individuals is one in which the arts, sciences, and all the positive aspects of human life flourish. He proposes various strategies to achieve this, but the "great point is the amelioration (*redressement*) of education, which must render virtue pleasant/agreeable in order to make it natural" (*Memoire pour des personnes eclairées et de bonne intention* (1692) A IV 4 615). Education's purpose is to enlighten reason and fortify the will in the exercise of virtues by submitting will to reason. The topic of rendering the virtues pleasant is central in the educational concept that Leibniz develops since his young writings (as *Nova methodus docendae discendaeque jurisprudentiae* (1667)), and it receives extensive treatment until his death. In his view, virtues become desirable and pleasant when they are taught in a playful manner: play is the expedient to fortify the will in an agreeable way.

Play is the best way to fortify the will, not only because it can be introduced and used from a young age, but also because it engages the subject's conative and cognitive capacities, pleasantly forcing them to think and act, and to combine theory and praxis. Play relies on imagination as a capacity that mediates between lower and higher capacities: the material offered to the senses is transformed into input that animates the emotions (hope to win/fear of losing) and cognitive/conative capacities of the subject, prompting them to initiate something based on the sensory input (e.g. consider the shack game, where the arrangement of the pawns invites to legitimate moves).

The talk will present a detailed account of Leibniz's idea that imagination involved in play fortifies the will in a playful, and hence agreeable, way. Through this analysis, I will show that Leibniz's proposal has implications that extend far beyond the ethical sphere. Play enables one to exercise the "ingenium", or the ability responsible for invention. Using play in teaching and education not only results in virtues being interiorized as a second nature and disposing the subject towards goodness, but also advances science by removing impediments to the will, such as doubt, to discover truth. This will advance society by improving the arts.

Spinoza and the Physics of Imaginative Error

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Spinoza's epistemology distinguishes three kinds of cognition, which correspond to varying kinds of truths and degrees of clarity: imagination, reason, and intuition. Respectively, reason and intuition procure adequate ideas by either subsuming things under common notions or by immediately understanding the necessary ontological relationship between the essences of a given individual and of God. By giving us insight into the eternal and necessary structure of reality, reason and intuition provide us with true, complete ideas.

Imagination, on the other hand, is an arational cognitive faculty. Spinoza understands imagination to be constituted by what we would today call perception and memory, the mental faculties involved in generating or contemplating images. For him, imagination results from how surrounding bodies impact ours; for example, a particle strikes the eye at a certain angle, prompting one to form an idea of a remote object's location. However, since our relations to surrounding bodies are inconstant and perspectival, imagination is the source of error, falsity, and inadequate ideas. This is not to say that all ideas procured through imagination are false, but they are vulnerable to falsity.

In this paper, I offer an account of this vulnerability grounded in Spinoza's sparse but suggestive physics. Specifically, I focus on a little-discussed passage from Part II of the Ethics, where Spinoza articulates a law governing oblique collisions, interactions between bodies traveling on different lines:

"When a body in motion strikes against another which is at rest and cannot give way, then it is reflected, so that it continues to move, and the angle of the line of the reflected motion with the surface of the body at rest which it struck against will be equal to the angle which the line of the incident motion makes with the same surface." (EIIa2)

I offer an account of the role of this collision law in Spinoza's epistemology. At Ellp17d2, Spinoza invokes it to explain that an oblique collision can move a reflecting body, such that the effective angle of reflection is incongruent with the initial angle of incidence. To use the example of my eye again, if the collision of a particle with my eye itself moves some part of my eye, the effective angle of reflection will differ from the angle of incidence. As a result, I may generate an idea of an object's location that does not correspond to its actual location, since I form the idea on the basis of my body's status after the collision.

On this reading, Spinoza's seemingly anomalous law of oblique collision provides a physical and metaphysical explanation for the epistemic limitations of imagination. Imagination is the source of epistemic error, not because of cognitive failure, but as a structural consequence of being a body among bodies.

The Individual as Object of Imagination in Spinoza

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In my paper, I wish to share the main ideas of a chapter from my upcoming dissertation on Spinoza's theory of interpersonal relations, including friendship and love determined by the second kind of knowledge, or imagination. The chapter is on Spinoza's theory of *affectuum imitatio*, according to which our imagination of some present affect of "a thing similar to us" (*res nobis similis*) engenders a similar affect in ourselves (*Ethics*, part III, proposition 27). This doctrine of affective imitation plays a central but multifaceted role within Spinoza's theory of human nature. Major XXth century French commentator Alexandre Matheron has claimed that, through the doctrine of the imitation of affects, Spinoza's philosophy involves a novel way of theorizing society, politics and history. Somewhat more modestly, but nonetheless importantly, a number of Anglo-Saxon commentators have time and again emphasized the relevance of this doctrine for shielding Spinoza's allegedly egoistic, metaphysically grounded moral psychology from being trivially false.

