

On Depiction and Expression

Two essays in Philosophical Aesthetics

by
Servaas de Villiers van der Berg

*Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts (Philosophy)
at the University of Stellenbosch*



Supervisor: Prof W.L. van der Merwe
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Departement of Philosophy

December 2010

Declaration

By submitting this thesis/dissertation electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

December 2010

Copyright © 2010 University of Stellenbosch

All rights reserved

Abstract

This thesis consists of two essays, each focussing on a current topic in aesthetics in the tradition of analytic philosophy.

First paper (On depiction)

Given broad consensus that resemblance theories do not do well at explaining depiction, two alternative approaches have dominated the literature in recent decades: (1) Perceptual accounts try to ground depiction in the phenomenology of our pictorial experiences; (2) Structural accounts understand pictures as symbols in pictorial symbol systems. I follow Dominic Lopes in granting that the two approaches, often interpreted as each other's rivals, both have merit and are successful in answering divergent questions about depiction.

After taking stock of the most influential theories from both approaches, I turn to John Kulvicki's recent work. He has made surprising progress as a proponent of the structural approach. His attempt to define depiction in structural terms is groundbreaking and, for the most part, successful. The paper measures some of his suggestions on picture structure and perception against the well-established "twofoldness"-thesis of the perceptual theorist on depiction, Richard Wollheim. Wollheim's theory is defended and suggestions made to adapt Kulvicki's theory accordingly.

Second paper (On expression)

Since Frank Sibley's early papers in the mid-twentieth century, analytic aesthetics has broadened its field of inquiry to extend past the traditional focus on judgements of beauty or aesthetic merit, to peripheral terms, concepts, properties and judgements (e.g. of *grace*, *elegance*, *garishness*, *daintiness*, *dumpiness*, etc.). Nick Zangwill gives a traditionalist report of what binds the new, broad and heterogeneous category of the aesthetic together. He argues that purely evaluative aesthetic judgements of beauty or ugliness (i.e. "verdicts") are fundamental. All other aesthetic judgements derive their evaluative aesthetic nature from them.

In this essay it is argued that Zangwill's defence of beauty's supremacy in the category of the aesthetic, does not do justice to ostensible instances of non-evaluative judgements that ascribe *expressive* properties to artworks. Nelson Goodman's cognitivist theory of expression in art is used as a foil for Zangwill's claims.

Opsomming

Hierdie tesis bestaan uit twee essays, elk oor 'n aktuele onderwerp in estetika in die tradisie van die analitiese filosofie.

Eerste essay (Oor uitbeelding, oftewel “piktoriale representasie”)

Gegewe 'n algemene konsensus dat ooreenkoms-teorieë nie slaag daarin om uitbeelding (“depiction”) te verklaar nie, is daar twee alternatiewe benaderings wat die onlangse literatuur oor die onderwerp oorheers: (1) die perseptuele benadering probeer uitbeelding begrond in die fenomenologie van ons piktoriale ervarings; (2) die strukturele benadering verstaan beelde as simbole in piktoriale simbool-sisteme. In navolging van Dominic Lopes neem ek aan dat dié twee benaderings, wat normaalweg as mekaar se opponente beskou word, al twee meriete dra en onderskeidelik sukses behaal in die beantwoording van heel uiteenlopende vrae oor die aard van uitbeelding.

Na 'n bestekopname van die mees invloedryke teorieë onder beide benaderings, word John Kulvicki se onlangse werk oorweeg. Hy maak verrassende vooruitgang as ondersteuner van die strukturele benadering. Sy poging om uitbeelding in strukturele terme te definiëer is revolusionêr en bied stof vir nadenke. In hierdie essay word sommige van sy voorstelle oor beeld-struktuur en -waarneming gemeet aan die gevestigde “twofoldness”-tesis van Richard Wollheim. Wollheim se perseptuele teorie word verdedig en 'n voorstelle word gemaak om Kulvicki se teorie daarvolgens aan te pas.

Tweede essay (Oor uitdrukking)

Sedert Frank Sibley se vroeë essays in die middel van die twintigste eeu het die analitiese estetika sy visier verbreed om verby die tradisionele fokus op oordele van skoonheid en estetiese *waarde* te kyk, na perifere terme, begrippe, eienskappe en oordele (van bv. *grasie*, *delikaatheid*, *balans*, *strakheid*, *elegansie*, ens., ens.). Nick Zangwill gee 'n tradisionalistiese verslag van wat die nuwe, breë en heterogene kategorie van die estetiese saambind. Hy argumenteer dat suiwer *evaluerende* oordele van skoonheid fundamenteel bly. Alle ander estetiese oordele se estetiese aard word daarvan afgelei.

In hierdie essay argumenteer ek dat Zangwill se verdediging van skoonheid (of estetiese waarde) as fundamenteel tot die kategorie van die estetiese, nie laat reg geskied aan aantoonbare gevalle van nie-evaluerende oordele, naamlik dié wat *ekspressiewe* eienskappe aan kunswerke toeskryf, nie. Nelson Goodman se kognitiewe teorie van van uitdrukking in kuns word gebruik as teenhanger en wegspringplek vir kritiek op Zangwill se aansprake.

Acknowledgements

Thank you kindly...

- to my supervisor, Prof Willie van der Merwe, for continued support over an extended period to ensure the completion of this project. It was especially gracious of him to enable me to explore a field of interest that might not always have overlapped with his own. Thank you also to Lettie, his wife, whose uncurbed enthusiasm is always greatly encouraging.
- to everyone at the Philosophy Department at Stellenbosch, for being exceptional teachers, colleagues, friends, and partners in philosophical conversation.
- to Profs Arnold Burms and Leon Horsten at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, whose courses first stirred my interest in aesthetics and analytic philosophy respectively.
- to the Vlaams-Zuid-Afrikaanse Cultuurstichting for financial support that made my stay in Belgium during the first half of 2008 possible.
- and to my parents, to whom I will always be indebted for the opportunity to study simply for the love of it.

Contents

First paper:

Wollheim and Kulvicki on depiction: Assessing points of convergence between perceptual and structural theories

1

Bibliography

30

Second paper:

The non-evaluative nature of expressive aesthetic properties

32

Bibliography

53

WOLLHEIM AND KULVICKI ON DEPICTION: ASSESSING POINTS OF CONVERGENCE BETWEEN PERCEPTUAL AND STRUCTURAL THEORIES

INTRODUCTION

Depiction has with good reason been called one of the most popular topics in recent aesthetics. During the last few decades the fact of its popularity has been exemplified, conspicuously, by the considerable number of theories sprouting in Analytic Philosophy, devoted to explaining the pictorial relation – between pictures and their contents. Most if not all of these theories fall roughly into one of two categories. On the one hand there are “perceptual” theories that try to understand depiction with reference to the way in which pictures are experienced by their spectators. And on the other hand, there are “semiotic”, or what I prefer to call “structural”, theories that explain depictive reference through an analogy with linguistic reference.

Approached from the former angle, pictures are taken to be perceptually special. Unlike linguistic, logical, diagrammatic and cartographic representations, pictures do not only relay information or bring the things they represent to mind; instead, they afford the viewer an opportunity to *perceive* the things they are pictures of (by simply looking at the picture itself). To perceptual theorists this experience of depicted subject matter *through* or *in* a picture, and nothing else, is what makes depiction what it is.

The latter, structural approach to understanding depiction claims that pictures, like linguistic signs, function within representational systems in which reference is determined by convention. The point of departure for theories of this mould is the assumption that, in the absence of a natural or pre-conventional link between pictures and what they represent, depiction can best be defined by determining syntactic, semantic, and other structural constraints that characterise the symbol systems within which pictures obtain their meaning.

This essay takes a moderate perspective on the issue as its working assumption, namely that the apparent disagreement between perceptual and structural theories of depiction is, to a significant degree, more verbal than real. Among representations in general, pictures are both perceptually and structurally special. Alternatively put: the unique nature of depiction admits of non-trivial characterisation in both perceptual and structural terms. If this is true one would of course expect the two sets of characteristics of depiction, as pointed out by perceptual and structural theories respectively, to be, at the very least, consistent with each other.¹ This is why a comparative analysis of

¹ I say “at the very least” because one could conceivably make the stronger claim (which I do not make here), that there is a causal link between these two sets of characteristics; i.e. that the peculiarity of picture perception is *caused by* the structural peculiarities of pictorial systems.

perceptual and structural theories of depiction, one that focuses on continuities as well as discrepancies between the two, looks to be a profitable venture.

In what follows I compare Richard Wollheim's well-known idea of "twofoldness" in picture perception, with an idea central to John Kulvicki's recent structural theory: the "structural transparency" of pictorial systems. I argue that a distinction Kulvicki uses in his definition of structural transparency (between the "skeletal" and "fleshed out" contents of pictures), leads him to misconstrue Wollheim's twofoldness thesis and, hence, to an inadequate appreciation of the inherent twofoldness of picture perception.

My argument is divided into four sections. After sketching some background to the topic in a brief first section, I take stock of the most influential perceptual accounts of depiction in Section 2, focusing especially on Wollheim and twofoldness. Section 3 is devoted to structural accounts and explains how Kulvicki reworks Nelson Goodman's theory in an attempt to define depiction in exclusively structural terms. In the fourth and concluding section, I discuss Kulvicki's ideas on picture perception, and how he situates himself with regard to Wollheim's twofoldness requirement. I explain what I consider to be the main defect in Kulvicki's account, and suggest how it could be supplemented with appropriate insights from a perceptual approach to depiction.

1. BACKGROUND: DEPICTION AND RESEMBLANCE

Like all symbols, pictures are things that "stand in for" or "refer to" other (real or possible) objects, events or states of affairs. Typically these objects, events or states of affairs – which we usually call the contents of a picture – are in some sense absent from, or at least not identical to, the picture itself. We generally say that symbols (including pictures, logical symbols, linguistic signs, diagrams, graphs, maps, road signs, thermometers, etc.) *represent* their contents, and more specifically, that pictures *depict* theirs. In other words there is a distinctive kind of representation exclusive to pictures, which we call "depiction". Robert Hopkins (1995: 425) demonstrates this with the example of a painting that *shows* a seated woman who *symbolises* despair, while the painting also *expresses* melancholy. Undoubtedly, when asked to say what the painting depicts, we would readily agree that it depicts a seated woman. So while the "showing", the "symbolising", and the "expressing" in the example can all be identified as instances of representation, we tend to think only of the first of these as depiction.

The question that interests me here is *what exactly constitutes depiction?* In an historical setting where the dissemination of images has become a determining feature of our culture, it is hardly difficult to recognise the relevance of this question. To formulate it differently: why and how are pictures special? To what can their depictive capacity be attributed? What determines what scenes, objects and/or events are depicted by a particular picture? What is it that delimits depiction among other forms of symbolisation/representation?² One of the central concerns of this essay is to consider

² Dominic Lopes (2000: 227) has commented on the danger of treating the distinctive issues underlying these questions indiscriminately. Indeed, one of my reasons for believing that depiction admits of both perceptual and

some of the canonical answers to these questions, but first we have to do away with a common misconception.

Most people share the intuition that pictures, as opposed to words or graphs for instance, “look like” what they represent. This can easily tempt us into thinking that pictures represent their contents *by virtue of* resembling them (let us call this the basis of a naive resemblance theory of depiction). It turns out that this intuition, although not unfounded, is misleading. Resemblance between a symbol and what it refers to is neither a sufficient nor (arguably) necessary condition for that symbol to be considered depictive.

In the last few decades, research in the psychology of depiction as well as the philosophy of pictures has shown this to be the case. The most famous contributions in this regard are probably art historian Ernst Gombrich’s monumental work *Art and Illusion* (1961) and Nelson Goodman’s *Languages of Art* (1976). In the first part of *Art and Illusion*, entitled “The Limits of Likeness”, Gombrich (1977: 29-78) shows how an artist’s painting of a scene is never really a question of copying or imitating what she perceives; and how there is a great deal to the creation of pictures, whatever the style or medium, that depends entirely on convention.

Goodman (1976: 3) follows Gombrich in this regard and opens his own book with the following quote³: “Art is not a copy of the real world. One of the damn things is enough.” He goes on to note that while the relation of resemblance is both *reflexive* and *symmetric*, depiction is neither (Goodman, 1976: 4). Resemblance is reflexive in that any object resembles itself to the very last detail, and symmetric in that one object resembles another exactly as much as that other object resembles it. In contrast to this, pictures seldom depict themselves (i.e. depiction lacks the reflexivity that resemblance has), and pictures are almost never depicted by their contents, although their contents are certainly depicted by them (i.e. depiction lacks symmetry). Clearly these incongruities between depiction and resemblance are enough to call for a more sophisticated account of how pictures gain their referential capacity.

Given these considerations, some theorists have turned to qualified or refined versions of a resemblance theory. Christopher Peacocke (1987), Malcolm Budd (1993) and Robert Hopkins (1995) have all, for example, explored the idea of *experienced resemblance* (as opposed to real resemblance) as a basis for understanding how pictures achieve reference. Experienced resemblance has the clear advantage that, unlike real resemblance, it entails neither a symmetric⁴ nor a reflexive⁵

structural characterisation, is the view that the perceptual and structural approaches aim to answer different, albeit related, questions about depiction.

³ The quote is attributed by Goodman, with an admission of uncertainty, to Virginia Woolf.

⁴ That I experience one thing as resembling another does not necessitate that I would also experience the latter as resembling the former. When looking at a little hill in the Karoo, I may very well experience it as resembling Table Mountain. But from this it does not follow that upon seeing Table Mountain, I would experience it as resembling a little hill in the Karoo. Hence experienced resemblance, like depiction, is asymmetric.

relation. But despite this apparent improvement on a naive resemblance theory, experienced resemblance theories have some serious obstacles to overcome.

Jerrold Levinson (1998: 227) points out two of these obstacles⁶: firstly, while the experience of perceiving resemblances is inherently relational and comparative, the experience of recognising a picture's depicted content is decidedly not. It seems feasible, even obvious, that one can recognise something in a picture without any comparison having taken place, but one cannot experience two things as resembling each other without comparing them, which means that the relation of depiction can be established prior to the experience of resemblance. And secondly, whereas the perception of resemblance is a notion of degree, depiction is much closer to being an "on-off or all-or-nothing" affair (Levinson, 1998: 227). One usually either recognises something in a picture or one does not; two things can be experienced as somewhat resembling each other, but with depiction there is no middle ground in which a picture only somewhat depicts its subject.

There are, in other words, also significant differences between experiencing resemblance and understanding pictures. This is why – Peacocke, Budd and Hopkins notwithstanding – there is a well established and growing consensus in the literature, that resemblance is not enough to explain how pictures manage to refer to their contents, nor to explain in what ways depiction differs from other forms of representation. Resemblance simply does not make the cut. Which leaves us with an obvious question: what are the alternatives to resemblance theories of depiction? The next two sections respectively look at two alternative approaches.

2. PERCEPTUAL THEORIES

Perceptual theorists share the view that, for any picture, an experience can be postulated by virtue of which that picture succeeds in depicting its contents. Without the possibility of such an experience, there can be no depiction. In Richard Wollheim's words, "if a picture represents something, then there will be a visual experience of that picture that determines that it does so"⁷ (Wollheim, 1998: 217).

