IMAGINATION IN THE STUDY OF HISTORY: COLLINGWOOD RECONSIDERED

A Master's Thesis

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May 2019

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BILKENT UNIVERSITY 2019

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IMAGINATION IN THE STUDY OF HISTORY: COLLINGWOOD RECONSIDERED

The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
of
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

by

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN PHILOSOPHY

THE DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

İHSAN DOĞRAMACI BİLKENT UNIVERSITY
ANKARA

May 2019

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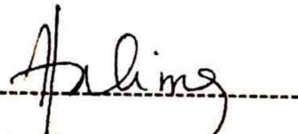

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ABSTRACT

IMAGINATION IN THE STUDY OF HISTORY: COLLINGWOOD RECONSIDERED

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Philosopher and historian R.G. Collingwood made bold claims for the role imagination plays in the study of history, but does not adequately qualify his claims. In this thesis I add content to Collingwood's conception of historical imagination by using Collingwood's works to inter-illuminate each other and by incorporating more thought on imagination and history that has been written since Collingwood. I conclude that there are three types of imagination relevant to a Collingwoodian historian: inquisitive, instructive, and representative imagination.

Keywords: Collingwood, Historiography, Imagination, Re-enactment, Simulation

ÖZET

TARİH ÇALIŞMALARINDA HAYAL GÜCÜ: COLLINGWOOD'UN YENİDEN İNCELENMESİ

Hadley, John

Masters, Felsefe Bölümü

Tez Danışmanı: Doç. Dr. Simon Wigley

Mayıs 2019

Filozof ve tarihçi R.G. Collingwood, hayal gücünün tarih çalışmasında oynadığı rol konusunda cesurca iddialarda bulunur, ancak bu iddialarını yeterince gerekçelendirmez. Bu tezde, Collingwood'un eserlerini birbirlerini aydınlatıcı şekilde kullanarak ve Collingwood'dan sonra hayal gücü ve tarih konularında yazılmış düşüncelerden de yararlanarak, Collingwood'un tarihsel hayal gücü anlayışına içerik ekliyorum. Collingwoodcu bir tarihçi için üç tür hayal gücü olduğu sonucuna varıyorum: meraklı, öğretici ve temsilci hayal gücü.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Collingwood, Hayal Gücü, Simülasyon, Tarih Yazımı, Yeniden Sahneleme

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I wish to thank Simon Wigley, my supervisor, for his support and constant availability during the entire research and writing process. He participated in the formation of my research question as much as he did in the refining of my arguments. I'm also grateful to many others in the Bilkent Philosophy Department: Bill Wringe for reading several drafts of this thesis and for skillfully building my kindling of an argument into an actual fire; Çağrı Gürkanlı for introducing me to both Collingwood and Gadamer; Gülce, Eylül, Dilara, Alican, Ömer, and Bilge for being friends in addition to fellow master's students. I'm also grateful to Ahmet Şimşir for being an amazing roommate, Wissam Al Ali for taking it upon himself to teach me Turkish (and for putting me on his football team), and Mürsel Başpınar for a lot of great laughs.

I am grateful to Mevlüde Bakır and the Turkish Fulbright Commission for taking a chance on me. I would never have made it to Bilkent University, nor written this thesis, if it weren't for your financial support and selflessness.

Thank you, Mom and Dad, for teaching me that thinking is valuable in and of itself. Thank you for living thoughtful lives, for taking meaningful action from the conclusions that you draw, and for teaching me to do the same.

And thank you, Jenna, not only for your unwavering support during this project but for this wonderful first year of marriage in Ankara and the personal emphasis that you place on imagination. May whatever difficulties we face together never stifle our imagination.

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INTRODUCTION

Abundant work has been done in the last 100 years on both philosophy of history and philosophy of imagination, but little has been written on the intersection between the two. It is not terribly difficult to see why. Articulating imagination's role in historiography (the study of history) requires robust philosophies of history and of imagination, a pair of theories which few philosophers wield.

One great exception is R.G. Collingwood. Collingwood's *Principles of Art e*arned him a reputation as the leading proponent of the expressive theory of art, and thereby an authority on imagination (Kemp 2016). And Collingwood's magnum opus, *The Idea of History,* posthumously published seven years later, has been considered the first systematic philosophy of history written in English (Collingwood, 1946). Collingwood's various writings, whether on art, history, politics, or metaphysics, inter-illuminate each other, frequently giving the reader a thrill at the connectedness of Collingwood's thought. However, once one has gotten over the first thrill of reading Collingwood, like a lover settling into a long-term relationship, he realizes that there are several links between ideas across works that Collingwood may *appear* to make but which he never does. The reader, now aware of the gaps, is left with the decision to either dismiss Collingwood as a crank who talked bigger than he walked, or to attempt to tie together the loose ends. Here I seek to do the latter.

I aim to defend Collingwood's theory of imagination in historiography by resolving unclear claims, modifying assumptions, and adding content to it. In **Chapter 1** I start by reviewing Collingwood's key historiographical theses—the logic of question and answer, re-enactment theory, and his claims for the historical imagination. Then I highlight some of the puzzles left by his work and demonstrate that these puzzles have not been solved by post-Collingwood commentators. In the following chapters I give Collingwood's claims of imagination in history more content, at times using Collingwood's own theories, and at other times incorporating new material. In **Chapter 2** I revise Collingwood's logic of question and answer to avoid threats of perspectivism,

and I demonstrate its reliance on *inquisitive imagination*. In **Chapter 3**, I argue that Collingwood's re-enactment theory finds its foundation in the *instructive imagination*. Re-enactment is a fully imaginative act, using the tools of simulation theory and mindreading. In **Chapter 4** I conclude that an historian must convey historical knowledge using his *representative imagination*. By my conclusion, it should be apparent that without any serious revisions to his theory of historiography, Collingwood's broad endorsements of the imagination may be given significantly more content. Imagination is the start, means, and end of historiography.

CHAPTER 1

R.G. COLLINGWOOD'S 'UNSUPPORTED' IMAGINATION

In *The Idea of History* Collingwood argues that modern critical historians (roughly, since the Renaissance) have used their imagination to properly criticize historical evidence. Yet seeing as that these historians have written little on the purpose, methods, limits, and verification criteria of their imagination in the historiographical process, Collingwood attempts to rectify this oversight by explaining what imagination does for an historian. He argues that an historian's structural imagination, far from being a filler between 'fixed pegs' of historical knowledge, produces inferential knowledge from evidence of the unobservable (Collingwood, 1946: 242). And he asserts, rather radically, that:

> far from relying for its validity upon the support of given facts, [imagination] actually serves as the touchstone by which we decide whether alleged facts are genuine… imagination which does the work of historical construction supplies the means of historical criticism as well. (Collingwood, 1946: 246)

Imagination has been declared the verification tool for historiography. But Collingwood does not qualify this claim as well as we might hope. He gives three brief imagination rules to which the historian willfully submits—1) the historian must create a picture in a localized space and time, 2) the historian must write a narrative that is consistent with itself, and 3) the picture produced by the historian must stand true in relation to the evidence (Collingwood, 1946: 246-248). The first rule is an obvious and necessary presupposition, the second is uninteresting without a corresponding epistemology of history, and the third is a tautology. He gives no further explanation of this claim in this published lecture, so we must look elsewhere in Collingwood's writing to see if he gives it more justification.

The obvious next place to look to is Collingwood's theory of re-enactment. Let us quickly review the theory itself before returning to our question. Scattered throughout *The Idea of History, An Autobiography,* and *The Principles of History,* re-enactment has lived on as the most well-remembered aspect of Collingwood's thought. It is hard to think of Collingwood without thinking of re-enactment, and indeed impossible to write of re-enactment without mentioning Collingwood. Collingwood explains re-enactment theory via three main axioms. The first axiom is that the historian seeks answers to specific questions about history by re-enacting the thoughts of the historical people ('subjects') he studies. This is so at least partly because of Collingwood's specific ontology of historical facts: historical facts are themselves the thoughts that historical subjects think.

His second axiom, therefore, is that the historian must think over again for himself the thought whose expression in history he is trying to understand. He must think the very same thought—not another like it (Collingwood, 1939: 111). Re-enactment is the painstaking work of the historian who uses the tools of evidence, imagination and other historical knowledge to arrive at an understanding of the past. Accurate historiography depends on the historian's re-enactment process (Collingwood, 1946: 215). Identical in content, the historian's thought and the historical subject's original expressed thought still differ in context. The subject's thought in history arises spontaneously out of the subject's context, but the historian's re-enacted thought is encapsulated in a sort of artificial setting of the historian's own context. Therefore, Collingwood's third and final axiom of historiography: historical knowledge is the re-enactment of a past thought encapsulated in the context of present thoughts, confining it to a different plane (Collingwood: 1939, 114).

