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# The Deliberative Imagination

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## Résumé

The contribution of imagination to deliberation is underappreciated. Indeed, recent focus on this question has concerned only the motivational value of mental imagery—a kind of representational content. I go further in arguing that some instances of complex deliberation require distinctive kinds of imaginative attitudes. Most importantly, I argue that deliberation can involve imaginative desire, which is an imaginative recreation of desire, but free of the motivational value that genuine desires have. Because of this, imaginative desires are motivationally safe. Safety marks an important continuity between deliberation, engagement with fiction, and empathy.

I start by presenting cases of complex deliberation, which are characterised by the fact that they present branching possibilities to the subject. I then argue that the imagination must be involved in some way in complex deliberation, because propositional reasoning cannot implement the exploration and evaluation of branching possibilities in an efficient way. I then explore the possibility that imagination is involved only insofar as deliberation calls upon our capacity to imagine possibilities in a belief-like way. I reject this account, as it cannot accommodate motivational safety. In addition to imaginative belief then, complex deliberation involves imaginative desire. The postulation of imaginative desires is further motivated by cases in which we have apparently imaginative desiderative states towards non-imagined entities. Motivational safety is a common core to imaginative desires across purely imaginative situations (such as fiction), non-imaginative situations (such as those pictured in empathising) and in in-between cases (such as deliberation).

My main argument has substantive upshots in both action theory and in the philosophy of imagination. In action theory, the role of the imagination is made explicit, which opens up new theoretical possibilities concerning, for instance, the nature of plans. In the philosophy of imagination, the debate concerning imaginative desires advanced, with the introduction of new explananda.

**Mots-Clés:** deliberation, imagination, branching possibilities, imaginative desire, safety

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