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MAIN PAPER

HYPNOSIS AS A CONVERSATION: 'BELIEVED-IN IMAGININGS' REVISITED*

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ABSTRACT

The experiences of hypnosis subjects are known only through the accounts they render during or after the hypnosis session. The accounts of their counterexpectational conduct are communicated through spoken and body language. For this reason, it is useful to regard the hypnosis interaction as a conversation. It follows that the conversation can be studied with the tools of discourse analysis. I provide three examples of discourse analysis all of which are consistent with the claim that accounts of counter-expectational conduct are 'believed-in imaginings'. I offer a psychological and semiotic analysis of those human actions that are identified as imaginings and believings. The reasons for believing in one's imaginings are best uncovered through examining the subject's self-narrative.

INTRODUCTION

Of the many metaphors that have been introduced to provide frameworks for theories of hypnosis, 'believed-in imaginings' has strikingly different ground from both nineteenth century constructions, such as mesmerism, nervous sleep, and odylic force, and twentieth century constructions, such as dissociation, conditioned response, and suggestibility. The grounds for these constructions were derived from metaphors that focused on the causality requirement of mechanistic science. I need but mention the numerous attempts to establish hypnosis phenomena as caused by an entity residing within the organism, such as special nerve pathways, electrochemical forces, mental mechanisms, and magnetic fluids. In such constructions, the behaviours of the hypnotized person are happenings presumably caused by such postulated forces.

Some 40 years ago, I introduced the metaphor 'believed-in imaginings' as a descriptor for accounts that subjects gave when describing their experience during or after a hypnosis session. I employed ordinary non-technical English in order to communicate that understanding the referents for the phrase required no new conceptual inventions; that we could get along with the same constructions that are employed in general psychology or in ordinary discourse.

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'Believed-in imagining' emerged from my earlier efforts to apply a contextual and non-mechanistic framework to understanding counterexpectational conduct. The central category, role enactment, was borrowed from the province of drama (Sarbin, 1950). During the 60 years that I have been studying the phenomena of counterexpectational conduct, I have been able to increase my understanding through the employment of metaphors that are remote from those disciplines which seek to discover causes inside the organism. The refiguration of the events of the hypnotic scene from internal happenings to role enactments demanded some marked alterations in theory building. It was but a short step from regarding hypnosis conduct as the performance of a social role to the overarching conception that life is theatre. If 'all the world's a stage' then auxiliary dramaturgical concepts could be enlisted to help explain hypnosis. Implied, but not always stated, is the proposition that self-narratives guide participation in dramatic encounters.

Role conceptions have been fruitfully employed to describe social behaviour of all kinds, not only hypnosis (Sarbin, 1954; Sarbin & Allen, 1968). Of central importance, both for social actions generally and for hypnosis particularly, is that the person is regarded as a doer, a performer, an agent, not an inert object that passively processes information. Instead of happenings in the mind, the focus of role theory is on what the person does and how he or she does it, taking into account immediate and remote contexts in which the performance occurs. The contexts include role models as portrayed in myth, movies, and textbooks.

It was observations that centred on overt forms of counterexpectational conduct, such as catalepsies, eye closures, post-hypnotic compulsions, and claims to increased stamina, lowered perceptual thresholds, etc., that made role concepts so appealing. The overt conduct could be conceived as a dramatic engagement of two role-players. With role-enactment as the central variable, I proposed a theory based on efforts to answer a master question: how to account for individual differences in counterexpectational conduct that appears to be automatic, discontinuous from prior behaviour, and characterized by a disjunction between the magnitude of the stimulus conditions and the magnitude of the responses. Note that the master question included the qualifier 'appears to be'. To answer this question one must first determine whether the claims to automaticity and discontinuity are supported by pragmatic tests or whether the claims fail to recognize that the behaviour under study reflects certain identifiable skills. (The master question was derived from an influential paper by Robert W. White (1941).)

ACCOUNTS

Contemporary research and theory has shifted from performance variables, such as the items in 'hypnotizability' scales, to the subject's account of his or her experiences. Not any account excites the interest of the investigator, only accounts that are counterexpectational: such as when the subject says 'I can't remember' when remembering would normally be expected, when the subject claims seeing a non-existent rabbit, or when the subject reports no pain under experimentally induced ischemia.