Neither an expanded summary of re-enactment theory nor a full treatment of critiques will be possible here, but a few critical comments and rejoinders are necessary. My view, in short, is that though many since Collingwood have argued that re-enactment is too narrow to properly describe historical method, most critiques can be successfully addressed with a more generous reading of Collingwood (see Dray, 1995). For instance some post-Collingwood thinkers hold that re-enactment fails to capture natural disasters or contagious diseases in history because re-enactment treats only thoughts—not events—as historical facts. W.H. Dray responds for Collingwood that while natural disasters, diseases, and other natural events do not have 'insides'

producing thoughts which comprise historical facts, humans' responses to natural events and social forces are found in thoughts which the historian may profitably study by re-enactment. Historical knowledge, in the case of a natural disaster, would therefore be produced by studying a subject's expressed thought in response to the natural event. The historical significance of the event will not be diminished, but merely considered from an 'inside' human perspective by looking at the subject's thoughts (Dray, 323-327).

Others, like Cambridge historian E.H. Carr, critique that "the conscious thought or motive of an individual actor may be quite irrelevant to the comprehensive study of a historical event," and correspondingly that Collingwood's narrow focus on re-enacting individual subjects' thought costs him understanding of the impersonal social forces which push history (Carr, 1961:30). We may again say that the re-enacting historian studies individualized components of a total social force by re-enacting individuals' thoughts. These individual pieces can give the historian a perfectly reasonable picture of the social force.

These objections to re-enactment are valid, even interesting, but are not detrimental to our inquiry here, for they do not challenge the viability of re-enactment, only the scope of its relevance. Re-enacting individuals' thoughts—whether princes' or paupers'—is recognized by most historians as at least one of several important historiographical methods. So we may continue our inquiry confident of re-enactment's viability. Moreover, a view of re-enactment humbler than Collingwood's own, one which recognizes possible limitations, will allow us to pursue greater theoretical clarity of what exactly re-enactment can do for the historian (Steuber, 2002).

So how does Collingwood connect re-enactment theory with the historiographical imagination? Interestingly—perhaps, troublingly—I cannot find anything in Collingwood's writings that claims re-enactment to be an imaginative activity. Yes, Collingwood says that imagination is the touchstone by which an historian discerns the viability of a historical narrative, but he does not explain how imagination relates to his primary historiographical method. This is surprising because one would expect that when discussing imagination in historiography, a way Collingwood would have defended its centrality was by linking it to his *more central* theory of re-enactment. When a guest shows up at a party uninvited, his appeal to enter often centers on his

relationship to the host or guests of honor. Imagination, here the guest, does not seem to have made his credentials known by appealing to a close relationship with re-enactment.

Perhaps we can find an answer by connecting imagination to Collingwood's other primary historiographical theory, the one in which re-enactment theory is supposed to be based: the logic of question and answer. Collingwood's work in archaeology (which led to him earning a reputation as the foremost scholar of Roman Britain in the 1920s and 30s) had impressed on him the importance of starting with questions, not only practically but logically. There are two senses in which this is the case. Firstly, the archaeologist (or any researcher of the past) beginning an excavation must know what question he is trying to answer. Is he trying to discern the subject people's living conditions? Is he determining which weapon was the subject people's most effective?

The second and more important sense in which questions are the foundation of understanding is that the archaeologist must view historical artifacts as answers to questions or problems which historical subjects found themselves up against. In his *Autobiography*, Collingwood uses his own experience on the excavation of Hadrian's Wall as a parable. Before Collingwood showed up at the excavation (so his story goes), none of the archaeologists could understand the reason for Hadrian's wall being so short. 'How could it have been used to keep anything out?' they asked. But Collingwood, realizing these archaeologists had assumed the purpose of the wall being that of keeping Rome's enemies out, instead embraced the logic of question and answer to determine to which Roman problem the wall was an expressed answer. Seeing from his other historical knowledge that the question the Romans were trying to solve was not one of 'how do we keep the Scots and Saxons out?' but rather 'How do we surveille the land beyond the wall?' Collingwood determined that the purpose of the wall was for sentries to walk on top of (1939: 128-130; 1931). By asking what question or problem a certain historical action was intended to answer or solve, the historian may begin re-enacting. Collingwood generalizes this into a rule: if an archaeologist fails to ask questions, an excavation merely produces empty physical artifacts, for no object is helpful to an archaeologist who fails to ask a question to which an excavated object may reveal an answer.

Collingwood argued that what he called 'the principle of propositional logic,' or the idea that a proposition defined as a unit of thought may be considered true or false, was based on a failure to understand that propositions may only be tested for their truth value by considering which question they are trying to answer. For without such a view, Collingwood contends, "a proposition which is in fact true can always be thought false by anyone who takes the trouble to excogitate a question to which it would have been the wrong answer, and convinces himself that this was the question it was meant to answer" (1939: 38). Thus, the argumentative seed for Collingwood's move into the philosophy of history: the study of what question a proposition (or argument, essay, etc.) is meant to answer is not a philosophical question, but a historical one. The question asked by the original writer can only be reconstructed historically—an effort requiring considerable skill (Collingwood, 1939: 30-39).

Unfortunately, Collingwood makes no mention of any relationship between imagination and the logic of question and answer. Thus, the question of how the logic of question and answer relates to the 'structural imagination' has been left unanswered by Collingwood's work on historiography. What is more, there are further puzzles that arise from the simultaneous centrality and absence of the logic of question and answer in relation to imagination and re-enactment in Collingwood's work. Where Collingwood writes of re-enactment as stemming from the logic of question and answer in his *Autobiography,* there is almost no mention of the logic of question and answer in *The Idea of History.* My contention is that a unified theory of imagination can not only illuminate Collingwood's individual theories of re-enactment and the logic of question and answer, but also that, by illuminating both of them, connect them in a way that Collingwood never did.

Collingwood's writing on imagination in *The Principles of Art* also does not significantly help us connect his conception of imagination to his historiographical theories. This, despite Collingwood himself claiming his theory requires understanding imagination relative to general experience (1938: 152-153). The problem is that Collingwood almost exclusively focuses on the relationship between imagination and *perception*. This can be seen, for example, in the views comprising his history of imagination. He first laments the Cartesians' denial of 'real sensation,' due to their view that '*all* sensation is simply imagination.' Then he considers the British empiricists,

who despite efforts to refute the Cartesians, functionally adhered to the same perception-centered, minimalist account of imagination (1938: 187).

Collingwood's Aristotelian-Kantian view of imagination holds it to be 'the enabler of intellection' and the 'blind but indispensable faculty' forming the link between sensation and understanding. But despite these broad, profound headers, Collingwood's account fails to escape the confines of the conversation about imagination and perception. He gives the example of a person imagining the three unobservable sides of a matchbox lying on a table in front of him. In fact, Collingwood argues, it is only so far as a person imagines the unseen sides of the matchbox that he can be "aware that the matchbox is a solid body at all. A person who could really see, but could not imagine, would see not a solid world of bodies, but merely… 'various colors variously disposed'" (Collingwood, 1938: 192). Therefore imagination provides structure by distilling sense perceptions, thus allowing an individual to know things not observed (Strawson, 1982). This connection between imagination and perception is most clearly showcased, Collingwood avows, in art, where the imagination houses imaginative extensions of sensa during an aesthetic experience. The focus on the matchbox example and the conversation about perception and art reveals the narrowness of Collingwood's theory of imagination in *The Principles of Art*—a view of imagination necessarily connected to perception.

The three main Collingwoodian concepts introduced and cross-examined here have been his re-enactment theory, the logic of question and answer, and theory of imagination. Collingwood's endorsement of imagination's role in historiography appears to be the high-water mark for imagination in the study of history, but it is not supported with specific content nor is it nested within Collingwood's two primary historiographical theses. Thus our problem: *Collingwood does not properly qualify, in any of his writings—whether on art or history—what he means by the historical imagination*.

Above I have suggested that Collingwood's failure to connect his theories stems from the perception-based focus of his theory of imagination. But identifying the 'cause' of the problem in Collingwood's thinking does not necessarily call forth a solution to his muddy concept of imagination in historiography.

