

Currie, Gregory and Ian Ravenscroft. Recreative Minds. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, 204pp., \$65.00 cloth, \$21.95 paper.

The subtitle of Recreative Minds is Imagination in Philosophy and Psychology. In many ways, the book warrants this label; it offers treatments of standard and non-standard philosophical problems regarding the imagination, and considers many of these problems in the light of psychology and neuroscience. Nevertheless, the book's scope is narrower than one might expect. Currie and Ravenscroft do not offer a theory of imagination in all its flavors, but concentrate instead on what they call recreative imagination.

Recreative mental states are simulative, involving a kind of perspective-shifting whereby the imaginer takes on states that are distinct from, but mirror and may substitute for perceptions, beliefs, desires, decisions, and experiences of movement, among others. The latter (non-imaginative) states are counterparts for the respective recreative states. Recreative states are similar to their counterparts in character—e.g. a visual image is characterized by being vision-like, having content that is like that of visual experience—and in causal efficacy—e.g. a belief-like imagining, like a belief, might dispose us to make certain inferences, perform certain (pretend) actions, or respond emotionally. The counterpart thesis is coupled with an implementation hypothesis, which states that rather than positing two mental mechanisms for, say, belief and belief-like imagining, the latter is a reuse of the mechanisms responsible for the former (p. 66-8). Currie and Ravenscroft offer conceptual arguments for the implementation of propositional imagining (chapter 3) and neuropsychological evidence for the implementation of perceptual and motor imagery (chapter 4).

By the end of the book, the notion of recreative remains vague. The clear cases are clear enough—simulating beliefs and desires for some folk psychological task, visualizing Wrigley Field in early spring, imaging a backhand tennis stroke—and Currie and Ravenscroft can certainly offer an analysis of those. If however, the task is to give a theory of recreative imagination, more needs to be said to clarify the analysandum. For instance, it is unclear what distinguishes a recreative state from a creative one. Is it just a matter of the respective products, where creative imagination “leads to the creation of something valuable in art, science, or practical life” (p. 9), while recreative imagination bears no such results? Or is the relevant mark procedural, where creative imagination consists in putting “together ideas in a way that defies expectation or convention” (p.9), while recreative imagination is, in some sense, predictable? Or is the mark one of mechanism? Content? Character? The authors offer brief comments on these issues, but nothing sufficient for conceptual analysis. The present concern is not specific to the creative/recreative distinction. Rather, the point is general; it is unclear what, in principle, distinguishes recreative states from other states. This neglect shadows much of the book. Lacking rigorous conceptualization of its basic working machinery, Recreative Minds falls short of successfully meeting its own stated goals. And this is a surprise given the authors in question.

The book divides into four parts. Part 1 consists of two chapters, focusing on a battery of conceptual distinctions and clarifications. A distinct desire-like mode of imagining is proposed; imagery, supposition, and fantasy are categorized as types of imagining; pretence is distinguished from imagination on behavioral grounds; and scientific thought experiments are claimed to fall out of the scope of the present theory.

The last provides an instance where we are left to struggle with the nature of recreative imagination. Currie and Ravenscroft claim that to assume that recreative imaginings model the objects of, for instance, belief, is to confuse contents with counterparts. In a belief-like imagining, we recreate its counterpart state, a belief, which has a certain propositional content. The argument that thought experiments are outside the scope of the analysandum however, makes a similar confusion. Since “thought experiments in science involve the mental modelling of the situation that the experiment describes, and such situations are typically not mental processes but rather processes involving particles and light waves, falling bodies and rolling balls”, they do not involve the recreation of mental states and are not, Currie and Ravenscroft conclude, recreative imaginings (p. 41). The problem is that thought experiment modelling is ruled out in virtue of a certain kind of content—states of affairs—when the focus should be on counterparts. Sober-minded scientists clearly have no ambitions of mentally modelling the contents themselves—“falling bodies and rolling balls”; only on the golf course would you catch a physicist muttering “Be the ball.” Rather, thought experimenters model mental states that stand in some relation to such contents. The appropriate counterparts seem to be vision and belief, the relevant recreative states, imagery and supposition. If Currie and Ravenscroft distinguish thought experimentation from recreative imagining, it had better be on different ground. Perhaps thought experiments involve creative imaginings, but as discussed above, it isn’t clear what distinguishes creative from recreative imaginings.