However, despite laudation for the economy of the principle itself, Spinoza's argument was found wanting. The doctrine apparently rests on a broader notion of contagious imagination, for the imitation of affects (*affecti*, the subject-matter of Spinoza's theory of "affectivity" in the contemporary sense of the term) is argued for on the basis of the imitation of affections (*affectiones*, which pertain to Spinoza's theory of sense-perception, association and empirical knowledge), which encompasses the former. Moreover, the claim to contagious imagination is argued for through a rather challenging inference from the general theory of imagination to it becoming further bodily assimilation of the imagining subject to the imagined object under the assumption of preexisting similarity. However, Spinoza provides no account of the relevant sense of similarity, nor does he indicate the sufficient degree. Commentators are even divided on the rather fundamental question of whether the similarity in question was meant to be entirely real or (at least partly) imaginary. Did the author of the *Ethics* assume that his intended readers will relate it to the objective features of interacting bodies? Or was he expecting that they will consider the similarity itself a product of imagination, prone to confusion and misrepresentation? Thence the bewilderment of many astute readers. Matheron himself calls the deduction "*fort curieuse*", and remarks – concerning the nature and degree of similarity required – that "*Sans doute serait-il quelque peu embarrassant d'entrer dans les details*" (*Individu et communauté* [1988], 154-5). Similarly, while Jonathan Bennett praises "This use by Spinoza of the concept of similarity" as "a brilliant metaphysical tour de force", he finds Spinoza's discursive brevity as painful here as anywhere in the *Ethics*: "He says nothing about how much similarity is needed to bring his theory into play" (see *A Study* [1984], 280-1, cf. Broad: *Five Types* [1967], 37-38 and Della Rocca: "Egoism and Imitation" [2004], 140).

I aim to take a fresh look at this doctrine and the difficulties involved, especially those that concern the notion of similarity. I follow Justin Steinberg ("Imitation, Representation, and Humanity" [2013]) in maintaining that the correct interpretation must be based on a more robust consideration of the background theory of imagination. However, my way of bringing in that theory is slightly different from his. Within reconstructing the key ideas of Spinoza's general theory of imagination, I place a special emphasis on the peculiar case of representing a thing like us. In short, I wish to shed more light on the all-important imitation doctrine by investigating how imagining another human individual (and imagining them as such) supposedly works in Spinoza.

Turning *passiones* Into *actiones* by Knowledge – Is Active Imaginative Practical Motivation in Spinoza Possible?

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Spinoza identifies imagination with sense perception (E2p15–17) and memory (E2p18), which are identified as the grounds of the first kind of knowledge: knowledge from experience and knowledge from testimony (E2p40s2). He states that the first kind of knowledge is the only cause of falsity (E2p41) and never teaches us to distinguish the true from the false (E2p42). Given Spinoza's identification of the will and the intellect (E2p48–49), ideas of imagination are not only representations of reality but also motivations for action.

For human beings, virtue is the power by which they persevere in their being; power is defined by the human being's ability to engage in *actiones* (E4d8). *Actiones*, unlike *passiones*, are the human being's effects that can be understood through the essence of the human being – i.e., their power – alone (E3d2). *Actiones* follow from the mind's adequate ideas alone (E3p1) – ideas that *do* teach us to distinguish the true from the false (E2p43) – and adequate ideas give rise to *actiones* but never *passiones* (E3p3). *Actiones* always lead to an increase in the human being's power (E3p4), i.e., virtue, and are always experienced as joyful affects (E3d3), whereas *passiones* can lead to the human being's destruction and are experienced as joy or sadness. Spinoza flatly denies the existence of any normative consideration transcendent to the conative motivational structure constituting the given human being's essence (E3p9s), but affirms that this structure is constituted by both adequate and inadequate ideas (E3p9d).

These considerations together might suggest that the human being's motivational structure is characterized by an ineliminable duality between sensuous motivations accompanied by the interplay of joy and sadness characterizing the satisfaction of egoistic desires and intelligible motivations accompanied by the joyful experience of the human being's eternal essence determining their action (E5p29–32) (Della Rocca 2008; Renz 2022; Youpa 2009; Newlands 2018; Perler 2011).