⁵ An object's resemblance to itself is given a priori, and is therefore seldom if ever explicit in my experience of that object. Table Mountain's resemblance to itself is logically prior to my perceiving of Table Mountain as such. As a result, saying that I perceive Table Mountain as *resembling itself* is really no more than saying that I perceive Table Mountain. Hence experienced resemblance, like depiction, is not intrinsically a reflexive relation.

⁶ There are more arguments against experienced resemblance theories – cf., for example, Wollheim (1998: 222-223). But because Wollheim's more technical arguments rely on premises grounded in his own theory of depiction, I list only Levinson's general (less theory-dependent) reasons here.

⁷ Unlike Wollheim, whose work is primarily concerned with the status of painting as a *visual* art, I do not think it necessary for a consistent perceptual account of depiction to disqualify instances of non-visual representation from being considered depictive. Like most theorists I treat visual representation as a paradigmatic case, but this does not have to imply that visual representation is the only possible kind of depiction (cf. Kulvicki, (2006: 106-114) and Walton (1992: 284) on, for example, audio, tactile and theatrical depiction). For my purposes, therefore, the point of the citation from Wollheim is not to restrict the domain of depiction to the visual, but to the *perceptual*.

There is, however, much variance among perceptual theorists about what exactly the so-called “appropriate experience” at the root of the pictorial relation entails. In the previous section I already mentioned the group of theories that invoke the notion of *experienced resemblance* to serve as appropriate experience, and I hinted at some of the reasons why these theories come up short. I now turn to perceptual theories that do not rely on an appeal to resemblance.

2.1 Gombrich and illusion

Having argued that resemblance does not explain how depictive reference comes about, Gombrich appeals, instead, to the *conditions* under which pictures are experienced. His understanding of depiction rests on a speculative history that traces the origins of visual representation to conditions that facilitate perceptual illusion. According to Gombrich (1977: 172) such conditions of illusion are typically, and were originally, created by contexts of action. Take for example the pre-historic hunter scanning the horizon for his prey. His expectations, aroused by participation in the activity of the hunt, combined with adrenaline, can easily make every other boulder or tree stump momentarily look like the bison he is searching for. Or, to use Gombrich’s own, very different example:

“When the hobby-horse leans in the corner, it is just a stick; as soon as it is ridden, it becomes the focus of the child’s imagination and turns into a horse. The images of art, we remember, also once stood in a context of action.” (Gombrich, 1977: 172)

There are grounds to believe that, in many primitive societies, visual art was often married to cult and ritual. In “early cultures”, Gombrich argues, images and fetishes were “bathed, anointed, clothed, and carried in procession” and it was these ritual activities that made it easy for an engrossed participant to mistake, even if just briefly, the artefact for the real thing; the picture for the thing depicted (Gombrich, 1977: 172).

Although for a very long time art has been withdrawing from ritual, and it no longer finds itself exclusively intertwined with contexts of action, Gombrich suggests that depiction remains parasitic on conditions of illusion. In a modern museum, or anywhere where the ritual context is absent, the expectations that facilitate illusion have to be created by the picture itself. Pictures, in this analysis, somehow appeal to their spectators to interpret them or flesh them out, and this appeal draws the spectator into the necessary frame of mind to cause perceptual illusion;

“Even within [a] world of conscious make-believe, it was found, genuine illusion held its own: we have seen how the incomplete painting can arouse the beholder’s imagination and project what is not there.” (Gombrich, 1977: 174)

So, to paraphrase: for perceptual theorists like Wollheim, the experience that determines what a picture depicts is perceptual as opposed to, for instance, reflective.

So, if one is to extract from the above a general (although admittedly somewhat simplified) version of Gombrich's view on depiction, it would look something like this: a picture depicts its contents by virtue of, at least for the shortest of moments, creating the illusion in the spectator of being the thing(s) it depicts.

Two things about Gombrich's account are problematic.⁸ Firstly, with regard to his speculations that link the origin of visual representation to ritual, it would seem that he gets the causal direction the wrong way around. One has to wonder whether, as Gombrich would have it, it is the context of ritual that originally conferred depictive reference onto pictures in primitive cultures; or whether, more likely, some artefacts were chosen for use in rituals precisely because they already possessed quasi-depictive attributes. If the latter is the case, which I think is reasonable to assume, then a prior explanation for depiction, one that precedes the use of pictures in ritual, is required.

Secondly, and more tellingly, the idea that pictures represent through illusion has a significant counter-intuitive implication for the way we consider pictorial content. Richard Wollheim (1986: 46-47) points out that theories based on illusion presuppose two distinct experiences when someone is looking at a picture. Consider for example, say, a spectator looking at a picture of a circus tent. On the one hand there is her experience of the picture surface. This experience would, according to theories such as Gombrich's, correspond to instances of "normal" or "simple" perception, like when we perceive objects other than pictures. On the other hand, there is her experience of the circus tent *in* the picture. The problem, to Wollheim's mind, is that illusion-based theories necessitate that this second kind of experience is considered illusory rather than correct or veridical (Wollheim, 1986: 47). But this is clearly not the way we generally treat our experience of pictures. In our everyday contact with pictures, we do not think of our recognition of their contents as illusory. In fact, recognising the content of a picture (rather than perceiving just a marked or coloured picture surface) means that I perceive the picture in the way it is supposed to be perceived. We tend to think of our seeing the circus tent *in* or *through* the picture not as an illusory experience, but as the correct or intended way of experiencing the picture. The circus tent is not just the result of a trick played on us by our senses, but rather a real manifestation of a depicted tent. Gombrich's theory, by implication, denies this. So, plainly, grounding depiction in perceptual illusion leads to dubious consequences.

⁸ Gombrich's work has both virtues and shortcomings. One of its merits, on which especially Kendall Walton's (1990) theory of representation later picks up, is that Gombrich's appeal to illusion goes a long way toward explaining our psychological attachments to some artworks (e.g. fetishism, and the way in which artworks can often act as psychological substitutes for the things they represent – cf. Gombrich (1978: 4-5)). Illusion, like resemblance, may be an important notion in this regard and should not be neglected by aesthetics. However, this does not mean that illusion, like in Gombrich's account, is logically prior to or even consistent with depiction.

2.2 Wollheim and seeing-in

To rectify this flaw in Gombrich's theory, Wollheim substitutes illusion with a specific visual capacity he calls "seeing-in". "Seeing-in" is the name he gives to both the capacity⁹ that mediates visual representation, and the experience that accompanies the appropriate perception of a picture. According to Wollheim, the experience of seeing-in is necessarily characterised by a distinctive phenomenology he calls "twofoldness", which entails that...

"...when seeing-in occurs, two things happen: I am visually aware of the surface that I look at, and I discern something standing out in front of, or (in certain cases) receding behind, something else. So, for instance, I follow the famous advice of Leonardo da Vinci to an aspirant painter and I look at a stained wall, or I let my eyes wander over a frosty pane of glass, and at one and the same time I am visually aware of the wall, or of the glass, and I recognize a naked boy, or dancers in mysterious gauze dresses, in front of (in each case) a darker ground. In virtue of this experience I can be said to see the boy in the wall, the dancers in the frosty glass."
(Wollheim, 1987: 46)

What thoroughly distinguishes Wollheim's account from Gombrich's is not, of course, that it explicitly situates the duality of form and content within picture perception, but that it conceives of the two aspects of picture perception as constitutive of a single experience¹⁰. For Wollheim, perceiving a picture *as a picture* is to have one (appropriate) experience with two distinguishable but inseparable aspects, rather than to have two separate experiences that are respectively deemed veridical and illusory. Wollheim calls the two aspects of the single experience of seeing-in the configurational aspect – which consists of our awareness of the differentiated surface; and the recognitional aspect – our recognition of something *in* that differentiated surface.

There is reason for Wollheim's claim that these two aspects, recognitional and configurational, constitute just one experience.¹¹ Although he readily admits that in some respects they behave as though they were separate experiences (Wollheim, 1986: 48) he stops short of conceding that they are in fact separate, because the phenomenological character of each of the two aspects of seeing-in depends on its coincidence with the other aspect. When we access (recognise) the content of a

⁹ Wollheim (1998: 221) takes note of, but remains neutral on, the issue of whether the capacity of seeing-in is unique to human beings.

¹⁰ While in its earliest formulation seeing-in was taken by Wollheim to consist of two separate but simultaneous experiences, it was gradually refined into the conception I describe here.

¹¹ Walton (1992: 282) astutely remarks that Wollheim tends to be a little vague on how exactly experiences are to be individuated, but what I take Wollheim to mean by a "single experience" is indeed that its two aspects cannot occur separately. Granted, in a quite obvious sense the awareness of a picture's surface can occur without any recognition of the picture's content; but "perceiving a picture's surface" in this sense is incommensurable with the "configurational awareness" of Wollheim's theory, because the phenomenological character of the configurational awareness is always already conditioned by a co-awareness of picture content.

picture, we are always aware of it as *depicted* content, which for Wollheim means that we perceive it as content configured by the shapes, colours, textures etc. of a differentiated picture surface. Similarly, when in the experience of seeing-in we attend to the picture surface, we perceive the shapes, colours and textures we find there not just as shapes, colours and textures *simpliciter*, but always already as constituents of a pictorial representation, i.e. as qualities engaged in depicting the picture's content.¹²

Apart from its having this twofold phenomenology, there is a second feature of seeing-in as Wollheim characterises it that distinguishes it from normal perception, namely its scope. Seeing-in and “normal perception” (or, as Wollheim calls it, “seeing face-to-face”) differ in scope, because there are things that can legitimately be seen in a surface that cannot be seen normally or face-to-face. Wollheim (1998: 223) offers a number of examples of this. Consider, for instance, the possibility of seeing something “of a particular kind” in a picture. Whereas normal perception always entails perceiving *particular things*, seeing-in can and sometimes does involve seeing something *of a particular kind* without that something being any particular thing. “We cannot see face-to-face women and battles of which we may not ask, Which woman? Which battle?” (Wollheim 1998: 223) But seeing a woman in a painting does not have to mean that I am seeing a particular woman; it can mean that I am simply seeing a woman of a particular kind.

Another example of how the scope of seeing-in exceeds that of normal perception is in the seeing of fictional things. In some sense it is patently obvious that I can see a unicorn in a painting, or see Batman in a comic strip, but sadly the closest I can come to seeing these things face-to-face, is to see a horse with a horn glued to its head, or a real man in a Batman-costume. So in this regard too, the scope of seeing-in includes things (“fictional things” in this case) that clearly do not fall within the scope of normal perception or face-to-face seeing. This difference in scope between seeing-in and seeing face-to-face is of some significance; because when Wollheim grounds depiction in seeing-in, it is with the idea in mind that, feasibly, the scope of depiction coincides exactly with that of seeing-in, rather than with that of seeing face-to-face.

Wollheim stresses, moreover, that while the twofold experience of seeing-in is a necessary condition for pictorial representation to be possible, instances of seeing-in are not exclusive to the perception of pictures. “I can see things in clouds, and stained walls, and frosted panes of glass, and Rorschach test cards. Seeing-in does not presuppose representation. On the contrary, seeing-in precedes representation,” (Wollheim, 1986: 46). In other words, where Gombrich’s appeal to illusion bungled the direction of causality, Wollheim’s theory is a clear improvement – it explains how in early cultures some artefacts acquired fetish status or were chosen for use in rituals: as a result of giving rise to

¹² One of the (arguably desirable) spinoffs of attributing this complex phenomenology to picture perception is that it provides a reason why depiction cannot be grounded in experienced resemblance. Whereas the experience of resemblance is “inherently comparative” and it therefore relies on the availability of two distinct (possible) experiences to compare, seeing-in explains depiction with reference to a single experience in which comparison does not take place. All of this tallies with the intuition that depiction is neither comparative nor a notion of degree (cf. Levinson (1998: 227) and section 1 above).

experiences of seeing-in even before they were assimilated into those contexts of ritual action. Thus seeing-in and, by extension, the possibility of depiction, logically and historically precede the conditions of illusion that Gombrich appeals to.¹³

But if seeing-in historically precedes depiction, then its extension must also be broader than that of depiction. Seeing-in may ground depiction, but it also sometimes takes place where there is no depiction. If we see a dog in the clouds, it does not mean that the dog is depicted or represented there. So in order to further delimit the specific appropriate experience underlying depiction, within the broader category of experiences of seeing-in, Wollheim expands his list of conditions necessary for depiction. He does this with reference, firstly, to a suitable spectator¹⁴ and, secondly, to the artist's (or creator of the picture's) intention¹⁵. To summarise his position, a picture only depicts its contents by virtue of producing in a suitable spectator a twofold perceptual experience of seeing-in that tallies with the intention of the picture's creator.¹⁶

Most perceptual theorists on depiction after Wollheim have been content to refer to picture perception in terms of some kind of "seeing-in". In fact, in some respects Wollheim's theory of painting has become one against which any subsequent speculation, both on depiction specifically and aesthetics in general, has had to measure itself. Despite this, or perhaps because of this, his characterisation of seeing-in has also been widely questioned and criticised. Two lines of argument especially have been adopted by some of his more serious critics.

The first of these rests on the premise that Wollheim's account of the recognitional aspect of seeing-in is incomplete or under-developed. One notable proponent of this view, Kendall Walton, attempts to supplement Wollheim's theory by underpinning the recognitional aspect with a detailed conception of imagination; in the next section I briefly examine his suggestions. The second line of argument often cited against Wollheim claims that his theory shows apparent defects in its treatment of *trompe l'oeil*

¹³ Cf. Wollheim (1998: 221, my parenthesis): "Logically, in that we can see things in surfaces that neither are nor are taken by us to be representations [...] And historically, in that doubtless our ancestors did such things (saw things in clouds, walls and artefacts) before they thought of decorating the caves they lived in with images of the animals they hunted."

¹⁴ "A suitable spectator is a spectator who is suitably sensitive, suitably informed, and, if necessary, suitably prompted" (Wollheim, 1998: 217).

¹⁵ "With any representational picture there is likely to be more than one thing that can be seen in it: there is more than one experience of seeing-in that it can cause. However, the experience of seeing-in that determines what it represents, or the appropriate experience, is the experience that tallies with the artist's intention" (Wollheim, 1998: 225-226). (The term intention is meant quite innocently in this context. It should not be confused with "intention" as it is used in Husserlian phenomenology or in debates about the intentionalist theory of perception in analytic philosophy.)

¹⁶ As it is the phenomenology of the appropriate experience that is ultimately of interest to my argument, I will not discuss Wollheim's notions of the suitable spectator and the artist's intention in more detail here. These notions have more bearing, in any case, on painting in particular than on the topic of this essay – depiction in general.

painting. This line of argument potentially has important implications for the role of twofoldness in picture perception; I return to it later, in section 2.4.