Part 2 focuses on the debate between simulation theory and theory theory. Chapter 3 explores the conceptual space of the debate, arguing quite refreshingly that the two camps needn’t be dichotomized. Chapter 4 is one of the more interesting chapters in

the book. The authors discuss empirical evidence regarding visual and motor imagery, and then conceptualize these capacities within the purview of their theory. Drawing on the research of Stephen Kosslyn and others, Currie and Ravenscroft argue that perceptual imagery and perception are underpinned by the same mechanisms. However, here the initial implementation hypothesis is significantly weakened; “the implementation claim is not the claim that the neural substrates for vision and for imagery are exactly the same, but rather that they substantially overlap” (p. 79). Unfortunately, the non-overlapping mechanisms—the neural substrates that underpin imagery and not perception—go unexplained. The authors cite experiments on patients who have suffered brain hemispheric disconnection, and experiments on Parkinson’s patients to support the implementation hypothesis regarding motor imagery. They argue that the appropriate counterpart for motor imagery is the experience of movement rather than movement, putting motor imagery closer to perceptual imagery than one might have initially thought. In Chapter 5, Currie and Ravenscroft maintain that the simulationist’s focus should be on propositional imagination, but also argue for the accommodation of perceptual imagination.

Part 3 is the most novel and exciting of the book. Chapter 6 considers the prospects for imagination as motivation for action. The authors distinguish a number of ways that beliefs, desires, and their respective imaginative counterparts, might motivate action. In chapters 7 and 8, they argue that autism consists in an imaginative deficiency and schizophrenia in a lack of imaginative control. Chapter 7 offers an excellent survey of the philosophy and psychology relevant to autism, plus some novel theoretical diagnosis of the disorder. Chapter 8 focuses on schizophrenia—a phenomenon

underexplored by philosophers of psychology—and is the most striking chapter in the book. The authors argue that so-called delusional beliefs are not, after all, beliefs. Rather, schizophrenics fail to distinguish imaginings from beliefs; they imagine something which is not the case, but then fail to recognize the imagining for what it is. Imaginings, unlike beliefs, are autonomously generated. Schizophrenics can imagine that P, but they fail to acknowledge that they imagined that P. The force of this kind of failure is compounded by the emotional consequences of imaginative thought (discussed independently in Chapter 9).

What, one might rightly ask, would such recognitional failure consist in? Here, Currie and Ravenscroft turn to what they call the copy-and-compare process of action-monitoring, championed by Christopher Frith and others. When a person is about to perform an action, the sensorimotor system makes two copies of the motor instructions, one to be sent to the relevant muscles in the body, and an efference copy to be compared with the sensory feedback from the world once the action is performed. When the efference copy and the feedback “match up”, the agent is alerted that the movement was hers and not the world’s. Frith argues that schizophrenics suffer damage to this sub-personal system and thus fail to recognize actions as their own—suffering delusion of control. Currie and Ravenscroft argue that the same sensorimotor malfunction may be the culprit for the failure to recognize autonomously generated imaginings. This move requires commitment to what is perhaps the most bold and promising, but unfortunately underdeveloped, hypothesis in the book. Although the copy-and-compare mechanism evolved specifically for the sub-personal planning of action, it is plausible that higher order cognitive capacities, recreative imagination, make use of the same mechanism.

This explains how damage to the motor-control system could result in damage to the monitoring of self-generated thought in a way analogous to damage to the monitoring of one's own action.

Chapter 9, the lone chapter in Part 4, is one of the only to address aesthetic issues. It is suggested that emotions might be, contrary to cognitive models of emotion, perception-like sensitivities. Here again we have a rather fruitful suggestion, but without the detailed and thorough analysis it deserves. Diagnoses of the traditional problems of emotional response to fiction are offered, but not ones so different from what we have seen Currie argue elsewhere, with one exception. Currie and Ravenscroft do suggest some adaptive reasons for emotional responses to imaginings (p. 197).

It might seem that Recreative Minds is not a book of interest to readers of this journal. In some ways, that is right. Currie and Ravenscroft treat very few traditional problems of aesthetics or art theory, and certainly do not pretend otherwise. However, there are respects in which the book is relevant to philosophers and theorists of art. Anyone working on aesthetic experience should benefit from an empirically bolstered philosophical theory of the imagination. In many ways, Currie and Ravenscroft fail to fully provide us that. But such is a project of enormous scope, demanding several volumes of research. Recreative Minds is one important volume that is worthy of and in fact requires sustained examination, and one that should encourage discussion of important but largely unexplored philosophical issues.

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