Almost no work since Collingwood has been undertaken to provide more content to Collingwood's theory of imagination. Is this because Collingwood's theory was dead on arrival? Some say so. W.H. Walsh, for instance, argued that the ill-defined fashion in which Collingwood employed 'imagination' in *The Idea of History* should simply lead us to use the replacement term 'judgment.' Where F.H. Bradley endorsed 'experience' as the historian's verification criteria, Walsh argues that Collingwood's expansion beyond Bradley's experience theory to 'imagination' as verification is nothing more than a judgment which allows for possibilities beyond one's own experience. 'Imagination,' for Walsh, is a red herring (1947). Alan Donagan makes an even more biting argument, holding that Collingwood's 'imagination' simply should be read as 'thinking,' for to think is to "put the imagination to work" (1986). Unfortunately these quick dismissals—as well as those from Taylor, Rubinoff, Winch, Cebik and Wheeler—do not further the conversation (Dray, 1995: 199). Instead, focusing on Collingwood's re-enactment doctrine, this spate of philosophers has ditched Collingwood's imagination theory altogether.

Some other analytic philosophers have been more receptive of Collingwood's work, including his work on imagination, but not necessarily in ways that bear direct helpfulness for this inquiry into the relationship between imagination and historiographical theory. For example, Robert Gordon is interested in the relationship between empathy, understanding, and imaginative simulation, but makes no goal of interpreting or combining Collingwood's thought on history (2000). Simon Blackburn, similarly references Collingwood's re-enactment theory as a forebearer of simulation theory, but does not develop Collingwood's theory for historiography (2000). Karsten Steuber defends the epistemic value of Collingwood's re-enactment theory, but develops it for the purpose of work on human agency, not for illuminating Collingwood's conception of imagination (2002). Thus, despite the abiding interest in Collingwood's thought among analytic philosophers of mind, their writings do not directly shed light on the question I am trying to answer.

There is another brand of Collingwood supporters which might be best defined as 'disciples,' including Rex Martin, David Boucher, Jan Van der Dussen, and W.H. Dray. In general, these philosophers and Collingwood editors are very supportive of Collingwood's thought, and they have taken great pains individually and collectively to re-edit and publish many of Collingwood's works. While their editor's introductions

are certainly enlightening, I have not come across any material in them which explicitly seeks to challenge or develop Collingwood's theory of imagination in historiography. W.H. Dray's commentary on Collingwood's thought at least briefly treats and critiques Collingwood's theory of imagination in historiography, challenging whether Collingwood's declaration of the imagination being *a priori* meshes with his thoughts on the development of human nature (Dray: 191-221). But his brief attention on imagination is subsumed, consciously or not, under broader discussions related to re-enactment theory—synthesis and wholeness, possibilities of universal history, concretism versus abstraction, and causal explanation—all tangential to the previously central conversation on imagination. Like a butler opening doors to rooms which the master, though a gracious host, had no intention of showing his guests, Dray's argument digresses away from his original purpose of exploring imagination's place within Collingwood's historiographical palace (213-225).

Several reputed historians have viewed Collingwood's theory as influential in their calling to historianship and/or central to their methods. Prolific Harvard historian Niall Ferguson, for instance, cites Collingwood's three axioms of historiography in the introduction to his biography of Henry Kissinger (2015: xvi). John Lewis Gaddis in his philosophy of history piece *The Landscape of History* cites Collingwood 14 times in 150 pages, and frequently at the critical juncture in his argument. Not only this, but like Collingwood, Gaddis rigorously adheres to a human-centric understanding of history, extols history's self-developing power, relies on similar analogies for describing the historian's task, and subscribes to re-enactment theory (2004). E.H. Carr acknowledges the debt post-Collingwood historians owe to Collingwood, for it was Collingwood who taught, among other things, that 'facts do not come to us "pure,"' that the historian requires imaginative understanding, and that the historian can only see the past with the eyes of the present (1961: 17-20). Despite this praise, none of these historians have further developed Collingwood's theory of imagination and historiography.

Focusing instead on re-enactment, these post-Collingwood thinkers have side-stepped the conversation about the nature of imagination's role in Collingwood's theory of historiography. Neither harsh critics, philosophers instrumentally using Collingwood's thought for unrelated purposes, Collingwood's disciples, nor Collingwoodian historians, have undertaken a critical assessment of the intersection between Collingwood's thought on imagination and historiography. Therefore, it is my

goal here to offer ways in which Collingwood's thought-provoking but vague theory may be bolstered. To this end I will construct a theory of imagination formed in direct relation to Collingwood's logic of question and answer (Chapter 2) and re-enactment (Chapter 3) theories, while addressing concomitant philosophical questions, then close with a discussion of imagination and the representation of historical knowledge (Chapter 4).

CHATPER 2

THE INQUISITIVE IMAGINATION

The best place to start, it seems, is to provide a theory of imagination that accurately describes what historians do when producing historical knowledge. This means firstly that to connect imagination with the logic of question and answer, and with re-enactment, we must expand on Collingwood's definition of imagination.

Defining imagination is difficult—even Kendall Walton famously admitted defeat (1990, 13-20). Most attempts to define imagination begin with its history, and most histories follow a conversation on *cognitive architecture*—an effort to define imagination relative to other better-known faculties of the mind (e.g. perception, belief, desire, thought). Collingwood's treatment of the history of imagination, discussed above, is typical—mention Aristotle, then skip to Descartes, Hume, and Kant to discuss imagination relative to perception, and perhaps its role in aesthetics. The histories offered by different philosophers reveal their own bent and interests. Continental philosophers focus on the cognitive architecture pursuant to explaining phenomenology or existentialism. Analytic philosophers share Continentals' Kantian roots but then tend to focus on imagination in aesthetics (see Kind & Kung, 2016; Kearney, 1991).

Sometimes instead of or alongside cognitive architecture arguments, philosophers use a taxonomical approach. Taxonomies of imaginings are divisions of imagination types into categories like, for instance, social and non-social, or transcendent and instructive imaginings. A third approach to defining imagination is a roles approach. Arguments for imagination's roles focus on the things that the imagination can do, like house creativity, generate counterfactuals, perform pretense, and read others' minds. Given that my goal here will not be to define imagination in its entirety, nor to relate imagination to anything other than the study of history, I will use tools from all three

approaches to understand imagination and to defend imagination's central role in Collingwoodian historiography (Lao & Gendler, 2019).

Our first relevant distinction is between transcendent and instructive uses of imagination (Kind & Kung). Transcendent imagination is what we employ to move beyond reality. It generates images of pink elephants; it leads a child in a game of 'house;' it is what permits the escapism of unrealistic daydreams; it allows us to engage with fantasy literature or fictional movies in meaningful ways. Normal conversation about imagination tends, mostly unconsciously, to reinforce our conception of imagination as a purely transcendent, non-instructive faculty. This is evidenced by our association of imagination with phrases like 'fantasy,' 'make-believe' and 'not real.' While transcendent imagination may accidentally or instrumentally lead to knowledge (as, in the case, of a child playing house learning more of what it is like to be a parent), in this essay I will focus more on the instructive imagination. In this chapter, I will focus on a specific subset of the instructive imagination which I argue describes the relationship between imagination and the logic of question and answer, a puzzle left unsolved by Collingwood. I call this type of imagination the *inquisitive imagination*.

Question-asking is a faculty present within one's imagination. Since knowledge is justified true belief crystallized, it is not interrogative or imaginative, and thus does not produce questions. Knowledge does not prompt one to accrue more knowledge; questions and even curiosity itself cannot exist in knowledge. Rather, maintaining Collingwood's view that imagination is the intermediary between sense and thought, we may say that questions exist in and arise from the imagination. Let us give more content to this inquisitive imagination.

After all, both transcendent and instructive imagination frequently function in the form of question-asking. This is made obvious to us by the conversation coincident with imaginative children's games. "*What if* I have wings and can fly?" or "*What if* this tea cup [which is really empty] has tea in it?" Imagination's question-asking role is equally apparent in the real world. A good example comes from an interaction between a language learner and a native speaker. When Jenna, an intermediate Turkish speaker, engages her friend Ahmet in conversation in Turkish, there are some words Jenna

doesn't understand and there are some grammar concepts beyond her Turkish level. She cannot fully understand what Ahmet is saying.

But, if Jenna knows enough to partially understand, and has the gumption to continue attempting to understand, her imagination asks questions of Ahmet's speech in order to obtain the meaning. The first question might be, "What if Ahmet meant *this*?" If to Jenna it does not seem, according to her intellect, that "this" is what Ahmet meant, then Jenna's imagination will try another possible meaning by asking a second imaginative question: "What if he instead meant *this?*" The point is that these questions, while relying on certain given knowledge of language and understanding of Ahmet, are not generated by knowledge. They are generated by the inquisitive imagination. A quick look at a conversation between two native speakers in the same language yields the same conclusion. Imagination asks questions of others' meanings—only then can one's intellect judge which possible meaning is most likely. By generating questions, the inquisitive imagination provides the intellect with the materials it needs to reach the point of understanding.

