

SEEING WHAT IS NOT THERE
PICTORIAL EXPERIENCE, IMAGINATION AND NON-LOCALISATION
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I. INTRODUCTION

Pictures – paintings, drawings, photographs, CGI – let us see what is not there. Or rather, since what pictures depict is not really there, we do not really see the things they are pictures of.¹ But we *seem* to see the depicted things. As we say, we *see* them *in* the picture.

What is it to see something in a picture? Precisely how to account for this phenomenon has been a matter of some debate over the last couple of decades. According to Richard Wollheim, who introduced the notion of seeing-in into philosophical aesthetics as an element of his theory of depiction, seeing-in is a ‘perceptual capacity’,² a ‘species of seeing’,³ which ‘is triggered off by the presence within the field of vision of a differentiated surface’.⁴ Many commentators have been unhappy with Wollheim’s account of seeing-in for one of mainly two reasons, or both. One line of criticism focuses on Wollheim’s *explanation* of seeing-in – or rather, lack thereof. The sentence following the last quote runs: ‘Not all differentiated surfaces will have this effect, but I doubt that anything significant can be said about exactly what a surface must be like for it to have this effect.’⁵ This leads Dominic Lopes to complain that ‘[a]n analysis of depiction in terms of seeing-in may well be true, but at the very least it stands incomplete’.⁶ Another critical discussion has

¹ One of the examples above – photographs – might, if Kendall Walton is right, be an exception to this rule. Walton argues that photographs let us see indirectly but literally the photographed things themselves, and not merely images of them; photographs, says Walton, are ‘transparent’. See Kendall Walton, ‘Transparent Pictures: On the Nature of Photographic Realism’, *Critical Inquiry*, 11 (1984), pp. 246-277.

² Richard Wollheim, ‘Seeing-as, Seeing-in, and Pictorial Representation’, in *Art and Its Objects*, 2nd ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1980), p. 217.

³ Wollheim, ‘Seeing-as, Seeing-in, and Pictorial Representation’, p. 205.

⁴ Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), p. 46.

⁵ Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*, p. 46.

⁶ Dominic Lopes, *Understanding Pictures*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 44. For more fully advanced versions of this objection, see Malcolm Budd, ‘On Looking at a Picture’, in James Hopkins and Anthony Savile (eds.), *Psychoanalysis, Mind and Art: Perspectives on Richard Wollheim*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), and John Hyman, *The Objective Eye: Color, Form and Reality in the Theory of Art*,

revolved around Wollheim's *characterisation* of seeing-in, and in particular his account of its *phenomenology*. In this latter discussion, one of Wollheim's claims has been of particular, or even exclusive concern, namely his thesis that seeing-in necessarily has a 'twofold' structure.⁷ When seeing something in a picture, one's awareness or attention is both of the pictorial content (what one sees in the picture) and of various design properties of the picture's surface. In Wollheim's original phrasing: 'Seeing-in permits an unlimited simultaneous attention to what is seen and to features of the medium.'⁸

Twofoldness is undoubtedly an important phenomenon. Meanwhile, it is but *one* feature that Wollheim identifies with regard to what is special about seeing-in. Another characteristic – one which has received far less attention in the subsequent discussion – is that of *non-localisation*. In looking at a picture, says Wollheim, there is not always an answer to the question *where* one sees something in the picture. Or put differently: when seeing a particular thing in a picture, there may be no particular part of the picture's surface that sustains the experience of seeing that thing in the picture.⁹ And if this is so, pictures indeed let us see what is not there: we see things in pictures, but there is no 'there' where we see those things.

Is seeing-in non-localised? In this paper, I will argue that pictorial experience is indeed sometimes non-localised. In particular, I will argue that the apprehension of *pictorial occlusion*, and, in a sense to be explained, of *pictorial quasi-occlusion* gives rise to such an experience. That said, precisely because the content of the experience regards occluded portion of things, it is unlikely that this apprehension should be seen as a case of pictorial *seeing*. Rather, such cases, as I will argue, are best thought of as eliciting what I will call 'pictorial perceptual presence'. Section II discusses kinds of content and non-localisation, and challenges Wollheim's conception of non-localised object-seeing-in. Section III addresses perceptual presence and its counterpart in pictures, and also how this phenomenon yields non-localisation. Section IV tackles a couple of possible objections and worries, and also provides some further examples of pictorial perceptual presence.

(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), chap. 7. See also Robert Hopkins, 'Explaining Depiction', *Philosophical Review*, 104:3 (1995), p. 439.

⁷ For instance, Bence Nanay claims, without argument, that '[t]he most important feature of Wollheim's concept of seeing-in is the twofoldness of this experience'. Bence Nanay, 'Taking Twofoldness Seriously: Walton on Imagination and Depiction', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 62:3 (2004), p. 285. See also, e.g., Dominic Lopes, *Sight and Sensibility*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), chap 1; Bence Nanay, 'Is Twofoldness Necessary for Representational Seeing?' *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 45:3 (2005), pp. 248-257.

⁸ Wollheim, 'Seeing-as, Seeing-in, and Pictorial Representation', p. 212.

⁹ Wollheim, 'Seeing-as, Seeing-in, and Pictorial Representation', p. 211-212, 223-224.

