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The Speaking Image

Visual Communication and the Nature of Depiction

§1 Some First Moves

Communication is one of the most pervasive features of human life. It lies at the centre of many of our activities, from engaging with art to describing one’s day. Many other activities, although not centred on communication, would be impossible without it. To do all this communicating, we use a wide range of tools. We gesticulate, impersonate, act out a train of events, and use objects at hand to stand in for those which are absent. Two forms of communication, however, dominate. The most important is language. Second by some distance, but far ahead of its nearest rival, is representation by pictures. What is this representation, and how does it differ from representation in language, or the representation our other tools allow us to achieve?

A natural first thought is that pictorial representation (or depiction, as I will sometimes call it) is specially visual. This is not the obvious claim that we get the point of pictures by looking at them. That is true of written language too. The idea is that pictures are visual as words are not. This is why pictures are often described as *showing* what they represent, rather than *saying* anything about it. However, as it stands the idea is hardly clear. To help, here are six claims about pictorial representation. As well as clarifying the idea that it is visual, they are of independent importance.

First, as the cliché has it, a picture paints a thousand words. It is possible to refer to a particular thing using a word (eg the name ‘Osama Bin Laden’) without saying anything about it. Likewise, one can talk about a kind of thing using a phrase (eg ‘a small blackbird’) which does not tell us anything else about things of that kind. In contrast, a picture of Bin Laden, or of a small blackbird, however schematic, must depict more than that. It must, for instance, depict a man with certain features, or a small bird of some shape, in some posture. Second, all depiction is from a point of view. The blackbird will be shown from the side, or the front, or above, or even (in

some cubist work) from all three positions at once; but not from no position at all. The words, in contrast, need not describe the bird from any angle. Third, only what can be seen can be depicted, and everything is depicted as having a certain (visual) appearance. So I can depict blackbirds, and depict them as black; but I can't depict an electron (though I can use a picture of something else to represent one non-depictively), and I can't depict Bin Laden as completely invisible (though I can depict the Bin Laden-shaped bulge in the carpet where he is hiding). Fourth, although the picture need not ascribe to its object the visual appearance it really has, there is only so much room for misrepresentation. I can depict a blackbird as much larger and more aggressive than blackbirds really are, but I can't depict it as having only the looks of an eagle. For then, while I may have depicted an eagle, I have not depicted a blackbird at all. Fifth, to understand a picture one needs to know what the thing depicted looks like. I can't tell that it's a picture of Bin Laden unless I know how he looks. Can't I learn this from a picture? Of course, but when I do, I only understand the picture in the first place, say as of a bearded man with sensitive eyes, because I know what *that* looks like. Being able to tell that the picture depicts *a bearded man* requires me to know what a bearded man looks like, and I don't gain the ability to tell that it depicts *Bin Laden* without simultaneously learning what Bin Laden looks like. Sixth, and finally, I do not need much more than knowledge of appearance to understand pictures. Perhaps I must have some general familiarity with pictorial representation. (So perhaps the stories of tribes who are simply perplexed by pictures are true.) But I do not need anything more than this general ability, coupled to knowledge of appearance. Once I can understand some pictures, I can understand all—provided I know the appearance of the things depicted.

Now you might doubt any of these six claims. For any of them, it is possible to think of cases which provide *prima facie* counter-examples. But the six are certainly true for the vast majority of pictures. Moreover, they cohere, in a way which makes them more plausible *en masse* than individually. They suggest that pictorial representation works by capturing the appearance of things. That is why anything represented must have an appearance, and be represented as having one; why the discrepancies between these two can only be so great; why, since something's appearance is relative to the point from which it is seen, all depiction is from a point of view; why depicted content is always relatively rich (the 'thousand words')—since otherwise, not enough

of the appearance would be captured for the representation to be of *that thing*; and why, to understand a picture of something, you need to know what that thing looks like, and not much more. In cohering in this way, around the idea that depiction is representation which captures (visual) appearance, the six provide a way to make more precise the idea that depiction is specially visual. But this coherence also reinforces the claims. Since they hang together in this way, and since they are undeniably true of the vast majority of pictures, there is good reason to think that they trace the boundaries of a genuine phenomenon, pictorial representation. The apparent counter-examples are not really so. Whatever they involve, it cannot be pictorial representation, properly understood.