Collingwood argues that the logic of question and answer requires the historian to ask questions of the historical texts and artifacts available to him, but makes no mention of this being an explicitly imaginative activity. What is more, the logic of question and answer requires an historian to discern the questions which a subject in history sought to answer, the problems which the subject sought to solve—but Collingwood, again, makes no mention of this discernment process being an imaginative one. Can we apply the inquisitive imagination present in conversation to the task of an historian? Yes, we can. Since historical texts and artifacts do not speak to us the way other people do in conversation, it may at first not appear obvious that we may apply it in this way. But Hans Georg Gadamer, building on Collingwood's logic of question and answer, argues that this difference is precisely why the imagination is so important in interpretation of historical texts. The historian himself must make the text speak. And the making the text speak means firstly posing an imaginative question to the text and secondly generating an imagined answer. Just like Jenna with Ahmet. Then the historian, using his intellect, may test the fitness of that imagined answer (Gadamer, 1975: 377). The conversation between an historian and his texts and artifacts is therefore one completely led by the inquisitive imagination.

Collingwood argues that historical facts are literally thoughts in the minds of historical subjects. Subjects' thoughts are, therefore, in a sense observable for the historian who properly re-enacts them. The historian is therefore thought by Collingwood to be asking imaginative questions of historical texts in order to discern objective truth—what were the actual thoughts expressed in history? The historian's imagination must also, as I mentioned above, determine the questions to which historical subjects' expressed thoughts were intended answers. Collingwood, focusing on this reality in his logic of question and answer fails to remember that the historian himself lives in a delineated stretch of historical time. Collingwood's scientific understanding of history obscures this reality even though his theory of imagination, and his argument for different eras' being characterized by dominant modes of thought, pointed to it. For Collingwood's view of the flow of history in time miraculously exempts the historian from its force; he appreciates the difficulty of the historian's task, but he does not account for the great difficulty that the historian is just as much a subject in history as is the subject he is studying.

Gadamer's argument runs very differently. In historically effected consciousness the historian separates himself from the 'self-forgetfulness' of the methodology of modern science (340). This means the inquisitive imagination which an historian employs is limited by the questions facing the particular era in which an historian is writing. This limitation is not a problem at all for Gadamer because, he argues, an historian must begin his historical search with an expectation of what he will find. Thus, although in Collingwood's theory the imagination fills the entire space between sense and intellect, in practice each individual's imagination is narrowed by disposition and experience as a member of history. Gadamer calls this narrowing *prejudice.* Many have attempted to denounce or evade this reality, including some of the great Enlightenment thinkers. But even those who bashed prejudice as a roadblock to reason had their own deep-seated prejudice *against prejudice*. Everyone, including the most accomplished historian, has prejudices—and this is a good thing, for, Gadamer argues, prejudice is the foundation of imagination. If an historian has no starting point for the generation of his questions, his questions will be untethered, perhaps meaningless. But by starting with an expectation of what he will find, the historian may begin his search (281, 302, 336). A woman walking into a cave expecting it to be lit from the inside finds nothing, but a woman who brings a flashlight may explore and find much more. We need not

argue the balancing point here that, of course, the historian must be prepared to revise his prejudices as his understanding grows.

We have now seen how it is that the imagination asks questions. But we must flesh out the significance of the difference in Collingwood's and Gadamer's ontologies of historical fact before we can declare Gadamer's theory of inquisitive imagination an improvement on Collingwood's. Does the inquisitive imagination ask questions of objective historical realities, or of historical facts unavoidably filtered and altered through the historian's own perspective? Collingwood takes the first view, Gadamer the second.

Collingwood was not concerned that his logic of question and answer would prompt objections of perspectivism. In fact, he boldly claims his historiographical theory does not expose the historian to the dilemma of perspectivism at all (1946, 175). But some since Collingwood, especially Gadamer, have reacted to the scientific objectivism of his historical fact ontology, siding opposite him in a realm of purely subjective, perspectivist ontology of historical fact (Dray, 271-315). Gadamer rejects Collingwood's scientistic ontology of historical fact altogether, holding instead that the historical 'object' is not an object at all (299, 338). Collingwood's historical fact ontology strongly resembles the language and means of science, but the problem, Gadamer contends, is that 'scientific' (here read: Collingwoodian) historiography's desire for objectivity led to a 'separation of historical understanding from the contemporary situation that motivates it,' and to impossible attempts to reconstruct 'objective' history in the subjective of the historian (Malpas, 2018). Accordingly,

> An interpretation that was correct in itself would be a foolish ideal…Every interpretation has to adapt itself to the hermeneutical [historical] situation to which it belongs…*There cannot, therefore, be any single interpretation that is correct 'in itself,'* precisely because every interpretation is concerned with the text itself. (Gadamer, 415)

Rather, historical interpretation and knowledge are 'concretized' and 'applied' in the present, argues Gadamer. Where Collingwood compares the historian to a scientist discerning objective fact about thoughts expressed in history, Gadamer compares the historian to a jurist. The jurist analogy keeps the historian safely inside historically effected consciousness, where he is aware that his goal in interpretation is application

(306). For in the field of law, understanding *is* application. The jurist's task requires an interpretation which *concretizes* the law in each specific case. And this "application does not mean first understanding a given universal in itself and then afterward applying it to a concrete case," but rather, "application is the very understanding of…the text itself" (Gadamer, 1975: 329-341).

On Gadamer's view, the historian recognizes his own horizon as well as the horizon of the historical question, and uses his imagination to more accurately make the historical text speak to himself in the present (302). This, in turn, helps the historian not forget that the past is continued in the present. Like the jurist who knows his practical, normative work of interpretation combines past and present to ensure 'the unbroken continuance of law,' so the historian's imagination must be guided by this analogy (327). The facts are not the real objects of inquiry; they are simply material for the tasks of the historian-jurist who establishes the historical significance of an event within the totality of his historical consciousness (338). Gadamer thus argues that the historian's imaginative projection of meaning into a text, within the context of the logic of question and answer, is inherently 'perspectivist.'

The Gadamerian view that the inquisitive imagination asks historical questions of a text at first bolstered Collingwood's argument for historical imagination, but, in the final analysis, has led to a directly opposing view of historical reality. And these opposite conclusions must cause us to revisit the viability of the logic of question and answer, which has been used by these two giants of historiography to generate very different conclusions. How can we save the logic of question and answer from perspectivism, and thus preserve the utility of the inquisitive imagination? How may we maintain Gadamer's improvements on Collingwood's thought without acquiescing to the seductive temptation of perspectivism?

It seems that Collingwood and Gadamer, while correct in their logic of question and answer itself, reach opposite—and radical—conclusions of pure objectivism and pure perspectivism from their different ontologies of historical fact. Like men on a boulder surrounded by rising lava, Collingwood and Gadamer jump opposite ways to safety. But if the lava will never overtake the boulder, then the best ontology of historical fact—and one which preserves the inquisitive imagination—is a view which allows the historian to stay on the boulder and bravely wait for the danger to pass.

This third ontology of historical fact, a sort of middle view, permits equal measures of Collingwood's objectivism and Gadamer's perspectivism, comparing the study of history to the nature of life itself. Its origins lie in the work of Cambridge historian E.H. Carr. Carr agrees with Collingwood's conclusion that objective history exists, but laments Collingwood's exposing the study of history to 'cynical interpretation devoid of actual truth'—i.e. Gadamer's defense of history (Carr, 21). For although an historian's thought is molded by the environment in which he is writing, the historian most conscious of his own situation is also more capable of transcending it and discovering historical fact without falling victim to perspectivism. For a historian's "capacity to rise above his social and historical situation seems to be conditioned by the sensitivity with which he recognizes the extent of his involvement in it" (Carr, 38). In other words, Carr argues that despite the inevitable historical forces affecting an historian's mind, both before he arrives at his evidence and during his research process, the historian may overcome at least part of his 'given' historically effected consciousness and aspire to discovering and conveying truth about the unobservable past.

On the other hand, Carr, like Gadamer, argues that there is no hard core of objective historical facts existing independently. He does not adhere to Collingwood's 'idealist' view (Carr's words) that historical facts are past subjects' thoughts. Carr admits that the historian picks his facts, that the facts don't speak unless the historian calls on them (5). Thus, Carr argues, in order to answer a historical question, the historian's task consists as much in 'cultivating ignorance' and blocking out certain facts as it does in researching historical facts, like Gadamer's view on prejudice. To not ignore evidence is to convey everything and to convey everything is to convey nothing.

