

# The Imagination Box\*

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In the late 1990s, playing Andy Kaufman in the movie, *Man on the Moon*, Jim Carrey became absorbed by the role. After the filming, one of his friends was interviewed about Carrey's performance.

*Interviewer:* Have you seen Jim Carrey since filming...? ...How did it go over?

*Bob Zmuda:* Very strange stuff. Very odd stuff. Jim Carrey is like the biggest Andy Kaufman freak in the world. He's very influenced by him...and Jim approached the role almost as if Andy had left a blueprint. He said, "How would Andy Kaufman approach this?" ...So we shot for 85 days. Jim Carrey was only there for two days. The rest of the time he was either Andy or he was Tony [Clifton, one of Kaufman's alter egos].

*Interviewer:* Did Carrey have trouble coming down from the character because of his approach?

*Zmuda:* He was just telling Milos [Forman, *Man on the Moon's* director] last night that he had a really hard time shaking the Tony Clifton personality. He'd wake up in the morning and he'd be Tony, and wonder where *his* life had gone. I mean, he's cool now, but he definitely lost it for a little while, but that's what he wanted to do.<sup>1</sup>

Carrey's is an extreme, work-induced case of something that happens less dramatically and more ordinarily. Children, for example, lose themselves in games of make-believe. Playing a particularly engrossing game of Cowboys and Indians, kids in some ways think of themselves as cowboys or Indians. Prepping for a particularly unpleasant speech, you find yourself articulating it, gesturing, unwittingly giving the speech. These three examples exemplify *imaginative immersion*.

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpted from an interview with Bob Zmuda, accessible online at <http://www.contactmusic.com/interview/zmuda>.

It is an ordinary phenomenon but a bit puzzling. Two aspects of imaginative immersion, in particular, need explaining. The *self-presentational aspect* concerns the way that immersed pretenders and actors experience their imaginative episodes. Carrey thinks of himself as Kaufman. Does he believe he is Kaufman? Does he, instead, merely imagine he is Kaufman? The *behavioral aspect* concerns the motivations of immersed pretenders' pretense. The child acts as a cowboy without being a cowboy. Is he merely mimicking a cowboy? Is he, instead, motivated by the sorts of things that motivate a cowboy: a desire to rustle or chase or...?<sup>2</sup>

Thinking about the self-presentational aspect of imaginative immersion tells us something about the relationships between imagination and belief. Thinking about the motivational aspect of imaginative immersion tells us something about the relationships between imagination and desire. The phenomenon of imaginative immersion therefore serves as a crucial data point for locating imagination in cognitive architecture.

Indeed, in a terrific, original, recent article in this JOURNAL, Susanna Schellenberg looks to these two aspects of imaginative immersion to give an account of imagination's place in the mind. The account comprises something new and something old. Looking at the self-presentational aspect, Schellenberg argues that—contrary to orthodoxy—imagination and belief exist on a continuum. Looking at the behavioral aspect, Schellenberg argues that—in accordance with orthodoxy—imagination is purely cognitive and not at all conative; there is no imaginative analogue of desire.

In what follows, we argue against Schellenberg's account and spell out the argument's lessons for theorizing about imagination.

## 1. Background

First, we lay out some terminology and assumptions. *Attitudes*—e.g. belief and desire—are at least partly characterized by their *functions*, their dispositions to causally interact with other components of the mind in particular ways. Attitudes contain *content*—e.g. the proposition <snow is white>. *Mental states*—e.g. the belief that snow is white and the desire that it snows in the summer—are combinations of a container and a content.

The philosophical debate about imagination that Schellenberg engages in concerns the functional organization of the mind. It concerns how imagination is causally connected to various states, what work it does in our mental lives, etc. The practice of theorizing about the mind at the functional level is sometimes called (occasionally derisively) *boxology* because philosophers, psychologists, and cognitive scientists who engage in this practice picture attitudes and their causal relationships

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<sup>2</sup> In a passage that suggests an answer to this question, J. David Velleman writes, "An especially imaginative child may come up with his own way of pretending to be an elephant, but not by considering which behaviors would be most suitable to an elephant-act. ... Rather, the child's method is to imagine being an elephant—weighing a ton, walking on stumpy legs, carrying floppy ears—and then to wait and see how he is disposed to behave... [S]uccess at pretending to be an elephant need not involve behavior that is realistically elephant-like at all. What it requires is rather behavior that's expressive of elephant-mindedness—expressive, that is, of vividly imagining that one is an elephant" (Velleman (2000): 257).

with boxes and arrows.<sup>3</sup> We follow this usage (though without the derision): an attitude is a box, a function is an arrow, and a mental state is a box with a proposition within.