Can we then *define* pictorial representation by the six features? I doubt it. It seems likely that the same features will hold for representation by three-dimensional models, such as sculpture. Perhaps sculpture represents in just the same way as pictures, but it is natural to think it does not. If we are not to rule this out from the first, it seems there must be more to pictorial representation than the above. What we need is a deeper account of its nature, one that will provide a more profound explanation for the six features.

§2 Moving Towards an Answer

What would such an account look like? An idea that has been very influential in recent years is that pictorial representation works by bringing about a distinctive visual experience. Suppose we said—falsely—that whenever we see a picture, we are in the grip of the illusion of seeing its object face-to-face. We could then understand pictorial representation as the generation of such experiences. Each picture gives us an experience just like that of seeing some object in the flesh, and what the marks depict is whatever object we then seem to see. Now, as noted, this description of our experience of pictures is false. When we see a marked surface, what our experience presents us with is just a set of marks. Perhaps we see them as organized in a special way, but we do not seem to see the picture's object. Nonetheless, even if the specific claims of the illusion view are wrong, the basic approach it exemplifies is attractive. The most powerful advocate of that approach has been Richard Wollheim (1980, 1987). Wollheim calls our experience of pictures 'seeing-in'. While I don't accept

Wollheim's own account of the experience either (see below, §6), I agree with him that this is the right general line to take, and I like the terminology. What I need, then, is a plausible way to characterize seeing-in. What is it to see something in a picture?

The problems with illusion show that we need from the first to give a prominent role, in our account of seeing-in, to our awareness of the marks *as marks*. But we also need to give a prominent role to the thought of the picture's object. Otherwise, the experience can't do the work intended: securing what the picture represents. Both needs can be met if we take seeing-in to be an experience *of resemblance*. To see something, O, in a picture P, is to experience P as resembling O. We see the marks, but see them as resembling something else—say, a blackbird. However, in what way are the marks seen as resembling a blackbird? After all, since the marks are seen as just that, marks on a flat surface, and since a blackbird is a plump, feathery rounded object, full of life, there are plenty of respects in which the picture is *not* seen as resembling its object. In what respect is resemblance experienced?

§3 Outline Shape

An answer can be found in the work of the great 18th century Scottish philosopher, Thomas Reid (1764, especially ch.VI §7). He describes a property he calls 'visible figure', but which I prefer to call 'outline shape'. This is to be distinguished from 2-D or 3-D shape, which, says Reid, is a matter of the positions of an object's parts in relation to each other. A sphere, say, is just an object every part of the surface of which is an equal distance from the object's centre. Outline shape, in contrast, is a matter of the direction of the parts of an object from a point in its surroundings. I will explain what this means with the help of a diagram.

Figure 1 illustrates the directions of parts of a pyramid from a point Z. From that point, one of the corners of the base, A, lies in a certain direction (downwards, and to the left, we might say, if we were at Z). Another corner, B, lies in a different direction, traced by the line ZB (downwards, but more to the right). Points further up that face of the pyramid, C and D, lie in their own directions from Z. And in fact every visible part of the pyramid will lie in a distinct direction from the point. The

pyramid's outline shape, at the point Z, is just a matter of the combined directions from Z in which its various parts lie.

This makes outline shape sound rather recherché, but it is perfectly familiar. Suppose you are looking down receding railway lines. They present a distinctive appearance. As we are tempted to say, they seem to converge. But is this really how things seem? This is, surely, just how receding parallel lines present themselves to our vision. If they did not look that way, your experience would not present them as parallel, but as diverging. Their being parallel is a matter of their 3-D shape, the relations of their various parts to each other, as Reid would say. It is not misrepresented in experience. So in what sense do the lines look converging? Reid's answer, and mine, is that what we are seeing is the outline shape of the receding rails. From the point from which we view them, opposing points on the two lines lie in directions which get ever closer together, as our glance passes down the tracks (see figure 2). And we can offer related accounts of other familiar visual phenomena, such as the increasingly 'elliptical' appearance of a round dinner plate, as it is tilted away.