2.3 Seeing-in and imagination

Especially when approached as objects of art, alongside artworks in other, non-pictorial media (like literature, theatre or music), pictures and by extension, depiction, have often been closely associated with imagination. Wollheim (1986: 45-46) points out that there is a “vapid sense of imagination in which it means no more than the opposite of narrow-mindedness” and that in this usage, imagination’s association or not with pictures is a trivial matter. But if imagination is understood as something more substantial, i.e. as cognitive activity other than or in excess of perception, the idea that it is a prerequisite for picture perception or seeing-in becomes somewhat more disputable

It is a central feature of Wollheim’s theory that the experience of seeing-in, just like normal perception or “face-to-face” seeing, can be informed by the viewer’s previously accrued concepts and beliefs. When someone sees a car in everyday life, the content of her perceptual act is at least partly determined by her recruitment of the concepts “car”, “wheels”, “windows”, etc., from her store of previously accumulated concepts. Her perception of the car would definitely have an altogether different and probably quite strange character if none of these concepts were available to her. In other words, normal perception is permeable to the conceptual framework from the background of the perceiver.¹⁷ The same holds for seeing-in. In fact, to quote Wollheim (1986: 48), in an act of seeing-in “both [the configurational and recognitional] aspects are conditioned by the cognitive stock that the spectator holds and brings to bear upon the representation that he confronts.”¹⁸

But this raises a further question, specifically about the recruitment of “cognitive stock” to the *recognitional* aspect:

“Is there a point at which the mobilization of cognitive stock to the perception of representations brings about the dilution of perception by imagination?” (Wollheim, 1986: 49)

It seems reasonable to suggest that in our interaction with pictures there *can* be a point at which we are no longer just perceiving the picture, but imagining something about it. Most people who have ever stood in front of an evocative painting or picture have, at some stage or other, engaged in imagining

¹⁷ In the continental phenomenological tradition, this kind of “recruitment of concepts” to our perception is customarily explained with reference to the notion of a pre-established “horizon” from which all intentional acts (including those of perception) take place.

¹⁸ By implication, this means that conceptual thought can bring about changes in what someone sees in a picture; yet Wollheim (1998: 224) is careful to stress that he is “not taking sides on the issue whether the experience of seeing-in has a conceptual or nonconceptual content. Tasting soup has a nonconceptual content, but, if we are prompted conceptually about what is in the soup, the soup can taste different.”

something about the things or events depicted therein. If this is the case, the question in need of answering is: as a rule, at what juncture in our perception of a picture is the point where imagination is called upon, reached?

One possible answer is to claim that a spectator's use of imagination is (either sometimes or always) *occasioned by* seeing-in. This answer implies that seeing-in takes place prior to the involvement of imagination and, hence, depiction may (either sometimes or always) elicit or coincide with, but does not always require, the spectator's imagining anything. This is more or less the position Wollheim takes. For him, the recruitment of the spectator's cognitive stock to seeing-in never has to involve imagination, at least not until everything that can "legitimately" be seen in a particular picture, has been seen-in (Wollheim, 1986: 50). Differently put, no necessary limit suggests itself as to how much of the spectator's cognitive stock may be recruited to an act of seeing-in, before that act becomes more than perceptual.

There is, however, a second way in which imagination can feasibly be linked to seeing-in: not as resulting from it, but as logically prior to it and, moreover, as one of its primary constituents. Malcolm Budd and Kendall Walton have both argued against Wollheim's idea that the experience of seeing-in is *sui generis* and that it cannot be elucidated beyond pointing out its twofold phenomenology. This kind of criticism leads Budd (1992: 273) to a rejection of Wollheim's twofoldness thesis, but, as I argued in section 1 above, the alternative to twofoldness proposed by Budd has some telling shortcomings. Walton (1992: 283), on the other hand, maintains that twofoldness of some sort should remain central to our understanding of depiction; only, the recognitional aspect has to admit of further clarification. He goes on to suggest that the recognitional aspect of seeing-in, as well as its intimate relation to the configurational aspect, can and must be fleshed out and explained more fully with reference to a specific kind of imagination, which he calls "make-believe".

For Walton (1990), pictures, like other objects of art or fiction, are props in games of make-believe analogous to children's games. These games have implicit rules of participation¹⁹ that determine in what way a particular artefact or work of art is to be approached, or alternatively, what kind of imagination is required to understand it. The particular kind of participation that grounds depiction consists of the following: that when we are confronted with a picture, we imagine our experience of its surface to be an experience of the picture's content. (Note that this imagining does not have to be deliberate or consciously initiated.) In this formulation, the configurational aspect of seeing-in is equated with the act of normally perceiving a picture's surface; crucially, the recognitional aspect is characterised as the same perceptual act, *imagined* to be an act of perceiving the thing(s) depicted. To Walton's mind, this is the best way of exhaustively explaining twofoldness, i.e. of shedding light on what Wollheim leaves unexplained: how "two different intentional contents can be combined" in a single experience (Walton, 2002: 33).

¹⁹ These rules are historically determined by the social context within which our interaction with objects of make-believe occurs. In this respect, Walton's view contradicts Wollheim's suggestion that a picture's meaning is determined by the fixed intentions of the author or artist.

Assigning this pivotal role to imagination enables Walton to situate depiction squarely among other artistic genre or media. In his conception, experiences of seeing-in cannot only be had with paintings or photographs, but also in connection with sculptures, theatre performances and musical representations.²⁰ Yet the particular way in which Walton claims imagination is brought into play by pictures, makes him, in his own view, an ally rather than opponent of Wollheim. In one essential respect his consistency with Wollheim's position is indisputable – that he conceives of depiction as a uniquely *perceptual* kind of representation. It is important to note that he does not claim, like other proponents of “imagination accounts” of depiction, that the spectator *imagines the picture to be something else*, nor that the spectator, in a free-floating act of imagination, *imagines something else upon perceiving the picture*; rather, according to Walton, the spectator imagines of her *perception* of the picture, that it is a *perception* of something else. This means that, for Walton, both the configurational and recognitional aspects of seeing-in have a decidedly perceptual character and, moreover, their discrepant intentional contents are inextricably bound together by a shared perceptual object (the picture).

Wollheim is not quite convinced by Walton's characterisation of seeing-in. In one article he argues against Walton on the grounds that, to his (Wollheim's) mind, imagining one experience to be another experience does not allow the original experience to retain its character. He insists that it is crucial for the configurational aspect of seeing-in to retain its character even while the spectator is attending to the picture's (recognitional) content (Wollheim, 1998: 224-225). This is, however, less than convincing as Wollheim's own version of seeing-in allows for the spectator's attention to alternate between the two aspects of the experience: “The twofoldness of seeing-in does not, of course, preclude one aspect of the complex experience being emphasized at the expense of the other...” (Wollheim, 1986: 47) There seems to be no reason why a shifting level of emphasis between the two aspects cannot be described in terms of a shifting level of applying imagination to the picture surface.

So, if we admit that Walton's theory contains no irreconcilable contradiction to Wollheim's – if we treat it as a supplement to, rather than a revision of, Wollheim – it seems, at least at face value, a credible and helpful account of picture perception. Crucially, however, it retains twofoldness as well as the especially perceptual nature of depiction, which means that it remains an essentially Wollheimian theory.

2.4 Seeing-in and *trompe l'oeil*

The second feature of Wollheim's account that has elicited some disagreement is his strong twofoldness claim: that the experience of seeing-in *necessarily* has to have a twofold phenomenology; i.e. that it has to consist of both a recognitional and a configurational aspect. It is easy enough to understand why from a perceptual theory's perspective an artefact that does not permit an experience

²⁰ For an example of the latter, Walton (1992: 285) cites the “birdsong” in Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony, and he suggests “*perceiving-in*” as title for a more inclusive notion of seeing-in.

with a recognitional aspect cannot be considered depictive. Without giving rise to a recognitional awareness in a suitable spectator, a picture cannot be said to have any depicted content (at least not content that is accessible perceptually). It is for this reason that Wollheim (1987: 62) can claim with little controversy that some abstract paintings are not depictive: they do not allow us to *see* anything depicted *in* them. However, the question whether depiction also invariably requires the spectator to be consciously aware of the picture's surface (i.e. to also have a *configurational* awareness in his perception of the picture), proves to be less simple.

Ironically, because Wollheim uses twofoldness to purge his own account of any appeal to illusion, his theory seems to run into trouble precisely when confronted with some patent examples of perceptual illusion in visual art. More specifically, if Wollheim's twofoldness thesis is to be upheld, he seems to be forced to make the counterintuitive claim that *trompe l'oeil* paintings (literally translatable from the French as "trick-the-eye" paintings) are not depictions in the strict sense of the word. As its name suggests, *trompe l'oeil* is a form of painting that deliberately exploits its spectators' perceptual tendencies in order to create false impressions or illusions in them. Through clever mimicry or built in triggers and promptings, a painting may for instance give the impression of having a transparent surface²¹ or of allowing its contents to escape into the three dimensional space in front of it²². The meticulously planned skewed proportions of a fresco on a cathedral's ceiling could deceive the viewer to think that its vaulting reaches up higher than it actually does²³ or that, in stead of closing in, a chapel's ceiling opens up to a balustrade and to the skies beyond²⁴.

The difficulty such *trompe l'oeil* paintings pose for Wollheim's strong twofoldness claim, has been widely discussed:

"To the extent that a *trompe l'oeil* painting is successful, the spectator's experience will *not* contain a configurational component, the component that is responsible for one's experiencing the painting as painted rather than as what it is supposed to mimic." (Feagin, 1998: 234)

In successful *trompe l'oeil*, the argument runs, a painting's "content" is accessible to a spectator prior to any visual awareness of or conscious attention to the marked surface by which that "content" is configured. In fact *trompe l'oeil* paintings generally resist the spectator's attempts to attend to their surfaces as such attention would foil the intended illusion. In other words, in the moment at which a *trompe l'oeil* painting's illusion succeeds, the suitable spectator is aware of the things that are being "depicted", but is unaware of the surface through which they are "depicted". This means that, given his insistence on a twofold experience as a requirement for pictorial representation, Wollheim's theory treats *trompe l'oeil* paintings as non-pictorial. If a painting does not permit an appropriate experience

²¹ The window-effect in Magritte's *La Clef de champs* (1936) springs to mind.

²² Cf. Pere Borrell del Caso's *Escaping Criticism* (1874).

²³ Cf. the *trompe l'oeil* dome by Andrea Pozzo on the ceiling of the *Jesuitenkirche*, Vienna (1703).

²⁴ Cf. the famous painted oculus on the ceiling of the "*Camera degli Sposi*" in the *Palazzo Ducale*, Mantua, by Andrea Mantegna (1474).

containing a configurational awareness of the painting's surface, then our experience of it cannot be an experience of seeing-in in Wollheim's sense. Hence a successful trompe l'oeil painting cannot be said to be depictive.

While many of his critics find this consequence of his theory absurd, Wollheim himself accepts it unflinchingly. He persists that for a painting to pictorially represent something, it has to invite (or at least allow) attention to its surface, and inasmuch as trompe l'oeil paintings discourage rather than invite attention to their surfaces, i.e. inasmuch as they trick the eye, they are not pictorial representations (Wollheim, 1987: 62). Susan Feagin sides with Wollheim on this count. She defends his position by giving reasons to maintain a distinction between the respective functions of pictorial representation (the art of painting)²⁵ on the one hand, and trompe l'oeil (the art of tricking the eye), on the other. Feagin (1998: 234) argues that trompe l'oeil paintings do not so much represent their contents as make them seem "substantially present". In other words, while a normal painting pictorially *represents* its subject, trompe l'oeil's function is *presentational*.²⁶ Her distinction – along with the proviso that some paintings may have dual functions: both presentational *and* representational (Feagin, 1998: 237) – does the necessary work to preclude pure trompe l'oeil from counting as pictorial painting on a Wollheimian account. But the debate about trompe l'oeil paintings and their failure to produce twofold experiences sparks some other, less easily dismissed questions about Wollheim's strong twofoldness requirement.

Levinson (1998: 228) argues, for example, that Wollheim's insistence on a configurational awareness as constituent of the experience underlying depiction is, perhaps, easy to maintain with regard to pictures intended for aesthetic appreciation (e.g. paintings); but in cases where aesthetic appreciation is not among a picture's primary functions, the configurational aspect of picture perception is less obviously present.

"Plausibly, not all seeing-in or registering of pictorial content is aesthetic in character, or even informed by the awareness of pictures as pictures; for instance, that directed to or had in connection with postcards, passport photos, magazine illustrations, comic strips, television shows, or movies." (Levinson, 1998: 228)

Can we really say when seeing someone in a passport photo that we are aware of the picture's surface in a manner comparable to when we are looking at Van Gogh in one of his self-portraits?

²⁵ In his treatment of trompe l'oeil, as well as in Feagin's reading of his work, Wollheim's focus on painting as an art form as opposed to depiction in general should be kept in mind.

²⁶ Drawing the distinction along these *functional* lines allows Feagin (1998: 236) to show how trompe l'oeil is grounded in face-to-face seeing rather than in seeing-in. If the purpose of trompe l'oeil is to present rather than represent its subject, then it has to limit itself to that which can conceivably be experienced as being present, i.e. to that which can be seen face-to-face. As we have seen, on the other hand, depiction has a scope that extends beyond that of face-to-face seeing, because according to Wollheim's theory depiction is grounded in a different kind of experience (seeing-in) to the experience in which trompe l'oeil painting is grounded (seeing face-to-face).

Does the “appropriate experience” of, say, a magazine illustration, really have to include conscious attention to its surface? For Levinson the answer is no, which leads him to the conclusion that while the aesthetic appreciation of pictures does involve Wollheimian twofoldness²⁷, such twofoldness is not a prerequisite for depiction in general. The offshoot is that, as the configurational aspect loses its relevance for a general account of depiction, the solitary, remaining recognitional aspect becomes the crux of seeing-in.

From here, Levinson (1998: 229-230) goes on to suggest a notion of seeing-in *sans* twofoldness, which he calls “simple seeing-in” or “seeing-from”. To give substance to the recognitional awareness at the core of simple seeing-in, he introduces a kind of “*as-if* seeing” which, in picture perception, entails that while one looks at a picture, one registers the perceptual data its surface affords without necessarily consciously attending to its surface; and, in processing this perceptual data, it “*seems*” to one “*as if*” one is looking at the subject represented in the picture. Thus simple seeing-in, as Levinson develops it, is no less perceptual than Wollheim’s seeing-in, but it lacks a twofold phenomenology. Full-blown, twofold, Wollheimian seeing-in, on the other hand, is reserved by Levinson for the more specific perceptual activity of aesthetic appreciation proper.

* * *

Levinson’s conclusions about seeing-in, as sketched above, are too strong. The challenges raised in the trompe l’oeil controversy for Wollheim’s view are significant, but should not, I contend, lead us to drop the twofoldness requirement on depiction altogether. The following reasons pertain.

Firstly, Levinson seems to forget what was at stake in Wollheim’s criticism of illusion-based theories – the issue of salvaging the veridical status of the experience at the root of picture perception. For Wollheim, looking at a picture of Alexander the Great entails having direct perceptual access (of some sort) to the man in the depiction; for Levinson, it merely entails experiencing the picture surface in such a way that it *seems as if* one is seeing Alexander. It is difficult to see how the locution “seeming-as-if” does not imply a step back in the direction of Gombrich’s mistake of attributing an illusory or non-veridical status to the recognitional core of our experience of pictures. As we have seen, in Wollheim’s theory the configurational aspect serves the purpose of preventing our recognitional awareness of a picture’s content from taking on the illusory character of a face-to-face experience, i.e. from turning into an independent but erroneous perceptual act. If, however, as Levinson (1992: 228) suggests, our interaction with some pictures’ contents is “[not] informed by the awareness of pictures as pictures”, then what alternative explanation can he offer for why we do not experience the subjects of these pictures as manifestly present? Despite his claims to the contrary, seeing something “as-if” it were something else cannot be properly differentiated from perceptual illusion, at least not without reference to some mechanism that frames or informs the act of *as-if*-seeing. Levinson’s account, to its own detriment, lacks such a mechanism.