But how to read Spinoza's claim in E5p3 that *passiones* turn into *actiones* through knowledge? Are *passiones* replaced by *actiones*? In this paper, I argue that this cannot be the case. Imaginations do not teach us to distinguish true from false in isolation (Toth 2025), but they constitute the matter of the human motivational structure: without imaginations, the human being did not have the ability to desire to engage in spatially and temporally located actions. In isolation, imaginations do not have transparent evidential power and can warrant theoretical and practical inferences that are in fact "conclusions without premises" (E2p28d). However, the human mind has the power to give its imaginations the intelligible form of a coherent structure, in which case their evidential power becomes transparent and their motivational power reduced to the desire of what is necessary (Toth early view). If the human subject achieves self-knowledge (Carlisle 2017), active imaginative practical motivation is possible. In this case, the human subject understands their desire to do x as being causally necessitated by their essence, i.e., by their desire: the desire is thus self-justifying.

The Limits of Humean Thought

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Hume has been credited with ushering in the naturalistic approach to mental representation (see, e.g., J. Cottrell "Hume on mental representation and intentionality"). Only fairly recently has his own account of mental representation received serious attention. Notable attempts at a systematic interpretation of Hume's account can be found in work by Don Garrett ("Hume's naturalistic theory of representation"; *Hume*), Karl Schafer ("Hume's Unified Theory of Mental Representation"), and David Landy (*Kant's Inferentialism: The Case Against Hume*, Ch. 2; "Recent Scholarship on Hume's Theory of Mental Representation"). We have these commentators to thank for a clearer picture of Humean mental representation—of what constitutes it, how it comes about, and its role in various mental operations like causal inference and moral judgment.

Yet one important aspect of Hume's account remains a source of interpretive controversy. Hume took *thought* to involve mentally representing an entity with a grasp of some of its intrinsic nature. He also held that our thoughts ("ideas") ultimately "copy," or exactly resemble and derive from, our sensory representations ("impressions"); call this 'the Copy Principle'. The question is how, if it all, the Copy Principle limits what we can think.

This question has been addressed indirectly in the literature on Hume's causal metaphysics. Proponents of the "Old Hume" take the Copy Principle to entail a stronger constraint on our thought, one that precludes any thought of—and so realism about—a mind-independent causal power over and above the fact that objects, events, or states of one type are always followed by those of another. (See Winkler "The New Hume" and Millican "Hume as a Regularity Theorist". This view has dominated outside of Hume scholarship. See, e.g., Mackie *The Cement of the Universe*, Stroud *Hume*, Lewis *Philosophical Papers*, vol. II, Woolhouse *The Empiricists*, Blackburn "Hume and Thick Connexions", and Ellis ("Causal Laws and Singular Causation"). Proponents of the "New Hume", however, assume that the Copy Principle entails either *no* constraint on our thought or one that allowed Hume to affirm the existence of causal powers even while denying our ability to conceive or know of them (See Wright *The Sceptical Realism of David Hume*, Craig *The Mind of God and the Works of Man*, Strawson *The Secret Connexion: Causation, Realism, and David Hume*, and Kail *Projection and Realism in Hume's Philosophy*).

I address the question head-on, and in two broad stages. First, I identify a tension between Hume's apparent applications of a stronger copy-based constraint and his allowance for thoughts that violate this constraint. Second, I offer Hume a way out via a weaker copy-based constraint that permits both the relevant thoughts and skepticism about our representational capacities. In balancing these seemingly contrary aspects of his system, my proposal is the most plausible among charitable interpretations of Hume. And, if correct, it illuminates the varieties of Humean thought, along with the nuances of Hume's semantic skepticism.

§2 clarifies the nature of Humean thought. For Hume, S thinks of particular intentional object x if and only if: (i) S forms an idea i; and (ii) i represents with some resemblance x. §3 flags Hume's apparent applications of a stronger copy-based constraint on our thought, and identifies candidates for this stronger constraint:

STRONG COPY CONSTRAINT S thinks of x only if S forms an idea i that copies an impression exactly resembling x.

STRONG COPY CONSTRAINT* S thinks of x only if S forms an idea i with parts that copy impressions exactly resembling parts of x, and i at least somewhat resembles x in the spatiotemporal arrangement of these parts.

MODERATE COPY CONSTRAINT S thinks of x only if S forms an idea i with parts that copy impressions exactly resembling parts of x.

§4 argues that each such candidate precludes thoughts Hume otherwise permitted: fictional and radically imperfect thoughts, and thoughts of a spatiotemporal minimum and of an invisible and intangible distance. §5 derives from these thoughts a weaker copy-based constraint:

WEAK COPY CONSTRAINT S thinks of x only if S forms an idea i with parts that copy impressions at least inexactly resembling parts of x to a sufficient degree.

§5 finishes by reconciling this constraint with various limitations on thought.