So outline shape is a property of things, albeit a property they have only in relation to some point. And it is a property we see. But what has it to do with pictures?

The beauty of outline shape is that it ignores the third dimension. Go back to figure 1. Anything lying on the line ZA lies in the same direction from Z as does A. The same is true for anything lying on ZB, ZC or ZD. Since outline shape is just a matter of the combined directions in which parts of a thing lie, it is possible for something with a quite different 3-D shape to share the pyramid's outline shape. One such thing might be a flat surface, with marks in the right places so that, for each part of the pyramid, there is a mark lying in the same direction from Z. If we were to mark a surface in this way, the result would be a picture of the pyramid. (See figure 3.) Outline shape, it seems, is independent of 3-D shape in just the right way for it to be a property that pictures and their objects share.

Reid knew this. He said that the artist's job was to capture outline shape (1764 ch.VI, §§3 & 7). However, Reid and I do not quite agree on how outline shape is relevant to pictorial representation. For my idea is not that artists produce pictures which share

the outline shape of the things they depict. That does not tell us anything about our experience of pictures, seeing-in. My claim is instead that pictures are *seen as resembling* their objects in outline shape.

§4 What Pictorial Representation Really Is

We now know what seeing-in is: experienced resemblance in outline shape. But is this enough to tell us what pictorial representation is? It is not. The problem is that, given the right circumstances or a little luck, many things might, at least on occasion, lead us to have that experience. As Wollheim notes (1987 pp.46-50) we sometimes see things in the frosty patterns on window panes, although they do not depict at all; or see something in a picture, even though it depicts something else. So there is a gap between someone's seeing something in a surface, and that surface depicting that thing. How can we close that gap?

The answer is obvious, especially when we remember that pictures are tools in communication. We should appeal to the intentions of the artist. Pictures depict what they do because (a) we see those things in them; and (b) we are supposed to see them there—someone made those marks *intending* us to see that thing in them. In fact, the appeal to the artist's intentions only gets us so far. For some pictures, there need be no such intentions. The most obvious examples are photographs. Although a photograph usually represents what the photographer intended, it need not. The photographer might not have noticed the grinning face in the corner of the scene. Or the photo might have been taken by accident, the shutter opening by chance when the camera was dropped. In either case, the resulting photo may depict some thing, even though no one intended it to. So, to close the gap between seeing-in and pictorial representation, we need to appeal both to intention, and to the sort of causal connection involved in photography.

If we put all this together, this is what our theory of depiction looks like:

> A picture P depicts something O if, and only if,
>
> > (1) O can be seen in P
>
> and either

(2i) (1) because someone intended that O be seen in P

or

(2c) P is causally related in the right way to O.

This does not tell us much unless we know what it is to see something in a set of marks, but of course we do:

O is seen in a surface P if and only if P is experienced as resembling O in outline shape.

So much for what my view is. Why should you believe it? I will try and persuade you in two steps. First, I defend the view against what is perhaps the most serious objection to it. Second, I compare its advantages with those of its rivals.

§5 Defending the View

There is a natural, and serious, worry about the experienced resemblance view—that it applies to only some pictorial representation. Consider pictures in classical perspective, those pictures meeting the rules laid down by the theorists of the Renaissance. For instance, Leon Battista Alberti suggested that the artist should think of himself as tracing the contours of the object on a transparent glass plane, or 'window', lying between his viewpoint and the thing (1966 p.51). The rules were enormously influential over the following centuries. But there would be no need for such rules if all depiction met them. So it seems the very idea of these rules presupposes that much depiction is not in perspective. This is surely right: examples include much mediaeval and primitive art, children's drawings, some cartoons, and a good deal else besides. Yet, and here's the worry, the experienced resemblance view seems especially well suited to pictures in perspective. For, by and large, the rules of perspective are rules for capturing the outline shape of things. That is why Alberti's advice seems so reminiscent of my exposition of outline shape, and in particular my figure 3. Of course, it's a good thing that my view covers these pictures, since it should cover all. The challenge is to show that it can cover *more than* perspectival depiction.