²⁷ Despite his doubts about the role of twofoldness in a general theory of depiction, Levinson is careful not to underestimate the significance of twofoldness in aesthetic enjoyment.

Secondly, let us for the moment suppose Levinson is right to notice that, besides *trompe l'oeil*, there are other kinds of pictures whose primary functions can be fulfilled prior to conscious attention to their surfaces. In other words, let us say there are artefacts that we intuitively take to be pictures and at the same time do not require full-blown twofoldness as part of their appropriate experiences. If we grant this, then clearly Wollheim's strong twofoldness requirement, which is apt when it comes to the specific case of the aesthetic appreciation of paintings, has to be revised to fit the needs of a more general theory of depiction. But revised to what degree? Even among cases where a picture's content can (supposedly) be seen or recognised prior to a robust configurational awareness of the picture surface (i.e. prior to proper twofoldness), it is difficult to find an example where the picture is completely incapable of sustaining a thoroughly twofold experience. Take Levinson's own example: a passport photo. It may be possible, even typical for a viewer to recognise the person in the photo before consciously attending to properties displayed by the photograph's surface. And yet, if prompted, on second glance the same viewer can become aware of the person in the photo as depicted-in-black-and-white, or depicted-in-gloss or -matte. Even if all picture perception does not necessitate twofoldness, it still seems that all pictures *can* at least sustain a twofold experience.²⁸

This consolidates the idea that there is, at the very least, a close connection between pictures in general and twofold perception. Even if we grant Levinson that twofold seeing-in as such may only be strictly necessary for a particular kind of aesthetic appreciation, the possibility of twofold seeing still accompanies depiction in all its forms. So whether we rest with Wollheim's account, or follow Walton in fleshing out twofoldness with reference to imagination or make-believe, the idea of an essential relation between twofoldness and picture perception seems to be difficult to circumvent.

While the accuracy of any phenomenological description is difficult if at all possible to establish beyond doubt (a fact that is due to the fundamentally subjective basis of phenomenological description), both Wollheim and Walton's descriptions of twofoldness are persuasive inasmuch as they successfully illuminate rather than obscure the way in which pictures manage to refer to their contents.²⁹ Furthermore, twofoldness is eminently feasible not only because it can explain something about depiction, but also because similar kinds of phenomenological doubleness have been pointed out outside the field of aesthetics.³⁰ For these reasons I find it difficult to see how a theory of depiction can be complete without accounting for the dual nature of picture perception. In the latter part of this paper I will argue that John Kulvicki's structural account of depiction underestimates the importance of

²⁸ *Trompe l'oeil* pictures remain the obvious exception, but this is not a problem if we accept Feagin's argument about the non-pictorial, presentational function of pure *trompe l'oeil* (see above).

²⁹ In this regard, Wollheim (1992: 222) makes the important methodological claim that "the philosophical point of phenomenological description ... is not to teach us the range of human experience. It is for us to see how some particular experience can, in virtue of what it is like, do what it does. It pursues phenomenology only to the point where function follows from it."

³⁰ Cf. Robert Schroer (2008) for an account of phenomenological doubleness in everyday (face-to-face) depth perception.

twofoldness. Before that, however, the next section gives a general introduction to theories that take the structural approach to explaining depiction.

3. STRUCTURAL THEORIES

The second kind of approach to explaining depiction, which I have termed the “structural” approach, was famously championed by Nelson Goodman. The position he is known for is that pictures represent their contents by participating in *symbol systems*. This implies, of course, that understanding depiction requires a systemic focus, i.e. attention to the characteristics of pictorial symbol systems. The important thing, for structural theories, is not to understand how we relate (perceptually or otherwise) to individual pictures, but to understand how pictures relate to each other and to other symbols within the same and similar systems. Hence the operative question about depiction becomes: what are the syntactic, semantic and other structural requirements for a symbol system to be considered depictive? In this section, I look at Goodman and John Kulvicki’s respective takes on the issue.

3.1 Goodman’s contribution³¹

To properly grasp Goodman’s approach to depiction, it is best to examine it within the context of the general theory of symbols he develops in *Languages of Art* (1976). His point of departure in this theory is the generalisation of the primary form of reference found in language – denotation – to all forms of representation. For Goodman all symbols, linguistic and non-linguistic alike, denote their contents or refer in ways closely related to denotation³²; in his own words: “Denotation is the core of representation” (Goodman, 1976: 5).

Symbols, in Goodman’s theory, often function in notational systems. The five-line staff of European classical music is a good example; its visibly differentiated symbols unambiguously *de-note* the particular pitch and relative duration of the sounds they are devised to be *notations* of. Similarly, there are systems of logico-mathematical notation (like Peano Arithmetic), notation for acting (like theatre or film scripts), taxonomical notation in biology, etc. As we will see, however, there are also symbol systems that are *not* notational – like natural languages and pictorial systems. More generally

³¹ For purposes of clarity, I deliberately adopt some of Kulvicki’s terminology in my exposition of Goodman. Apart from the intrinsic merit of Kulvicki’s theory, his treatment of Goodman is especially useful for its expression of some of Goodman’s ideas in terms that are his own. Kulvicki (2006: 16) points out that Goodman has some “metaphysical scruples”, particularly with regard to talk of kind membership, sets and properties. For those who do not share Goodman’s mereological views (i.e. his resistance to set theory), his position on depiction can probably be more effectively explained if one disregards these “scruples”.

³² Goodman’s theory makes room for non-denotative symbols (i.e. symbols with null denotation) through his analysis of “exemplification”, an alternative form of reference which is a restricted converse of denotation. Hence even these non-denotative symbols participate in denotative symbol systems inasmuch as they are denoted by other symbols which they exemplify.

described then, a symbol system (whether notational or not) consists of a set of characters³³ together with everything these characters refer to. When a set of characters is considered in isolation from what they refer to, we call the set a “symbol scheme” (Goodman and Elgin, 1988: 126). In any system or scheme, the term “symbol” can designate either a single character or a compound of two or more characters (Goodman and Elgin, 1988: 124-125). Moreover, one symbol can at the same time function as a character in one or in many symbol schemes.

What does all this imply for a theory of depiction? As mentioned above, for structural theorists depiction is a function of systems. A picture, in other words, is not a particular kind of symbol, but a symbol in a particular kind of system. What kind of system? Therein lies the rub. Goodman suggests three conditions that characterise, although conjunctively they do not suffice to define³⁴, the symbol systems we normally interpret as pictorial. The three conditions are *syntactic density*, *semantic density* and *relative repleteness*.

Density, of the sort Goodman has in mind, can best be described by way of contrast with what is called “finite differentiation” between the elements of a system. I will explain syntactic density first. The syntactic units of a system are its characters, so when we speak about syntactic density, we are speaking about a particular kind of relation that holds between the characters in a symbol scheme. As a roundabout way of approaching syntactic density, let us start with an example of a non-dense symbol scheme in which all the characters *are* finitely differentiated: the written alphabet. Simply put, the characters of the alphabet are discrete. For the alphabet to serve its notational purposes, its characters have to be of such a nature that we are, theoretically speaking, always able to determine whether a particular mark belongs to one of its characters or to another, or to neither of the two. If, for instance, as the reader of this essay, you were not able to tell which of the marks in front of you belong to the character “p” and which to the character “b”, you would bropably find the text quite difficult if not imbossible to read.

For an example, secondly, of a non-dense scheme that *lacks* syntactic finite differentiation, consider the following:

“[A] system [has] two syntactic types. An object belongs to one if it is a line less than one inch long and the other if it is a line one inch long or longer. It is easy to discern the syntactic identity of most objects in this system, but there are some for which it is impossible to do so: those very, very close to one inch long. Take any measuring device or strategy you like. It may be quite precise, but it will have some finite degree of precision.” (Kulvicki, 2006: 17)

³³ A character can be deemed an abstract *type* or *category* that may have one or several marks or inscriptions or objects (tokens) belonging to it. In the symbol system called English, for instance, the marks “dog”, “Dog”, “**Dog**” and “DOG”, despite their differences, all belong to the same character.

³⁴ Goodman has doubts about the possibility of a crisp definition for depiction.

In the scheme described here, there will always be some possible marks or “objects” of which the syntactic identities cannot be determined. Confronted with an object extremely close to one inch long, and given the finite degree of precision of our measurement instruments, we would not be able to say to which syntactic type it belongs. This means that the scheme’s two syntactic types (its characters) are not discrete like for instance the characters of the written alphabet. We say of this scheme that it lacks finite differentiation between its two characters. However, this particular lack of differentiation does not yet make the scheme syntactically *dense*.

Let us therefore, thirdly, look at a dense symbol scheme. Syntactic density is a special case of a lack of syntactic finite differentiation. “A scheme is syntactically dense if it provides for infinitely many characters so ordered that between each two there is a third.” (Goodman, 1976: 136) A good example of such a scheme would be a two-dimensional linear graph that maps changes in temperature over time. Given any two positions on the graph, no matter how closely they are situated to each other, there is always a third possible position between them on the graph – a position that is closer to both the initial positions than they are to each other. This implies that there are infinitely many positions on the graph and, once again, given the finite accuracy of our measurement instruments, we cannot possibly hope to determine which syntactic type each of them belongs to. So if we think of the possible positions on the graph each as a character in the symbol scheme, it should become clear how the set of characters satisfies Goodman’s description of a syntactically dense scheme.

Syntactic density of the kind displayed by this graph is the first of the three constraints Goodman places on a pictorial system of representation. Pictorial schemes work just like the example of the graph-scheme: given any two pictures (i.e. two characters in a pictorial symbol scheme), no matter how similar they are (in syntactically relevant ways), there is always a third picture possible that is more similar to each of them than they are to each other. This means that the scheme is syntactically dense.

The second of Goodman’s constraints is semantic density. Semantic density is in many respects a very similar notion to syntactic density. It can, in fact, be described quite neatly by an appropriate reformulation of Goodman’s description of syntactic density. If syntactic density is a special case of a lack of finite differentiation between the characters in a scheme, semantic density is a special case of a lack of finite differentiation between the “compliance-classes” (extensions) of the symbols in a system. Recall that syntactic finite differentiation can be understood in terms of our ability to determine exactly which marks fit into which characters. Semantic finite differentiation, similarly, entails the possibility of determining which object, event or state of affairs belongs to which compliance-class or extension within the system (Goodman, 1976: 152-153). Semantic density in a system would therefore entail that the denotata of the system’s characters lacks finite differentiation throughout the system. “A semantically dense system provides for an infinite number of characters with compliance classes such

that between each two (compliance classes) there is a third” (Goodman in Kulvicki, 2006: 19-20; my parenthesis).³⁵

An old-fashioned mercury thermometer provides us with a good example of a system that is both syntactically and semantically dense. The latter kind of density, in this system, entails the following. The temperatures that the different readings on the thermometer denote are the denotata of the system. But real temperatures can differ by such infinitesimally small margins that, given the finite accuracy of our measurement capabilities, their compliance with particular readings on the thermometer cannot possibly be determined with perfect accuracy. In other words, the compliance-classes of the readings on the thermometer are not finitely differentiated. In this scheme this is true of an infinite number of characters’ compliance classes, so the system is semantically dense.

When approached as symbol systems, both the thermometer and the graph of temperature over time are syntactically as well as semantically dense.³⁶ But intuitively, neither of them seems pictorial. The third condition Goodman places on pictorial systems provides reasons for why this is so. According to Goodman, pictorial systems are syntactically and semantically dense just like the graph and the thermometer, but in addition to this, they are also relatively replete. Differently put, neither the graph nor the thermometer are as replete as a pictorial system.

Relative repleteness pertains to the fact that pictures have more “character-constitutive aspects” than characters in non-pictorial symbol schemes (Goodman, 1976: 230). Non-pictorial symbols have relatively few attributes that determine their syntactic identity. In the scheme of characters consisting of readings on a thermometer, the only thing relevant to the syntactic identity of a particular character is the height of the mercury in the glass tube. The colour of the tube’s casing, the size of the tube, the font used to indicate relative readings, are all incidental. Similarly, on the graph that maps changes in temperature over time, the only thing that is syntactically important is the particular position on the line. The colour and width of the line, the colour of the background, the relative proportions of the axes, the language in which the axes have been named – these things are all irrelevant. Both these schemes, in other words, have very few “character constitutive aspects”. But in pictorial schemes, this is not the case. Changing just the slightest detail in a picture usually results in a picture with a new syntactic identity, because almost any change in a picture affects at least one of the picture’s *many* character constitutive aspects. The fact that pictures have relatively many such character-constitutive aspects (like colour, shape, saturation, texture, etc.) makes pictorial systems “relatively replete”.

³⁵ Kulvicki presents this definition as a citation from Goodman, but on inspection it appears to be his own paraphrasing of material from the page reference he gives – (Goodman, 1976: 153).

³⁶ Syntactic and semantic density usually go hand in hand, but, as Goodman (1976: 153) and Kulvicki (2006: 20-21) both illustrate, systems in which the former holds without the latter and *vice versa*, can be constructed with relative ease. Admittedly such systems are mostly rather odd, but the possibility of constructing them shows why it is necessary for Goodman to state the two density constraints separately.

(As an aside: it is both interesting and significant, that Goodman conceives of the difference between pictorial systems and other dense systems as only a matter of degree. The repleteness Goodman requires for depiction is, after all, *relative* to that of non-pictorial systems. This runs contrary to some strong intuitions on the part of especially perceptual theorists, intuitions to the effect that depiction is qualitatively different to schematic systems like the thermometer and the graph.)

So, for Goodman, pictures are symbols in syntactically dense, semantically dense and relatively replete symbol systems. These three systemic constraints on the pictorial, delimits the kind of representation that counts as depiction quite neatly, but not entirely without error. On the one hand, Goodman's constraints disqualify some obvious examples of pictorial systems, e.g. systems containing digital pictures only. And on the other hand, they fail to disqualify some obvious examples of non-pictorial systems. The latter problem is not so much a blunder on Goodman's part as a shortcoming of his theory that he recognised himself. Goodman never claimed that his three constraints are sufficient to define pictorial systems. But his failure to define depiction is a point on which he has received plenty of criticism. More recently, in an important contribution to the literature entitled *On Images* (2006), John Kulvicki has tried to supplement this shortcoming and also solve the problem Goodman's theory runs into with regard to digital pictures.

3.2 Analog and digital: Kulvicki reworks Goodman

Goodman's three constraints on pictorial symbol schemes tie the noose too tightly. While successfully excluding many non-pictorial forms of representation, Goodman's conditions also exclude all digital schemes and systems. Digital schemes and systems, in short, are those that presuppose finite differentiation. Because the systems deemed pictorial by Goodman lack such differentiation, they are not digital but analog. As Kulvicki (2006: 21; my parenthesis) points out, "[the] marriage of syntactic and semantic density (both of which count among Goodman's constraints) is analogicity." In other words, it seems that Goodman's theory judges depiction to be an essentially analog form of representation.