Ultimately, for Carr, there is no pure access to the objective past, nor is there purely perspectivist historiography. The historian is engaged in a continuous process of molding his facts to his interpretation and his interpretation to his facts. Provisional facts and provisional interpretations are recast iteratively by new evidence and new interpretations, bracketing in on the truth (46). It is therefore impossible to assign primacy to either facts themselves or to historical interpretation. Like in normal human life, in which facts and interpretations are in continuous dialogue, historical inquiry relies on a give-and-take between the two. "The historian without his facts is rootless and futile; the facts without their historian are dead and meaningless" (Carr, 24).

This middle-road solution is both satisfying and unsatisfying. Where Gadamer's theory seems contrived as the 'best we can do' and Collingwood's over-influenced by positivism and scientific ontology, Carr's theory rings true. It seems to make the study of history not only possible, but exciting, filled with the same tension of regular life. It is this unclear tension in which the historical imagination must operate most saliently.

I thus discard Collingwood's likening of the historian to the scientist and Gadamer's comparison of an historian to a jurist in favor of a new analogy. One of Carr's most celebrated followers, American historian John Lewis Gaddis, argues that historians are like cartographers who fit historical representations to historical reality. Cartographers attempt to take large realities and simplify them into usable vehicles of valuable information. The purpose for which a map is to be used affects the information—the size, scale, highlighted material, etc.—the cartographer decides to include in the map. All maps are imperfect representations, exaggerating certain terrain features and omitting others. But no one argues that landscapes really exist, and everyone knows that maps are useful.

Historians are like cartographers. There are objective historical realities (facts), and there are limitations of possible purposes for which a history of a particular subject may be used. An historian maps the past, which is equally as objective and real as the landscapes we live on. Yet the nature of his task requires interpretation in order to be relevant and useful, even worth writing. Historiography is therefore neither purely objective nor purely subjective. And its quality is determined by the degree to which the historian achieves a *fit* between the historical knowledge he is generating and the requirements (or questions) for which the historical knowledge is being generated (Gaddis, 34). This concept of fit, borrowed from cartography, is a more effective verification criteria than accuracy (Collingwood's) or application (Gadamer's).

We have thread a very fine needle here, so let me recount exactly what we have done to liberate the inquisitive imagination. First, we considered Collingwood's logic of question and answer and the role it permitted for imagination. Finding it lacking, we added improvements from Gadamer to better understand how the inquisitive imagination aids the historian. But, finding Gadamer embracing wholehearted perspectivism, perfectly contrary to Collingwood and dangerous to the study of history,

we took a minute to articulate a more reasonable ontology of historical fact, lifted from Carr and Gaddis, which defends the logic of question and answer. This allowed us to glean from Gadamer's improvements on the way imagination is used inquisitively in historiography.

In conclusion, what are these improvements? There are two. The first is that Gadamer allows and supports greater primacy of the imaginative question in historical work. Collingwood, like a boy who knows playing outside is good for him but who opts for the indoor comfort of a favorite videogame, extols the value of the question but, failing to develop it, returns to his comfort zone with re-enactment theory. Secondly, Gadamer better defines and centralizes the role of imagination in historical inquiry. Despite Collingwood's resurrection of the Aristotelian-Kantian conception of imagination as the medium between perception (sense) and thought, Collingwood fails to develop the way that an historian's imagination is used to ask questions pertaining to the historical era he finds himself in. Gadamer says that the historian's historically effected consciousness cannot help but project provisional meanings into texts by *imaginatively* making the texts speak to the historian in the present. We have arrived at a polished and defensible understanding of the *inquisitive imagination.*

CHAPTER 3

THE INSTRUCTIVE IMAGINATION

If the inquisitive imagination is how the historian begins his research process, the instructive imagination is what allows the historian to carry out Collingwood's primary historiographical method: re-enactment. The goal of this chapter is to explicate the relationship between imagination and re-enactment, adding content to Collingwood's original theory. We will answer a series of questions about what re-enactment is and is not using an example case that runs through this chapter.

Let's take the case of an historian seeking to understand why Alexander Hamilton supported Thomas Jefferson in the American election of 1800. The historian, sitting in his wood-paneled office, wearing his glasses and holding a paper cup of office coffee, starts with the outcome: Alexander Hamilton supported Thomas Jefferson in the election of 1800. He chooses this event because it is significant, both immediately and in the long-term (or 'historically,' in the sense that the event impacted history). The immediate significance is that Hamilton's support for Jefferson is specifically what won Jefferson the election (many historians contend). And the long-term impact of Hamilton supporting Jefferson is that its final outcome, Jefferson's victory, marked the first transition of power from one American political faction, the Federalists, to another, the Democratic-Republicans. This peaceful transfer of power, a 'bloodless revolution,' would be heralded as a precedent for generations of free and peaceful elections in the U.S.

Now the historian may begin collecting his historical facts. For Collingwood, these facts are the thoughts expressed by historical subjects. But as I argued in the previous chapter, we need not limit ourselves to thoughts-as-facts for our present conversation. We must also remember, from the previous chapter, that the historian does not find facts directly from historical authority, but that every possible fact he runs into must be

criticized by his structural imagination. The historian's search for facts is led by his historical question, and the historian must be ruthless in the clarity he seeks.

One question, for instance, that the historian must answer using facts, is what is meant by the idea that Hamilton 'supported' Jefferson? Does it mean that he gave public speeches on Jefferson's behalf, merely suggested to his friends that they should vote for Jefferson, or something else entirely? The answer to this question will be found in the facts—the thoughts and actions that occurred in history. To find the facts, the historian turns to his general historical knowledge (i.e. knowledge of America in the year 1800), and the evidence directly pertaining to the studied event of Hamilton supporting Jefferson. All general historical knowledge and direct evidence is subject to criticism by the historian. The historian must establish what it was that happened in order to provide evidence for (or challenge) the interpretation that Hamilton did in fact 'support' Jefferson. There is a continuous give and take relationship between facts and interpretations.

All that we have said thus far is logically and temporally prior to re-enactment. Now, having established *what* it was that Hamilton did, the historian's goal becomes knowing *why* Hamilton did it. His method is mindreading, or re-enactment. The historian, now putting his coffee down to get into the real work of historiography, transposes himself into the mind of Alexander Hamilton. How does he do this?

Using his instructive imagination. Now there are several uses of instructive imagination, including pretense and mindreading, so we must clarify which one the historian uses. Since the late 80s, cognitivists like Stich and Nichols (and then, later, philosophers of mind) have modeled cognitive mechanisms to explain how pretense works as an imaginative cognitive function (2003, 16-17). Stich and Nichols argue for three additions to our traditional understanding of cognitive architecture: a Possible Worlds Box in which ideas about possible ways the world could be are stored; an Updating Mechanism which reevaluates (real and imagined) beliefs based on inference; and a Script Elaborator which prompts new belief, desire, and action non-inferentially. They argue that the Updating Mechanism and Script Elaborator create fluid 'pretend representations,' or imaginations, in the Possible Worlds Box, toggling between inferential (e.g. "This imaginary tea is hot, *therefore* we can't touch it") and non-inferential (e.g. "I want two sugar cubes in my tea *and* I'm a dragon") updates to an

imaginary situation. All three mechanisms are subcomponents of an individual's imagination and together they work to create imaginative, pretend scenarios—whether life-like or make-believe—that instruct an individual's thought and action (28-57).

Collingwood at first glance appears to hold this imaginative pretense as an instructive, imaginative tool for the historian. He writes, particularly in his *Autobiography,* that the historian must, to some degree, pretend to be the person he is studying in order to think their thoughts (i.e. re-enact), and thus generate historical knowledge. Collingwood declares that studying history means "getting inside other people's heads, looking at their situation through their eyes, and thinking for yourself whether they tackled it in the right way." This is evidenced by, for instance, Collingwood's example of the historian interpreting the Battle of Trafalgar. If the historian fails to see the Battle of Trafalgar "through the eyes of a man brought up in sailing ships armed with broadsides of short-range muzzle loading guns…he is not even a beginner in naval history." By being unable to assume the physical, emotional, and intellectual traits of the subject, the historian remains outside history. Thus pretense seems to be heralded as instructive by Collingwood himself (1939: 58, 70, 112).

But in other sections of his writing, Collingwood does not seem to say that the historian's task requires pretense at all. His praise for pretense, while occasional, is subordinated to the consistent weight he places on his third tenet of re-enactment theory: the encapsulation of thought. A better example of Collingwood's real thought on the relationship between a re-enacting historian and his subject can be seen in the following example:

> When, as an historian, I relive in my own mind a certain experience of Julius Caesar …the way in which I incorporate Caesar's experience in my own personality is not by confusing myself with him [i.e. pretending to be him], but by distinguish-ing myself from him and at the same time making his experience my own. (1946: 174)

Encapsulation makes pretense an impossible means of generating historical knowledge. It precludes the historian from thinking he must "be" the historical subject in order to think the subject's thoughts, and this is a good thing. The historian's thought in re-enactment, though identical in content to the thought of the historical subject is encapsulated on a different contextual plane. Thus, a historian who fully steps into the mind of his subject via pretense fails to look at the past through the eyes of the present.