Although there is some unclarity to this challenge, it has enough intuitive appeal to be worth answering at some length. I make six points.

First, at least some perspectival systems, such as Alberti's, tell us how to project objects onto planes. It is very natural to think of such systems as providing recipes for depicting real objects. At least if this is what is meant by perspective, the experienced resemblance view is in no way committed to this being the only depiction there is. The view tells us nothing about how to make pictures. (That is not the point of figure 3, which instead illustrates how two objects of very different 3-D shape might resemble in outline shape.) All the view does is to put a condition on the result of any picture-making process: if the marks are to depict O, they must be experienced as resembling O in outline shape.

The second point is really a consequence of the first: the view not only allows for the idea that marks depicting something might not resemble it in outline shape, in certain important cases it predicts it. Remember what the view is trying to do. It states what it is for a picture to depict whatever it is that it depicts. When the picture depicts something, such as Tony Blair, as it really is, then the view says the picture will be experienced as resembling in outline shape Blair *as he really is*. But if the picture depicts Blair with distorted features, as a caricature might, then the view claims that the marks will be experienced as resembling just that—Tony Blair *with distorted features*. This is how the view makes room for the possibility of pictorial misrepresentation, the fourth of the six features (§1).

Misrepresentation is about inaccuracy. My third point concerns imprecision. No picture represents every property its object actually has, and some pictures represent relatively few of their objects' properties, and those only vaguely. An example is a simple silhouette of a face. It shows the rough shape of the nose, but no more; and does not depict any of the details, such as eyebrows. (This is not to depict the face as *lacking* eyebrows—the picture is simply silent on the matter.) What will the experienced resemblance view say about relatively imprecise pictorial content? Again, it will say that the marks are experienced as resembling whatever the picture depicts. If it depicts a face full of detail, they are experienced as resembling just that. If it depicts only a vaguely defined face, that is what they are experienced as

resembling. In the latter case, the precise shape of the marks on the page may not matter. What matters is that what is before the viewer is a set of marks of this rough shape, in virtue of which they can be experienced as resembling in outline shape a face the features of which are relatively unspecified. Thus in the case of imprecise depiction, the view can allow for a good deal of variation in marks which, because they all share the relevant rough outline shape, are equally well suited to depicting O. There is no reason to think that those variations stay within the bounds set by some system of perspective.

Fourth, the view does not anyway place any stress on P's resembling O in outline shape. What matters is that P be *experienced as* resembling O in that respect. No doubt in general these two requirements will stand or fall together: what meets one will meet the other. But this need not always be so. Resemblance in outline shape is a (second order) property of the resembling objects, but in general the presence of a property is neither necessary nor sufficient for experience of it. Take an example. A half-submerged stick, although straight, looks bent. The outline shape we see it has having is that of a kinked stick, not a straight one. How should we mark a piece of paper, if we want to capture how the stick looks? If we produce marks which really resemble the stick's outline shape, by drawing a straight line, we will fail. We need to draw a kinked line. So we depict the stick by producing marks which, although they do not resemble the stick in outline shape, are seen as doing so. And this, of course, is just what the experienced resemblance view says we should do. Now, the rules of perspective, in so far as they tell us how to capture outline shape at all, tell us how to produce marks which actually resemble objects in outline shape. But the view tells us that what matters to depiction is experienced resemblance. Since the view does not even agree with the rules of perspective, it can hardly limit depiction to items produced according to those rules.