Another preliminary note: the topic of this paper concerns pictorial *experience*. It does not treat the related, but different, problem of what it is for a picture to *depict* something. So although I will argue that the experience of pictures allows for non-localisation, it does not follow from this that there may be *depicted* content of a picture, which is not sustained by determinate parts of the picture.¹⁰

II. KINDS OF CONTENT AND NON-LOCALISATION

The claim that seeing-in allows for non-localisation might at first glance perhaps seem odd, or at least surprising. After all, one is typically fully able to point to where, exactly, on the picture's surface one sees various parts of a picture's content. In Dürer's *Draughtsman Making a Perspective Drawing of a Woman*, a draughtsman is hard at work determining where exactly to draw various parts of the woman in accordance with the rules of perspective. In looking at Dürer's image, a viewer sees in the picture the man, the woman, the drawing device, and so on, and there seems to be no difficulty whatsoever in determining where, in the image, one sees this, or alternatively, which parts of the image sustain that experience of seeing-in. But if we are surprised by the claim that seeing-in may be non-localised, this is only, says Wollheim, because we have too narrow a range of examples of pictorial content in mind. Broadening the kinds of examples of pictorial content will make us more susceptible to the idea of non-localised seeing-in. Here are a couple of Wollheim's examples with this alleged effect:

- (1) The gathering of a storm.
- (2) That a woman is reading a letter (as in Vermeer).
- (3) A crowd of which all but a few members are occluded by a fold in the ground (as in Michelangelo's *Sistine Deluge*).

Now, Wollheim is not very explicit as to why these instances of seeing-in would imply non-localisation. But at least with respect to (1) and (2), a moment's reflection on the kind of *content* involved reveals that if there are instances of seeing-in with that kind of content, it follows immediately that the experience will be non-

¹⁰ Again, the kind of non-localised experience I will propose has occluded parts of things as its content. But I take it that many will not be happy to say that a picture *depicts* such content. Kendall Walton offers a distinction between *depiction* and *representation* in relation to this matter and claims that a picture may represent occluded things, but does not depict them. Kendall Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe. On the Foundations of the Representational Arts*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 297.

localised.¹¹ In (1) the content is an *event* – a gathering of a storm. Where do we see it? Perhaps in the parts depicting the sky? But what about those parts depicting the field, where the barley has not yet been shaken by the wind? After all, since what we are supposed to see is a *gathering* of a storm, cannot the (as of yet) unshaken barley be taken as a proper part of the event? Do we not there see the calmness before the storm, which may very well be part of the gathering of the storm? I take it that these questions have no straightforward answers. And the reason has to do with the event itself, the spatial properties of which seem hard to determine with any exactness. Although, as Anthony Quinton points out, it may in principle be appropriate to ask where and when a certain event took place, precision as to its spatial properties is far off:

A wedding can be located in a church. But does it occupy all of the church? We can distinguish small weddings where all those taking part are huddled together up near the altar from large weddings where the participants are all over the place, penetrating into the remotest aisles and chapels. But then we are at a loss as to whether the event extended to the loftier parts of the church, just under the roof, for example.¹²

Granted this imprecision with respect to the spatial properties of events, it should come as no surprise that we have difficulties in saying exactly where we see them, be it in a picture or ‘face-to-face’. Something similar may be said about (2) where the content is a (possible) *state of affairs*, the spatial properties of which – should it have any – seem even more obscure. Seeing states of affairs in pictures is bound to be non-localised simply because the very question of where, exactly, one sees states of affairs, in a picture or otherwise, cannot be answered with any precision.

(3) is an instance of *object-seeing-in* involving occlusion. This case is more interesting, I think, but also slightly more puzzling, since it is not immediately clear *why* such an experience would amount to non-localisation. Why, that is, is the seeing-in of a partly occluded crowd not sustained by determinate parts of the picture?

¹¹ I say *if* there is seeing-in of events and states of affairs, since some authors have challenged precisely this. For instance, Alec Hyslop – one of the few who have touched on the topic of non-localisation in the subsequent literature – argues that the pictorial perception of states of affairs is nothing over and above the perception of objects and properties; rather the latter provide *evidence* on the basis of which we *judge* that something is the case in a picture. Somewhat similarly, Jerrold Levinson has expressed the worry that seeing-in as it applies to objects on the one hand, and as it applies to not only states of affairs but also events, on the other, might come to two different experiences. See Alec Hyslop, ‘Seeing Through Seeing-in’, *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 26:4, p. 377; and Jerrold Levinson, ‘Wollheim on Pictorial Representation’, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 56:3 (1998), p. 231.

¹² Anthony Quinton, ‘Objects and Events’, *Mind*, 88 (1979), p. 208-209.

Again, Wollheim does not offer much guidance here, but I take it that a plausible interpretation of this example would be the following:

- (i) We see in the picture a crowd of people;
- (ii) there *is* a part of the picture's surface that sustains *the seeing-in of the first few members* of the crowd; hence, the seeing-in of those members *is* localised;
- (iii) there is, by contrast, *no* particular part of the picture that sustains the seeing-in of the *crowd* (in contrast to the first few); so the seeing-in of the crowd is *non-localised*.¹³

If this is Wollheim's view, it is far from unproblematic, however. In particular, both (i) and (iii) seem open to objections that jointly challenge the idea of non-localisation from two frontiers, as it were.

First, then, some may simply deny that when an object (or a group of objects, as in *Deluge*) is pictorially occluded, one really sees that object in the picture. What one *really* or *strictly* sees in the picture, the objection would go, are the non-occluded *parts* of the object, but one does not really or strictly see the object in the picture. Since what one strictly sees in the picture are the non-occluded parts, and since, plausibly (and by (ii)), there *are* parts of the picture that sustain the seeing-in of those parts (in contrast to the object), there is no non-localisation in this case. There *might* have been, had we seen the object in the picture, but, on the present challenge, we do not.¹⁴ How much weight does this objection carry?

Suppose a picture depicts a tree in front of which a fly is flying past, occluding a tiny portion of the tree's trunk. I take it that most of us would be very reluctant to say that in this case, we do not see the tree in the picture, but merely some non-occluded tree-part. So perhaps the objector would claim that we do not see an occluded object when a *sufficiently large portion* of that object is occluded? But how much? I doubt that anything non-arbitrary can be said in reply to this.¹⁵ Of course, there *might* be cases where so much of an object is hidden from view that we are indeed unwilling to say that we see the object. But be that as it may, the cases Wollheim indicates by means of *The Deluge* do not seem to be of this kind. So I think

¹³ If this is Wollheim's thought, I take it that he would agree on a similar line of reasoning regarding objects (rather than groups of objects) so that if an object *x* is partly occluded in a picture, there is an experience of seeing *x* in the picture, such that the seeing-in of *x* is non-localised, whilst the seeing-in of the non-occluded parts of *x* is localised. In the following, I will treat the two kinds of occlusion – i.e. with respect to objects and groups thereof, respectively – as analogous.