Investigators of hypnosis phenomena can choose to follow the lead of the conventional researcher who assumes that the account given by the subject is an isomorphic report of his or her experience. Such investigators take subjects' accounts at face value and then formulate fanciful theories to explain the counterexpectational behaviour. Alternatively, investigators can choose to study the accounts from the perspective of discourse analysis. Theorizing would proceed from construing the hypnosis

encounter as a conversation of words and gestures. It is an interesting commentary on our predecessors that they ignored the most obvious place to begin their inquiries – the conversation between the hypnotist and the subject.

As a preliminary to revisiting 'believed-in imagining' I discuss briefly three examples of discourse analysis: (1) investigating meanings attributed by subjects to the induction ritual; (2) undressing the metaphors contained in the induction; and (3) construing the conversation as a vehicle for strategic interactions.

Meanings of the induction ritual

The literature is silent about variation in meanings that are attributed to the hypnotist's talk. The typical hypnotic induction is made up of a string of sentences that tell the subject what is expected of him or her. It is recited slowly and in a monotone. The sentences are expressed in the declarative or imperative mode. Observed individual differences in how the subject construes his or her role in response to the induction suggests that each subject assigns different meanings to the string of sentences. Some years ago, I employed the semantic differential technique to assess such meanings (Sarbin, 1964). An audiotape of the Friedlander-Sarbin standard induction (Friedlander & Sarbin, 1938) was played before groups of students, each of whom had been given a packet of 27 answer sheets on each of which was printed 10 semantic differential scales: voluntary–compulsory; conflicting–harmonious; soothing–interesting; elevated–depressed; sceptical–believing; uninfluential–influential; feeble–vigorous; spacious–constricted; relaxed–tense; improbable–probable. The subjects rated each sentence on the 10 scales during a 20 s pause between sentences. The ratings were subsequently correlated with performances on group suggestibility tasks administered two months later. Correlation coefficients between ratings of role-enactment and the semantic differential ratings were computed. Twenty-one of the 27 sentences were significantly correlated with the scale probable–improbable (the end of the scale checked by skilled subjects is given first); 20 sentences were correlated with depressed-elevated (the opposite of Depressed on this scale is elevated, not elated; the references to heavy eyelids, and the use of 'down, down, down' probably influenced this correlation); 16 sentences were correlated with influential–uninfluential; 15 sentences with harmonious–conflicting; 11 sentences with constricted–spacious; 10 sentences with believing–sceptical; and eight sentences with voluntary–compulsory.

Thus, the meanings attributed to the sentences of the hypnosis induction were different for persons who were responsive to suggestions from the meanings attributed by persons who were unable or unwilling to enact the role. One could reasonably conclude that the readiness to interpret the sentences as probable, influential, harmonious, and believing, would contribute to enacting a role the components of which depended upon assigning credibility to the contrafactual sentences uttered by the hypnotist. Conversely, the readiness to interpret the sentences as improbable, uninfluential, conflicting, and sceptical would be an important factor in assigning disbelief and non-performance of the hypnosis role.

Induction metaphors

Discourse analysis, among other things, is concerned with the use of metaphor. Analysis begins from the fact that a metaphor has two terms, the figurative and the literal. Further, each term can be expressed or implied. Thus, four classes of metaphor are generated. In the first class, the figurative and the literal are both expressed, e.g., the poet is a nightingale. In the second class, the literal term is

expressed and figurative term is suppressed, as in religious rituals. In the third class, the figurative term is expressed and the literal term is silent, as in proverbs. In the fourth type, neither term is expressed, both must be inferred from the context.

Deciphering any metaphor requires cognitive work, and the work increases with the suppression or silencing of the terms. Metaphoric encounters of the fourth kind require the most cognitive work. The subject works to make sense of the intentions of the speaker by entertaining such questions as: Does the speaker mean such-and-such a statement to be taken literally or figuratively? The hypnosis encounter is a metaphor of the fourth kind (Sarbin, 1980). When the subject takes the figurative direction, the actions of both participants follow from their intentions tacitly held together by a grand extended metaphor.