A similar argument is spelled out in slightly different terms by Gadamer. A historian's 'transposing himself' into the mind of a subject does not mean the historian disregards himself but rather that into this other historical situation the historian must bring, precisely, himself (Gadamer, 305). So to interpret the past means to bring one's own preconceptions into play so that an archaeological object or historical text's meaning can really be made to speak for the historian in the present. The historian, from his own standpoint in the present, must project a historical horizon into the text to maintain the text's otherness and to incapsulate it, separating it from his own historical situation. The historian, therefore imaginatively and iteratively attempts to fit his own fore-meanings (or interpretations) to the historical subject's experience, trying to think the thoughts of the subject, but only by translating them into the historian's own context (267-269).

Collingwood's re-enactment theory thus cannot rely on imaginative pretense, for pretense is inconsistent with the majority of Collingwood's explanation of re-enactment. Instead, let us see if the instructive imaginative tool Collingwood would endorse is *mindreading*, or the activity of attributing mental states to oneself and to others, and of predicting and explaining behavior on the basis of those attributions (Lao & Gendler). We must determine whether mindreading is, firstly, an imaginative activity and secondly, whether it is employable by an historian. These are difficult questions, and only in recent years has the tide of philosophical opinion shifted in such a way as to defend a conception of the re-enacting historian as an imaginative mindreader of the past.

There are two main groups of theories that seek to define how mindreading works from a cognitive architecture perspective. The first group is information-rich theories. Under these theories, mindreading requires little to no imagination. This is because people are said to have rich understanding of others' minds—they simply apply their own 'folk psychological theory' to read others' minds, requiring no imagination at all. Let's take the example scenario where a mother asks her generally compliant high school son to take out the trash. When she asked him, he was texting on his phone, and he does not do what she asked. The mother, seeing later that he didn't take out the trash, and remembering that he was texting when she asked him uses her mindreading ability to predict that the reason her son did not listen to her was that he was texting and did not hear her, so she asks her son to put his phone down so she can ask again. Theory

theorists would argue that this mother's mindreading of her son—her knowing that he was not listening to her while he was texting—comes not from an imaginative action which allowed her to mindread but rather from a folk psychology which predicts that multitasking precludes good listening.

The second category is information-poor theories which regard simulative imagination as central to mindreading. They argue that individuals do not have enough information about others' minds, nor folk psychological capacity to read others' minds, so they must rely on their imagination to simulate. Simulation theorists hold that the mother's ability to discern by mindreading that her son is not listening while texting does not come from a folk psychology but actually from an imaginative simulation in which the mother simulates her son's thoughts in order to predict that her son is not listening. Intuitively, both ideas are appealing and the debate between the two sides for the past forty years has been generous, each side granting successive concessions to the other. Perhaps it is this mutual attractiveness which, along with the help of empirical psychological work, has contributed to what the field now calls a *hybrid theory* of mindreading (see Currie & Ravenscroft, 2002; Caruthers, 2009). Hybrid theory is a blend of the two theories, formed out of the collective realization that sometimes simulation and sometimes theory theory better explain empirical data of our experience attempting to predict the content of other's minds.

What is important for us is that this hybrid theory does in fact endorse at least a partial role for imagination in mindreading. We may therefore argue with the confidence of cognitive scientists and philosophers of imagination, that an individual—and, for our purposes, the historian—uses his imagination to mindread others. While empirical studies have not, to my knowledge, been done on historians using their mindreading abilities, it appears probable that a higher effort task, in which the mindreader must overcome a greater cultural-temporal chasm between his own thought and the subject's thought, requires greater emphasis on imaginative simulation. Moreover, Collingwood's high emphasis on context and singular actions that subjects in history have taken fits better with simulation theory.

Furthermore, Collingwood's distaste for psychological law explanations of history, though perhaps overstated, is quite consistent with a preference for imaginative simulation theory. This is firstly, he says, because science concerns itself with

generalizations, with the discovery of laws present in an 'insideless' (read: mindless) nature, but history deals with the particular. The historian has no interest in discerning laws, whether psychological or otherwise, that determine or guide human behavior. In *The New Leviathan,* Collingwood makes this point by arguing that on the 'historical plain method,' historians do not ask what mind *is*, so they make no attempt to discern what mind "always and everywhere does." Instead they only ask what *minds have done* (Collingwood, 1999: 61). In *The Idea of History,* Collingwood's critique of Dilthey includes his fears about the use of psychology in the search for historical understanding.

> Psychology is not history but science, a science constructed on naturalistic principles. To say that history becomes intelligible only when conceived in terms of psychology is to say that historical knowledge is impossible and that the only kind of knowledge is scientific knowledge: history by itself is mere life, merely experience, and therefore the historian as such merely experiences a life which the psychologist as such and he alone understands. (Collingwood: 1946: 173)

Though Collingwood's personal distaste of psychology perhaps miscolors some of his arguments against its use, his thesis here is defensible. Several analytic philosophers since Collingwood have agreed with him that determining psychological laws to understand human action is useless or impossible. Donald Davidson argues in *Mental Events* that the 'anomalousness' of mental events—which, he admits, must be causally dependent on *something*—leads them to be irreducible to 'lawlike' statements (1970). Robert Gordon goes a little bit further than Davidson, arguing that "the generality that is pertinent to reason explanations [of human action] is not the generality of scientific law," but rather the contextual connection between situation types and action types. For Gordon, a simulation theorist, this means that understanding the reasons for another's action has more to do with practically simulating the real world that another lived in (2000). Gordon's conclusion, and ours here too, is that reduction of action to psychological mechanism or causality is not only unhelpful, but actually an incorrect way to understand reasons for action.

Though this is not the uniform view of philosophers in the field, its defense by Davidson and Gordon supports Collingwood and combines his views with simulation theory in a way that makes our blending of the theories reasonable, reasonable even to Collingwood himself. For all these reasons, simulative mindreading as an instructive

form of imagination, seems to be the best possible cognitive description of re-enactment, the best way we can understand what it means for an historian to transpose himself into the mind of Alexander Hamilton.

Let's return to the historian and Hamilton. We have said that the historian transposes himself into the thought of Hamilton, yet hinted at how the historian's thought is encapsulated. We must go a little further in our explanation of how exactly the historian 'becomes' Alexander Hamilton. Firstly, we must say that the re-enacting historian does not merely imagine political or philosophical concepts floating through Hamilton's intellect. He also imagines the side streets Hamilton walked on to work at the capitol building that day, the smells emanating from the cobblers' and butchers' stores, and the low height of the surrounding 18th century offices, homes, and shops. Not every detail is necessary—and surely there are diminishing returns on details conjured—but the point remains that if the historian is to accurately re-enact Alexander Hamilton's thought, he must do more than think Hamilton's localized thoughts at the time of a decision itself.

Here is the key point: the historian re-enacting Hamilton's thought is not watching Alexander Hamilton, neither as an 'objective' historian nor as one of Hamilton's peers. Because all thought boils down to an 'I' statement in the mind of the thinking individual—we call this the 'indexicality' of thought—the re-enacting historian is using his imagination to see Hamilton's surrounding world *as if he were Hamilton*, from Hamilton's first-person perspective. The only way that I as a person—or, more relevantly here, I as an historian—may understand the thought causing the action of another person is to simulate that person's thoughts and "understand how they would motivate me if they were my thoughts" (Gordon, 34). This reality, which Collingwood argues the historian relies on, makes the understanding of another's thoughts necessarily simulative-imaginative.

Indexicality opens the door to a few more questions about what is within the scope of re-enactment. If the historian, in a sense, becomes the person he is re-enacting, does he have access to the entirety of that person's experience or consciousness? Collingwood (mostly) says no. For example Collingwood claims in his *Autobiography* that emotions are beyond the scope of re-enactment (110). His argument seems to be that emotions are too rudimentary, and are therefore inaccessible to re-enactment (1946:

307). But this is hard to reconcile with passages where Collingwood refers to the historian re-enacting his subjects' 'experience' (see Julius Caesar example above). For emotions are certainly part of a person's 'experience.'