Fifth, and relatedly, many factors affect what we experience a picture as resembling in outline shape. Some of these factors are a matter of our biology, or of our physical environment. But others may be cultural. Outline shape is often hard to see. Reid called it 'this fugitive form' (1764 ch.VI §7). It is difficult to isolate from 3-D shape and other properties, especially in objects of some complexity. Thus it is quite possible that people differ in their sensitivity to outline shape. And, if I am right that

pictures work by exploiting that sensitivity, it is surely possible that cultural factors, including the styles of depiction people are familiar with, affect how sensitive to outline shape those people are. If that's right, what we experience a picture as resembling in outline shape may differ from what its original viewers saw it as resembling. For example, at first glance many mediaeval pictures of cities show the various buildings stacked up one behind another, higher and higher in the picture plane. We, being familiar with painting in linear perspective, cannot help but see in these canvases a certain spatial disorderliness. But there is no reason to think that the original viewers did. Perhaps they, because unfamiliar with painting in perspective, were simply less sensitive to the discrepancy between the outline shape a city presents and the outline shape of the marks. If so, we need not claim that the picture is in any sense a failure. If its intended audience saw in it what the artist intended, that is what it depicts. The existence now of a visually more sophisticated set of viewers is by the by.

Sixth, and finally, although my view places experienced resemblance in outline shape at the heart of depiction, it does allow for some slippage between the two. Nothing depicts unless it is seen as resembling something else in outline shape. But the picture need not depict precisely that thing. For pictorial representation is essentially a tool for communicating. If the point is got across, the job has been done. As a result, it is possible for the depictive content of a picture to differ slightly from what is seen in it. In particular, certain details of the object seen in the marks may be discounted, by the viewer, as irrelevant to the point the picture is intended to convey. (I make this point for intentional depiction, but related claims apply to accidental photographs and the like.) For instance, it may be that I experience a stick-figure picture as resembling a very thin man, with a balloon-like head. But even if I do, I will not take this as what it represents. I know that you have chosen this method of drawing for its speed and ease. You want to convey something—perhaps what the man is up to—but you are not, in all probability, interested in representing a strangely deformed person. So I set aside certain aspects of what I see in the picture. Seeing-in still governs depiction, since I don't take the marks to depict some feature unless I see that feature in them. But not every feature seen-in is taken as part of what is depicted. Since depiction is about communication, what is reasonably set aside as irrelevant to your representational intention is not part of what is depicted at all. This is how today's

viewers treat the disorderliness of the buildings we see in the mediaeval depiction of the city. Perhaps it is also (contrary to the suggestion above) how the original viewers of this picture reacted. Certainly that is a possibility for other non-perspectival images. Thus once again what is not in perspective need not be treated by the experienced resemblance view as not depictive.

In short, perspective may preserve outline shape, but the view does not see depiction as being about such preservation. Now, these six points may not satisfy the critic. They all exploit either non-veridical pictorial content (points one and two), or imprecise content (this is explicit for three, but in effect also what underlies five and six), or the slightly arcane possibility that experienced resemblance come apart from resemblance (four). And one might wonder whether there could be depiction which, though not in classical perspective, is of highly precise and accurate pictorial contents and which does not rely on the arcane possibility. Indeed, Dominic Lopes has suggested that so-called inverse perspective provides just such a counter-example to my view (Lopes 2003). Now, I deny that pictures in inverse perspective depict what Lopes says they do. They do depict, but only somewhat imprecisely; and they do represent precise contents, but only non-depictively. Moreover, I do not merely assert this, but offer an argument (Hopkins 2003a). If that argument works (and its premises are ones Lopes himself seems to accept), it shows, not just that the experienced resemblance view should deny that these pictures depict precise contents, but that Lopes' own recognitional theory (see below) should also do so. The only remaining counter-example thus seems to be one that its proponent cannot use.

§6 Comparing the View with the Alternatives

To defend the view against criticism is one thing, to make a positive case for it is quite another. I will do this last by comparing the position with its main rivals. First, then, let me say what these are. I begin with a view which, like mine, adopts the experiential approach to depiction.