But what does this say about digital pictures? Digital pictures are pictures that can be divided up into a finite number of identically shaped "pixels", each uniformly filled with a hue chosen from a finite range of possibilities. A digital picture can be constructed with just two colours distributed over relatively few pixels, or with hues chosen from an incredibly wide range specified individually for millions of pixels. Placed on a spectrum, pictures constructed from a greater number of pixels is said to be of higher resolution than pictures with relatively few pixels. However, given their structure, digital pictures (even those with very high resolutions) clearly belong to digital schemes – i.e. finitely differentiated schemes. So if Goodman's theory determines depiction to be essentially analog, it implies that a scheme consisting only of digital pictures cannot be pictorial. This raises a serious question: does it mean that according to Goodman's theory digital pictures are not pictures in the genuine sense of the word? Given the way we interact with digital pictures on a daily basis, digital pictures that intuitively seem very similar to their analog counterparts, this conclusion seems highly suspect.

Goodman himself realised this and tried to save his account by claiming that digital symbol schemes, those within which the characters are finitely differentiated, can be included in larger analog symbol schemes (Goodman and Elgin, 1988: 130). After all, in a structural account like Goodman's, depiction is not a function of the individual picture, but of the system within which it finds itself. Functioning as a pictorial symbol then depends on being part of the full analog symbol scheme we consider to be pictorial. And digital pictures, although belonging potentially to many other digital *and/or* analog symbol schemes, are also included among the characters of the full analog pictorial scheme. Kulvicki, however, does not find this defence of Goodman's account convincing. Digital pictures, he says, are not "only pictorial inasmuch as we interpret them as if they were analog representations" (Kulvicki, 2006: 40). It is simply wrong to claim that syntactic and semantic density (analogicity) is necessary for a system to be considered pictorial.

This, partly, is why Kulvicki adapts Goodman's three criteria for depiction. He does it in such a way that they can and do include digital systems of representation. Showing that this can be done confirms that Goodman was mistaken in enlisting density as a constraint on depiction. If we can draw up alternative constraints, like Kulvicki does, that yield similar results to those of Goodman, but at the same time include digital symbol systems, there seems to be no good reason to insist on the essential analogicity of depiction.

The alternative or "reworked" criteria for depiction proposed by Kulvicki (to do the same work that Goodman's criteria were meant to) are what he calls *syntactic sensitivity*, *semantic richness*, and an adapted version of Goodman's *repleteness*. Kulvicki develops them with reference to what he calls the syntactically relevant properties (SRP's) of the marks or objects (tokens) in a scheme. "Syntactically relevant properties" or "SRP's" are his version of Goodman's "character constitutive aspects". I will not explain Kulvicki's three criteria in detail here apart from stating the gist of each in brief³⁷: (1) Kulvicki's version of *relative repleteness* is akin to Goodman's in that it pertains to the number of a system's SRP's in relation to other systems; only, in measuring repleteness, Kulvicki allows for cases in which two systems overlap in terms of their SRP's, but that each has SRP's that are independent of the other system's. (2) *Syntactic sensitivity* describes the feature of a scheme that makes the identity of its characters particularly responsive to changes in the SRP's of tokens in the system. And (3) *Semantic richness* stipulates that a system must have as many denotations (or, alternatively, "compliance classes" or extensions) as it has syntactic types (or characters).

While Kulvicki's three constraints on the pictorial end up providing a notable improvement on Goodman's, especially in that they make room for digital pictorial systems, they are still not sufficient to exhaustively define depiction. At this point, where Goodman stopped short because he doubted

³⁷ As Kulvicki's first three constraints do roughly the same work as Goodman's, and as it is rather a fourth constraint which he adds (and which I discuss under the next subheading) that is of interest to my argument, I do not elaborate on his reworking of Goodman's constraints here. For the interested, Kulvicki's (2006: 30-39) own account of them is both thorough and concise.

whether depiction could be comprehensively defined, Kulvicki continues by adding a fourth criterion that he claims, in conjunction with the other three, lays down necessary *and* sufficient conditions for a system to qualify as pictorial.

3.3 Defining depiction: Kulvicki and “structural transparency”

This fourth criterion, and the core of Kulvicki’s structural analysis of depiction, is what he calls “transparency”. Not transparency in the literal, perceptual sense of being able to see through a pane of glass for instance; nor even in the metaphoric sense of being able to see “through pictures... to what they are about” (Kulvicki, 2006: 49). The transparency Kulvicki has in mind is a structural rather than perceptual notion. It is structural in that it does not describe something about our relation as spectators to individual pictures; it describes something about the relation between different representations in a pictorial system:

“In transparent representational systems, a representation of another representation is syntactically identical to its object.” (Kulvicki, 2006: 49)

To paraphrase in terms of pictures specifically: if one takes (or creates) a picture, A, of another picture, B, then the representation of B (in A) will be syntactically identical to B itself. This is the case only for transparent systems of representation, like pictorial ones. According to Kulvicki (2006: 61) transparency is “a structural condition that should limit the class of syntactically sensitive, relatively replete, and semantically rich representational systems to those that are intuitively pictorial.” But in order to show that the notion of structural transparency can do this work, Kulvicki has to jump through a number of hoops.

Among these hoops, two are of particular significance. The one regards the fact that a strict formulation of transparency seems (just like Goodman’s constraints) to exclude some systems we do intuitively take to be pictorial. Kulvicki focuses on two examples of such systems that seem to be borderline cases on his account as formulated so far: the scheme according to which out-of-focus or “blurry” pictures are made is not, strictly speaking, structurally transparent; nor, strictly speaking, are digital systems. Working, for the moment, with just our sketchy intuitions of what a picture’s syntactic identity entails, a blurry picture of a blurry picture clearly would not retain the original’s syntactic identity like a representation in a transparent system should. And if one takes a digital picture of a digital picture, some of the (arguably syntactically relevant) information contained in the original picture is necessarily lost. Yet, Kulvicki (2006: 64) argues convincingly, both these systems, blurry and digital, still “*approach* transparency”, and this is enough to make them pictorial.³⁸ Transparency is thus not a strict requirement, but a qualified one in Kulvicki’s account.

³⁸ There is a section in Kulvicki (2006: 63-78) devoted to working out how systems could be understood as “approaching transparency”, rather than simply being transparent or not. His arguments in this section mostly rest on an understanding of syntactic *similarity*, as opposed to the syntactic identity that is retained from one representation to the next in strictly transparent systems. In the blurry picture scheme, for instance, a picture of a

The second obstacle or “hoop” Kulvicki faces, and realises that he faces, is the requirement to specify more precisely what he means by a picture’s syntactic identity. If transparency in pictorial systems entails, like Kulvicki claims, that a picture of a picture retains the original’s “syntactic identity”, what part of the picture exactly is it that is retained? In less replete systems, like natural languages, say, it is usually easy enough to delineate a symbol’s syntactic identity. But what does the notion of syntactic identity actually amount to with regard to pictures? Kulvicki answers this question by reverting to a distinction made by John Haugeland between the skeletal or “bare bones” content of a representation, on the one hand, and its “fleshed out” content on the other. So, to understand how Kulvicki conceives of the syntactic identity of a picture, it is necessary first to get some purchase on Haugeland’s notions of skeletal and fleshed out contents.

For Haugeland (1991), all representations – pictorial and non-pictorial alike – have both skeletal and fleshed out contents. The question that leads him to the skeletal/fleshed-out distinction is:

“How much of what derives from [a representation’s recipient’s] ‘background familiarity’ belongs in the represented contents as such?

In one sense, all or most of what a recipient could be expected to learn from a communicated representation could be deemed ‘contained’ therein.” (Haugeland, 1998: 185)

When we look at pictures, or interpret other symbols, a lot of what they tell us derives from our own background knowledge; or, to revert back to Wollheim’s terms, from our “cognitive stock” consisting of previously held concepts and beliefs. But in a sense, representations also have contents that logically (if not actually) precede the meaning we attribute to them when we mobilise our own background cognitive stock. This latter, rather abstract and narrowly delimited notion of content is what Haugeland calls the “skeletal” or “bare bones” content of a representation, and he contrasts it with a broader notion of content he calls “fleshed out”, which is content mediated by the spectator or recipient’s background knowledge or “familiarity”.³⁹ All representations, in other words, have fleshed-out contents consigned to them by their recipients. But all of them also have skeletal contents that are independent of the recipients’ background cognitive stock. This independent, “skeletal” version of a representation’s content is what constrains the recipient in her assignment of content to a representation from her own background cognitive stock.

Kulvicki illustrates the distinction between skeletal and fleshed out contents with his own examples:

picture does not retain the original’s syntactic identity *per se*, but it does contain similarities to the original picture with regard to the system’s SRP’s.

³⁹ Haugeland (1998: 186-187) goes on to show how the skeletal/fleshed-out distinction relates to “other and better-known distinctions, such as literal versus figurative, and explicit versus implicit”. It displays some clear similarities, especially with the latter, but also important differences with both.

“...the claim ‘Johnny went to bed with a frown and without his supper’ has a rather rich fleshed out content. Arguably one does not fully get that content without being able to draw some connection between the frown and the lack of a meal, without being able to guess that Johnny is likely a child or being portrayed as one, and so on. The sentence relies on the reader to draw out what is implied, implicated, and otherwise suggested by and alluded to in the remark without being built into the sentence itself. What one has to build upon, however, is the bare bones content of the sentence,” (Kulvicki, 2006: 122).

The skeletal/fleshed-out distinction can also be made with regard to pictures. In some sense a photo in a family album represents one’s family (fleshed out content). But in another sense, its content is less determinate; it could for instance also be a set of “cleverly designed mannequins on cleverly designed sets” (Kulvicki, 2006: 123). Taking such indeterminacy to its extreme yields a picture’s skeletal contents. As it turns out, at its most abstract and indeterminate – i.e. at a *skeletal* level – a pictures’ contents amount to nothing but “certain variations of incident light with respect to direction” (Haugeland, 1998: 189).

Let us at this point return to Kulvicki’s account of the structural transparency of pictures. Recall that Kulvicki formulates transparency in terms of pictures’ syntactic identities: a system is transparent when a representation of a representation in that system retains the *syntactic identity* of the original. It is the abstract notion of the skeletal content of pictures that allows Kulvicki to recognise and differentiate between pictures’ syntactic identities. “Though abstract, bare bones (skeletal) content is a plausible way to articulate what pictures can be about and thereby establish conditions under which two pictures differ syntactically.” (Kulvicki, 2006: 59; my parenthesis) For Kulvicki, structural transparency in pictorial systems amounts to the following: that a picture taken of a picture retains the skeletal contents of the original picture.

One of the spinoffs of characterising depiction in these structural rather than perceptual terms is that they show how depiction is not necessarily an essentially *visual* form of representation. Depiction, Kulvicki argues, as delimited by the conditions of syntactic sensitivity, semantic richness, relative repleteness, and structural transparency, is a form of representation independent of sense modality. There are, for instance, audio and tactile representational systems that meet Kulvicki’s four conditions, and possibly others (Kulvicki, 2006: 106-114).

Nonetheless, whatever the medium under consideration, the notion of structural transparency is the cornerstone of Kulvicki’s account of depiction. Without it, his theory is a far cry from fully defining depiction in structural terms. As is now also evident, his formulation of the notion of transparency relies heavily on Haugeland’s skeletal/fleshed-out distinction. It should therefore not be surprising that Kulvicki understands picture perception in terms of how we derive pictures’ fleshed out contents from their skeletal contents or “bare bones”. In Kulvicki’s account, the perceiving of a picture’s content corresponds to “fleshing out” its bare bones.

4. KULVICKI AND WOLLHEIM: ON FLESHING-OUT AND SEEING-IN

Unlike for perceptual theorists, the topic of picture perception is only of secondary interest to Kulvicki. His theory does not need to rely on a particular characterisation of picture perception in order to define depiction, because (arguably) he can already define it in structural terms, without recourse to phenomenological considerations. However, one of his reasons for taking the structural approach to explaining depiction is the view that “the problem of picture perception looks more interesting if one first has some purchase on pictures’ structure” (Kulvicki, 2006: 29). This fairly disguised admission that there *is* in fact something like a “problem of picture perception” (which is more than Goodman tended to acknowledge), and that it can be brought into sharper focus by the tenets of a structural account, tallies with our working assumption that depiction admits of both structural and perceptual characterisation.

Moreover, Kulvicki formulates one of the key concepts of his decidedly structural account – the concept of pictures’ “skeletal contents” – in terms that point towards the fact that there is something fundamentally perceptual about pictures. Recall that he follows Haugeland in describing the skeletal contents of pictures, as nothing but “variations of incident light with respect to direction”.⁴⁰ Recall also that in Kulvicki’s account, skeletal content equates to his notion of the syntactic type or identity of a picture. It seems, then, from his description of pictures’ skeletal contents, that the syntactically relevant information contained in a picture can always best be described with reference to a specific sensory medium (e.g. light, sound or shape⁴¹). This is significant, because it implies an admission that there is something thoroughly perceptual about our recognition of a picture’s syntactic identity.

Thus, already at this point, in its exposition of picture structure, Kulvicki’s account seems precariously balanced between perceptual and structural considerations. But it is only later on in *On Images* that he addresses picture perception explicitly. Having laid down structural conditions to define depiction, and having supplemented them with some ideas about pictures’ skeletal and fleshed out contents, Kulvicki returns to the issue of picture perception by trying to show how it could be conceived of using the conceptual apparatus he develops in the foregoing account of picture structure and content. Let us see where this gets him...

For Kulvicki, a particular picture’s skeletal content can result in indefinitely many “fleshings-out”. An example from the previous section, of the photo in a family album, should illustrate this nicely.

⁴⁰ As Kulvicki also makes room for audio and tactile pictorial systems, he seems to be committed to understanding the skeletal contents of pictures in these media as something like (for audio pictures) “variations of incident *sound* with respect to frequency, amplitude, wavelength, intensity, etc.” and (for tactile pictures) “variations of incident *shape* or texture with respect to position”.

⁴¹ See footnote 40.

Remember how there are different contents that could be attributed to the photo: *one's family*; or *a set of cleverly designed mannequins*; or, say, (if it were an acquaintance's rather than your own family album) *a group of strangers in a familiar room*. All three of these are possible fleshings-out of the same picture's skeletal content. Kulvicki's view is that all pictures are like this – they all possess more than one or, in fact, indefinitely many possible fleshed out contents – but in most pictures only one of the possible fleshed out contents of the picture is perceptually salient. The perceptual salience of a particular fleshing-out of a picture depends, then, on the spectator's background cognitive stock, on environmental promptings, and on other (strictly speaking) extra-pictorial factors.

Picture perception is a process of fleshing out. It is usually not a self-conscious process, and is akin in this regard to everyday perception – because in everyday perception we are also mostly unaware of the way in which we recruit concepts and beliefs to give shape to what we perceive. We can only become aware of the perceptual process of fleshing out a picture *post-factum* and theoretically, because, in practice, all our perception (that of pictures included) is always already informed by our background cognitive stock. This implies that the skeletal content of a picture remains an abstract notion and is not accessible to us as such, because what we perceive when we perceive a picture is always already something fleshed out.