Nearly all parties in the debates that Schellenberg engages in agree that there are at least two attitudes, belief and desire, and they characteristically combine to motivate behaviors. So we can take the following partial picture of the mind to be the starting point:

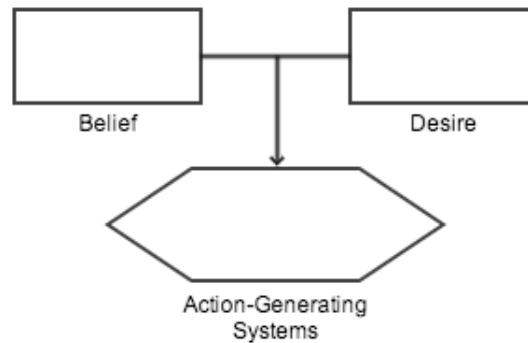


Figure 1. A common starting point: belief and desire together motivate actions.

Importantly, a mental state only needs to exhibit enough of the characteristic functions of the attitude of belief to count as a belief. Even so, not all mental states can be so neatly characterized. Borderline cases are not uncommon.

In contemporary debates about the imagination, two questions are prominent. Roughly, the first is about the relationship between imagination and belief, and the second is about the relationship between imagination and desire. In boxological terms, the questions are:

*The belief question.* Should we add a belief-like imagination box (call it, simply, *imagination*) to Figure 1?

*The desire question.* Should we add a desire-like imagination box (call it *i-desire*) to Figure 1?

Start with the belief question. *Cognitive splitters*, who represent the orthodoxy in contemporary debates about the imagination, answer “yes”. *Cognitive lumpers* answer “no”.<sup>4</sup>

Schellenberg develops an innovative account that makes difficult categorizing her as a cognitive splitter or a cognitive lumpers. To the belief question,

<sup>3</sup> Stock (2011) argues that boxology is not an explanatorily fruitful way of theorizing about imagination. Nagel (2011) grumps that boxology is “dispiriting”.

<sup>4</sup> The orthodoxy is most comprehensively developed and defended by Nichols and Stich (2003). Other cognitive splitters include Currie and Ravenscroft (2002), Doggett and Egan (2007, 2011), Kind (2011), and Weinberg and Meskin (2006a, 2006b). Challengers to the orthodoxy include Langland-Hassan (2012, forthcoming) and Leslie (1987, 1994).

she answers “it’s complicated”: some mental states are imaginings, some are beliefs, and some are in between the two. However, in boxological terms, the attitude that those mental states have in common is not best represented by a belief box or an imagination box, but, rather, by a single box that represents a *continuum* from belief to imagination. The best explanation of the self-presentational aspect of imaginative immersion, Schellenberg argues, invokes a single belief/imagination continuum box.<sup>5</sup>

Take the desire question next. *Conative lumpers*, who represent the orthodoxy in contemporary debates about the imagination, answer “no”. *Conative splitters* answer “yes”.<sup>6</sup>

Schellenberg is a conative lumpner, holding that immersed behavior is motivated by desires with a special kind of content—to make certain claims fictional—but desires nonetheless. When the boy, immersed in play, seems to be motivated by a desire to flee the Sioux, he is actually motivated by a desire to make it fictional that he flees the Sioux. The best explanation of the motivational aspect of imaginative immersion, Schellenberg argues, only invokes this special class of mental states, a class that falls squarely inside the desire box. No i-desire box is needed.

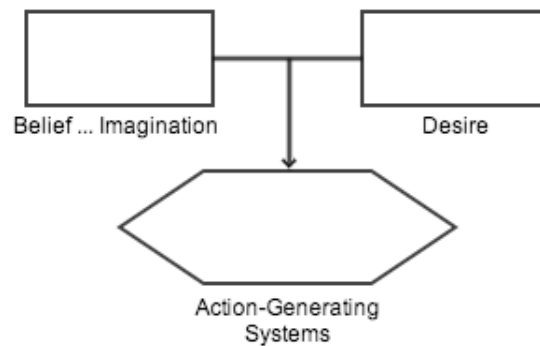


Figure 2. Schellenberg’s account, boxologically represented.