Richard Wollheim has not only been the most forceful advocate of the experiential approach in general, he has also offered his own characterisation of seeing-in (1987). The distinguishing feature of Wollheim's view is its modesty. He says that seeing-in

is an experience with two ‘folds’ or ‘aspects’. One fold is somehow analogous to seeing the marks, without making any sense of them. The other is somehow analogous to seeing the depicted object in the flesh. But Wollheim refuses to say how these two aspects are related to those independent experiences. He thinks that to do so would be a mistake. All we can say is that there are these two folds to seeing-in, that both occur at once, and that attention can nevertheless shift between them (provided neither is entirely extinguished).

There are two other positions I want to discuss. Neither is a form of experiential view, although they differ in their distance from such accounts. The *recognition theory* (Schier 1986, Lopes 1996) agrees with experiential accounts that pictures are importantly visual representations. But instead of trying to understand their visual nature in terms of an experience which pictures provoke, the theory appeals to the processing involved in understanding them. The claim is that pictures engage the very same abilities that are involved in recognizing the depicted object in the flesh. In fact, there are two claims here. The first is that I can understand a picture as representing a blackbird if, and only if, I can recognize blackbirds when I see them. There is ‘co-variance’ (Schier 1986) between the ability to interpret pictures and the ability to recognize their objects in the flesh. The second claim is that whatever sub-personal processing is involved in recognizing the object in the flesh, significantly overlapping processing is involved in understanding a depiction of that object. The second claim, concerning overlap, is inferred as the best explanation of the first, concerning co-variance. The inference is to some overlap, no more, because we do not in general confuse pictures with their objects. Given this, there must be some stage at which the two processing chains differ. Otherwise, they would yield the same output, and we would misidentify the picture as the blackbird (or vice versa).

Finally, there is the view brilliantly advocated by Nelson Goodman (1968, 1988). He argues that pictures form a symbol system in just the sense in which words do. What distinguishes pictures is formal features of the symbol system to which they belong. In particular, Goodman suggests that pictorial symbol systems are *relatively replete*, and *syntactically and semantically dense*. The details here are very interesting, but need not concern us. The gist is that pictorial systems allow for an infinite number of possible symbols, and possible referents of those symbols, and that, for a wide range

of properties of the marks on the surface, the smallest difference in one of those properties affects what the symbol represents. In written language, in contrast, variations in many properties of the marks (their colour, size, and even many aspects of their shape) are unimportant. They simply do not affect which word is inscribed, and hence what is represented.

How, then, do these various positions and mine compare? I will make three points.

(a) Pictures are tools for communication, or representations. But they are particularly visual representations. I think it clear that some of the positions emphasize one of these features at the cost of the other.

Goodman's view puts all the stress on the first. Pictures are just symbols, like words, differing from them only in formal respects. In effect, Goodman denies that pictures are, in any interesting sense, visual. This seems implausible. For instance, it leaves Goodman unable to explain how at one extreme depiction shades into illusion, as clever *trompe l'oeil* demonstrates; or how it could be possible to produce pictures mechanically, using only the geometrically regular movement of light, as do photographs. Both these aspects of depiction should be as puzzling for Goodman as the thought that at the limit linguistic description might aim to delude the reader into thinking that she is looking at the thing described, or that we might produce descriptions using only mirrors and photosensitive film.

The recognition theory, in contrast, puts all the weight on the visual, and none on the communication. It gives very pure expression to the idea that pictures are visual representations, in its claim that they engage the same visual processing as their objects. In fact, the view need not privilege the *visual* over other perceptual modes. It could see pictorial representation as encompassing various types of symbol, all of which work by engaging the same processing, in *some* modality, as their objects. This clearly appeals to Lopes, who has drawn our attention to some fascinating psychological evidence concerning the ability of blind people to draw and understand raised-line pictures (Lopes 1997, and see Hopkins 2000). But, whether pictures are specially visual, or specially perceptual, their communicative aspect needs accommodating. And it is not clear how the recognition theory can do this. True, it

concedes that we can tell pictures and their objects apart, and so supposes that the processing story in the two cases diverges at some point. But the concession is rather grudging. The view has nothing concrete to say about the difference between the processing a picture demands, and that triggered by its object. All its ingenuity is expended in trying to understand the link between our looking at a flat surface and our looking at the robustly three-dimensional world. This does not strictly make it impossible to accommodate the communicative aspect of pictures. (Indeed Schier spends considerable energy making room for it (1986 ch.s 6-8).) But it does doom this accommodation to the role of afterthought. In contrast, I claim, when we encounter pictures we encounter objects which are patently communicative episodes. They are the messages in a bottle of the visual world.

