The Profile of Imagining by Robert Hopkins. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024. Pp. xi + 288.

Sensory imaginings are imaginings that correspond to possible perceptual experiences and have as their objects possible objects of perceptual experiences. They belong to the wider category of experiential imaginings, which correspond to possible experiences, including possible emotions and bodily sensations. In this sophisticated and nuanced book, Robert Hopkins develops an account of sensory imagination that characterises its phenomenological and metaphysical features and offers an explanation of why it has these features. Although he focusses on sensory imaginings, he takes many of his claims to extend to experiential imaginings more generally.

Hopkins's account of sensory imagining takes inspiration from Alva Noë's notion of a sensorimotor profile (2004). Although Hopkins rejects the close relation that Noë posits between perception and action, he preserves Noë's claims that perceptual content is fundamentally perspectival and that perception involves a form of knowledge. Hopkins argues that our perception of the non-perspectival properties of objects such as their three-dimensional shape is necessarily mediated by our perception of the perspectival properties they exhibit relative to the perspective from which we perceive them, such as their occlusion shape or silhouette. The latter, not the former are the immediate objects of our perceptual experiences. He claims that perceiving a particular non-perspectival property is a matter of placing various of the perspectival properties one perceives into the distinctive sensory profile for that non-perspectival property. Doing so is a matter of having expectations about how changes in one's perspective will affect the perspectival properties one perceives. Analogously, he argues, imagining a particular non-perspectival property is a matter of conjuring various perspectival properties and placing them in the sensory profile for that non-perspectival property. The key contrast is that, in perception, placing an object's perspectival properties in a sensory profile is a matter of forming *expectations*, while in imagining it is a matter of forming *commitments* to conjure further perspectival properties in response to particular changes to one's imagined perspective. He takes placing perspectival properties in the sensory profiles for non-perspectival properties to make a difference to the phenomenology of both perceiving and imagining. It enriches their phenomenology by construing the perspectival properties one perceives or imagines as appearances of something whose nature exceeds those appearances in specific ways.

On this account, both perception and imagination deploy knowledge of how the perspectival appearances of non-perspectival properties vary systematically. It therefore preserves Ryle's claim that imagining involves the same knowledge as perceiving, put to a different use. However, Hopkins is at pains to emphasise that knowledge of sensory profiles is intuitive rather than conceptual and claims that his account therefore

avoids over-intellectualising imagining. Placing a property in a sensory profile does not implicate beliefs or concepts, but rather know-how.

Hopkins construes imagining a particular object *o* or a thing of a certain kind K or something bearing a higher order property P as involving higher-order imagining. Such imaginings involve sensorily imagining non-perspectival properties while placing them in the sensory profile of *o*, K or P. This requires one to deploy one's knowledge of how the appearance of *o*, Ks, or P things change with changes in the perspective from which one imagines them.

While this account of sensory imagining construes it as perception-like in implicating sensory profiles, the way it does so reveals deep differences in both the phenomenology and the functional role of each. Indeed, Hopkins's book provides a very valuable contribution to the philosophical literature on the imagination merely by
refocussing discussion of the sensory imagination away from its phenomenological and functional similarities to perception and towards the variety of ways in which they differ in these two respects. Most notable among the differences he identifies in their functional roles is the difference in their directions of fit. Whereas the perspectival properties we perceive and the sensory profiles into which we place them are answerable to the way the world is, he argues, the perspectival properties we conjure are answerable only to the commitments undertaken in our initial imaginings. This is reflected in phenomenological differences between the two. Whereas the phenomenology of perception is of things as being the way it represents them as being, he argues, that of imagination is not. Furthermore, while the phenomenology of perception presents its objects as mind-independent, that of the imagination does not.

Other differences he posits in the functional roles of perception and imagination reflect the difference in their directions of fit. For example, he contrasts the *spontaneity* of sensory imaginings, which he takes to originate within the imagining subject herself, and the *receptivity* of perceptual experiences, which are determined by the things they represent. He construes all imaginings, whether they are actions or come unbidden, as exercises of an agential power. He takes the considerable match between what we can actively imagine and what we can passively imagine to warrant construing both active and passive imagining as involving the exercise of a single power (in comparison with active blinking, which does not resemble passive blinking enough to warrant such an identification). He argues that every imagining is connected to agency because it always makes sense to try to control an imagining directly, without doing so by doing something else. The explanation for this, he claims, is that imagining originates in that part of the self that is the source of control. Spontaneity, thus construed, is both a metaphysical and a phenomenological feature of imaginings. They are spontaneous and are experienced as such.