¹⁴ 'Might' – since I will argue against the very idea of non-localised seeing-in of occlusion below.

¹⁵ Cf. the argument against the idea that we merely see surfaces, rather than physical objects, given in Thompson Clarke, 'Seeing Surfaces and Physical Objects', in Max Black (ed.), *Philosophy in America*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1965)

that at least in such cases we should agree with Wollheim in saying that we see objects in pictures although parts of them are occluded, and hence this objection does not seem very worrying, after all.

The second worry is more serious, I think. According to this challenge, we *do* see in pictures objects, which are partly occluded, but on a plausible account of how object-seeing works, the seeing-in of occlusion *is* localised. Consider again the case of seeing a tree, in a picture or otherwise. Even without the fly, in seeing the tree from some point of view, there is a considerable part of the tree being occluded, namely the insides and its backside. Sure, the kind of occlusion is somewhat different in comparison to the case with the fly, or to the case of *The Deluge*, since in the latter cases, the relevant occlusion is effected by objects occluding *other* objects, when in the former case, *parts* of an object occlude *other parts* of that object. But in both kinds of case, to be sure, there is occlusion, relative to the relevant viewpoint. Again, we should not, I think, opt for the claim that we do not, in the present case, really see the tree, but merely the non-occluded parts, i.e. its front-side. But this does not, of course, imply that we see the whole tree *in the sense of visually perceiving all its sides* at once. How, then, do we see it? Several options might be open here, but according to one idea in the philosophy of perception we see objects *by*, or *via*, seeing their *looks*, or their *appearances*, where looks, as Alva Noë has recently put it,

are not mental entities. Looks are objective, environmental properties. They are relational, to be sure. But they are not relations between objects and the interior, sensational effects in us. Rather, they are relations among objects, the location of the perceiver's body, and illumination.¹⁶

And looks, on Noë's account, are 'perceptually basic',¹⁷ since, in the manner just indicated, we see objects *via* them: 'We see by seeing how things look'.¹⁸ An important thing to note about this, as Noë calls it, 'two-step' view of perception, is that it is compatible with direct realism,¹⁹ the idea that we see *objects themselves* and not merely some intermediary object mediating between the objects and us. We primarily, or basically, see the looks of things, but this does not imply that we do not see the things themselves. Rather, seeing looks, as one may put it, *is a way* of seeing things.

¹⁶ Alva Noë, *Action in Perception*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004), p. 85.

¹⁷ Noë, *Action in Perception*, p. 166.

¹⁸ Noë, *Action in Perception*, p. 165.

¹⁹ For worries that this is not the case, see Jason Leddington, 'Perceptual Presence', *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 90:4 (2009), pp. 482-502. Who is right here matters little, I think, in the present context.

Noë's 'two-step' view concerns face-to-face perception, but it seems readily applicable to the case of pictures, too. On such a view, *to picture* something is typically to depict *a* look of a certain thing; pictures are typically from a single point of view,²⁰ and the painter or draughtsman attempts to capture how a thing looks from that point of view (as Dürer's *Draughtsman* illustrates). This view sits well with a number of recent '(experienced) resemblance theories' of depiction, the basic tenet of which is the idea (in various forms) that pictures exhibit shapes that are similar to the *outline shapes* of the depicted things relative to some point of view.²¹ But, of course, in neither of these accounts is it implied that the outline shapes are *all* that we should or do see in pictures – we see the *objects* that display those shapes, too. Now, a natural way to put the relation between seeing shapes (or more generally, looks) and the objects that display those shapes (looks) is precisely in terms of Noë's 'two-step' view: we see things in pictures, to echo Noë, *by* seeing how they look in the picture. Or alternatively: seeing the look of an object in a picture is a *way* of seeing that object in the picture.

But if this is how object-seeing-in works, it seems to leave no room for non-localisation, even though part of the object is occluded, either by parts of itself or by other objects. For if the seeing-in of an object is a two-step process, as the present suggestion has it, where one sees an object in a picture by seeing the look of it, and where the look is typically connected to non-occluded parts of the object, then we have a perfectly clear answer to where, exactly, we see the object, namely *in those parts of the surface that sustain the experience of seeing the look of the object*. To illustrate this, consider again *The Deluge*. We should, I think, agree with Wollheim that we see a crowd in the picture. But the way we see the crowd in the picture is by seeing its look, which, in this case, amounts to seeing the look of the first few, non-occluded members. This is how the crowd *looks* or *appears*, given relations among objects (notably the members of the crowd and the fold in the ground), and the pictorial viewpoint. But this look *is* sustained by determinate parts of the picture's surface; or in other words, the seeing-in of that look *is localised*.

²⁰ Typically but not necessarily. One exception to this rule is building plans, which often depict several sides of a building simultaneously; another is, e.g., David Hockney's neo-cubist paintings and photographs. For discussion of the latter, see Lopes, *Understanding Pictures*, pp. 120-121.

²¹ For such accounts, see Christopher Peacocke, 'Depiction', *Philosophical Review*, 96 (1987), pp. 383-410; Malcolm Budd, 'How Pictures Look', in *Virtue and Taste: Essays on Politics, Ethics and Aesthetics*, eds. Dudley Knowles & John Skorupski, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993); Robert Hopkins, *Picture, Image and Experience: A Philosophical Inquiry*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); John Hyman, *The Objective Eye: Color, Form and Reality in the Theory of Art*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006). The details of these accounts, and how they differ, need not concern us here.