<sup>5</sup> However, Schellenberg also mentions alternative boxological models for representing a belief/imagination continuum, writing,

There are at least two alternative ways of accounting for the continuum thesis. One is to have three cognition boxes: a pure-belief box, a pure-imagination box, and a mixed box. In the case of imaginative immersion, propositions in the mixed box are in play. In non-immersive cases of imagination, propositions in the pure-imagination box are in play. A second alternative way of accounting for the continuum thesis is to have a multitude of cognition boxes: a pure-belief box, a pure-imagination box, and many boxes in between. In the case of imaginative immersion, propositions from the intermediate boxes are in play. Depending on how immersed one is, propositions from boxes closer to or farther from the pure-belief box are in play. (2013: 510-511)

We believe, though we do not argue for it here, that the worries we raise for the model that includes a single belief/imagination continuum box apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to Schellenberg’s alternative models of a belief/imagination continuum.

<sup>6</sup> The orthodoxy is recently defended by Everson (2007), Funkhouser and Spaulding (2009), Kind (2011), Nichols and Stich (2003), O’Brien (2005), Van Leeuwen (2011), and Weinberg and Meskin (2005, 2006). Challengers to orthodoxy include Currie and Ravenscroft (2002) and Doggett and Egan (2007, 2011).

We will primarily focus on and object to the unorthodox aspect of Schellenberg's account: her claim that functionally speaking, belief and imagination exists on a continuum and her arguments from premises about imaginative immersion to that conclusion.<sup>7</sup> However, we will also argue that the unorthodox aspect of Schellenberg's account—her answer to the belief question—stands in tension with the orthodox aspect of her account—her answer to the desire question.

## 2. Arguments for the Continuum Thesis

To explain the self-presentational aspect of immersion, Schellenberg posits *the continuum thesis*, the thesis that functionally speaking, belief and imagination exist on a continuum. Explaining what a continuum is, Schellenberg writes,

If I am immersed in imagining that I am a talented wizard, I may start to take it to be true that I am a talented wizard. *The distinctive cognitive role of the relevant representation is to some extent belief-like and to some extent imagination-like. If this is right, then imaginings and beliefs must be on a continuum.*<sup>8</sup>

And then writes,

The particular way in which they are understood to be on a continuum depends on how beliefs and imaginings are understood. If they are identified relative to a cluster of functional roles, then the relevant continuum can be understood as follows: with a loss of roles characteristic of imagination and a gain of roles characteristic of belief, *a person comes to have a state that is intermediate between the two.*<sup>9</sup>

The idea is *not* that if a state is to some extent like X and to some extent like Y, then X and Y are on a continuum. When a painting is thoroughly pierced and so loses a characteristic of paintings—having a largely unbroken surface—and gains a characteristic of a rabbit warren—having many holes—what results is *not* something intermediate between a painting and a warren. Rather, it is just something that is in one way like a warren and something in one way unlike a painting.

What Schellenberg is after is not merely that there is a state that is to some extent like imagination, to some extent like belief, but rather, as she makes clear, that this state that is to some extent like belief and to some extent like imagination is *intermediate* between the two.

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<sup>7</sup> Currie and Jureidini (2004) seem open to the claim about belief and imagination but, in discussing it, make no mention of imaginative immersion.

<sup>8</sup> Schellenberg (2013): 508; emphasis ours.

<sup>9</sup> Schellenberg (2013): 509; emphasis ours.

So much for what a continuum is. In arguing for it, Schellenberg propounds two claims about immersion and holds that the continuum thesis is needed to explain them:<sup>10</sup>

*Explanandum 1.* One can slip imperceptibly from rotely play-acting into being totally immersed in it.<sup>11</sup>

*Explanandum 2.* It is hard to tell what state the immersed is in.<sup>12</sup>

About Explanandum 1: Schellenberg argues that imperceptibility is made possible because one moves along a continuum of states, each quite a bit like the one before it, and where the continuum is long enough so that one may end up in a state quite different from the state one started in. This is plausible. Compare: You start listening to a low pitch tone that very gradually turns to a high pitch tone. The change goes unnoticed. How is this possible? Because there is a continuum of pitches, each exceedingly like its immediate predecessor and successor, and, because of this, as one listens to the sequence, one fails to notice a change. The state of hearing a low pitch is indistinguishable from the state of hearing a very slightly higher pitch.