Uttering sentences in the declarative and imperative modes, the hypnotist – to guide the subject's imaginings – makes use of similes and marked metaphors such as 'hypnosis is a state of absorbed attention somewhat like that experienced when reading a novel or seeing a movie'. More significant is the fact that the hypnotist utters fictional and counterfactual statements such as 'your legs are getting heavier', 'you are becoming drowsy', 'you are drifting away'. Some inductions even provide epistemological frameworks for the subject such as 'your subconscious mind is being activated'. It must be emphasized that the content of the entrance ritual includes fictional, contrafactual, and problematic statements. Such conditions call for sense making in the asserted fictional and contrafactual sentences. Two possible interpretations are afforded: The first is the construction of disbelief, in which case the interactants have no basis for continuing the encounter. The second interpretation assigns to the suppressed metaphors a metamessage – that the hypnotist is dramatizing his talk about contrafactual events as an invitation to participate in a game of 'let's pretend' and also to pretend that it is serious business. Such a conclusion follows from construing the hypnotist's utterances as an extended metaphor of the fourth kind. That is, the subject turns from the literal interpretation of the fictional utterances and instead constructs the figurative interpretation.

Having concluded that the messages are not to be taken literally, the subject now has the task of supplying the tacit terms. The hypnotist's talk does not openly direct the subject to enter a metaphorical transaction – the subject establishes the metaphoric meaning from the total context. The metamessage contained in the grand metaphor is that the two interactants will engage in a miniature drama, each employing his or her rhetorical skills to follow an unvoiced script.

Conversation and strategic interactions

In the typical experiment, the subject is not asked to engage in protracted conversation. In the usual scales for assessing hypnotizability, the subject's contribution to the conversation is helped along by rhetorical actions. Rhetoric is the language art for convincing others; it includes expressive movements as an integral part of conversation. Glances, shrugs, gestures, facial movements, smiles, frowns, and postural adjustments fall under the rubric of rhetoric. Employing the metaphor of hypnosis as a conversation, one can construe a subject's vigorous demonstration of his or her inability to separate interlocked fingers as a rhetorical act to convince the experimenter that he or she is involved in the role.

Closely related to dramaturgical and semiotic conceptions are those drawn from strategic interaction and game playing. We now recognize that hypnosis subjects are still social beings capable of managing impressions, and so it is necessary to examine their accounts contextually.

To serve his or her manifold purposes, a person may engage in a variety of strategies, among them masks, mirrors, lies, and secrets (Scheibe, 1979). Aware of these commonplace strategies, the contemporary student of hypnosis will examine the subject's accounts from a perspective different from that of earlier students who had not been exposed to the literature on strategic interaction. As in any social encounter, the subject's accounts that deform consensual or empirical validity may serve strategic goals (Goffman, 1974; Spanos, 1996).

One of the categories of strategic interaction is deception. It is proper for an investigator to entertain the hypothesis that a contrafactual account may be a deceptive manoeuvre. When the subject gives an account, the sceptical investigator is guided by the question: 'What strategies of social action and rhetorical communication does the subject employ?'

The posture of asking what the subject is doing directs us to the intentions of the subject. If we can infer the subject's intentions, then we can search for the strategies that he or she employs to realize the intentions. In those cases where the subject is trying to ratify his or her role, we can posit the use of various game-playing strategies. We now know that one class of hypnosis subjects holds the intent to pretend, to create an illusion, to make believe, to deceive. These are subjects who, for example, first claim amnesia and, later, under pressure for remembering, breach the amnesia.

Given the clinical or research purposes of most hypnosis settings and the expectation of truth telling, an apparent moral element is introduced when we attribute to subjects the use of deception as a strategy for realizing their intentions. The problem for both participants is to neutralize the moral component of deception. Moral neutralization is commonplace in such settings as the theatre and in the exercise of rules of politeness. It is reasonable to assign actions of the subject to the same class of strategies. The subject's conferral of expert authority on the scientific investigator or the clinical healer facilitates the removal of any moral taint from the intention to deceive. The person who employs impression-management strategies to realize his or her intentions (e.g., to be regarded as a good-natured, cooperative, scientific collaborator), then, is like a professional stage actor. The goal is to convince the audience that one is enacting the role sincerely.

The accounts of all subjects cannot readily be assimilated to the use of strategies of deception. Using amnesia as an example, not all subjects breach when pressured to remember. That is, they claim amnesia and do not breach. When the rhetorical behaviour of the subject convinces the experimenter that the subject 'believes' that the account 'I don't remember' is genuine (not a deception), the deception analysis requires supplementation (Sarbin & Coe, 1979).