Kulvicki follows Wollheim in calling the perceptual state associated with pictures “seeing-in” (Kulvicki, 2006: 172) and agrees that it is *possible* to have twofold experiences when looking at pictures, but where his view differs is that it does not *require* such twofoldness:

“Rather, our experiences are usually twofold because for any picture just one fleshed out content is perceptually salient, along with the picture surface itself.” (Kulvicki, 2006: 173)

Perceiving the perceptually salient fleshed out content of a picture equates nicely with the recognitional aspect of Wollheim's *seeing-in*. As there are more than one ways in which a picture can be fleshed out, Kulvicki thinks about picture perception in terms of “manifold” fleshed out possibilities of which only one is normally realised. Add to that the awareness of the picture surface, and you have the two sides of Wollheim's twofoldness. However, Kulvicki does not say too much about the nature of our awareness of the picture surface. What can be said in Kulvicki's terminology about the configurational aspect of Wollheim's *seeing-in*?

It seems, from Kulvicki's own account of fleshing out, that the importance his theory attributes to the spectator's perceptual interaction with the picture surface is reduced to the concern of registering an instance of the picture's skeletal content. The core of *seeing-in* for Kulvicki is, maybe rightly so, the perceptually salient fleshed out content that in Wollheim's terms would be the content of the recognitional aspect. What might be thought of as the configurational aspect is only important, for Kulvicki, inasmuch as it mediates the spectator's registering of the picture's “syntactic identity”.

But this misses an important point about pictures' perceptual peculiarity – a point that comes into relief in Wollheim and Walton's theories. On a Wollheimian view, the configurational aspect does not merely entail that the spectator "registers" some abstract notion of the picture's content. Rather, the configurational aspect itself also entails a perceptual process of fleshing out. "For both aspects [of seeing-in] are conditioned by the cognitive stock that the spectator holds and brings to bear upon the representation that he confronts" (Wollheim, 1986: 48). Kulvicki understandably focuses quite intently on the relation between a picture's skeletal content and its one most perceptually salient fleshed out content (let us, for now, call the latter the picture's "referential" content). But this leads him to overlook a second relation that is also highly relevant to picture perception, namely the relation between the picture's one fleshed out (referential) content and *another* of its fleshed out "contents" – the picture surface.

In a sense, it seems strange to think about the picture surface as something "contained in" the picture. But on the account of perception Kulvicki sketches, the picture surface is also a fleshing-out of the same skeletal content (or "variations of incident light") from which the fleshed out referential content of a picture is derived. This in itself is not so strange, as Kulvicki readily admits that a single skeletal content has indefinitely many possible fleshings-out. But what is indeed unusual is that for most pictures, both the fleshed out referential content and the fleshed out awareness of the picture surface are relatively perceptually salient and, as educated spectators of pictures, we are used to thinking of them both as what I would like to call "veridical" fleshings-out.

So, if one fully explicates Wollheim's notion of twofoldness in Kulvicki's terminology, the following result is obtained: in picture perception, a single picture's skeletal content usually results in two separate perceptually salient and (hence) veridical fleshed out contents. What makes our experience of pictures special, what causes a twofold phenomenology in a picture's spectator, is that there are two simultaneous perceptual processes of fleshing out that build on the same skeletal content, and that the outcomes of both these processes of fleshing out are veridical.

With the way that I use the term "veridical" here, I do not mean to suggest that there is or should be an ahistorical criterion according to which the veracity of our pictorial experiences can be tested. After all, one of the merits of Kulvicki's account is that it allows that historical and contextual changes, as well as differences between spectators, can affect the perceptual salience of particular (referential) fleshed out contents of pictures. Additionally, I am sure that the way in which we experience the *surface* of, say, one of Giotto's frescos, might also differ dramatically from the way it was experienced by a fourteenth century spectator. In other words, there need not be a single, ahistorical veridical way of fleshing out a particular picture's surface either. What I mean by applying the term "veridical" to both the fleshings-out that result, respectively, in our awareness of a picture's surface and in our recognition of the picture's referential content, is merely to indicate that both of them carry (1) an intuitive validity and (2) (assuming the pictorial competence of spectators in general) a likelihood of finding consensus with what other spectators see when they look at the same picture.

It has to be noted, before concluding, that while the above reformulation of twofoldness in Kulvicki's terms was put together with specific regard to visual pictures, it can be generalised in a quite obvious way to apply to pictures in other sense media as well. Fleshing out the skeletal contents of audio and tactile pictures can also be a twofold perceptual process in much the same way that it is twofold for pictures in a visual medium.

CONCLUSION

At face value it seems to me that Kulvicki's structural account does a somewhat better job of drawing the finer distinctions between pictorial and other representational artefacts than the perceptual accounts discussed in Section 2. Despite this, the occurrence of perceptual twofoldness in our interaction with pictures is intuitively persuasive and, it turns out, difficult to circumvent even for structural theorists. Kulvicki's own characterisation of twofoldness, which conceives of the picture surface only in terms of the opportunity it affords us to access a picture's skeletal content, holds the danger of neglecting the rich and fleshed out perceptual content of the configurational aspect of seeing-in. This fleshed out configurational awareness of a picture's surface, moreover, is inextricably tied to our (recognitional) fleshing out of its referential content; and their close relation is secured by the skeletal content both these fleshed out contents share.

Kulvicki is right in claiming that a better understanding of picture structure can and should inform our understanding of picture perception. His notion of structural transparency, although not explicitly present among our intuitions about pictures, does capture something about the reasons for many of these intuitions. The success of transparency as an *explanans* for depiction, however, rests heavily on Haugeland's distinction between skeletal and fleshed out contents. The danger, for accounts of picture perception like Kulvicki's (and Levinson's, for that matter), of focusing exclusively on the relation between pictures' skeletal and fleshed out contents, is that it detracts from another important relation in picture perception: the one Wollheimian theories focus on – between our fleshed out awareness of pictures' referential contents and our similarly *fleshed out* awareness of their surfaces.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Budd, M. 1992. "On Looking at a Picture". *Psychoanalysis, Mind, and Art: Perspectives on Richard Wollheim*. Hopkins, R. and Savile, A. (eds.). Oxford: Blackwell. pp. 257-280.
- Budd, M. 1993. "How Pictures Look". *Virtue and Taste*. D. Knowles and J. Skorupski (eds.).
- Chasid, A. 2004. "Why the pictorial relation is not reference". *British Journal of Aesthetics*. 44(3): 226-247.
- Chasid, A. 2007. Review of Kulvicki (2006). *British Journal of Aesthetics*. 47(3): 326-328.
- Feagin, S. 1998. "Presentation and Representation". *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. 56(3): 234-240.
- Gombrich, E. H. 1977. *Art and Illusion*. 5th edn. Oxford: Phaidon.
- Gombrich, E. H. 1978. *Meditations on a Hobby Horse: and other essays on the theory of art*. 3rd edn. Oxford: Phaidon.
- Goodman, N. 1976. *Languages of Art*. Indianapolis: Hackett.
- Goodman, N. and Elgin, C. Z. 1988. *Reconceptions in Philosophy*. Indianapolis: Hackett.
- Haugeland, J. 1991. "Representational Genera". *Philosophy and Connectionist Theory*. W. Ramsey, S. Stich and D. Rumelhart (eds.). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. Reprinted in Haugeland, 1998.
- Haugeland, J. 1998. *Having Thought*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Hopkins, R. 1995. "Explaining Depiction". *Philosophical Review*. 104(3): 425-455.
- Kulvicki, J. V. 2006. *On Images: their structure and content*. Oxford, New York: Clarendon Press.
- Levinson, J. 1998. "Wollheim on Pictorial Representation". *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. 56(3): 227-233.
- Lopes, D. M. M. 1996. *Understanding Pictures*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Lopes, D. M. M. 2000. "From Languages of Art to Art in Mind". *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. 58(3): 227-231.
- Nanay, B. 2004. "Taking Twofoldness Seriously". *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. 62(3): 285-289.
- Peacocke, C. 1987. "Depiction." *Philosophical Review*. 96(3): 383-410.
- Schroer, R. 2008. "The woman in the painting and the image in the penny: an investigation of phenomenological doubleness, seeing-in, and "reversed seeing-in". *Philosophical Studies*. 139: 329-341.
- Walton, K. L. 1971. "Languages of Art: An Emendation". *Philosophical Studies*. 22(5/6): 82-85.
- Walton, K. L. 1990. *Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts*. London: Harvard University Press.
- Walton, K. L. 1992. "Seeing-in and Seeing Fictionally". *Psychoanalysis, Mind, and Art: Perspectives on Richard Wollheim*. Hopkins, R. and Savile, A. (eds.). Oxford: Blackwell. pp. 281-291.
- Walton, K. L. 2002. "Depiction, Perception and Imagination". *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. 60(1): 27-35.
- Wollheim, R. 1970. *Art and its Objects*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

- Wollheim, R. 1986. "Imagination and Pictorial Understanding". *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes*. 60: 45-60.
- Wollheim, R. 1987. *Painting as an Art*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Wollheim, R. 1998. "On Pictorial Representation". *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. 56(3): 217-226.

THE NON-EVALUATIVE NATURE OF EXPRESSIVE AESTHETIC PROPERTIES

INTRODUCTION

There is a strong camp in contemporary analytic aesthetics that holds that aesthetic properties are by nature *value* properties. Although aesthetic terms and descriptions come in many different kinds, and although it is generally acknowledged that they need not all have a clear inherent evaluative *direction* or “*polarity*” (i.e. univocally positive or negative evaluative content), the point has often been argued that the aesthetic judgements they are used to express on specific occasions, can never be evaluatively neutral. One of the most notable proponents of this view, Nick Zangwill, expresses it as follows: the class of substantive aesthetic judgements (i.e. those aesthetic judgements that we usually deem to have some, more or less neutral, descriptive content)¹ have a role that is “entirely subsidiary to judgements of aesthetic value”; also: “there is no such thing as a neutral [...] aesthetic judgement” (Zangwill, 1998: 86).

In this paper, I want to challenge Zangwill’s position by considering a particular kind of aesthetic property that can feasibly be construed to have at least some instances that are independent of judgements of aesthetic merit or value. In particular, I am interested in the *expressive* properties of artworks and the account that has been given of them by Nelson Goodman.² Goodman is known for understanding expression in art as a subclass of what he calls “metaphorical exemplification”, where *exemplification* is a form of symbolic reference similar to denotation.³

What I want to show is that, if Goodman is right in understanding expression in terms of *exemplification*, then some particular instances of the expressive properties of artworks become classifiable alongside representational properties, as “*meaning-properties*”. The upshot is that, through this reclassification together with representational properties (i.e. in becoming meaning-properties), expressive properties acquire conditions of application that do not necessarily presuppose or imply aesthetic evaluation. This is at odds with Zangwill’s account of the central role evaluation plays in all things aesthetic.

My argument is structured as follows. In Section 1, I give a broad outline of the historical and theoretical background against which Zangwill’s arguments about the category of the aesthetic are cast. The focus is especially on Frank Sibley’s contribution in broadening the field of the aesthetic to

¹ The notion of “substantive” aesthetic judgements and properties will be more fully elucidated in the next section.

² Technically it is not quite accurate to ascribe any account of a particular class of *properties* to Goodman, as he was a defender of nominalism and, as a result, eschewed talk of properties altogether. But the part of his aesthetics I am interested in is a part that can (and will) be easily translated into terms that should be acceptable to even the most stringent metaphysical realist about aesthetic properties.

³ To be precise, exemplification is a restricted form of converse denotation.

include concepts and judgements that are ostensibly not exclusively evaluative. Section 2 concerns Zangwill's attempts to consolidate this broadened notion of the aesthetic. His suggestion is that while judgements of aesthetic merit alone (verdicts) should not be all that aesthetics concerns itself with, aesthetic judgements of all kinds *do* in the end retain an essential connection with evaluation. In Section 3, the crux of this paper, Goodman is introduced, his theory of expression in art assessed and adapted, and the challenges his theory poses for Zangwill's consolidation of the aesthetic, considered.

1. BACKGROUND: THE CATEGORY OF SUBSTANTIVE AESTHETIC PROPERTIES

Since the mid-twentieth century, there has been a significant shift in focus in aesthetics away from the traditional (Kantian) preoccupation with beauty and ugliness – i.e. with judgements of aesthetic merit – and towards issues surrounding the attribution of a broader class of aesthetic properties including “elegance”, “garishness”, “delicacy”, “grace”, “vividness”, “triteness”, “balance”, “eeriness”, “sobriety”, “sadness”, “daintiness” and “dumpiness”, to name just a few. In the recent literature the former kind of judgements, that attribute aesthetic merit only, are usually called *verdicts* or *verdictive* judgements; and, for most of this paper, I will follow Zangwill's habit of referring to judgements attributing the latter kind of properties (elegance, garishness, grace, etc.) as *substantive* aesthetic judgements. Correspondingly, I will sometimes also refer to aesthetic *terms, expressions, concepts, predicates, qualities, attributes, traits* and *properties* as either verdictive or substantive.

To reiterate, therefore, since the Second World War there has been a shift in the focus of aesthetics from matters concerning the verdictive to matters concerning the substantive. A number of philosophers were instrumental in this shift, among them Wittgenstein, Austin and Goodman⁴. But it was Frank Sibley's essays, “Aesthetic Concepts” (1959) and “Aesthetic and Nonaesthetic” (1965), that first marked out the class of substantive aesthetic properties for long overdue systematic attention. The remainder of this section will focus on Sibley's insights about this specific category, so, for now, I will ignore issues regarding the aesthetic status and role of verdictive judgements.

1.1 Sibley and aesthetic supervenience

Sibley does not give a strict definition for the class of substantive aesthetic properties, probably because, as it turns out, to give such a definition is a devilishly tricky job. Instead, in both his papers he characterises the class of such properties (like countless aestheticians since him have done and like I did too in the first paragraph of this section) by giving examples. His assertion that the discrimination of an object's aesthetic properties requires “taste” or “aesthetic sensitivity” has sometimes been read as an (unsatisfactory⁵) attempt at a definition. However, as Lyas (2005: 180) stresses, Sibley's primary concern was not with defining the aesthetic. The distinction between

⁴ Their respective comments on the matter are discussed in Zangwill (1995: 317-318, 320-321).

⁵ Kivy (1975: 199-200), among others, has pointed out that this way of defining aesthetic terms is question-begging unless the notions of “taste” or “sensitivity” can be analysed in non-aesthetic terms.

aesthetic and non-aesthetic properties is ever presupposed in our daily discourse, according to Sibley (1965: 135), and, as such, needs no further justification.

So, what interests Sibley is not so much what determines a property's membership to the class of substantive aesthetic properties, but rather what we can say about substantive properties as a class already intuitively circumscribed. The question he seems most concerned with answering is: how do specific substantive properties relate to the non-aesthetic properties of their objects? And on this score, he is famous for proposing a doctrine of *supervenience*⁶ without *logical entailment*.

There is a quite obvious sense in which an object's aesthetic properties depend on or are determined by its non-aesthetic properties. A sculpture can only be *graceful* in virtue of having certain non-aesthetic qualities – e.g. physical or phenomenal qualities such as having long, curving lines, for instance. Similarly, if someone calls a painting *garish*, it is always legitimate to ask “which colours in particular contribute to its garishness?” In short, it seems silly to deny that things have aesthetic properties like grace and garishness only *in virtue of* having some other, (primary or secondary⁷) non-aesthetic traits. This relation of dependence or determination is best understood as a supervenience-relation⁸.