Perhaps all that is required to defend the possibility of re-enacting emotions is a theory that emotions are rational, like thought. Collingwood scholar David Boucher argues that Collingwood holds many emotions to be rational emotions, and gives, as an example, Collingwood's argument for sentiment in *The New Leviathan* (1999, xxxvi). There are several problems with this view, however. Firstly, it is unclear what is meant by 'rational emotions.' Secondly, Boucher's theory seems to presume that some emotions are nonrational, and—it seems by inference—therefore not re-enactable. Finally, the word 'rational' is a difficult word, because it can perhaps imply an inherent logic or reasonableness in thoughts (or emotions) which is what makes them accessible to the historian. Collingwood does not believe that thought's rational-ness is what makes it re-enactable, but rather the possibility of its self-consciousness. Therefore, Boucher's theory does little to further the possibility of re-enacting historical subjects' emotions.

Our best bet for vindicating the re-enactability of emotions is a cognitive appraisal theory of emotions. Such a theory, first developed by Richard Lazarus and defended today by psychologists like Ira Roseman, holds that the emotion of frustration is not an automatic physiological response to, say, the event of being fired from a job, but rather that one's cognitive appraisal, and thus, interpretation, of the circumstances surrounding the outcome of being fired are what generate the emotion of frustration. The primary attraction of a cognitive theory of emotion is that it best explains the variance of emotional responses to similar stimuli across people and situations. According to cognitive appraisal theory, frustration is not an automatic response to being fired, but is an emotion generated after a thought appraises the event.

If a cognitive appraisal theory of emotions better describes the origin and experience of emotions than competing theories, then an historian may adequately defend the possibility of re-enacting emotions. This is because by re-enacting the thoughts of a subject, the historian logically should have access to the emotions considered or generated by those thoughts. Put differently, the historian, on this theory,

may predict (or mindread) the emotions of a subject based on the subject's thought content.

Moreover, re-enactment of emotion, like the re-enactment of thought, must be encapsulated. This means firstly that the historian cannot experience the emotions he is re-enacting in the same way that the historical subject experienced them. Whereas an historical subject's frustration may have permeated his consciousness beyond the moment of the event causing him frustration, it would be incorrect to assume that the historian would continue to feel frustrated after putting his pen down. The frustration is not actually the historian's.

In the case of re-enacting Hamilton's experience, the historian has encapsulated access to Hamilton's emotions. This means that, provided that the situational evidence is available, the historian may indexically imagine what it was that Hamilton felt on the day that he decided to support Thomas Jefferson. The source of these feelings must come from sources discerned by the historian's evidential methods, but this does not restrict their possible variety. For instance, perhaps Hamilton's decision was related to a frustration he experienced earlier that day when he was ignored by another politician, or the fear he felt upon the thought of Jefferson losing the election. The historian may also re-enact Hamilton's sorrow from losing his son in a duel only several years prior and his relief from his recent reconciliation with the wife he cheated on, searching these experiences as sources for Hamilton's decision to support Jefferson. Not all will be readily available to the historian, nor will all re-enacted experiences be relevant to the historian's answering his question about the past. But the point remains that the re-enacting historian has access to the emotional experience of Alexander Hamilton.

If the historian has nearly full access to past subjects' thoughts and at least partial access to their emotions, what does he not have access to? Unfortunately we do not have space to consider the entire range of possible experiences, such as pain. It seems wrong to say that the historian may re-enact his subject's pain, but perhaps using the simulative tool of indexicality and its relationship to empathy, the historian may come to a partial understanding. The difficulty that the question of pain introduces is one which pervades philosophy of mind, far beyond the question of re-enactment and possibilities for historical knowledge. Thomas Nagel's famous paper *What is it Like to be a Bat?* raises the important question of what it means to experience the subjective

qualia of another creature (or person). He argues that for someone to have a certain conscious experience means that *there is something it is like* to be that person. But can another person ever know what it is really like? Nagel thinks not—the facts of another's experience are accessible from only a single point of view, the perspective of the person in the experience itself. He therefore argues that, because we are not equipped with the appropriate subjective tools to experience others' consciousness, we should dig in deeper in our objective descriptions in order to arrive at greater degrees of accuracy and understanding (1974, 435-450).

What does this mean for Collingwood and simulation theory? First, it means that it is incumbent on the historian to recognize this limitation and have an understanding of the degree to which it limits his specific inquiry. For example, an historian's self-aware recognition of the type of historical research he is doing and its relation to subjective qualia is a good starting point for determining the degree to which the 'subjective qualia problem' affects the historian's work. The importance and relevance of this difficult issue are determined largely by the type of history an historian is undertaking. For example, intellectual history has little to do with pain at all. But in military history, the historian must make great efforts to re-enact, as closely as possible, what the pain would have been like for soldiers in such-and-such a battle. He should at least be able to imagine, for instance, a gunshot wound's causing a historical subject to surrender. The question facing art historians is another tricky matter—what was it *like* for one of Beethoven's listeners to hear his compositions a couple decades after hearing Mozart's? These questions of the nature of qualia in other's minds is too difficult to resolve here.

Ultimately the (current) inability for re-enactment to totally reach into the sphere of qualia should push us towards a healthy skepticism, and to confess that perfect re-enactment is an unrealistic goal. Still, the historian must try nonetheless. Collingwood defends this view elsewhere.

> Partial and imperfect understanding is not the same thing as a complete failure to understand and must still be sought. (Collingwood: 1938, 309)

Although the historian may be capable of re-enacting a very high proportion of the experience of a particular person in history, he can never *be* that person, nor can he know exactly *what it is like to be that person*. The historian, searching for understanding Hamilton's support for Jefferson in the election of 1800, brings his entire painstaking

effort of re-enactment to imaginatively simulate all his evidence of Hamilton's life, thought, and emotions presently available to him. But still he will never know fully what it is like *to be* Hamilton. This is fully consistent with Collingwood's theory of encapsulation—the historian thinking Hamilton's thoughts is constrained by the reality that that thoughts are only occurring within the historian's *own* mind. This means that the historian cannot, and indeed should not, completely become Alexander Hamilton. He only seeks through simulative re-enactment to generate and consider the possibilities of Hamilton's mind, using his own mind. There is an inherent limitation on objectivity because the historian's mind can only use its own conceptions in order to simulate being Alexander Hamilton. It is precisely by using his own mind, testing potential cause and effect relations between thought and action, that the historian is in a position to understand what Hamilton did and why he did it.

Now, in full awareness of the re-enactive tools available to him, the historian is ready to simulate Hamilton's thought, searching for the specific thought which led Hamilton to support Jefferson in the election of 1800. The historian sifts through the possibilities generated by his re-enactment. They are numerous, each one initially attractive. But many are eventually ruled out because they are inconsistent with other knowledge that the historian knows about Hamilton and his historical circumstances. Then, suddenly, the historian finds the thought he's looking for! It is simple: the only person Hamilton can't stand more than Jefferson is his opponent, Aaron Burr. Hamilton supports Jefferson because if Jefferson does not win, Burr will. The historian may continue to simulate reasons why Hamilton does not want Burr to win, or why he hates Burr more than Jefferson. Different historians have different views. It could be for moral reasons—he may think that Burr is a less 'honest' or 'principled' man than Jefferson. It could be for reasons of personal gain—Hamilton may think that if Jefferson becomes president that Hamilton will get more access to the seat of power. It could be for reasons of sheer vengeance—Burr had defeated Hamilton's father-in-law in a New York Senate election a couple years prior, and perhaps Hamilton, in spite, wanted to end Burr's winning streak.

CHAPTER 4

THE REPRESENTATIVE IMAGINATION

Once an historian uses his inquisitive imagination to ask historical questions and his instructive imagination to mindread, via simulation, the thoughts of historical subjects, what is he to do with the historical knowledge he arrives at? In this section I argue that the historian's remaining task is to imaginatively *represent* historical knowledge. My purpose is to demonstrate that imagination is not only employed by the historian in the research process; thus Collingwood's conception of imagination's role in historiography must be categorically expanded to include its role in representation. Imagination is here crowned as an essential ingredient, from start to finish, in historiography.

A generally educated reader may be intrigued by Collingwood's claim at the beginning of *The Idea of History* that history (historiography) is a science (9). But upon finishing the book, the reader may be surprised by Collingwood's apparent rejection of this original claim, and his endorsing Benedetto Croce's 'vindication' of historiography as an art, not a science (201). A closer look reveals that Collingwood is trying to argue that only in *kind*—not in subject matter, method, or purpose—is historiography a science (9-10). He argues that in subject matter, science deals with 'insideless' nature, but historiography deals with the 'inside' minds of people. Thus, the historiographical method of re-enactment, discussed above, is quite distinct from any method of science. Moreover, historiography has for Collingwood the *purpose* of human self-knowledge. It teaches us what humanity has done, therefore what humanity is; in science there is no corollary purpose.