If the above reasoning is found persuasive, I think there are basically two options open as regards the idea of non-localised pictorial experience of objects. The first is simply to deny that there is such a phenomenon. Again, Wollheim himself has given us no reason to believe it occurs, apart from an *example* with this alleged feature. But it is far from clear *why* that example would imply non-localisation. If, on the other hand, one wants to hold on to the idea that there is non-localised object-experience, the lesson to be drawn from the previous discussion is that it has to be *content-wise richer* than what is assumed in the two-step view of seeing partly occluded objects. In particular, there has to be content of the experience that is richer in the sense that it is *not* reducible to, or accounted for by the seeing-in of looks that are sustained by the picture, in which case, as I have argued, non-localisation does not occur. Could there be such content? Is there, in this sense, more to the picture than meets the eye? One candidate for such content that suggests itself is a pictorial analogue of what has been called *perceptual presence*.

III. (PICTORIAL) PERCEPTUAL PRESENCE

In looking at a tree, we see the tree although much of it is occluded by its non-occluded parts. Intuitively, this does not imply, as I put it, visually perceiving all its sides at once. Or does it? Some writers seem to have thought as much. J. J. Gibson, for example, writes that 'the perception of occlusion entails ... the perception of *something* which is *occluded*',²² where, in this case, 'perception of *something* which is *occluded*' seems to refer to the perception of the occluded (parts of an) object, and not merely the perception of an occluded object by perception of its non-occluded parts. This idea might seem to smack of clairvoyance, of the kind of 'four dimensional seeing', which M. M. Moncrieff once argued is a more basic perceptual access to things than 'normal seeing', and according to which 'we have a visual apprehension simultaneously of things and processes from a number of "points of view"'.²³ At any rate, the claim that we perceive occluded things seems to fly in the face of the natural view that in order to perceive something it is necessary that the object has causally interacted with the perceptual experience in some appropriate way, and occluded things do not, since they are made causally idle by the occluding object(s). But perhaps what Gibson intends is something less paradoxical, for in a sentence preceding the one just quoted, Gibson says that in perceiving occlusion one perceives

²² James J. Gibson, 'A Theory of Direct Visual Perception', in J. R. Joyce & W. W. Rozeboom (eds.), *The Psychology of Knowing*, (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1972), p. 222. Gibson's italics.

²³ M. M. Moncrieff, *The Clairvoyant Theory of Perception*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1949), p. 96.

'something *as occluded*'.²⁴ On one interpretation of this, this indeed 'entails the perception of *something* which is *occluded*', much like perceiving a tomato as red entails perceiving a tomato. But to see something 'as occluded' could perhaps rather be interpreted as the less controversial claim that one sees *that* something is occluded; one forms a perceptual belief *that something* is not seen on the basis of beliefs about what one does see.

Is perception of occlusion merely a matter of seeing *that* something is occluded? Judging from the literature on perceiving occlusion, at any rate, such a view does not seem quite right, for it leaves out what has in the literature been seen as the key feature of this experience, namely that, in Noë's idiom, 'we *experience* the presence of the occluded bits even as we experience, plainly, their absence. They are present *as absent*'.²⁵ Or in other words, what Noë suggests here is that the presence of the occluded bits is not merely *cognitively* grasped, but rather *experienced*; the occluded parts are, as the term for this phenomenon has it, *perceptually* present. Some seventy years before Noë, Koffka expressed a similar idea when he insisted that one 'sees', in what he calls 'the phenomenological meaning' of 'to see', the table *behind* the book that lies on it.²⁶ And in a similar vein, Merleau-Ponty talks of an 'indeterminate vision', which occurs at what surrounds the visual field – 'and, to take the extreme case, what is behind my back is not without some element of visual presence'.²⁷

Now, I am not going to pretend that these characterisations of the phenomenology of perceiving occlusion are crystal clear. But hopefully at least one main point is clear enough for present purposes, namely that *at times*, at least, the way we apprehend occluded portions of things, so these writers seem to suggest, have a perceptual-like character. That is to say, phenomenologically speaking, the apprehension of visible parts of things and the apprehension of, strictly speaking, unseen parts of things may appear similar. Here is how Bence Nanay expresses the notion of perceptual presence in a recent paper: 'the cat's tail is perceptually present

²⁴ Gibson, 'A Theory of Direct Perception', p. 222.

²⁵ Noë, *Action in Perception*, p. 61. Italics in the first sentence mine.

²⁶ Kurt Koffka, *The Principles of Gestalt Psychology*, (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1936), pp. 179-180.

²⁷ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith, (London: Routledge Classics, 2002), p. 6. Here is Alva Noë again: 'When you see a tomato, you only see, strictly speaking, the visible face of the tomato; but it is also true that you are *visually aware* of the presence of the parts of the tomato which you don't actually see.' Noë, 'Experience without the Head', in Tamar Szabó Gendler & John Hawthorn (eds.), *Perceptual Experience*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 414. My italics. And here is a more recent, and slightly more paradoxical, formulation: 'vision is not confined to the visible. We visually experience what is out of view, what is hidden or occluded.' Noë, 'Conscious Reference', *Philosophical Quarterly*, 59:236 (2009), p. 470.

to me if what it is like to be aware of the cat's occluded tail is similar to what it is like to perceive those parts of the cat that are in view.²⁸

Now, one aspect about this phenomenon, which, I think, has not been sufficiently attended to in the literature, but which seems of key importance for how one should account for it (and the issue will also be relevant with respect to the pictorial analogue of perceptual presence, which will be addressed below) is that, as already indicated, occlusion comes in different kinds. The white of an apple is occluded by its red skin; the tree's backside is occluded by its front; the cat's tail is occluded by one of the pickets in the fence; and parts of the grass are occluded by the mullion of the window through which one sees the grass stretching out on both sides. All these are examples of occlusion, but are the occluded bits, phenomenologically speaking, given in the same way? This is far from clear to me (I would even dare to say that it is implausible). The apprehension of the grass hidden from view by the mullion seems more perceptual-like than does the apprehension of the tree's backside, and even more so than the apprehension of the white of an apple. But if this is so, it is unlikely that the (phenomenological) presence of occluded bits (more perceptual in one case than another) is to be accounted for in a unified way, or explained by a single theory. Also, and related to this, that a given account implies phenomenological similarity with (real) perception might count as a good-making feature of the account in one case (the occluding mullion, say), but not so in others (apprehending the white of an apple, say).²⁹ A brief discussion of two rival accounts of perceptual presence will flesh these ideas out, and will also take us towards my suggestion of a pictorial analogue of such presence that does allow for non-localisation.