The contemporary reconstruction of hypnosis must explain the phenomenon where the subject says 'I believe' or otherwise communicates that the contrafactual report reflects a veridical state of affairs, not a fictional one. Believing is a complex act and involves at least the placing of a value on a proposition. In the case of suggested amnesia, for example, subjects must resolve a paradox. They must confront the fact of two contrary knowings: (1) the recognition that they are engaged in a theatrical enterprise in which the strategy of deception is fostered; and (2) holding the belief that deception is an inappropriate or improper strategy. The paradox is resolved through the adoption of an unconventional metaphysical assumption: the suspension of the law of non-contradiction, the rule that something cannot be both A and not-A at the same time. Although unconventional in most mundane problem-solving situations, the suspension of this rule is not unique to hypnosis. It occurs in other settings, for example, in the creating and telling of fairy tales, in the practice of

magic, and in certain theological doctrines. An apt label for this state of affairs is self-deception.** The subject 'believes' under belief-adverse circumstances. In order to deceive himself or herself, the actor must be proficient in two epistemic skills, the skill to spell out certain of his engagements with the world, and the skill to not-spell out certain engagements. (For a more detailed account of self-deception see, Sarbin, 1981.)

Above, I have sketched three examples of discourse analysis that are consistent with the proposal that hypnosis is a conversation. The three examples are preparatory to discussing 'believed-in imaginings' as an apt metaphor for the accounts rendered by hypnosis subjects.

Before getting into the thick of the argument, a comment is in order about my avoidance of the older language, 'belief' and 'imagination'. Being substantives, they more easily lend themselves to reification. In the absence of critical analysis, their referents are usually construed as mental objects, as quasi-organs, or as regions in a hypothetical mind-space. Such a construal reflects an adherence to a discredited mentalistic psychology that regarded the metaphorical mind as composed of discrete faculties with special powers.

From a contemporary constructionist position, imaginings and believings, rather than being thing-like entities, are actions that serve human intentions and purposes. Rather than happenings in the mind, they refer to doings. To maintain the set that imagining and believing are active, constructive features of human conduct, I employ the gerunds, believing and imagining, in place of the substantives, belief and imagination.

The foregoing remarks are intended as a backdrop to an analysis of the two terms in the phrase 'believed-in imagining'. I will discuss imagining first and show how our mentalistic predecessors, to be consistent with Cartesian doctrine, deformed an action concept and treated imagining as mysterious happenings in the mind. In the next few paragraphs I offer the sketch of an alternative perspective on imagining that is more compatible with a constructionist epistemology. This sketch is followed by a discourse on the act of believing. I make a bold assertion that the contents of those human actions we call believings have no independent status outside of imaginings. I also make the claim that assigning credibility to an imagining is an action in the service of sense-making to meet the demand for a consistent self-narrative. I conclude with a discussion of the contexts that promote the assignment of credibility to imaginings not only in the hypnosis setting but in other settings as well.

IMAGININGS

The popular view of imaginings as pictures-in-the-mind developed under the influence of Cartesian dualism. To regard imagining as a process taking place on the shadowy stage of the mind is to affirm a demonstrably futile model of human conduct. A review of theories and research designed to clarify the concept of imagining makes

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**Both the subjects who employ deception strategies and the subjects who employ self-deception strategies construct self-narratives, taking into account the behaviour of the experimenter, the setting, the audience, etc. Their self-narratives are different, however, and depend on the differential use of grammatical forms. At one time, the self can be the author of action, represented by the pronoun 'I' at another time, the self can be the object of happenings, represented by the pronoun 'me'. The focus of an episode in a self-narrative, then, may be on the 'I' (author) or on the 'me' (the narrative figure, the role being played): The subjects who employ the strategy of deception tell their stories from the perspective of self-as-author. The self-deception subjects plot their stories differently. The covert story focuses on the 'me', the object of action, the narrative figure imaginatively created by the self-as-author. The subject must be skilful in not spelling out those engagements that would challenge plausibility and coherence.

one fact abundantly clear: the model of pictures-in-the-mind has produced virtually nothing in the way of pragmatically useful or heuristically exciting propositions (Sarbin & Juhasz, 1970).