Both aspects of pictures are given their proper place by the experienced resemblance view. An experience of resemblance makes no sense without both a resembler experienced and a resembled in the light of which it is experienced. Thus the view gives equal weight, in describing our experience of pictures, to the marks (the resembler) and the object the thought of which organizes them (the resembled). So one encounters a communication, in the form of a deliberately marked surface; but one that is particularly visual, a grasp of its meaning requiring one to see it in a particular way. However, the view is not the only position to attain a proper balance between the two aspects. Wollheim’s view certainly does so, since it in effect makes the two features definitive of seeing-in.

(b) However, there is a related issue where even this rival falls away. One consequence of the imbalance in the recognitional account and Goodman’s view is that they are unable to distinguish pictorial representation from representation by sculpture. Goodman can find no difference between pictorial and sculptural representation because any formal features of the former, such as density and repleteness, will also be found in the latter. And the recognitional view, since it puts all the weight on the link between picture and object, has no resources for distinguishing the rather different link between sculpture and object. In so far as it is plausible that pictures engage the same processing as their objects, it is just as much so for sculpture. Schier, indeed, acknowledges this point, and takes himself to be defining a far wider category, ‘iconic’ representation in general (1986 ch.4).

Lopes, however, is more optimistic (see his chapter). He might try to capture the distinction in two ways. One would be to supplement the claims of the recognition theory. For instance, it might be stipulated that, while pictures and sculptures both engage our abilities to recognize O, the former are 2-D, the latter 3-D. Any such move looks like an unsatisfactory afterthought. It is not the recognition view which is doing the work here, but these other claims, and they could be attached to almost any position. So it is as well that Lopes explores an alternative. This is to adjust one of the centrepieces of the recognition theory, the overlap claim. What pictures engage is not merely our ability to recognize O in the flesh, but our ability to recognize O 'seen two-dimensionally'. Sculptures, in contrast, engage our ability to recognize O when presented in three dimensions.

I doubt that this second option is genuine. It is simply unclear what it means to say that we recognize O presented in two dimensions. Suppose I said that, in understanding a passage describing O, we recognize O presented linguistically. This is just a misleading way of saying that a bit of language represents O, and we can understand it as doing so. How does Lopes's claim fare any better? We no more see O when seeing a picture of it, than when reading the description. So in neither case do we recognize O, if that means correctly identifying what we see as O. And in both cases what we can do is identify the thing as a *representation of O*. Now, this does not show that the adjusted recognition theory fails to distinguish pictorial from linguistic representation. The co-variance claim blocks this unwelcome consequence: linguistic understanding fails to co-vary with the ability to recognize O in the flesh. However, what the example does show is that our options for interpreting talk of 'recognizing O seen two-dimensionally' are very limited. Either it means (a) that we identify a representation as of O, and that representation is two-dimensional; or it means (b) that what we are seeing is O in two-dimensional form, and we recognize it as such. The problem with (a) is twofold. First, it turns the overlap claim from an interesting assertion about the cognitive processing involved in understanding pictures into the wholly uncontroversial claim that we are able to understand them. Second, it allows us to distinguish picturing from sculpture only by an appeal, quite independent of the rest of the view, to the fact that one is in two-dimensions, the other in three. We are

back at the original way to handle the distinction, as a mere afterthought. The problem with (b), on the other hand, is that it is, if not nonsense, then certainly false.

Difficulties in differentiating picturing from sculpture are not restricted to the unbalanced accounts. Wollheim's rather minimal description of seeing-in surely applies just as readily to our experience of sculpture. There too, there is an aspect which is somewhat analogous to seeing the sculpted object in the flesh, and an aspect somewhat analogous to seeing the sculpture without making sense of it, seeing it, for instance, as nothing more than a lump of stone.