About Explanandum 2: Recall the Jim Carrey example we started with. Schellenberg would argue that the difficulty for Carrey in ascertaining what state he is in is best explained by positing that Carrey is in a state intermediate between belief and imagination. Since there are such cases, there is such a state and the continuum thesis is true. Again, this is plausible. The difficulty in determining what state Carrey is in is like the difficulty in determining whether the red mixed with yellow results in red or orange or yellow.<sup>13</sup>

### 3. Arguments against the Continuum Thesis

We are struck by Explanandum 1 and Explanandum 2 too, but deny that they lead to the continuum thesis. We argue the continuum thesis is insufficient for explaining Explanandum 1 and unnecessary for explaining Explanandum 2. (In the end, we have some doubts that Explanandum 2 is unqualifiedly true. These doubts emerge in what follows.)

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<sup>10</sup> “I will argue that the phenomenon of imaginative immersion can be fully accounted for only if the functional roles of imaginings and beliefs are understood as being on a continuum. I will call this the *continuum thesis*” (2013: 508).

<sup>11</sup> “[A]ccounting for imaginative immersion requires accounting for the possibility of moving seamlessly from mental states that could be called pure imaginings to mental states that are at least to some degree belief-like” (2013: 509). “The typical starting point of a game of make-believe may be a pure imagining. As the subject immerses herself in the game of make-believe the cognitive role of her mental state may start taking on characteristics of the cognitive role of a belief” (2013: 510). Liao (manuscript) makes the same observation.

<sup>12</sup> “[The continuum thesis] requires accepting that when someone is in a state of imaginative immersion, her mental state may not be easily categorized as either an imagining or as a belief—analogous to the way shades between yellow and red may not be easily categorized as either yellow or red despite the fact that there is a conceptual distinction between yellow and red” (2013: 509-510). We interpret Schellenberg as holding that any adequate theory of immersion should be able to explain this difficulty in categorizing the immersed’s mental state.

<sup>13</sup> Schellenberg uses the color analogy on pp. 509-510.

### 3.1. On Explanandum 1

About Explanandum 1: Schellenberg considers cases in which you start off rotely imagining something and come, imperceptibly, to something-like-believe it. But one might wonder whether this is a neutral description of immersion or, rather, one that presupposes the continuum thesis. Here, we think, is a neutral account of the transition from rote play-acting to immersion: Consider Mom. She gets dragged into playing cops and robbers with her daughter. Mom's the cop but desultorily so. But her daughter is a genius pretender and, eventually, bit by bit, Mom is gripped by the game, totally into being a cop.

To see why the continuum thesis is not sufficient to explain the gradualness of immersion in this case, first recall our assumption that we are motivated by mental states, which are combinations of an attitude and a content. The non-immersed pretender's mental states differ from the immersed pretenders' mental states not just in attitude, but also in content. In the beginning, the mother simply believes the proposition <I am a mother who is pretending to be a cop in a game>. In the end, the mother imagines the proposition <I am a cop>. At no time did Mom imagine herself to be a mother who is pretending to be a cop in a game or believe herself to be a cop. In general, the non-immersed pretender has beliefs about *the make-believe itself* (e.g. conventions, prop-assignments)<sup>14</sup> and the immersed has imaginings about *the fictional content of make-believe*.<sup>15</sup> At best, the continuum thesis can explain why one fails to notice a transition from belief that p to imagining that p. However, immersion involves not just a change in attitude, but also a change in content.