It is instructive to take a backward glance at the 'pictures in the mind' construction. The etymological root of imagining, *imago*, was derived from *imitari*, a form that gave rise to our current word, *imitate*. The root form denoted copying through fashioning a moulded likeness, a sculptured statue, or an engraved artefact. *Imago*, *imitari*, and cognate forms were employed to communicate about three-dimensional carving, sculpturing and engraving. On the basis of partial similarity between events ordinarily denoted by *imitari* and the copying activities of artisans, *imago*, the root form of *imitate*, was borrowed to denote the copying activities. The use of image, *imago*, and similar forms was until the sixteenth century restricted to three-dimensional imitations such as objects of religious worship, statues, and carvings. When applied in a metaphorical way to those occurrences that are currently called 'imaginings' the tenor was an active constructive process. That is to say, the pre-Renaissance imaginer was regarded as a fashioner, an image maker, a fabricator, a doer; no implication was intended that he was a passive registrant of a mysterious process happening in an equally mysterious mind. Such an implication evolved when the Cartesian 'mind' become the concept of choice to render the theological conception of 'soul' philosophically and scientifically credible. Imagining, believing, and other private and silent actions not easily explained by concurrent rule-following theories were assigned to the mysterious domain of mind.

The fact is undeniable that a shift in metaphor occurred – a shift from imagining as an active three-dimensional imitation to imagining as a passive mechanical mirroring in the mind. After assigning images to the mind, the next step was the assimilation of imagining as active three-dimensional copying to an interiorized form of seeing. Our language is full of instances of this assimilation 'seeing in the mind's eye', 'visualizing', 'seeing mental pictures', 'having a visual image', etc. These everyday expressions are witness to the fact that we have been captivated by the unlabelled metaphor – we now talk (1) as if there are pictures (alternatively, impressions or representations) and (2) as if there are minds that, like art galleries, provide display space for such mental pictures.

Before proceeding further, I point to an important distinction. Because of lack of precision in the use of vocabulary, the words 'imagery' and 'imaginings' are often used interchangeably. For my purposes, these terms have different referents. The study of imagery is the study of experiences of an optical and ocular nature, for example, negative after-images. In contrast to imagery, imaginings are narratives, storied sequences of actions in which self and others are involved. Imaginings are plotted narratives with beginnings, middles, and endings. They are fashioned from concurrent perceptions of proximal and distal stimulus events, from rememberings, cultural stories, folk tales, urban legends, cultural myths, from articulated theories, and from experiences with art forms. In short, imaginings are storied constructions. (Elsewhere, I have suggested resurrecting 'poetics' as a more apt term than constructions. 'Poetics' more neatly reflects the making of stories, avoiding the architectural aspects of 'constructions'.)

Imagining as 'as if' behaviour

Mentalism is not the only thought model available to students of silent and invisible processes. An alternative view construes human beings as active, exploring, manipulating, inventing, doing creatures. Within limits, human beings construct their worlds instead of being merely the envelopes of a passive mind and subject to the uncertainties of a capricious world. Human beings' constructions of reality depend upon a skill

to function at various levels of hypotheticalness. This skill makes it possible to distinguish between sentences of the form 'I heard the voice', (ordinary perception) 'It is as if I "heard" the voice' (imagining) and 'I heard the voice of conscience' (metaphor). That is to say, a hierarchy of hypothesis-making, 'as if' skills liberates human beings from the constraints of the immediate environment. With this skill the actor can interact with events that are spatially distant and temporally remote, he or she can relocate self to different times and places. The pictures-in-the-mind metaphor collapses when somesthetic experience rather than distal events are imagined. The absurdity of the 'pictures' metaphor becomes apparent when we phrase the question: 'What faculty of the mind would have to be activated in order to imagine the taste of chocolate fudge, the aroma of a bagel bakery, or the feel of the dentist's drill?'

I propose considering storied imaginings as made up of 'as if' constructions (synonyms: hypothetical or suppositional construction). I am using construction in the same sense as in Bartlett's formulations about remembering. The person combines bits and pieces of experience to form rememberings. Through constructing their worlds, human beings are able to place themselves with reference not only to objects and events that are present in the world of occurrences, but also with reference to absent objects and events. The act of constructing absent objects and events is the referent for 'as if' or hypothetical construction. Such an act can occur only when the person has achieved the skill in using fictions, such skill following from the acquisition of sign and symbol competencies. As outlined in the following paragraphs, the 'as if' form makes possible the formation of narrative plot structures.