It is undeniable that whatever presence we may experience of occluded portions of things often depends to a large extent on background knowledge (or belief) about the things we see. If one has not seen a (whole) cat, one will not, I take it, sense any presence, perceptual or otherwise, of the cat's occluded tail. 'The belief account' draws on such knowledge in explaining perceptual presence. More precisely, on this account, what explains the experienced presence of occluded parts of things, is a belief – inferred from background beliefs about cats in general – about

²⁸ Bence Nanay, 'Perception and Imagination: Amodal Perception as Mental Imagery', *Philosophical Studies*, 150:2 (2010), p. 241. In fairness to Nanay, he expresses some doubt as to how, precisely, perceptual presence is to be understood.

²⁹ For related points, and for a more thorough discussion of the varieties of seeing occlusion, see Robert Eamon Briscoe, 'Mental Imagery and the Varieties of Amodal Perception', forthcoming in *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*.

this particular cat, that *it* has a tail. So although we do not *see* the cat's tail, we represent the tail by means of a belief, and that is what explains the presence of the occluded tail.

Now, one possible objection to the belief account is that it misrepresents the phenomenology of perceiving occlusion. If one thinks that the phenomenology of apprehending occluded parts of things is similar to the apprehension of the visible parts – if one, in Nanay's language, thinks that 'what it is like to be aware of the cat's occluded tail is similar to what it is like to perceive those parts of the cat that are in view' – the belief account would seem to be on the wrong track. For it does not seem that merely holding a belief about the cat's occluded tail will be anything like perceiving the non-occluded bits; indeed, merely holding a belief does not seem to imply any element of 'what it is like' at all. So, again, if one is a 'unionist', as it were, holding that apprehension of occluded and non-occluded portions of things are similar with respect to phenomenology, the belief account does not seem a strong contender. ('Separatists,' on the other hand, might be content with the kind of presence an appropriate belief might yield.)

Unionists might be more impressed by the account 'the imagination theory' gives of perceptual presence. On this view, the apprehension of occluded parts of things involves representing those parts by means of imagination. The idea that the perception of occlusion involves imagination is not new. Here it is in the hands of R. G. Collingwood:

When I look out of the window, I see grass to the right and left of the mullion that stands immediately before me; but I also imagine the grass going on where this mullion hides it from my sight.³⁰

Now, in order to meet the unionist's demand for phenomenological similarity between the apprehension of the occluded bits of the grass, and the perception of the visible areas of the grass, the imagination that on Collingwood's view is operative in this case needs to be understood in a certain way. It is not to be understood as an instance of propositional imagining *that* the grass goes on behind the mullion, for such imagining does not on its own seem to imply any phenomenal similarity with seeing the grass (cf. the case of holding beliefs about the hidden parts of a cat, above).

³⁰ R. G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 136. Here is Wilfrid Sellars, in a similar fashion, on experiencing the white inside of an apple, though, strictly speaking, one only sees the red skin: 'How can a volume of white apple flesh be present *as actuality* in the visual experience if it is not seen? The answer should be obvious. It is present by virtue of being *imagined*.' Wilfrid Sellars, 'The Role of Imagination in Kant's Theory of Experience', in *Categories: A Colloquium*, H. W. Johnstone (ed.), (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1978), § 16.

Nor would it seem to suffice that one imagines *that one sees* the grass extending behind the mullion, for, again, such imagining does not necessarily come with a perceptual-like phenomenology (one can imagine that one sees something, without there being any phenomenal character to one's imagining whatsoever). Rather, in order for the imagining to get the phenomenological characteristics right (on the unionist's assumption on what counts as 'right' here), the imagining has to be construed as 'imagining seeing,' or visual imagery.³¹ For, it is a commonplace in the philosophy of mind that, as far as phenomenology goes, images and percepts are in many respects alike; indeed, much work on images and percepts by the early empiricists consisted in attempting to *distinguish* images from perceptions.

That there are differences between images and percepts, though not necessarily those that the early empiricists pointed to, is crucial with respect to the plausibility of the imagination theory of perceptual presence. For whatever truth there is in the unionist position, it is clearly not the case that the apprehension of occluded parts of things is indistinguishable, with respect to phenomenology, from the perception of the visible bits. Except for the extreme case of hallucination, images are not indistinguishable from percepts, so the imagination theory *does* imply a phenomenological difference with respect to how we apprehend occluded parts of things, and those that are in view. According to Hume, the difference between images and percepts is a matter of degree, and more precisely, a matter of degree of 'force' and 'liveliness'.³² But as intuitive as this might sound, these notions seem too metaphorical to offer any clear line between the two (after all, in an intuitive understanding of 'liveliness', many images – haunting images, say – may seem more 'lively' than some percepts). A more promising notion is that of Colin McGinn, who distinguishes images and percepts in terms of 'saturation'. In perception, so McGinn suggests (rightly to my mind), the visual field is such that at every point some property or other is 'manifest'. Not so with images: in images, there are typically many points where, in McGinn's idiom, the image remains 'utterly silent'. So in forming an image of a tomato, say, fewer points would be occupied by manifested properties, than in a corresponding percept. Or in other words, percepts are 'dense',

³¹ For the distinction between imagining *seeing* and imagining *that one sees*, see Kendall Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe*, chap 1, § 1.4. See also Kendall Walton, 'On Pictures and Photographs: Objections Answered', in *Marvelous Images: On Values and the Arts*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 118, footnote 6, & p. 122.