So, merely positing a continuum between the attitudes of belief and imagination will not be enough to make sense of the change in Mom's mental states. On its own, it is no help at all. To help, it needs alongside it a continuum of content that goes from, say, the proposition <I am pretending to be a cop in a game> to, say, the proposition <I am a cop>. Moreover, to explain Mom's transition, Schellenberg needs to hold that as one gradually moves from belief to imagining, one also moves from, say, the belief that one is acting like a cop to the imagining that one is a cop and needs that the movement along these continua be movement one might not notice. (Compare with the ascending tone example: One reason it is possible to move imperceptibly from hearing a low tone to a high one is that the *content* of what one attends to is on a continuum. The attitudes are not on a continuum: There is just one

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<sup>14</sup> As Schellenberg acknowledges: "This brings out that at least two different kinds of beliefs matter to imagination: beliefs about the object of imagination or more generally what is imagined, on the one hand, and beliefs about how to act out what is imagined, on the other" (2013: 505). See Harris (2001) and Walton (1991).

<sup>15</sup> See Harris (2001) on absorption: "When we are absorbed [in a make-believe game]... current reality is temporarily held in abeyance while we focus attention on the world of the narrative. We start to locate ourselves inside that world rather than the real world and events that befall the protagonist loom large in our consciousness...Once the state of absorption has been evoked, we begin to share the spatial and temporal framework [of the person whose life we're absorbed by]" (48-49). Note two things. First, it is not entirely clear that the phenomenon of absorption that interests Harris is what we are calling immersion; we assume it is but do not argue for that. Second, absorption clearly involves taking on contents like that I am a cowboy or that I am Kaufman; these are contents about the fictional content of one's make-believe; it is the transition from, say, believing that *I am pretending that I am a cowboy* to immersedly imagining that *I am a cowboy* that we think Schellenberg's account fails to explain.

attitude—hearing—with a continuum of contents.) While Schellenberg does argue for the continuum of attitudes, the rest of the view we think she needs is not argued for. So we reject her argument from

Explanandum 1. One can slip imperceptibly from rotely play-acting into being totally immersed in it

to the continuum thesis.

### 3.2. On *Explanandum 2*

As we noted, Schellenberg puts forward another argument for the continuum thesis. Consider

Explanandum 2. It is hard to tell what state the immersed is in.<sup>16</sup>

Has Carrey (crazily) come to believe he is Kaufman? Is he merely imagining this? Hard to say. This, Schellenberg claims, is because Carrey is in a state is intermediate between belief and imagination. So there are such states. The continuum thesis follows.

To see why the continuum thesis is not necessary to explain the difficulty of categorizing an immersed pretender's mental states, notice that Explanandum 2 can be precisified in three ways:

*Explanandum 2a.* It is hard for the immersed to tell, while she is immersed, what state she is in.

There is something to this. As Schellenberg notes, when you are immersed you are at least not consciously aware that you are imagining. To that extent, it at least takes some effort to figure out you are imagining or something-like-imagining. Does that make it *hard* to tell what state you are in as you are immersed? Good question, but the proponent of the continuum thesis need not answer it in order to explain Explanandum 2a. For, according to the continuum thesis, the difficulty for the immersed in telling which state she is in has nothing to do with her conscious awareness but rather the difficulty for anyone to tell—consciously or not—which

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<sup>16</sup> A claim closely related to Explanandum 2: When you ask an immersed pretender who he is, he often tells you not who he is but, rather, who he is immersed in being. When you ask an immersed Jim Carrey who he is, he might well say, "Andy Kaufman." Is he confused, genuinely believing he is Kaufman? Or, as a proponent of the continuum thesis might have it, does he something-like-believe he is Andy Kaufman?

Carrey's answer supports neither. There is difficulty in getting immersed people to answer right question. When dealing with an immersed Carrey, one might ask "Who are you?" and Carrey might take that as "In the pretense, who are you?". To that question, "Andy Kaufman" is the right answer.

Relatedly, there is also a difficulty in getting people to give pretense up. Some of what strikes us as evidence that someone has started to something-like-believe what he used to be imagining might, instead, be evidence that he is continuing to pretend in contexts where we expect him to be acting on his beliefs. On these points, see Taylor (1999): 115.



state the immersed is in. That is because the state is not quite an imagining neither is it quite a belief.