A three-stage sequence of child development accounts for the achievement of the 'as if' skill. The child acquires knowledge in a number of ways, one of which is imitation. In the developmental sequence, the first stage is the outright copying of performances of another person. This is the paradigm of imitation. That is to say, to imitate is to copy the actions of a model that can be seen and heard. In the second stage a complexity is introduced. The child imitates the actions of another, but that other is absent. The child imitates the motions and the talk of the absent model. This is the paradigm of role-taking. It is a high order achievement to pretend to be Mummy when Mummy is out of sight. A child may set up a tea table with imaginary props; she may pour 'pretend' tea into ephemeral cups, and talk to an unoccupied chair holding a fictional guest. The child's role-taking is integral to her current self-narrative. She follows a script with a beginning, a middle, and an end.

The third stage is concurrent with another achievement of early childhood: the muting of speech. To talk to oneself rather than aloud at first requires only the skill in controlling the volume of air that passes over the vocal cords. With practice, the child learns to inhibit most of the obvious muscular characteristics of speech. At the same time that the child acquires the skill in muting speech, he or she learns to attenuate the role-taking performance, to reduce the amplitude of the overt responses that comprise the 'let's pretend' roles. This third stage – muted and storied role-taking – is the ultimate referent for the word 'imagining'. Note that I have returned to the pre-Renaissance use of the root form of imaginings – the active, constructive, three-dimensional copying of absent models. Rather than artefacts, such as religious icons, the products of such constructional activity are narratives.

Having advanced the claim that storied imaginings are 'as if' or hypothetical constructions, I now move to a discussion of 'believings'.

BELIEVINGS

The challenges to Cartesian psychology have turned contemporary theorists away from the futile position that 'beliefs' are quasi-objects residing in the mind. It is now more common to refer to those constructions that serve as guides to action as expectancies, or, alternatively, believings. A continuing task for psychologists is to determine what a person means when he or she asserts or implies that the clause 'I believe . . .' is a preface to a proposition. In response to a suggestion to hear the voice of an absent person, a hypnosis subject might say: 'I can hear my mother calling my name'. How does one determine the truth value of this particular believed-in imagining? This query takes us deeply into the formidable and confusing task of trying to define Truth. The multireferentiality of truth is an all but insurmountable obstacle to a useful analysis. To add even more complexity to the analysis, I point to a seldom noted observation: the contents of believings are no different from the contents of imaginings. Therefore to ask about the truth value of a particular believing would be equivalent to asking about the truth value of an imagining, an exercise in irrelevancy.

Any linguistic study must take into account the historical contexts that enter into the process of forming meanings of words. A significant context has been the religious tradition in which the notion of belief was infused with the idea of faith. Imaginings that are the sources of religious beliefs are most often stimulated by sacred stories, parables, sermons, and catechisms that have the imprimatur of authority.

If we can discover the defining attributes of belief by analysing its use in religious contexts, then we may come closer to comprehending the contrafactual accounts of hypnosis subjects and clients. That is to say, the widespread notion of religious faith provides a model for the certainty that some people assign to their believings, some of which may have been contrary to empirical fact as assessed by pragmatic tests of knowledge. The concept of faith, furthermore, renders impotent any logical grounds for contradiction. The rules of logic are feebly ineffective in transforming believings that are constructed and supported by faith.

I remind the reader that this discussion is addressed to subjects' accounts of their experience – accounts judged by competent observers as counterexpectational and contrafactual. For example, a subject responds to an arm levitation suggestion. In giving an account of his experience, the subject claims that he did not levitate his arm, that it moved by itself. His claim to non-volition is an attribution made after the fact, a strategic manoeuvre to manage the impression of his sincerity. Within the framework of the present argument, an imagining constructed from the experimenter's suggestions has been transformed into a believing. It now remains to show the constructive nature of the processes by which some imaginings become believings. I have already staked the claim that the content of experiences identified as believings cannot be differentiated from the content of experiences identified as imaginings. The differentiae are to be found in another domain of experience. The following contemporary fable will serve as a prologue to a discussion of how some poetic imaginings become identified as believings.

Two men were given copies of a novel, *The Turner Diaries*, popular among right-wing extremists. For both readers, the contents of the book stimulated storied imaginings centred around the intrusion of the government into citizen's lives, the inevitability of racial wars, and the need to change the world by force and violence if necessary. Reader number 1 construed the book as a resentful reflection of current history by a disgruntled author, but irrelevant to his daily life. After reading the book, he put aside the imaginings invoked by the prose and returned to his daily

routines. Reader number 2 became deeply engrossed in the imaginings generated by the text and transported himself into the role of the solitary hero with the mission to regenerate the world through violence. He began his mission by exploding a bomb in a government building, killing scores of men, women and children. The imaginings generated by the book had become transformed to believings, to narrative guidance for action (Sarbin, 1997).