Hopkins takes this construal of the spontaneity of imagining to be superior to Sartre's claim that spontaneous states spring from the self. Bodily sensations spring from the embodied self but are not plausibly spontaneous. He also takes it to be superior to Kant's claim that spontaneity is the mind's capacity to bring forth representations itself, which arguably construes perceptions as spontaneous. However, I have some doubts about whether, without significant further development, this notion of spontaneity can bear the weight that Hopkins's claims about imagining's role in episodic memory place on them.

From this account of sensory imagination, Hopkins develops several ingenious arguments for some surprising conclusions. According to one of these, episodic memory is a form of imagining. He also argues that learning from sensory imagining is an inference-like process; that imagining seldom affords aesthetic engagement with its objects; and that many of our apparent responses to imaginings are themselves merely imagined. These arguments differ in the extent to which they rely on the details of Hopkins's account of sensory imagining, although none is a direct implication of it. While they did not all convince me, in particular the argument concerning aesthetic engagement, this did nothing to diminish my admiration for the core account of sensory imagination from which they are developed.

According to his account of episodic memory, it is sensory imagination under the control of the past. Sensory imaginings are proper parts of episodic memories. This requires Hopkins to accommodate the fact that memories, when recognised as such, are experienced as receptive rather than spontaneous. He argues that, contrary to appearances, spontaneity and receptivity are consistent, so long as things that originate in the source of control need not ultimately originate there and provided that memories are only indirectly determined by their intentional objects. Memory, on his view, combines spontaneity with receptivity. I thought that "the part of the self that is the source of control" was being made to do a lot of work here. What is this part and how is it individuated? Hopkins does not appear to be making the empirical claim that the same brain activities are implicated in remembering and imagining (although some claim that there is an overlap here – see, for example, Addis et al. 2007). I expect he takes it to be functionally individuated, but its functional individuation is complicated by the fact that, on Hopkins's own construal, its issuances are not always controllable. Moreover, why are memories not experienced as both receptive *and* spontaneous? I would have liked to have heard more in answer to these questions.

Hopkins posits a further phenomenologically and functionally significant contrast between perceiving and imagining. While the intentional objects of perceptions have and are experienced as having features of which we are not currently aware, those of imaginings do not have natures that outstrip the contents of those imaginings and are not experienced as

doing so. He takes this to have the important implication that, while we can observe the objects of our perceptual experiences, attending to them and discovering more about them, we cannot observe the objects of our imaginings.

This raises the question of how he can explain our apparent ability to learn from imaginings, as in Shepard shape rotation cases, in which we appear to make discoveries about the perspectival appearances of imagined objects by observing how their perspectival appearances change as we rotate them in imagination. Doing so requires him to modify his claim that the objects of our imaginings lack natures that outstrip the contents of those imaginings. He denies that imagining a non-perspectival property involves imagining all the perspectival properties in its profile or being able to recognise every such property. Rather, it is a matter of our commitments to imagine such properties under the appropriate circumstances enriching the phenomenology of our current imagining. The contents of those commitments can therefore outstrip the contents of our current imaginings. However, the non-conceptual nature of our knowledge how to unpack the contents of those commitments in the imaginings we subsequently conjure means that our current imaginings do not involve beliefs about those contents.

Hopkins takes the process by which we learn about the perspectival appearances of imagined objects in Shepard shape rotation cases to be akin to inference rather than to observation. He argues that they enable us to learn how things are in reality by systematically moving between different imagined contents that unpack the commitments we make to further conjurings when we initially imagine non-perspectival properties. The discipline involved in unpacking those commitments is like that involved in inference. To the extent that our commitments reflect knowledge of the sensory profiles of the non-perspectival properties we imagine, things will unfold in imagination in the way that they would in perception. Hopkins does not discuss how readily we can acquire knowledge of sensory profiles or the source of such knowledge (whether we have evolved to have it, for example, or whether it is empirical). Either way, he is sceptical about the extent to which we really do learn from imagining, claiming that it enables us only to learn the consequences of what we consciously imagine and to make the contents of our imaginings accessible to belief.

The claim that the intentional objects of imaginings do not have natures that outstrip the contents of those imaginings also plays a role in Hopkins's argument that we cannot, except under very circumscribed conditions, engage aesthetically with the intentional objects of our imaginings. I had not thought hard about whether we can do so before reading his book, but there seems a good prima facie case for thinking that aesthetic engagement with the intentional objects of imaginings plays an important role in processes of artistic creation. Hopkins wants to

allow this, but I was not convinced that the conditions under which he thinks it possible are permissive enough.

