

## **Summary of the Research Plan: Imagination, Emotion, and Value**

The aim of our project is to explore significant connections between the imagination, emotion, and experiences and judgements of value. The focus will be on moral and aesthetic values, but we intend the scope of our investigation to have implications for values in general, including how we 'apprehend' them, their metaphysical status, and the norms governing our judgements about them.

Our working hypothesis is that experiences and judgements of moral and aesthetic value are intimately connected with certain capacities and uses of imagination and with our emotions. We wish to investigate just what this connection(s) consists in, without simultaneously attempting to develop a fully-fledged theory either of the imagination or of the emotions. Instead, we shall rely in various places on a number of philosophical accounts of the imagination currently available, as well as relevant work in empirical psychology and neuroscience, and we shall focus on certain prominent 'perceptual theories' of emotion, as outlined in the detailed descriptions of the sub-projects below. Nonetheless, our work will have important bearings on how we think of imagination and emotion, particularly with respect to the connections between them and the norms governing their operation in certain spheres of value judgement.

The project is divided into four sub-projects intended to explore certain areas in depth whilst also drawing on each other to ensure the investigation of significant connections between a wide array of different issues. A distinctive feature of our project is that it contains an historical dimension, namely the examination of the role of the imagination and emotions in Hume and Kant's ethics and aesthetics respectively. This is driven by the belief that such an investigation can inform, and enrich, contemporary debates on these issues, for the theories of Hume and Kant have been amongst the most influential in shaping contemporary debates on aesthetic and moral value, on emotion and on the imagination. In particular, the ways in which both Hume and Kant introduce imagination and emotion into moral and aesthetic evaluations can be interpreted as including certain

'expressivist' elements that bear importantly on the themes pursued in the non-historical, systematic sub-projects on moral and aesthetic value. Moreover, Hume and especially Kant are not always easy to interpret, and a good understanding of the systematic issues can help to delineate and classify the different readings, to assess their value as philosophical theories and perhaps also to assess which are the most adequate / charitable readings of Hume and Kant.

The first sub-project consists of two parts: first, the elaboration of a Humean account of the nature of the imagination, the analysis of which will encompass both its epistemic and its ethical dimensions. Second, the analysis of the role of sympathy in moral judgments, with particular emphasis on the role of imagination and emotions in the process of forming impressions of others' feelings. The second sub-project, informed by a close reading of Kant as well as of the Kantian literature, investigates how the realm of the empirical can deal with the ways in which transcendental norms that govern human life can be instantiated. Through the examination of the role of the imagination and emotions in the application of moral rules, it will explore the hypothesis that these empirical capacities alone can address the problem of the gap between abstract judgments and deliberation on the one hand, and applied judgments and action on the other.

The third sub-project, drawing on the work of the first two sub-projects, examines the role of imagination in emotional experience generally, and more specifically in relation to moral judgement and practical reasoning. It will examine the hypothesis that emotions 'apprehend' values partly as a result of an interaction between imagination and perception and, in light of this, will assess the merits of sentimentalist and expressivist theories of moral judgement.

The final sub-project, drawing on all three previous sub-projects, focuses on aesthetic value, with the aim of showing that the imagination plays a central role in aesthetic judgement and experience that explains the nature of aesthetic emotions, the value of aesthetic experience, the normative nature of aesthetic

judgement, and that links aesthetic value closely to moral and cognitive value. The main aim of this sub-project is to outline an expressivist theory of aesthetic judgement.

All of the issues explored in each subject lie at the heart of value theory, have significant implications for the metaphysics and epistemology of values, and for other areas in the philosophy of mind and perception, as well as ethics and aesthetics. Despite this, however, the roles of imagination and emotion in value judgements have been remarkably under-explored and remain very underdeveloped. Part of the reason for this is undoubtedly the complexity of these phenomena, and confronting this complexity and filling these crucial philosophical lacunae provides the chief motivation for our project, and explains its broad and ambitious scope.