Against the continuum thesis's explanation of Explanandum 2a, consider some psychological evidence:

Psychologists Claire Golomb and Regina Kuersten... wanted to know whether 3- and 4-year-olds could keep track of reality while engaged in fantasy play and not be confused by adult actions blurring the fantasy/reality boundary. In this study, the adult playing with the child acted in ways that suggested she had lost track of reality. For example, at one point, the adult poured real water rather than pretend water out of a leaky "boat," soaking a blue blanket placed on the floor to represent the ocean. Later on, the adult who was having a pretend picnic with a young child actually bit into a Playdough cookie. Children were clearly shocked by these transgressions. ("Oh, you took a real bite. Now your teeth are all pink. How does it taste? ... Yuck, do you always eat Playdough?") Their surprise was clear evidence that, although they were engrossed in the game of pretense, they had not lost track of the fact that dumping water onto a bad blanket is bad behavior and that Playdough is not an edible substance.<sup>17</sup>

If the continuum thesis were true and these kids were in an intermediate state, why would they be surprised by the water-pouring or the Playdough-eating? So far as one believes the Playdough is a cookie and that one wants to eat that cookie, eating it makes sense. If the continuum thesis were true and Carrey were something-like-believing he were Andy Kaufman, why did he track the camera as it filmed him? Andy Kaufman was not making a movie; Jim Carrey was. Yet Carrey remembered there were cameras filming him and remembered to act so that the cameras could film him.<sup>18</sup>

What explains these behavioral patterns is that even immersed pretenders keep track of their own mental states—their beliefs about who they are and what they are doing—even when they are immersed. In fact, describing immersion—thought without using the term—Paul Harris claims "barring a psychotic interlude, or a sudden awakening from a deep sleep in an unfamiliar environment, we are aware at some level... of who we are".<sup>19</sup> So Carrey knows he is Carrey and Mom knows she is Mom and, presumably, Carrey does not believe he is Kaufman and Mom does not believe she is a cop. Hence, even though we think Explanandum 2a is plausible, we also think that immersed pretenders' overall behavioral pattern tells against the continuum thesis's explanation of Explanandum 2a.

Now consider a second precisification of Explanandum 2:

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<sup>17</sup> Taylor (1999): 104-105. See also L.F. DiLalla and M.W. Watson (1988) and C. Golomb and R. Kuersten (1996). We thank Neil Van Leeuwen for alerting us to the psychological evidence and for raising the point about tracking.

<sup>18</sup> Daniel Day-Lewis, immersed in his role as paralytic Christy Brown in *My Left Foot*, demanded help being moved around the set, but the demands only extended so far. He did not, for example, demand help using the bathroom. See Jenkins (1995).

<sup>19</sup> Harris (2001): 48.

*Explanandum 2b.* Post-immersion, it is hard for the person who *was* immersed to tell what state she was in while she was immersed.

This is significantly less plausible than Explanandum 2a and Schellenberg does not argue for it. Our guess is that Mom herself probably would have no trouble retrospectively classifying her mental state as an imagining. Jim Carrey probably has no trouble retrospectively classifying his as an imagining. The continuum thesis cannot explain this. (Compare: It does not become easier to classify borderline cases of red as time passes.) In fact, the continuum thesis implies Explanandum 2b. If there is a difference between contemporary and retrospective classification of states—we predict there is—that is a problem for the continuum thesis.

Finally, consider a third precisification of Explanandum 2:

*Explanandum 2c.* It is hard for someone who is not immersed to tell what the immersed's mental state is.

The continuum thesis implies that third parties will have as much trouble as the immersed in determining which state the immersed is in. (Compare: Third parties have as much trouble as the painter in determining whether *that* shade is red.) It is unclear that this is correct, and Schellenberg does not argue for it. If there is a difference between first- and third-parties—we predict there is—that is a problem for the continuum thesis. When your wife walks in on you vigorously rehearsing a difficult speech, totally lost in it, she does not think you something-like-believe you are giving the speech. She thinks that you are imagining that in a really vivid way. When people respond to a method actor who will not give up a character, the response that makes sense is frustration—give up the game!—rather than pity—he has lost his grip on reality.

So although we are struck by Explanandum 2, we think that the truth it expresses is best expressed not by Schellenberg's claim that "when someone is in a state of imaginative immersion, her mental state may not be easily categorized as either an imagining or a belief" but rather by her claims that "When we immerse ourselves in a fictional world, we cease to be aware we are imagining" and "The most relevant characteristic of imaginative immersion is that the subject does not consciously think about the fact that she is imagining".<sup>20</sup> To that extent, it is hard to tell what state one is in while one is immersed. But notice that whereas the continuum thesis does explain Schellenberg's initial claim—the claim about ease of categorizability—it is not particularly helpful in explaining the latter two—the ones about conscious awareness. What those two suggest is that immersion is going to be explained at least in part by facts about the immersed's *attention*. Indeed, facts about attention seem relevant, too, for explaining Explanandum 1.