He claims that aesthetic engagement with the beauty of an object involves pleasure in attending to the non-aesthetic properties on which its beauty depends. Pleasure, he argues, tends to its own perpetuation such that pleasure in beauty motivates sustaining the experience of attending to those non-aesthetic properties on which the object's beauty depends. In the case of perceptual experience of the object, we sustain the experience by observing the perceived object. Hopkins takes this to involve the possibility of discovering things about its non-aesthetic features that might either undermine or refine our pleasure in experiencing it. He argues that the prospect that our pleasure in experiencing the beauty of an object might collapse or be refined in this way colours our aesthetic engagement with it, inflecting it with a permanent sense of its own instability. In the case of pleasure in the non-aesthetic properties on which the beauty of an imagined object depends, however, Hopkins argues that it is not possible to discover things about its non-aesthetic features that could undermine or refine our pleasure in experiencing it and therefore that pleasure in imagined beauty is not similarly inflected with a permanent sense of its own instability.

As I understand Hopkins's argument, his claim is that the sense of instability that results from the possibility of the refinement or collapse is essential to the phenomenology of aesthetic engagement. This struck me as plausible. Nevertheless, pleasure in beauty is not the only source of aesthetic engagement. We also engage with objects aesthetically when we find them disgusting, repellent or horrific. Hopkins takes his arguments to apply to aesthetic engagement of this form, too. He argues that although in the longer term we are turned away from the disgusting, repellent or horrific, they compel our attention in the short term, prompting observation and enabling discovery in the same way as pleasure in beauty, thereby sustaining aesthetic engagement. There is an important disanalogy, however, between pleasure prompting observation and the disgusting, horrific or repellent doing so. Being disgusting, repellent or horrific are all aesthetic properties, while being pleasurable is not. While aesthetic engagement with the beautiful is pleasurable, aesthetic engagement with the disgusting etc. is surely unpleasant. There is nothing about displeasure that leads inevitably to the possibility of discovery and thus could explain why the disgusting could engage us aesthetically. This made me wonder about the role that pleasure plays in Hopkins's argument. If pleasure is not essential to aesthetic engagement, as the possibility of engagement with negative aesthetic properties illustrates, perhaps it does not help to explain the phenomenology even of aesthetic engagement with the beautiful, the elegant or the graceful. If, as Hopkins claims, the disgusting, the repellent and the horrific prompt observation and enable the possibility of discovery, it seems most plausible that they do so directly rather than in virtue of our displeasure in them. Might not beauty similarly do so directly, rather than in virtue of our

pleasure in it? This would provide a more unified explanation of the phenomenology of aesthetic engagement than Hopkins provides.

Furthermore, I was not convinced by his grounds for denying that the phenomenology of aesthetic engagement precludes aesthetic engagement with imagined objects. Somewhat surprisingly, he does not argue that our inability to observe imagined objects precludes us from sustaining pleasure in imagined beauty, since he takes the possibility of isolating particular aspects of the imagined object and of imagining further of its features to be capable of sustaining pleasure. Rather, he denies that there is any possibility of making discoveries about the non-aesthetic features of imagined objects that might inflect our imaginings with the requisite phenomenology. While unpacking the commitments of our initial imaginings through our subsequent conjurings may seem to enable something like discovery, he argues, whenever this process threatens to disappoint, the pursuit of pleasure will motivate us to alter the nature of the imagined object, betraying the commitments we make in our initial imaginings by conjuring properties that are capable of sustaining our pleasure. He claims that such betrayal is not possible in the case of perception, where pleasure commits us to a process that may result in its own demise.

This argument did not convince me. For one thing, when our pleasure in a perceived object is threatened, we can often sustain pleasure by focussing elsewhere instead. True, we may not be able to sustain our pleasure *in the perceived object*, but we equally fail to sustain our pleasure in the imagined object when our further conjurings betray our initial commitments. Hopkins is willing to concede that sensory imaginings might afford aesthetic engagement of a diminished form that does not present its objects as admitting of further exploration and which therefore lacks the phenomenology characteristic of aesthetic experience. However, I do not see why imaginings should not afford full blown aesthetic engagement.

Hopkins allows a role for aesthetic engagement in artistic creation, claiming that a composer might develop an imagined tune they discover to be beautiful by unpacking the commitments implicit in their initial imagining, thereby exploring the non-aesthetic character of the theme initially imagined and discovering its aesthetic consequences. However, he takes this case to be distinctive in that the composer’s motivation for elaboration is not pleasure, but curiosity about their theme. Even if their engagement can still be considered genuinely aesthetic, given this difference in motivation, he argues it can only do so if it involves the discovery of features implicit in the original imagining. He claims that this will be possible only among those few who possess the skill and pleasure-independent motivation to elaborate on their initial imaginings in this way.

