

Editorial

Value Cognition in Imagination

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Before her marriage she had thought that she had love within her grasp; but since the happiness which she had expected this love to bring her hadn't come, she supposed she must have been mistaken. And Emma tried to imagine just what was meant, in life, by the words "bliss," "passion," and "rapture"—words that had seemed so beautiful to her in books.

Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*

Our evaluative and normative thought, both moral and nonmoral, is not limited to what we take to be the case in reality. Much of it involves imagining some situations or prospects and, based on how they appear to us in imagination, making judgments about whether they would be good or bad if they were to obtain, and whether we should pursue them or not. It is also natural to think that such consideration of imagined situations puts us, at least sometimes, in a position to make reasonable evaluative judgments and perhaps even to acquire evaluative understanding. After all, evaluative understanding requires agents to discriminate the evaluatively significant features of a situation from the evaluatively insignificant ones, and this discrimination itself seems to depend on the ability to imaginatively consider what changes in a situation would make an evaluative difference.

Imagination's relation to values and evaluative thinking is, however, more complex than this picture suggests. Imagination does not only lead us to value or disvalue things; our evaluative dispositions also affect the way in which we imagine things in the first place. In imagining, we must exercise discretion in focusing on some possibilities while disregarding others, and presumably this activity is itself guided by what we deem worth imagining. The influences between values and imaginings thus seem to run in both directions: imagination shapes evaluation, and evaluation shapes imagination.

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There are, moreover, various reasons for being suspicious of imagination in the context of evaluative cognition. Historically, imagination has often been associated with distracting influences on rational thinking about the good and the right. Our imaginings are prone to distort the prospects they represent, since they are shaped by our desires; the way we prioritize some imagined possibilities over others is often not sensitive to the actual value of those possibilities, but rather to what we find attention-grabbing or relevant to immediate wish-fulfilment. Beyond such worries, imagination has specific features that may seem to make it ill-suited to serve as a basis for evaluation. It is commonly acknowledged, for instance, that imagination is subject to the will and is substantially less constrained than paradigmatic epistemic sources such as reasoning or perception—features that problematize its status as a source of justification and understanding. In addition, imagination as the capacity underlying our engagement with fiction, and this capacity is arguably not well suited to provide insight into what is really valuable, since what is true in fiction need not be constrained by what is actually the case.

Given all these complexities, there are plenty of issues for philosophers to explore. This special issue of *Studia Philosophica Estonica* brings together philosophers working on imagination, value cognition and related topics to explore the intricate relationship between the two. The contributions range from arguments for the positive role of imagination in decision-making, through examinations of the role of values in guiding imagination, to discussions of the aesthetic dimensions of imagining. While some papers primarily defend the positive contribution imagination can make to value cognition, others adopt a more critical perspective, highlighting its limitations. The papers also differ in the kind of imagination they focus on: some are concerned primarily with sensory imagination and mental imagery, while others extend their scope to non-sensory and propositional imaginings as well. Taken together, the contributions to this volume reveal the many ways in which imagination and values are intertwined and hopefully will inspire further research on these important issues.

Contributions to this volume

Katja Vogt's "Deliberative Imagination" is a fitting first article for this volume because it maps out a variety of ways in which imagination is crucial for good decision-making. She distinguishes between three kinds of imagination, all with their distinctive roles to play. First, diagnostic imagination is used to evaluate the features of one's situation that are relevant for decision. Second, anticipatory imagination involves mental rehearsal of what one takes to happen in the future. Third, by using imagination tests, the agent imagines whether she would like the outcomes of her choices.

While Vogt's account of deliberative imagination draws on Aristotle, **Francesco Orsi's** contribution, "*Sub Specie Boni, Sub Ratione Boni: Imagination and Estimation in Aquinas's Guise of the Good*," turns to one of Aristotle's most famous followers, Thomas Aquinas, and his view of evaluative cognition. Orsi argues that, for Aquinas, imagination itself carries no evaluative content; rather, the will operates under the more specific aspect of suitability. Imagination plays only an ancillary, enabling role, supplying the raw material for concept-application and influencing desire for or against right action. The real evaluative work for Aquinas, Orsi contends, is instead performed by a distinct cognitive power, estimation, which apprehends non-sensory contents such as suitability or harm and draws inferences between particulars. Orsi's paper thus presents a much more reserved view of imagination's role in evaluative cognition.

In her contribution, "The Role of Value in Creative Imagining," **Julia Langkau** looks at how what we subjectively value can influence how we imagine. Unlike the previous two contributions, Langkau's focus is thus not on the downstream effects of imaginings on values but rather how imaginings themselves are shaped by values. Langkau draws a distinction between unguided and value-guided creative imagining. It is the second form of imagining in which evaluative cognition shapes the imagining. Value-guidance helps determine which possibilities are highlighted, which features receive attention, and how the imaginative process unfolds. In developing her view, Langkau also contrasts it with Kauppinen's account of how aspirational aims guide the creative process. Aspirational aims may frame or motivate a creative project, but do not fully explain why particular emerging possibilities strike the creator as valuable or promising; this is better explained by attention to their felt subjective value.

The papers in the second half of the volume take a look at imagination's role in evaluative cognition in the aesthetic context, broadly conceived.

In his contribution, "Layered Imaginative Acquaintance: A Roadmap", **Uku Tooming** addresses the idea that a proper ground of aesthetic judgment about the value of an artwork can be the imagining of experiencing that work. While imagination has often been seen as crucial for basic aesthetic appreciation, in the literature on the acquaintance principle in aesthetics, it has been proposed as a surrogate for genuine acquaintance with the artwork. Tooming proposes an analysis of the distinction between basic and surrogate imaginative acquaintance in terms what the prescriptive frame that is associated with the artwork permits. As a result, imagination can play a dual role in aesthetic appreciation.

Piotr Kozak's paper, "Aesthetics of Imagery: The Quixotic Dilemma," also examines imagination's role in aesthetic appreciation, but focuses specif-

ically on sensory imagination (or imagery). Kozak asks whether mental imagery itself has aesthetic value and argues that defining mental imagery experientially leads to a dilemma: if we assume that experientially defined mental imagery has aesthetic value, we cannot explain how one could be mistaken about that value; but if we assume it lacks aesthetic value, we cannot explain how mental imagery contributes to aesthetic appreciation in the first place. Kozak's way out of the dilemma is to reject the experiential definition of mental imagery altogether, proposing instead that it be defined in terms of content.

In the only Estonian-language contribution to this volume, "The Science-Fiction Argument and New Knowledge," **Henrik Sova** and **Jaak Tomberg** argue that the works of science-fiction provide a mechanism for attaining new knowledge by turning certain ideas plausible that weren't such otherwise. Sova and Tomberg draw on Sue Burke's *Semiosis*, where survivors on an alien planet must learn to communicate with an intelligent, sentient bamboo. They show how Burke makes the bamboo's intelligence believable through a combination of narrative and poetic strategies. Through this imaginative but carefully scaffolded plausibility, readers come to accept that a thinking, speaking plant could exist and that plants are potential cooperation partners. In doing so, it opens up the possibility of new ecological knowledge, suggesting that addressing the environmental crisis may require humans to enter into mutual relationships with non-human creatures.