Instead of looking for an explanation of immersion in terms of facts about a continuum between belief and imagination, we suggest looking for it in terms of

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<sup>20</sup> Schellenberg (2013): 509-10, 507, 507.

facts about where our attention is turned. But our focus here is on Schellenberg, and we will not defend an attention-based explanation of immersion here.<sup>21</sup>

#### 4. A Tension within Schellenberg's Account

In the previous section, we argued that a continuum between belief and imagination cannot do the explanatory work Schellenberg tasks it to do when it comes to the self-presentational aspect of immersion, the way that immersed pretenders and actors experience their imaginative episodes. In this section, we argue that the continuum thesis is at odds with Schellenberg's own view on the relationship between imagination and desire.

Schellenberg argues that *i*-desires are unnecessary to explain various motivational and self-presentational features of pretense. Consider her explanation of what motivates the immersed. When a child is particularly engrossed in a game of Cowboys and Indians, and pretends to be a cowboy who savagely shoots the Indians, which conative mental states proximately<sup>22</sup> motivate his pretense action? Schellenberg endorses the orthodoxy here and answers that the relevant mental states are desires, with an important wrinkle: these are desires to make something to be the case in a fiction. Of this example, Schellenberg would say that the child pretends to savagely shoot the Indians because he desires to make it the case in the game that the Indians are exterminated from their homeland; he is not motivated by the desire that the Indians are exterminated from their homeland.

We can get a better handle on Schellenberg's explanation by contrasting it with a competitor. Tyler Doggett and Andy Egan are what we earlier called "conative splitters". They argue that the best explanation of the behavioral aspect of imaginative immersion requires positing *i*-desire, an attitude that is distinct from plain old desire.<sup>23</sup> With this example, Doggett and Egan would say that the child pretends to savagely shoot the Indians because he *i-desires* that the Indians are exterminated from their homeland. Whereas Doggett and Egan say that the relevant mental states are different from everyday desires in kind, Schellenberg says they only differ in content.<sup>24</sup>

Describing her take on the orthodox view, Schellenberg writes, "the desires that are paired with imaginings are desires to make fictional, that is, for instance, desires to make true in fiction".<sup>25</sup> One might wonder about this. The desires to make fictional not only differ from everyday desires in content; they also differ in function. Namely, desires to make fictional pair with imaginings to motivate actions.<sup>26</sup> Recall that, from a boxological point of view, attitudes are individuated by their causal

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<sup>21</sup> For an attention-based explanation of immersion, see Liao (manuscript).

<sup>22</sup> As Schellenberg shows, even philosophers who think pretense actions are motivated by imaginings and *i*-desires ought to agree that background beliefs and desires go into enacting pretense. To bring out the disagreement, we focus on the immediate cause of pretense actions.

<sup>23</sup> Doggett and Egan (2007, 2011).

<sup>24</sup> "The desires involved in imagination do not differ in kind from desires involved in belief. They differ only with regard to the complexity of their content" (2013: 517).

<sup>25</sup> Schellenberg (2013): 515.

<sup>26</sup> Schellenberg (2013): 514-515.

connections to other attitudes and processes. As such, the special class of desires that Schellenberg highlights is in fact not a species of desire because it is functionally distinct. When plain old desires combine with a cognitive state to motivate actions, that cognitive state is typically belief rather than imagination. For example, imagining you are a billionaire while also desiring to buy a yacht if you were a billionaire typically produces no move towards the yacht store. So just by positing a conative state that typically combines with imaginings to produce action, Schellenberg is, from a boxological point of view, positing a conative state that is not desire. This would support the conative splitters' position.

Perhaps what she has in mind is more complicated than we just let on. Perhaps her view is that desires to make fictional are a kind of in-between state that is to some extent like a desire and to some extent not. Nevertheless, they share enough of features with paradigmatic everyday desires to be properly categorized in the desire box anyway. If that is her view, there is a tension here: it is unclear why these in-between states should be categorized as desires while the in-between states that exhibit some functions of belief and some functions of imagination should motivate a continuum between belief and imagination.