I could not see why the features in virtue of which imagining affords aesthetic engagement must be implicit in the original imagining. They

cannot be discovered if they are not, but discovery is important to Hopkins's argument only because (or so I take it) its possibility is what secures the distinctive phenomenology of aesthetic engagement. It seems to me that the same phenomenology of prospective refinement or collapse could also be secured by a process of embellishing, rather than betraying the commitments implicit in our initial imaginings. Imagined objects are indeterminate as perceived objects are not. Our initial imaginings can be silent regarding many kinds of non-perspectival properties. I might imagine a hat as having a stiff round brim, but not imagine anything about the texture of its crown. My subsequent imaginings might then fill in the texture of the crown. Such embellishment neither betrays my initial imagining nor unpacks its implicit commitments. Moreover, my subsequent imaginings have the same intentional objects as the initial imaginings they embellish. Like the process of discovery, that of embellishment brings with it the possibility that the non-aesthetic properties with which one embellishes the imagined object will lead either to the refinement or the collapse of one's pleasure in imagining it. Until I have embellished the object of an indeterminate imagining with a given non-aesthetic property, I cannot tell whether such embellishment will increase or undermine the pleasure I take in imagining that object. Embellishing my imagined hat with a stiff, woven crown might undermine my pleasure in imagining it by bringing it an unpleasing rigidity, but it might instead increase my pleasure by imparting an air of assertiveness. The phenomenology of sustaining pleasure in imagined objects by embellishing them seems sufficiently similar to that of sustaining pleasure in perceived objects by observing them to constitute full blown aesthetic engagement. Furthermore, embellishment does not require unusual skills or any motivation independent of prolonging one's pleasure in imagining.

Although he is willing to countenance occasional aesthetic engagement with imagined objects, as in the case of the composer described above, Hopkins thinks that many cases of discovering that an imagined object is beautiful do not involve genuine aesthetic engagement because they involve imagined rather than actual pleasure. This is in line with his more general scepticism regarding the reality of many of our responses to imaginings. He thinks that many apparently real responses to imaginings are merely
imagined responses. This includes apparent affective responses to imaginings. Just as non-perspectival properties have sensory profiles, Hopkins argues, affects have *affective profiles*. Imagining an affect such as fear, he argues, is a matter of conjuring feelings and placing them in the affective profile for fear. An affective profile is a distinctive pattern of feelings or physiological-cum-psychological appearances, which vary with how we believe or experience the affect's object to be, how we are motivated to respond, and how we believe or experience ourselves to be situated in relation to both the object and the responses it motivates. For example, fear of a dangerous situation may involve feelings such as weakness of the legs and an inability to think about anything but that situation. While these feelings are not unique to fear, the profile into

which we place them, on which they diminish the further we perceive ourselves to be from the dangerous situation, distinguishes fear from other affects.

This raises the question of why we often mistake imagined affective responses for real responses. Hopkins argues that we can be led to do so because we sometimes imagine an affect by putting feelings that we really undergo into the profile for that affect. That is, imagining a dangerous situation can really cause me to feel weak at the knees, a feeling I then put into the affective profile for fear by forming commitments to conjure other feelings in that profile in response to imagined changes in my relation to the dangerous situation. I do not experience real fear when I do this, although the reality of my feeling can lead me mistakenly to believe that I do.

Hopkins focusses his discussion of imagined affects exclusively on affects with intentional objects. The proposed extension of his approach to such imaginings significantly extends the range of experiential imaginings he can accommodate. However, it seems unlikely that his account could be extended to apply to all experiential imaginings. In particular, imaginings without intentional objects do not seem amenable to explanation in terms of profiling. The notion of a profile, whether sensory or affective, requires there to be something independent of its constituent appearances with which those appearances covary. It is hard to see what this could be, other than our relations to its intentional object.

Nevertheless, to the extent that Hopkins's account is applicable to experiential imagining more generally, and to the extent that the differences in the phenomenology and functional role he posits between perceiving and sensorily imagining also hold between real experiences of other kinds and their imagined counterparts, his account constitutes a rival to recreationist or simulationist accounts of experiential imagining, such as that proposed by Gregory Currie and Ian Ravenscroft (2002). These accounts construe imagined experiences as matching the phenomenology of the relevant real experiences to a significant degree and as sharing important aspects of their functional roles, whereas Hopkins takes imagining to capture the phenomenology of real experiences without reproducing it and to differ importantly from perception in its functional role. Because Hopkins allows some overlap both between the phenomenology of real and imagined experiences and between their functional roles, at least in respect of their ability to provide knowledge of the world, it is not clear to what extent these accounts contradict one another. What Hopkins's rich and detailed account of the phenomenology and metaphysics of imagining does make clear, however, is the complexity of its relation to the real experiences it represents. This book has a great deal to offer to philosophers working in a wide range areas including the philosophy of mind, epistemology and aesthetics. I recommend it highly.

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