To identify the conditions for persons to give warrant to some poetic imaginings and not others, it is helpful to look into the meaning of the word 'believing'. An etymological tracing of our modern word 'believe' provides some clues to help establish what differentiates believing from imagining, even though they cannot be differentiated in terms of content. The tracing proceeds from an IndoEuropean form *leubh* translated as 'strongly desires" through Latin forms that gave us 'libido', through forms that include the Gothic *liufs*, meaning 'dear', and *gelaubjen*, meaning 'to believe'. The Germanic derivatives include: *lieb*, meaning dear; *Liebe*, meaning love; *lieben*, to love or to cherish; *glauben*, to believe; *Glaube*, meaning faith; *loben*, meaning to praise (Needham, 1973).

The etymological connection between 'belief' and the various words for 'love' is central to my thesis: that believings are highly-valued imaginings. Thus, within the cognitive term 'belief' resides variants of 'love', a concept associated with emotional life. In this context, I am interpreting the word 'love' not in its romantic sense but in the general sense of 'being highly valued'.

To account for the differential responses of the two readers of *The Turner Diaries* one must look into their self-narratives. We can infer that for the first reader, the imaginings engendered by stories of government wickedness made no connection with his self-narrative. However, for the second reader, the imaginings provided the opportunities to enhance a failing self-narrative. He placed such a high value on his poetic constructions that the government building was equated with the object of his hatred: that abstract entity, the government.

DEGREE OF INVOLVEMENT AND THE 'REALITY'[†] OF IMAGININGS

The more general question is now open; to wit, what are the antecedent and concurrent conditions that account for the credibility a person assigns to poetic imaginings, such as a visual hallucination, a remembering of events that never happened, a witnessing of a Satanic ritual, a bodily transformation?

The argument can be made that a well-constructed story is automatically given credibility unless an effort is made to disbelieve. William James put it succinctly: 'Any object which remains uncontradicted is ipso facto believed and posited as

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[†]In earlier times, the reports of religious figures were used to ratify the claim that, under some conditions, what appeared as imagining was taken to be a veridical perception that was identified with the descriptor 'real'. The problem of what is real turns out to be a pseudoproblem. 'Real' is an excluder word. It tells only what something is not, and then only if the context is known. Its lack of utility in discourse is illustrated by the following anecdote. Two sports enthusiasts have just taken their seats in a football stadium. The first man, pointing to the playing field, asks, 'Is that real grass?' His companion answers: 'No. It's real astroturf.'

The problem contained in those self-reports that declare that the imagining has the appearance of a substantive reality cannot be dismissed merely by informing the person that his choice of language would not be acceptable to a linguistic philosopher. Although devoid of meaning, it is important to recognize that 'real' is often employed as a term to convince self or other that the credibility assigned to an imagining is warranted.

absolute reality' (1890, p. 289). 'We never disbelieve anything except for the reason that we believe something else which contradicts the first thing' (1890, p. 284). The Jamesian proposal is supported by a series of studies reported by Gerrig (1993) in which he demonstrated that both children and adults automatically assign credibility to fictional accounts unless they make an effort to disbelieve.

Some believings return to their status as imaginings. Children who assign credibility to the Santa Claus and Tooth Fairy imaginings withdraw the credibility as they mature. Doubt characterizes a period between belief and unbelief. I propose that a condition for insulating a particular imagining from doubt is a high degree of involvement. The action concept 'degree of involvement' is applicable to silent, attenuated, 'as if' behaviour as it is to overt role behaviour. It is a matter of common observation that a person may overtly enact a role with varying amounts of force and vigour. High involvement in role behaviour is illustrated in such conditions as ecstasy, mystical experience, religious conversion, and sexual union (Sarbin & Allen, 1968). Just as we may fruitfully talk of degree of involvement in overt role-enactment so may we talk of degree of involvement in muted role-taking, i.e., in storied imaginings.