³² David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, (London: Penguin Classics, 1985), p. 49.

or 'saturated', in a way images are not.³³ This feature of imagery gives plausibility to the imagination theory, for the way we apprehend occluded parts of things indeed seem less phenomenally 'dense' than the perception of the visible parts; the apprehension of the grass hidden by the mullion, for example, does not come with the phenomenal richness that attaches to the perception of those parts that are in view.

Another difference between images and percepts, which, by contrast, might seem troubling to the imagination theorist, regards the different amount of control we have over images and percepts, respectively. Images, says Berkeley, 'have an entire dependence on the will',³⁴ whereas it is hardly up to our will what we do perceive. As just indicated, this might seem like a problem for the imagination theory, since, again judging from the literature on perceptual presence and of perceiving occlusion, the way we apprehend occluded portions of things, does not (or does not necessarily) seem to be a matter of choice or something which is subject to the will. But a couple of things need to be said about this. First, while it is true that images are often subject to the will, it seems false to say, as Berkeley does, that they have an *entire* dependence on the will. For images may appear more or less spontaneously, and may, as in the case of many 'haunting' images, even be hard to get rid of – or in other words, they appear *despite* one's will that they would not (in the auditory case, think of an annoying tune that 'gets stuck' in one's head, where the 'sticking' is arguably best construed as compulsive auditory imagining). Moreover, Berkeley's claim leaves out how many images are *prompted*. So, for instance, in reading a novel one imagines its content – and often imagines it *visually* – but such imaginings are not entirely dependent on the will. Rather, they are prompted, and it is rather that one 'just finds oneself' imagining the content of the narrative as one reads the text, than it is an act of the will.³⁵ Now, to the extent that the apprehension

³³ This, as McGinn suggests, might be a way to understand the popular idea that images seem more indeterminate than do percepts. Colin McGinn, *Mindsight: Image, Dream, Meaning*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 25-26

³⁴ George Berkeley, *A Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge & Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, G. J. Warnock (ed.), (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1986), p. 225. (The quote is from the *Dialogues*.)

³⁵ Sartre captures the combination of activity and spontaneity with regard to imagery well: 'A perceptual consciousness appears to itself as being passive. On the other hand, an imaging consciousness gives itself to itself as an imaging consciousness, which is to say as a spontaneity that produces and conserves the object as imaged. ... The consciousness appears to itself as creative, but without positing as object this creative character. It is thanks to this vague and fugitive quality that the image consciousness is not given as a piece of wood floating on the sea, but as a wave among the waves.' Sartre, *The Imaginary*, p. 14. For further discussion of this matter, see McGinn, *Mindsight*, chap 1, § 1.

of occluded things is a spontaneous phenomenon, not subject to one's will, this would seem to be possible to account for within the imagination theory, for much paradigmatic imagining is spontaneous, too.

This brings me to the second point I would like to bring up, which is a repetition of the idea that occlusion, just like perceptual presence, comes in different varieties. In particular, if imagery is at least a *sufficient* condition for perceptual presence, colouring at least *some* of our perceptions of occlusion,³⁶ the two features of images just pointed to suggest a variation along two dimensions: first, since saturation is a matter of degree, the apprehension of occluded things (by means of imagery) may differ with respect to phenomenal plenitude, and second, the amount of control over one's imagination also being a matter of degree, the same apprehension may be (and be felt as) more or less spontaneous. So, again, the apprehension of the hidden grass in Collingwood's example may be both more spontaneous and phenomenally richer than the apprehension of the white of an apple.

Now, I will not try to weigh the belief account and the imagination theory of (face-to-face) perceptual presence against each other; again, whether one finds the one more attractive than the other will to a large extent depend on whether one's phenomenological data are in line with the unionists' or the separatists' (and I take this to be variable between individuals, at least in many cases of alleged perceptual presence). But enough has been said, I think, to understand how perceptual presence may have a counterpart in picture perception, and, by extension, how pictorial experience can be non-localised.

To begin, whatever merits there may be to the belief theory, as it stands, it clearly will not do as an account for *pictorial* perceptual presence. For it is simply not the case that, in looking at *The Deluge*, say, we *believe* that there is a crowd behind the fold in the ground.³⁷ Rather, this is something we *imagine*.³⁸ But again, only by means

³⁶ Briscoe argues (against Nanay) that imagery is not necessary for amodal perception (which is often taken to be a paradigm example of perceptual presence) but that it suffices for the latter. See Briscoe, 'Mental Imagery and the Varieties of Amodal Perception'.

³⁷ Alva Noë has offered a different account of perceptual presence, an account that will not fare any better than the belief account in the context of pictures. On Noë's view, what gives us a sense of presence of occluded parts of things is tacit knowledge about 'sensorimotor dependencies' between perceivers and perceived objects. If one moves one's head, different parts of a scene will come into view, and if an object starts spinning, its backside will become visible. But clearly this is of little help with respect to pictorial perceptual presence, since regardless of how I move in front of *The Deluge*, the crowd will remain hidden from view. One may, of course, have knowledge about sensorimotor dependencies between one's experiences and *the picture*, considered as a physical object, but that is a different matter, since such knowledge would at most explain whatever perceptual presence one might sense of the *picture's* hidden parts.

of *visual* imagination (in contrast to propositional imagining that there is a crowd, or that one sees it) will there be an experience that satisfies the unionist's account of perceptual presence. Moreover, and more importantly, only if there be such imaginings can one talk of a pictorial *experience* being non-localised; and only then are we in the same terrain as that in which Wollheim found non-localised *seeing-in*. For I take it that something is rightly called a pictorial experience only if it has phenomenal character, that there is something *it is like* to have that experience. And this is guaranteed if the apprehension is by means of visual imagining, but *not* if the representation is by means of a mere thought, such as propositional imagining that something is the case in the world of the picture, the latter not necessarily implying any sense of 'what it is like' at all. Images, by contrast, do come with phenomenal character, although not of the plenitude characteristic of perception.