It thus becomes clear that Collingwood's usage of 'science' in his original comparison is less in the modern English sense of 'natural science' and more in the Baconian or modern German sense of 'an organized system of inquiry' (9). Curious minds, Collingwood's argument goes, ask questions of history just as curious minds in

science ask questions of nature. But if this is the only sense in which history is like science, Collingwood's comparison seems at best confusing and at worst harmful. We have a right to ask whether Collingwood conflated the disciplines of history and science in other ways.

I argue that Collingwood tips his hand by what he *doesn't* say—by his failure to distinguish between *presented* and *represented* knowledge. Now, because scientific facts are often observable, they may be *presented*. One chemist wants to show another what happens when two molecules are mixed, so she brings him to the laboratory and shows him. This is a sort of presentation; the facts of the experiment speak for themselves directly to the chemists. To not argue that historical knowledge must be represented is to implicitly grant that historical knowledge may, like some scientific knowledge, merely be presented. But an historian who views his responsibility as one of presentation cannot stop himself from presenting everything he knows about a historical subject. How can he discriminate between needless detail and central theme? A *representing* historian is released from the obligation of presenting everything, recognizing that he cannot possibly tell the audience everything that happened leading up to a specific action.

This is not a trivial distinction. Collingwood, caught up in his scientific ontology for historiography, failed to grasp it. It seems like Collingwood viewed the historian's task as analogous to that of a TV anchor reporting (presenting) the scripted nightly news—the imaginative work of the journalists is complete; now the anchor may simply relay the findings. After all, imagination is not necessary for a 'presented' history evaluated purely on its research qualities and communicative clarity. From this oversight follows Collingwood's failure to illuminate the role imagination plays in representing historical knowledge.

In Chapter 2 we argued that the historian must begin with an imaginative historical question. Practically speaking, this gives the historian a specific purpose for which he searches for facts and re-enacts certain thoughts and actions. In a similar way, the historian's original question constrains and guides his representation. Like a cartographer making a map for a specific purpose—a detailed topographic map for mountain-climbers or an Atlantic Ocean tides map for transatlantic freight carriers—an

historian must know the purpose for which he is representing to make a useful map (Gaddis, 3).

Historical knowledge, when conveyed from historian to audience, must invariably be conveyed through a medium. It may be scrawled hurriedly in pen or typed laboriously into manuscripts and eventually published books, or perhaps portrayed on film. It communicates historical truth to the reader, no doubt, but it frequently does so much more—it moves the reader, it paints a picture of another era so detailed that it transports the reader to that era itself. Like a painter who deliberately chooses his paint textures, the size of the canvas, and thickness of the frame—not to mention the colors and shapes on the canvas itself—the historian is aware that the medium itself affects what he says. Historical writing employs imagination on every page—and not merely ornamental imagination for effect, but imagination recognizing that the medium of representation affects the material itself.

Now there are two senses in which we mean 'medium.' The first is the physical medium—books, films, artworks, etc.—and the second is to refer to the constitutive components of the physical medium. Here, because the medium by which historians represent most historical knowledge is language, I focus on written history. Within the medium of written history, there are sub-media by which the historian may communicate his historical knowledge. Here I give three examples of imaginative tools (sub-media) an historian may employ in his effort to represent the past. This list is not intended to be exhaustive.

The first tool is *abstraction*. Abstraction is necessarily imaginative, on Collingwood's theory of imagination, because it fits between sense and the intellect's truth value computations. Abstraction allows an historian to convey historical truth in indirect or even surprising ways, sometimes allowing what is not said to speak as loudly as what is. Gaddis's explanation of the tradeoff between literal and abstract representation employs a contrast between the famous paintings of lovers by Van Eyck and Picasso. Van Eyck achieves almost photographic accuracy of a Dutch couple, while Picasso's intimate lovers are conjured via spare graphite lines on a plain white backdrop. There is no use comparing the quality of the works. They seek to accomplish very different purposes through very different means, yet both are considered world-class, timeless representations of lovers. An historian, by necessity, must move beyond

details by abstracting to oversimplify complex realities. While continuing to meet scholarly standards for verification like in the sciences, historians must at the same time function like abstract artists, using their imaginations to boldly go "where no actual person has or ever could have gone before" (Gaddis, 14, 17).

The second tool is *metaphor*. The necessity of metaphor, meant here in a wide sense, first arises for historians because their job is to relate the non-existent past to something existing or knowable to the reader. Metaphor is necessarily imaginative because it involves creation—the artful connection of two disparate concepts via creative insight. The use of metaphor may be brief and ornamental, for the purpose of mental imagery or effect, such as the comparison of a historical battlefield to a slaughterhouse. A metaphor may also be more explicitly didactic, even if still limited in scope, like in the case of comparing a Roman emperor to one of the Roman gods. But most importantly, metaphor may be used in a more extended way. Gaddis's *The Landscape of History* uses Caspar David Friedrich's painting *Wanderer Above a Sea of Fog* as an extended metaphor by which he describes the nature of historiography. In every chapter he compares the historian's task—which, we have seen, is difficult to describe—to the situation of the man in the center of Friedrich's painting, his back to the future, his eyes set on the foggy and uncertain landscape of the past below him. This metaphor does more than just describe the historian's task; it gives it associated imagery and even emotions—all of which Gaddis intends to impress upon his reader. Metaphor, or comparing the unobservable to the known, experienced, or observable is thus a powerful and necessary tool for historical representation.

I should add that historiography is not alone in its usage of, or even reliance on, metaphor. Representation via metaphor is equally important in some natural sciences, particularly non-laboratory sciences like evolutionary biology or branches of cosmology in which actual experimentation is difficult or impossible. British philosopher Roger White defends this view in his explanation of Darwin's usage of the words 'select' and 'selection' in *The Origin of Species.* After presenting three options for the ways in which Darwin could have meant 'select' to be understood, White concludes that a detailed reading must lead to the conclusion that Darwin was using 'select' primarily as metaphor, comparing nature to a farmer or at least a personality. This is knowable to us because the way in which Darwin used the word 'select' was so innovative and different when contrasted to the previous literature, even though we

hardly notice today because Darwin's vocabulary has seeped so firmly into the common lexicon (White, 2010: 71; see also White, 1996). Gaddis argues that in the non-laboratory sciences, and even in medicine, scientists do not base theories on laboratory results but instead 'derive structures from processes,' exactly like historians, and convey their findings through metaphor (39).

Having employed creative-imaginative abstraction and metaphor, the historian must now bring together all his individual facts, examples, and writing devices into his overall historical narrative. There is thus a second stage, and a third imaginative tool, of historical representation: the historian packaging his knowledge into a persuasive narrative. Narrative is the cohesive force binding together all of the historian's metaphors and abstractions. Persuasion is the historian's goal in narrative. This final persuasive narrative, the final medium of the knowledge, contributes to the content of the knowledge itself—the style of the writing even affecting the way the knowledge is understood by the audience. This persuasive narrative, imaginatively and thoughtfully produced, is necessary to make the history worth reading, to command "a consensus of rational opinion over the widest possible field" (Gaddis, 38).

An historian's persuasive narrative, whether in writing or in film, ultimately comes down to the words and images the historian uses. This is a heavier responsibility than the historian may at first realize, and it is here we come full circle to the original dialogue between the objectivity and perspectivism of historiography. We will transcend this dichotomy with a closing thought on imaginative creation with language.

Language, Owen Barfield points out, is often a microcosm of Collingwoodian re-enactment (1967: 23). For every time we use a word we are employing it in some relation to the past usages of the word. Barfield argues that when we are normally using words—using them according to their *lexical meaning,* or generally agreed upon meaning—we are re-enacting the meaning of the word. But, Barfield demonstrates, in a variety of word studies in several books, that there is another way to use words, which is different from re-enactment. Words create new meanings—thus a *speaker's meaning* may expand or contract the meaning of a word (32-67; see also Lewis, 1960: 320-328).

These musings could be subject to dismissal by philosophers of language who might not see depth in or relevance of 'changed meaning over time.' But these ideas become relevant in the realization that the historian who uses words is not a merely a passive

participant in the historical process, but a creative force in history—"We half perceive the world, but we also half create it" (Barfield, 1973, 27). Knowledge does not only illuminate the individual, but through the production of knowledge, the individual illuminates the world. The historian not only conveys knowledge but helps create the world, the real world in which he lives. So the imagination of the historian in moving him to select a certain segment of history to study is impactful in so far as it creates the future by leading to a representation given to readers. And thus, the historian's imagination serves as the impetus and guide for asking historical questions, the means by which the historian re-enacts to gain historical knowledge, and the tool by which the historian represents historical knowledge. Imagination is here crowned as an essential ingredient, from start to finish, in historiography.

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