In recent decades, *supervenience* has become a widespread notion in analytic philosophy. Arguably, its current sense originated with R. M. Hare, who employed it to illustrate his view of how moral properties relate to ‘natural’ or morally neutral facts⁹. Since then supervenience has become crucial in debates about *physicalism* in the philosophy of mind – a view in which a person's mental properties are typically construed as supervenient on some set of his or her physical properties. Similarly, in serving as a useful tool for specifying an impalpable connection between two sets of properties, supervenience has also found an application in aesthetics. Its aesthetic application can be simply formulated by adapting the maxim of supervenience as it is generally articulated to the particular relation it is taken to express in the aesthetic context. Levinson (1984: 93) provides the following formulation of “Aesthetic Supervenience” (AS):

⁶ There is at least one reading on which Sibley's commitment to supervenience is drawn into question (cf. MacKinnon, 2000), but it is, by its author's admission, not the standard reading.

⁷ Exactly *what kind* of non-aesthetic traits (physical properties, phenomenal properties, representational properties, art-historical properties, etc...?) do or do not play a role in determining an object's aesthetic properties, is an important question – one on which (for example) subscription to or dissent with aesthetic formalism hinges. I tend to agree with Levinson (1984: 93-94), who allows for a very inclusive non-aesthetic triumvirate of “structural, substructural and contextual properties” to play a determining or subvenient role.

⁸ The consensus that an object's aesthetic properties supervene on (some or all of) its non-aesthetic properties is widespread in the recent literature, but not completely uncontested. For arguments in favour of aesthetic supervenience, see Levinson (1984), Bender (1987) and Zangwill (1992, 1994, 1998b). For arguments against it, see Wick (1988, 1992), Eaton (1994) and MacKinnon (2000). Note, however, that MacKinnon's argument really only addresses a stringent form of supervenience-account that disallows the inclusion of contextual properties (cf. footnote 4 above) in aesthetic properties' supervenience bases.

⁹ Cf. Hare quoted in Eaton (1994: 384).

“(AS): Two objects (e.g. artworks) that differ aesthetically necessarily differ non-aesthetically [...] [i.e. fixing the non-aesthetic properties of an object fixes its aesthetic properties.]”

Clearly, if this holds (which intuitions suggest it does), it shows why we are inclined to sometimes cite descriptive, non-aesthetic judgements as “reasons” or justification for our substantive aesthetic judgements; by “giving reasons” in this way, we are actually just describing a prominent part (typically but not always a *perceptually* prominent part) of the non-aesthetic supervenience-base of the aesthetic property described by our judgement... *Why* is the painting garish? *Because* it combines this bright red and pale blue region here with that mustard yellow patch there... Or, in philosophical jargon: the painting’s garishness *supervenes* on a set of properties that includes its being bright red and pale blue *here* and mustard yellow *there*.

The advantage of framing the relation between objects’ aesthetic and non-aesthetic properties in terms of supervenience is that it provides a way of showing that a connection actually exists without saying very much about the nature of that connection. This suits Sibley’s programme, because, while he wants to acknowledge some connection, in fact he holds a relatively deflated view of what that connection – between things’ aesthetic and non-aesthetic properties – entails. His view is expressed in his famous (and by now widely accepted) thesis that the substantive aesthetic concepts used in aesthetic property-attributions, are “non-condition-governed”. In general, for a concept to be either strictly or loosely “condition-governed”, amounts to it being in an analytic relation of entailment. That aesthetic concepts are *non*-condition-governed, then, means that while they *do* supervene on, they are *not* logically entailed by any specifiable set of the non-aesthetic properties their objects might have.¹⁰

1.2 Sibley and “negative condition-governedness”

The thesis of non-condition-governedness, as Sibley explains it, is that the correct application of a substantive aesthetic concept to a particular object can never be decided with reference to a list of sufficient non-aesthetic conditions. Consider the following examples he uses to illustrate this point (Sibley, 1959: 424-426):

For a two-dimensional geometric figure, the properties (1) of having four equally long sides and (2) of having four right angles are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for it to be square. They are individually necessary because no square can have only three angles *or* one side that is shorter than the others. And they are jointly sufficient because no two-dimensional geometrical figure with four equal sides and four right angles can fail to be square. Hence the proper application of the concept “square” can be said to be strictly governed by those conditions.

¹⁰ It is important to keep in mind, from this point onward, that supervenience is an *ontological* or *metaphysical* affair, whereas Sibley’s claims about non-condition-governedness pertains to a particular kind of *epistemological* opacity surrounding our application of aesthetic concepts. Cf. Zangwill (1994: 466) on the hazards of confusing metaphysics with epistemology in this regard.

However, there are also concepts that are more “loosely” governed by conditions, concepts such as for example “intelligence” or “laziness” (Sibley, 1959: 424). There is no list of conditions that are both necessary and sufficient for us to call someone intelligent, although we can think of a long list of conditions that can positively count in favour of intelligence: their (1) being a good chess player, (2) being able to solve abstract mathematical problems, (3) having a very broad general knowledge, (4) being unusually quick to learn to perform certain complicated tasks, (5) being exceptionally good at remembering details, etc. Although possessing any one of these properties always counts in favour of intelligence and never against it, it is conceivable that someone possessing quite a few of them may still be considered unintelligent (in virtue of having other overriding properties that counts against intelligence, for instance). But the concept of “intelligence” remains condition-governed inasmuch as a person’s having a combination of enough of the properties enumerated on such a list can serve as sufficient condition for us to have to admit them intelligent. If we just continued adding to it, there is a point at which the list of a person’s intelligent-making qualities becomes too extensive for us to still cogently deny that he or she is intelligent.

Aesthetic concepts, this is the claim (Sibley, 1959: 425), do not function like either of the concepts in the examples above (i.e. “square” or “intelligent”); aesthetic concepts are neither strictly nor loosely condition-governed, at least not in a positively decisive way. The point is that no list or selection of an object’s non-aesthetic features can serve as an a priori guarantee that a particular substantive aesthetic concept applies to it:

“Things may be described to us in non-aesthetic terms as fully as we please but we are not thereby put in the position of having to admit (or being unable to deny) that they are delicate or graceful or garish or exquisitely balanced.” (Sibley, 1959: 426)

This insight of Sibley is a corollary of another crucial and intuitively feasible principle, often discussed in aesthetics, namely the Acquaintance Principle, which states that our aesthetic beliefs (i.e. our verdictive *and* substantive aesthetic property-ascriptions) can only be legitimately formed through *experiencing* the objects those beliefs concern.¹¹ In effect, the upshot of non-condition-governedness is a strengthened emphasis on the importance of aesthetic experience; the reason being that it disqualifies procedures of deductive or inductive inference from an object’s non-aesthetic to its aesthetic properties.

At this point two qualifications on Sibley’s commitment to non-condition-governedness should be noted. Firstly, he readily admits that some non-aesthetic qualities can *typically* or *characteristically* count in favour of the application of a particular aesthetic term or concept (Sibley, 1959: 428). This is why we are tempted to think of aesthetic concepts as analogous to the example of *intelligence*. However, in the case of aesthetic concepts, contra the *intelligence*-example, it does not actually mean that the non-aesthetic traits that are *typically* or *characteristically* associated with a concept can ever function as condition-features of it. Slimness, lightness and smallness may for instance always count

¹¹ For an illuminating recent discussion of the Acquaintance Principle in aesthetics, see Hopkins (2006).

for, rather than directly against, delicacy; but in some objects they might count towards anaemia or insipidity instead – concepts that are clearly incommensurable with delicacy – which makes them unsuitable to function as *conditions* for delicacy.

Secondly, Sibley (1959: 427; 1965: 153) *does* allow for instances of the “negative” condition-governing of substantive aesthetic concepts. Differently put, an object *can* have non-aesthetic qualities such that applying a particular aesthetic term to it would be absurd. A painting consisting exclusively of a few uniformly pale blue or pale grey rectangular regions, for example, can never be termed “vibrant”, “garish” or “flamboyant”. Similarly, a vuvuzela blown at full blast for five minutes can never (except in jest) be said to produce a “delicate” or “dainty” sound. So, at least some aesthetic concepts are in this way – negatively – governed by non-aesthetic conditions that preclude their application. This is why Sibley’s particular version of the non-condition-governedness thesis is usually called a view of “negative-condition-governedness”.

1.3 Aesthetic properties and evaluation

Sibley’s treatment of substantive aesthetic properties introduces an important field of tension at the junction between the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic. On the one hand, it highlights an obvious connection between an object’s aesthetic and non-aesthetic properties – a connection articulated in the notion of aesthetic supervenience. But on the other, it demonstrates that there is more to aesthetic properties than the non-aesthetic properties on which they supervene; the non-condition-governedness thesis implies that aesthetic properties cannot (at least not in full) be logically reduced to the properties in their emergence bases.¹²

The question this raises is: how can the surplus-part in aesthetic properties, that refuses to be reduced to their supervenience bases, be accounted for? What are the elements of a substantive aesthetic property that comprise an excess to the non-aesthetic features of its object? One answer that seems to present itself and has been prominent in the literature is the idea that aesthetic properties have an evaluative component. Rafael de Clercq (2002, 2005) has recently used this idea as a central supposition in his attempt to define the concept of an aesthetic property in non-aesthetic terms. If aesthetic properties have a value-component, he argues, it will explain their logical irreducibility quite nicely, because it is impossible, after all, to logically derive an “ought” from an “is”. (De Clercq, 2002: 172, Endnote 22).

¹² Levinson (1984: 96-97, 107-108) interprets Sibley’s negative-condition-governedness view as a subscription to a qualified form of a position he calls “emergentism” – a reading of aesthetic supervenience on which substantive aesthetic attributes “are ontologically distinct from whatever structural bases support them, and that they emerge from them without [...] including or comprising them in what they are.” Sibley also sometimes used the term “emergence” to refer to aesthetic properties’ relation to non-aesthetic subvenient properties (cf. Sibley, 1965: 138). Whether the notion of *emergence* really adds anything to normal supervenience claims is sometimes drawn into question, but in aesthetics at least, the term seems to have stuck. For an authoritative account of emergence, the *locus classicus* so to speak, see Jaegwon Kim’s work on the topic (e.g. Kim, 1999).

That *some* substantive aesthetic properties certainly do have evaluative implications is, after all, clear enough. Just consider the well-known examples of aesthetic concept-pairs that might conceivably be applied to very (non-aesthetically) similar objects: *delicate/anaemic*, *graceful/insipid*, *flamboyant/garish*, *elegant/effete*, *rapturous/turbulent*. In each pair, the aesthetic qualities described by both terms might include many of the same characteristic or typical non-aesthetic properties in their supervenience bases. But in each pair there is also a sharp contrast between the two terms' evaluative implications in that the first term implies appreciation and the latter, censure. Examples like these show why the argument that an evaluative component might explain the logical discontinuity (non-condition-governedness) between substantive aesthetic properties and their non-aesthetic supervenience bases, has intuitive appeal. Hence, a promising angle from which to approach the category of substantive aesthetic properties is to examine their contribution or relation to the aesthetic merit of their objects. Nick Zangwill takes this angle.

2. ZANGWILL AND BEAUTY

The shift in focus that gained substantive aesthetic properties their prominence since Sibley can also be understood as a broadening in the scope of aesthetics. Whereas historically aesthetics focused on beauty or aesthetic merit alone, contemporary aesthetics undertook the project of including substantive aesthetic properties in a new, wider and more complex category of the aesthetic. Zangwill (1998) points out a potential problem with this project. Substantive aesthetic concepts come in many different kinds. Some, like "graceful" and "garish", are native to aesthetic thought, while others, like "balanced" and "delicate" seem to be borrowed from other, non-aesthetic spheres. Some properties, like "elegance" and "triteness", seem to be inherently evaluative; others, like "mournfulness" and "eeriness", may in some circumstances contribute to the aesthetic value of their objects, but do not seem to have univocal evaluative implications across all their instantiations. The problem Zangwill recognises is that the great variety among substantive aesthetic properties, as well as their divergence in kind along different axes of analysis, threatens to undermine the unity and coherence of a new, broadly conceived category of the aesthetic.

"What is in question is the *point* of a classification which groups the beautiful together with the dainty and the dumpy. Is there anything to be said for such a classification? Or is it arbitrary? Are there relevant similarities which would make such a classification illuminating and worthwhile?" (Zangwill, 1998: 78)

Zangwill sets himself the task of finding a justification or rationale for subsuming the verdictive *as well* as the full variety of substantive aesthetic properties under a single, unitary category of the aesthetic. He explores two approaches to the problem: the *neo-Kantian* account which, although he ultimately rejects it, he considers to be "in many ways [...] the natural programme to explore" (Zangwill, 1998: 85); and his own so-called "determination account". What both these approaches have in common is that they are unashamedly traditionalist; albeit in contrasting ways, they both accord the Kantian conception of beauty (aesthetic merit) its traditional, central role in aesthetics.

Under the next two headings respectively, I will first take stock of the challenges faced by the neo-Kantian approach (section 2.1), and then of Zangwill's arguments for his own alternative - the *determination* account (section 2.2). The point of starting with a rehearsal of Zangwill's exposition and analysis of the neo-Kantian account is that, in it, some issues are raised that I believe might ultimately pose challenges to Zangwill's own account. I will argue as much in section 3.

2.1 The neo-Kantian programme

In the *Critique of Judgement*, Kant analyses judgements of beauty (which he calls "judgements of taste") as the kind of judgement *par excellence* that lays claim to *subjective universality*. This, for Kant, is what defines verdictive judgements: that by the same token they are irreducibly subjective *and* approach normative universality. Verdictive judgements are *subjective*, on the one hand, in that they are "based on a felt response" and they lay claim to universal validity, on the other, inasmuch as they "aspire[s] to a kind of *correctness*" (Zangwill, 1998: 79), i.e. are subject to norms and can be adjudged right or wrong.

The question is: how can the above Kantian view of judgements of beauty – which is after all an imminently credible characterisation of verdictive aesthetic judgements – assist in the task of grouping verdictive *and* substantive judgements (or verdictive *and* substantive properties, for that matter) together in a single class? The neo-Kantian strategy wants to show how the notion of subjective universality can be extended to apply not only to verdictive judgements, but also to substantive judgements. If it is possible to demonstrate that, apart from the central case of verdictive judgements, substantive judgements, and then *only* substantive judgements, have a *subjectively universal* character, then the task of securing a unified category of the aesthetic is as good as accomplished (Zangwill, 1998: 80). To do this, three criteria must be met, i.e. three questions need answering:

- (1) Do substantive aesthetic judgements, like verdictive judgements, aspire to *universal* validity or correctness?
- (2) Are substantive aesthetic judgements also *subjective* in the Kantian sense? [i.e. are they "based on a felt response?"]
- (3) Aside from the class of substantive aesthetic judgements as it is intuitively circumscribed, are there any other kinds of judgement that also meet the criteria articulated in (1) and (2)?

If the neo-Kantian strategy is to succeed, it will require a positive answer to the first two questions, and a negative answer to the third. Zangwill (1998: 80-84) examines the neo-Kantian programme's answers to the three questions in turn...

[1] The first question gets a resounding “yes”: substantive judgements clearly *do* lay claim to correctness and may, as such, be subjected to norms or procedures of verification.¹³ This is more than evident in the fact that we consider someone who judges Hawaiian music and Alpine yodelling to be passionate, and flamenco and rebetika to be cheerful, to be mistaken.¹⁴ Clearly, when making a substantive aesthetic judgement it is possible to judge correctly or wrongly. *Some* standard of correctness evidently applies; which means that substantive judgements do have aspirations towards universal validity.