In sharp contrast, the experienced resemblance view distinguishes the two with ease. To see something in a picture is to see it as resembling its object in one respect, outline shape. Our experience of sculpture is of a quite distinct resemblance—resemblance in 3-D shape. Perhaps we should finish the job by adding a negative claim to our account of pictures: we do not see them as resembling their objects in 3-D shape. But this is both easily done, and independently plausible.

(c) Finally, let me return to the six features of depiction with which I began. I said we should aim for an account of pictorial representation which explained these six features. Does the view I have suggested do this? And do any of its rivals do as well?

Here is the experienced resemblance view's explanation for the six features. If a set of marks is to depict something, it must be experienced as resembling it in outline shape—this is just the view. But you can't experience resemblance in outline shape to something unless you think of that thing as having certain properties—at least outline shape itself, and any other properties that entails. Hence feature one. But outline shape is relative to a point. Nothing has an outline shape *tout court*. It has different outline shapes at different points in its surroundings. Since resemblance can only be experienced to something with an outline shape, and since outline shape is relative to a point, resemblance is experienced to something considered *from a certain point*. Hence feature two. Now, outline shape is not a visual notion. But our grasp of it is visual: we only perceive outline shapes, at least to any very determinate degree, in vision. So the only things to which we can experience resemblance in outline shape will be visible ones. Hence feature three. There is no need for the resemblance to be

experienced to the thing as it actually is—misrepresentation is possible. But it cannot be to the thing transformed beyond all recognition, on pain of the experience of resemblance breaking down. Hence feature four. Since to interpret a picture is, more or less, just to see the right thing in it, the resources necessary for understanding pictures are just those necessary for experiencing resemblance in outline shape. The latter amount to little more than knowledge of a thing's appearance. Hence features five and six.

What of the other candidates? How do they fare? It would be laborious to run through each of the six features for each of the rivals, so I will confine myself, in closing, to some brief observations.

Goodman is at sea with almost all of the features. His refusal to allow depiction to be visual, coupled to the fact that most of the features concern visual aspects of what can be depicted, block explanations at the first. Wollheim simply says too little about seeing-in for his view to explain much. Until we are told in what way each 'fold' of the experience is analogous to the experience of seeing the object, or seeing the marks as marks, we cannot tell what properties seeing-in, and hence depiction, will have. For instance, all seeing is from a point of view. But will this feature of seeing a blackbird transfer to seeing one in a picture? Wollheim's blank formula that the one experience is 'somewhat analogous' to the other prevents us from knowing. The recognition theory in effect takes features five and six as basic. It translates their talk of knowing the object's appearance into talk of being able to recognize it, but this difference, though not trivial, is not enormous. It then treats those two claims combined as its first, and most elemental, claim (the co-variance thesis). Of course, it also infers overlap as the best explanation for co-variance. But since the overlap claim is just that there is as much overlap in processing as is required to explain co-variance, this hardly constitutes a genuine explanation of the latter (compare soporific virtue). However, it might try to explain some of the other features. Schier himself has a go at features one and two (1986 p.164), and Lopes has buttressed those moves against an attack from me (Hopkins 1998, Lopes 2003). For my part, I cannot see how the explanations appeal to more than contingent facts about our processing system. Since I think the features are *necessary* features of depiction, I don't think any explanation the view offers will ever be strong enough (Hopkins 2003b).

Well, so what? After all, none of the six features are unassailable. This is true. However, I think that those who reject them ought to find substitutes. They ought to propose other features of depiction, which have some claim to trace a unified phenomenon for us all to study, and which are both sufficiently interesting to merit explanation, and sufficiently superficial to leave room for it. It would help if those features also cohered, in the way I suggested my six did. Perhaps the proponents of these other views will come up with a rival set. At the moment, no one has even seriously tried. Until they do, I contend that the fact that my six features are plausible, and that the experienced resemblance view is the only plausible position to offer explanations of them, is reason enough to believe it.

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