Now, I am not claiming that propositional imaginings regarding the world of the picture cannot make a difference with respect to the phenomenal character of seeing-in. Indeed, I would agree with Wollheim's claim that one significant phenomenological characteristic of seeing-in is its 'permeability to thought'.³⁹ So, for example, looking at *The Deluge* accompanied by imagining that there are people hidden by the fold in the ground, *or* imagining that there are no such people, will arguably lead to phenomenally different experiences.⁴⁰ But although the experiences in this sense are different – a difference that perhaps best can be captured by saying that only in the one case does one see a crowd in the picture – this does not lead to a difference with respect to localisation. For as I argued in the previous section, seeing the first few members of the crowd is *a way* of seeing the crowd: this is how the crowd looks. But, again, that look is sustained by the picture, and hence the experience is localised. In order for there to be non-localisation of pictorial experience, the experience has to be more free-floating, as it were. And such a free-floating experience we find in the visual imagination of pictorially occluded things. Here, I suggest, is where we will find non-localisation.

³⁸ I am not, however, claiming that imagination is the only possible source for pictorial perceptual presence. For instance, it may be that in some simple examples of pictorial occlusion, such as in some of the Kanizsa figures perhaps, the apprehension of occluded parts of things is instead effected by some sub-personal, 'bottom-up', filling-in mechanism, not necessarily leading to one's imagining anything. Thanks to an anonymous referee for this journal for making me realise that I should stress this point.

³⁹ Wollheim, 'On Pictorial Representation', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 56:3 (1998), p. 224.

⁴⁰ Cf. Searle's discussion about looking at the front of a house, accompanied by a belief that what one sees is the front of a house, or a belief that what one sees is a façade. John R. Searle, *Intentionality. An Essay on the Philosophy of Mind*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 54-55.

IV. CONCLUDING NOTES: OBJECTIONS, ANSWERS, AND FURTHER EXAMPLES

I will conclude by bringing up a couple of possible worries and objections to the account of non-localised pictorial experience outlined above, and also provide some further examples of pictures that seem to have a particular capacity to elicit pictorial perceptual presence.

(i.) The account appeals to visually imagining pictorially occluded things. Such imaginings are free-floating – indeed they are happening entirely in the head of the viewer. There is no reason to see this as a pictorial experience, since such experience should depend solely on perceiving the picture.

If it is objected that the free-floating character of the relevant imaginings – that they are in part happening in the head of the viewer – disqualifies them as being instances of pictorial experience proper, this reveals much too limited a view of pictorial experience. As just indicated, seeing-in, or pictorial experience in a more narrow sense than the one discussed above, is itself permeated by beliefs, and such beliefs are of course happening in the head. More importantly, what the account above is supposed to capture is a *non-localised* experience. And a non-localised experience, as Wollheim introduces the notion, is a free-floating experience, in that it is *not* sustained by determinate parts of the picture's surface. And this implies that it is, to some extent, happening in the head of the viewer. But the qualifier 'to some extent' is important. For it is not the case that the relevant visual imaginings are totally unrelated to perceiving the picture; the experience is not the kind of completely free-floating experience that occurs in Roberto Casati's recent thought experiment of 'hallucinatory pictures', where, in looking at such images, a viewer has an experience as of whatever they depict, but there seems to be no grounding whatsoever of that experience in any design features of the images.⁴¹ Rather, as was pointed out in the previous section, many imaginings are prompted and this applies to visually imagining pictorially occluded things, too. As I noted, what one imagines in connection to perceiving occlusion depends to a large extent on background knowledge (or belief), so only if one has the relevant beliefs regarding the physiognomy of cats will one sense a perceptual presence of the cat's occluded tail. But what triggers the imagining of the tail is of course one's seeing of the non-

⁴¹ Roberto Casati, 'Hallucinatory Pictures', *Acta Analytica*, 25:3 (2010), pp. 365-368.

occluded bits, be it face-to-face or in a picture. And in this sense, the visual experience of occluded portions of things is dependent on perceiving the picture.

(ii.) *Some think that seeing-in is to be analysed in terms of visual imaginings. So when we see the first few members of the crowd in The Deluge, this is a matter of imagining seeing them. The account of pictorial perceptual presence says that we imagine seeing the occluded members, too. This would seem to imply that our apprehension of the occluded and the non-occluded members are the same. But the two cases are strikingly different. So if the imagination theory of seeing-in is true, something must be wrong with the account above.*

The most elaborate account of depiction and of pictorial experience in terms of imagination is that of Kendall Walton. On his view, pictorial appreciation indeed amounts to visual imaginings, and he thinks of his view as a way to further analyse Wollheim's notion of seeing-in.⁴² So, if he is right, is there a risk that the account I have given above collapses the intuitive difference with respect to how we apprehend, on the one hand, things that are visible in pictures and, on the other, those that are not, but merely pictorially perceptually present? No. On Walton's account, to see something in a picture is to imagine *of one's* (really) seeing the picture *that it is* a seeing of whatever the picture depicts. And here we find the difference between this account of seeing-in and that of pictorial perceptual presence above. For although the latter appeals to visual imaginings, and, as described above, although these are dependent on perceiving the picture, one does *not* imagine *of one's perception of the picture's surface* that it is a perception of occluded parts of things. In this way, although the imaginings of occluded parts of things depend on perceiving the picture, the dependence is not as strong as that embodied in the imaginings that Walton's imagination theory of depiction uses to explain seeing-in. And, hence, the account does make room for a difference between the apprehension of occluded parts of things and those that are visible in the picture, should seeing-in turn out to be a case of visual imagining, too.