At the minimal level of involvement we might cite the college sophomore who appears as a subject in a required laboratory exercise. He imagines tasting salt when a few drops of tasteless distilled water are put on his tongue. He is probably not highly involved in the 'as if' behaviour of tasting salt. An example of moderate involvement in imagining would be the case of a novelist struggling to construct a character or a scene – especially if she were facing a deadline. The degree of involvement could be noted in the motoric accompaniment of the creative process such as nervous pacing, speed of writing on the note pad or vigorous striking of the keyboard, inattention to extraneous stimuli, etc. A similar level of involvement in imagining is illustrated by the reader of a novel who weeps upon reading the tragic death of the hero.

The concept 'degree of involvement' is helpful in understanding why some individuals claim their imaginings are 'real', why some imaginings are believed to be of the same character as literal happenings in the distal world. The arguments are intended to convey the proposition that when a person claims 'reality' for his imaginings, it is likely that he or she is deeply involved in the 'as if' behaviour. 'Deeply involved' includes the bodily concomitants of emotional life. Under conditions of high involvement, more organismic systems are engaged and imaginings are accompanied by interoceptive and proprioceptive sensory inputs.

The higher the degree of involvement, the more likely the actor will interpret imaginings as equivalent to veridical perceptions. In formulating them for relevant audiences, the actor will use identity terms, rather than as if terms. For example, after a conversion experience, a Pentacostal churchgoer testified: 'I actually felt the Holy Spirit entering my body' rather than 'It was as if the Holy Spirit entered my body'. Even under conditions of moderate involvement people drop 'as if' qualifiers when they reproduce stories (Chun & Sarbin, 1970).

The formation of believings that are identified as superstitions reflect the role of involvement. The following anecdote is illustrative: In Devonshire, the appearance of a white-breasted bird has long been considered an omen of death. The belief has been traced to a circumstance said to have happened to the Oxenham family and reflected in a gravestone inscription: 'Here lies John Oxenham, a goodly young man, in whose chambers, as he was struggling with the pangs of death, a bird with a white breast, was seen fluttering about his bed, and so vanished. He died immediately.' Two

or three other members of the family were said to have died under the same circumstances (Scheibe & Sarbin, 1965). The coincidental pairing of two events, perceived by persons under high degrees of affective involvement, was sufficient to organize a belief. The participants 'believed' and were not interested in applying any logical or pragmatic tests.

Some years ago, a prominent churchman published a book that described his effort to establish communication with the spirit of his dead son. He consulted a medium and in the course of the seance, he and his son engaged in an uplifting conversation (Pike, 1967).

Subsequent to the publication of the book, the author was interviewed on a television program. The interviewer asked: 'Do you *know* that you communicated with your son?' The reply came after a moment's thought, 'I don't *know*, but I *believe*.'

The response epitomizes my arguments. Knowing implies that a proposition has passed pragmatic tests. No pragmatic tests have been developed to allow one to equate knowing and believing. Believing requires no test. And high degrees of organismic involvement – a condition of emotional life produced by placing a high value on storied imaginings – insulates the believing against doubt.

In the same way that a person can become deeply involved in the lives of characters in fictional or biographical narratives, so can self-deceptive subjects become deeply involved in the role of narrative figure in their own life stories. In uttering contrafactual statements such as claims to non-volition, claims to multiple personality, or claims to alien abduction, the hypnosis subject elides the ongoing social encounter into the plot of his or her self-narrative – the plot in which he or she is the central character. The subject's account and the publicly performed actions are directed to the hypnotist or other spectators as audience. The contrafactual account, convincingly given, charters the actor as someone special, as having entered a magical kingdom of enchantment. (For more elaborated accounts see, Sarbin, 1984, 1986.)

In this revisitation, as in most of my work, I construe hypnosis not as an esoteric subject-matter requiring special explanatory concepts but as social behaviour to be explained with the same constructions as other social actions. I have bracketed together accounts of hypnosis subjects with accounts given by persons who believe in such benign imaginings as Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy, and such potentially disastrous imaginings as Satanic ritual child abuse, alien abductions, and the doctrines of the late members of the Heaven's Gate religious group. Any one can construct such imaginings. Those who assign credibility (against pressures to doubt) do so in the service of maintaining or enhancing an ongoing self-narrative.

Finally, in adopting the position that hypnosis is a conversation, we can free ourselves from the tyranny of causality-seeking mechanistic conventions. In so doing, we can dignify both interactants in the hypnosis encounter as discourse partners, each contributing to the conversations for reasons best understood in the context of their respective self-narratives (Sarbin, 1986).

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