Recall Schellenberg's own argument for the continuum thesis. The i-desire view can be motivated by similar considerations: there are states that are in some way like desire, but in other ways unlike desire. Hence, they are not desires. Moreover, these states typically cause behavior and with imagination rather than belief. It seems that consistency requires Schellenberg to sign on board to something like a continuum between desire and... And what? I-desire is what suggests itself. So she ought to sign up for i-desires. Or, conversely, her arguments against positing such a continuum between desire and i-desire might also function as arguments against positing a continuum between belief and imagination.

Put differently, here is the problem we are raising. In explaining the behavioral aspect of immersion, Schellenberg argues that in the immersed there is a state other than belief that pairs with desire to produce motivation. This state is imagination or some other state on the belief-imagination continuum. Cognitive lumpers—those who answer “no” to the belief question—would reject this not on the ground that there is no continuum but, *a fortiori*, on the ground that imagination is just a special class of belief, namely, beliefs with a certain type of content. A challenge for Schellenberg is to explain why cognitive lumpers are wrong without siding with the conative splitters—those who answer “yes” to the desire question—and giving, *mutatis mutandis*, an argument for i-desires.

## 5. Lessons for Imagination Debates

We have presented objections to Schellenberg's account of imagination and her arguments for it. These objections ramify into some more general debates about imagination and cognitive architecture.

The objections in §3 bring out a larger point about boxology. The goal of boxology is to point out characteristic inputs and outputs of attitudes, processes, and the like and to thereby help account for the nature of certain mental states. Boxology

highlights *ceteris paribus* psychological laws that hold between different components of the mind. These psychological laws are then explanatory of observable psychological phenomena, such as imaginative immersion. It is one thing to point out some borderline cases, but a whole other thing to posit continuums in boxology. Only the latter, and not the former, makes claims about psychological laws.

We should not collapse boxes, or posit continuums between them, just because there are borderline cases. There are always borderline cases: there are highly-cognitive emotions that are in between pure beliefs and outputs of the affect-generating system, and there plausibly are states in between pure desires and intentions that are outputs of the action-generating system. If we follow a principle of having the borderline cases between two states leading to a single box including those states, we might as well draw one's mental life as one giant box, or just a few, with lots of continuums inside. Such a boxology would be rather unhelpful for explaining observable psychological phenomena.

The distinction between noting a borderline case and revising boxology holds theoretical importance not just for debates about imagination but also for all debates about cognitive architecture. As our Schellenberg case study shows, an astute observation of a psychological phenomenon may well support noting a borderline case but not support revising boxology. This distinction is useful for revisiting recent arguments for alief,<sup>27</sup> bimagination,<sup>28</sup> and other unorthodox attitudes. With each, one can ask whether the philosopher is merely noting a borderline case or radically revising boxology and, if the latter, whether the observations indeed support the more ambitious project.

The objection in §4 brings out a larger point about unexplored parallels between

*The belief question.* Should we add a belief-like imagination box...to Figure 1?

and

*The desire question.* Should we add a desire-like imagination box...to Figure 1?

Cognitive lumpers typically say “no” to both. Conative splitters typically say “yes” to both. In contrast, orthodox theorists answer one question differently from the other question. Schellenberg does that too, though in a distinct manner: she answers “it’s complicated” to the belief question and a resounding “no” to the desire question. We worry that both orthodoxy and Schellenberg’s account are unstable.

There are some considerations in favor of positing an imagination box distinct from the belief box. Taken at face value, they function, *mutatis mutandis*, as considerations for positing an i-desire box distinct from the desire box. And there are some considerations against positing an i-desire box distinct from the desire box.

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<sup>27</sup> Gendler (2008a, 2008b)

<sup>28</sup> Egan (2008).

At face value, they function, *mutatis mutandis*, as considerations against positing an imagination box distinct from the belief box. That is the form of the worry. We pressed a specific instance of it against Schellenberg, but other forms of it plague a number of views about the imagination in the literature, most notably the orthodox view. Perhaps the appearances are deceiving, and there are important disanalogies between the imagination-belief relationship and the imagination-desire relationship. However, that disanalogy needs to be argued for, and we find such arguments lacking in the current literature.

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