⁴² In 'Seeing-in and Seeing Fictionally', Walton writes: 'Although my theory and Wollheim's are very different, their central tenets are more complementary than conflicting, and they are better regarded as allies than as rivals. The make-believe theory can be understood to provide a way of explaining Wollheim's fundamental notion of seeing-in, which, to my mind, he leaves seriously underexplained.' Walton, 'Seeing-in and Seeing Fictionally', in *Marvelous Images: On Values and the Arts*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 134. For another theory of picture perception, which also makes essential use of imagination in explaining pictorial experience, see Catherine Abell and Gregory Currie, 'Internal and External Pictures', *Philosophical Psychology*, 12:4 (1999), pp. 429-445.

(iii.) *Further examples.*

I said above that perceptual presence seems to vary with different kinds of occlusion. Some occluded bits of things seem *more* perceptually present than others. I will close by giving a few examples of pictorial occlusion that seem, to my mind at least, to elicit a particularly strong and perceptual-like sense of what cannot strictly be seen in the picture – that, if I am right, have a particular capacity to prompt visual imaginings of what cannot be seen.

The first kind of pictorial occlusion with this effect concerns pictures that ‘hide’ *psychologically salient elements* of the depicted scene, faces being one kind of such salient features. A surreal case here is Magritte’s *The Son of Man*, depicting a man facing the viewer, but where an apple hides parts of his face. In this image, so it seems to me, there is a certain kind of *tension*, deriving from our not being able to fully see the man’s face. Indeed, this kind of tension does not seem very different from the kind of tension that music might embody, as when a dominant chord ‘waits’ for its release in the tonic. But much like a listener needs, in some sense, to anticipate, or keep in mind, the chord that will offer the release, in order for there to be any tension in the music, so, I suggest, the tension experienced in Magritte’s image derives from our representing what we do not see: or more precisely, from our visually imagining of the occluded parts of the face, which, as a result, are pictorially perceptually present.⁴³

Moreover, there is the phenomenon of, as I called it in the introduction, *quasi-occlusion*. In looking at many pictures, things are indeed hidden from view, but not because other things in the picture occlude them, but because they are simply cut off by the frame, as the crowd of people in Cosimo Rosselli’s *Way to Calvary* (which is another of Wollheim’s example of non-localisation). In such a case, the objects are not strictly pictorially occluded, nor are they *seen as* occluded in the picture; rather they are simply out of view. Still, the parts cut off by the frame are nevertheless, so it seems, experientially given as present in the picture; indeed, the notion of parts being *cut off* would seem to imply the idea that they are somehow present – they are, as Noë would have it, ‘present as absent’. For instance, in Goya’s *No Se Puede Mirar*, a group of people about to be executed are depicted as having guns pointing at them,

⁴³ It is interesting to compare this image to Magritte’s *La reproduction interdite* which also hides the face of a man – this time because the mirror that should mirror his face, as the title prescribes, does not reproduce it, but rather his look as seen from the picture’s viewpoint. This picture, so it seems to me, does not come with the same perceptual presence of the face as does *The Son of Man*. And the reason for this, I think, is that in contrast to the latter, *La reproduction interdite* does not give us any clue as to what to imagine, since this time the entire face is hidden from view.

but the guns are cut off halfway by the frame. But clearly, there is a sense of more than the muzzles of the guns being present in the picture. As Kendall Walton notes,

there can be no doubt that there are soldiers (or anyway people) holding the guns ... It would be perverse, a wilful misinterpretation, to maintain that the guns are hanging in midair ... The position of the guns is responsible for the presence of the soldiers in the picture world.⁴⁴

This is surely correct, but I would like to add that not only are the soldiers *present*, they are so in a perceptual-like manner. Due to visual imagining of them, they are pictorially perceptually present.

A final, phenomenologically intriguing, example is Warren De la Rue's photograph of a solar eclipse in Spain of 1860. In this image, the kind of occlusion effected is different from the kinds discussed so far. For here, the *back* of an object – the moon – occludes the side that faces towards us, and towards De la Rue's so-called photoheliograph with which he took the image. The front completely falls within the shadow cast by the moon's far side, and is thereby made causally idle. It is not entirely clear what to say one sees in this image – some, like Roy Sorensen, would probably say that one sees into 'a concave bowl-shaped surface',⁴⁵ since it is the back of the moon that has been causally efficacious in generating the black disc appearing in De la Rue's image. At any rate, one does *not*, I take it, rightly see the front of the moon in the image since, again, the front-side is occluded by the moon's far side. But the front is surely felt as being present in the image, and this in a highly perceptual-like manner; it is almost *as if* one sees the front in the image. Behind this particularly strong sense of perceptual presence of the moon's front-side lies, I take it, our familiarity with how more common pictures always depict the *front* of things: that is, in the typical case, relative to the viewpoint of the picture, the picture lets us see the front of an object, *x*, provided that, in the world of the picture, there is no other object, *y*, between *x* and the pictorial viewpoint that blocks the light reflected off or emitted from *x*. It is likely that these facts about how depiction typically works are deeply rooted in our appreciation of pictures and are part of our tacit expectations about what to see in them. Now, in De la Rue's image there is no object between the moon and the viewpoint that prevents the moon's near side from being seen in the picture, and hence we tacitly expect to see it. And yet, since the back of

⁴⁴ Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe*, pp. 140-141

⁴⁵ This is what Sorensen says about face-to-face perception of eclipses. See Roy Sorensen, *Seeing Dark Things: The Philosophy of Shadows*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 48. I discuss De la Rue's image at length in my 'Shot in the Dark: Notes on Photography and Causality' (Manuscript).

the moon occludes its front, we do not see the latter. But our *expectation* to do so makes the near side readily 'come to mind' – and, more precisely, and in line with what I have argued in this paper, to the parts of the mind where visual imagination occurs.⁴⁶

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