[2] The second question causes more trouble. On the Kantian model, verdictive judgements are said to be based on a “felt response” of (disinterested) pleasure or displeasure. A felt response, says Zangwill (1998: 79), is not a cognitive state like the beliefs or perceptual experiences that it is occasioned by. Beliefs and perceptual experiences admit of conditions in the world that determine whether they are, respectively, true or veridical. A felt response, it seems, lacks such conditions – in this sense, it is *subjective* and as such gives its subjective character to the verdictive judgement(s) it grounds.

If, as the neo-Kantian strategy intends, substantive judgements are to be considered *subjective* in a comparable way, we need to be able to specify the particular kind of “felt responses” that ground them. The problem is that substantive judgements are based on our experiences of the objects judged and, in these experiences, it seems as if substantive concepts, like delicacy, elegance, daintiness and dumpiness, enter into the (cognitive) content of our perception (Zangwill, 1998: 81). We *perceive* a violin-sonata as mournful, rather than perceiving it as an aesthetically neutral piece of music and then responding to it with a non-cognitive feeling of mournfulness.

This is not good news for the neo-Kantian agenda. If substantive concepts enter into the content of our perceptual experiences then it seems that substantive judgements are not based on non-cognitive, felt responses to our experiences at all, but rather on the cognitive perceptual experiences themselves. We perceive substantive properties, rather than attributing them to objects on the basis of a subjective response to a prior, aesthetically neutral perception. In other words, substantive judgements do not live up to the standard of subjectivity found at the root of verdictive judgements. But there is a way for the neo-Kantian to try to circumvent this problem, namely, to relax the strict criterion of subjectivity as it is originally modelled to the subjective nature that applies to verdictive judgements. Perhaps, suggests Zangwill (1998: 81-82), there is a more relaxed sense of subjectivity that will allow for substantive judgements to be included among the subjective.

Let us concede that substantive concepts form part of the content of our perceptual experiences and therefore our substantive judgements have a perceptual basis. What, then, if the way in which

¹³ Of course, procedures for verifying aesthetic judgements may be vastly different from, for instance, deductive verification procedures followed rigorously in some branches of science. However, this does not in any *a priori* way detract from their legitimacy as uniquely aesthetic procedures of verification – an insight Sibley’s work emphasised (cf. Lyas, 2005: 177).

¹⁴ The example is due to Zangwill (1998: 80).

substantive concepts enter our perceptual content is not the same as the way in which the concept of, say, a juniper tree enters into our perception of a juniper tree? What if we recruited substantive aesthetic concepts only *imaginatively* to our perception, rather than to positively apply them like when we form *beliefs* based on perception (e.g. the belief that I am standing in front of a juniper tree)? Then, after all, it would be feasible to call the recruitment of substantive concepts *subjective* inasmuch as it occurs as an *imaginative response* to the more “fundamental” empirical perception of primary and secondary perceptual qualities.

Thus, the attempt to give a broader, more inclusive account of what makes a judgement *subjective* in the Kantian sense, turns out to ground substantive aesthetic judgements in aspect-perception. Our substantive judgements become “as-if” judgements based on our aesthetic experiences of *seeing-as*¹⁵: we *hear* the violin sonata *as* mournful and *see* the sculpture *as* elegant or graceful. The implied argument, from the neo-Kantian perspective, is that aspect-perception (“perceiving-*as*”) of this kind is – although admittedly in a broader sense than the non-cognitive felt responses that ground verdictive judgements – a *subjective* matter. In this way, by relaxing the standard of subjectivity, substantive judgements may be included among the subjective. Question (2) can then also be answered in the positive: substantive aesthetic judgements, like verdictive judgements, are also *subjective*.

[3] But what is the cost of relaxing the strict criterion of subjectivity? If we ground the subjectivity of substantive aesthetic properties in an account that invokes aspect-perception, does this not mean that some other kinds of judgement that we do not usually consider aesthetic – judgements based on similar forms of aspect-perception – then also have to be included among aesthetic judgements? It looks that way, because at face value, judgements that ascribe objects with representational properties will then also qualify as subjectively universal.

“The problem is that if we have conceded that the ascription of some *substantive* properties involves aspect perception, or something very like that, and that makes *them* subjective, then we seem to be committed to saying the same of *representational* properties.” (Zangwill, 1998: 83)

This is problematic, because it is counter-intuitive. We do not usually think that, for example, a painting’s being *of* a particular object qualifies as one of its distinctively *aesthetic* properties. Differently put, representational properties are not usually supposed to be included in the category of the aesthetic. Moreover, if the slackening of the subjectivity-constraint to include judgements based on aspect-perception has the undesirable consequence of allowing representational judgements to also sneak into the category of the aesthetic, then we seem to have treated the Kantian criterion of subjective universality too liberally.

The neo-Kantian is therefore left with the burden of trying to show how representational properties are not subjectively universal *in the same way* that substantive aesthetic properties are. Interestingly, on

¹⁵ Zangwill acknowledges Roger Scruton (1974) as the best known proponent of this view of aesthetic qualities as aspects of their objects.

Zangwill's reading, the only way out is to draw the distinction between representational and substantive properties with regard to the (different) kinds of normative constraints at work in the attribution of each. The point he makes, on behalf of the neo-Kantian, is that "Representational properties are a matter of *meaning* – substantive properties are not" (Zangwill, 1998: 83). For Zangwill, calling an object's representational properties "*meaning*"-properties implies that they are in part constituted by the intention of their object's creator. Invoking Richard Wollheim's account of pictorial representation¹⁶, he grounds the normative constraints on judgements that ascribe representational properties in the intention of the author/creator/artist. The argument is that experiencing or judging a certain painting to be *of* a particular object, event or state of affairs, necessarily entails judging that the painter intended it to represent the particular content ascribed to it by your judgement. In other words, the painter's intention is not just a *cause* of a painting's representational properties; it is in fact partly constitutive of those properties, as it plays a role in determining the correctness of judgements ascribing those properties.

Happily for the neo-Kantian, this is not the case with substantive aesthetic properties (or, at least, so it is claimed). As opposed to the intention-*dependent* normative constraint on representational judgements, the standard of correctness imposed on substantive aesthetic judgements seems to be intention-*independent* (Zangwill, 1998: 84). Substantive aesthetic properties are not constituted, even in part, by an artist or author's intentions; in fact, they do not even have to be *caused* by an artist or author, because they may even be attributed to natural objects that do not admit of having artists or authors. In other words, we have found a way for the neo-Kantian to exclude representational properties from the category of the aesthetic.

In summary, where does all of this leave us? For the Kantian criterion of subjective universality to *include* substantive aesthetic properties, but *exclude* representational properties, it should be interpreted as follows: Aesthetic judgements are (A) subjective inasmuch as they are either based on a non-cognitive, felt response to an experience, or on imaginative aspect-perception; and (B) aspires to universal validity in being subject to intention-independent standards of correctness.

2.2 Zangwill's "determination account" of the aesthetic

Zangwill feels, and I believe rightly so, that the neo-Kantian argument leaves behind an unsatisfactory state of affairs. The difference between the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic is, at the end of the argument, only dubiously secured, by nothing more than a subtle and highly theoretical distinction. "What initially seemed to be a fundamental category – The Aesthetic – has turned out to involve a lot of finicky distinctions. We have lost a clean and illuminating way of characterizing a significant category." (Zangwill, 1998: 84)

A simpler solution is required. The Neo-Kantian programme tried to stretch the criterion of subjective universality to fit the whole heterogeneous category of the aesthetic. The assumption was that the

¹⁶ For an accessible and relatively recent précis of his theory, see Wollheim (1998).

best way to cogently categorise substantive and verdictive judgements together (and at the same time keep them nicely separate from non-aesthetic judgements), is to find an intrinsic characteristic that they and they alone share. As alternative, Zangwill's own "determination account" rather focuses on how verdictive and substantive judgements, as two *distinct* kinds of judgement that *may or may not* share some intrinsic characteristic, relate to each other as they arise in everyday aesthetic thought. In one respect Zangwill follows the neo-Kantian – by placing verdictive judgements at the heart of his project. Of this much there can be no doubt: subjectively universal judgements of merit belong fundamentally to the category of the aesthetic. But from this shared point of departure Zangwill proceeds differently.

The point is to try to demonstrate that there is a necessary connection between verdictive and substantive judgements, which does not exist between verdictive judgements and any other kind of judgement. If substantive judgements are in some way more closely connected to the verdictive than any other kinds of judgements (e.g. empirical judgements about objects' primary or secondary qualities, or representational judgements, the kind that threatened to undermine the neo-Kantian account), then that connection would provide a suitable rationale for grouping verdictive and substantive judgements together. Not surprisingly, the place Zangwill looks for such a connection is in the much debated idea that all substantive aesthetic properties may possibly have evaluative implications.

Usually, those who follow this line of approach want to show that all substantive properties somehow *contribute to or detract from* the aesthetic merit or value of their objects. At face value, it seems clear enough that *grace* and *elegance* always include a positive evaluative content. Then why not simply concede that there is a logical entailment relation between the concept of grace and the concept of beauty or aesthetic merit. For something to be graceful already *means* that it is beautiful or aesthetically valuable in a particular way. The connection between the concepts of grace and beauty is analytic. But while this strategy may (perhaps) be workable for examples like grace and elegance, unfortunately it cannot even nearly be extended to the whole class of substantive aesthetic properties. Zangwill (1995: 323) uses "dainty" and "dumpy", two of his favourite examples, to illustrate how some substantive properties, unlike grace and elegance, may *sometimes* contribute and *in other instances* detract from the aesthetic merit of their objects. Although daintiness is often a positive feature and dumpiness a defect, there are some "*horribly dainty*" porcelain figurines and "*wonderfully dumpy*" sculptures of Neolithic women. Evidently, not all substantive properties have a univocal, one-direction evaluative content. Hence, only some substantive properties can be tied to verdictive ones by an appeal to a logical entailment relation between them.

In light of this fact, that not all substantive aesthetic concepts logically entail aesthetic merit, Zangwill frames the connection he is looking for between verdictive and substantive properties as a supervenience relation. He does this in the vocabulary typical of supervenience claims: "If two things differ in evaluative respects, then they differ substantively. If something changes evaluatively, then it changes substantively. And something could be different in evaluative respects only if it were different

in substantive respects.” (Zangwill, 1995: 325) Once again, just like it did for Sibley’s purposes¹⁷, supervenience proves to be a useful notion for articulating an otherwise intangible connection between two sets of properties.

But making the supervenience claim, that aesthetic merit and demerit is determined by substantive properties, does not yet entirely secure the connection Zangwill wants to demonstrate. The full extent of his *determination* account of substantive aesthetic properties involves that their role of *determining* the aesthetic merit of their objects is what makes them substantive properties. Differently put, to subvene or determine beauty and ugliness is part of the meaning of the concept of a substantive aesthetic property. This means that, implied in all particular substantive property attributions, is the realisation that the properties we are attributing fulfil the role of determining the aesthetic merit we have already perceived in their objects. The reason we intuitively group substantive properties together with the verdictive is that they are partly constituted as substantive properties by this determination (or subvenience) relation to the verdictive.

We may also put it in terms of aesthetic thought. The aesthetic status of verdictive judgements is fundamental, the aesthetic status of substantive judgements, derivative.

“Substantive judgements do not describe neutral features of things but *ways of being beautiful or ugly*. We can put the point in terms of the *function* of the judgements. The function of verdictive judgements is simply to pick out aesthetic value and disvalue; but the function of substantive judgements is to pick out the substantive properties that determine aesthetic value and disvalue. Substantive judgements are there to *serve* verdictive judgements. Substantive and verdictive judgements are inextricably locked together in this way.” (Zangwill, 1998: 85)

Reverting back to the realist mode of talking in terms of *properties*: Zangwill’s diagnosis may be summarised as follows... The category of substantive aesthetic properties is heterogeneous along one or several axes of analysis – most importantly, it is heterogeneous in that not all substantive properties may be said to have *intrinsic* evaluative content. Zangwill’s solution: all substantive aesthetic properties have a necessary *extrinsic* connection to pure judgements of aesthetic value (verdicts) in that the function of *determining* the beauty or ugliness of their objects is part of what constitutes a substantive property as substantive property.

It would seem that this “determination” account gives a much simpler response than the neo-Kantian argument, to the problem of grounding or justifying a unified category of the aesthetic. It manages to *include* the substantive alongside the verdictive but, importantly, it also ostensibly *excludes* the representational properties that caused so much trouble for the neo-Kantian account (because judgements that ascribe representational content to objects are not by necessity, and perhaps not even in any instances, directly subservient to judgements of merit in the way that substantive judgements are deemed to be). If I may use the substantive aesthetic term, this is a more *elegant*

¹⁷ See section 1.2 above.

account than the neo-Kantian argument. Nevertheless, some of its central suppositions and implications require more scrutiny; two issues in particular spring to mind.

Firstly, there is the issue of the depreciation of the role of substantive aesthetic judgements. In the process of reinstating judgements of beauty or aesthetic merit as the fundamental kind of aesthetic judgement, Zangwill allows substantive judgements to become its mere subsidiaries. He goes as far as to call them “*rationalizations*, in the pejorative sense” (Zangwill, 1998: 89) indicating that they are made *post factum* and are, as such, secondary to the verdictive. In practice, it might well be that substantive terms are *often* used in such a subservient way, but whether it is *always* the case cannot simply be settled by stipulation.

And secondly, Zangwill (1998: 86) insists without much positive grounds that, although there are many substantive terms, descriptions and properties that lack an inherent evaluative content or direction¹⁸, particular uses of these terms in particular circumstances *always* imply evaluations. This is implicit in the central thesis of Zangwill’s account: a verdictive stance is presupposed in *all* our particular uses of substantive aesthetic terms. Otherwise they would not *be* substantive terms.

Intuitions differ on points like these, but I think we may do well to sometimes test our intuitions. This is best done with reference to some borderline cases – properties that lie close to what we might call the “border” between the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic (as drawn by Zangwill’s account). In his reconstruction of the neo-Kantian argument, Zangwill implicated one class of such borderline properties: representational properties. It should be clear that the determination account does not struggle with excluding representational properties from the aesthetic, like Zangwill wants it to. But the fact that they were borderline on the neo-Kantian account, and that this was the case because they are intention-dependent *meaning*-properties, gives us a nudge towards another borderline case. In the next section, I will look at another class which also lies close to the “border” of the aesthetic, but, on Zangwill’s account, on the opposite side to representational properties – *inside* the category of the aesthetic. I want to argue that this other class is, like representational properties, also a class of *meaning*-properties, and that this poses some problems for Zangwill’s account. What I have in mind are the expressive qualities of artworks. I will introduce them in the next section via Nelson Goodman’s account of expression in art.

3. GOODMAN, SYMBOL SYSTEMS AND ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

Nelson Goodman is probably the best known proponent of aesthetic cognitivism in the analytic tradition. It is no surprise, therefore, that his work holds some useful resources for an argument (like

¹⁸ In “The Beautiful, the Dainty and the Dumpy”, Zangwill (1995: 324) suggests that many more substantive terms than is usually supposed succumb to the view of “conversational implicature”. On this view, reflection on the particular use of an aesthetic term often makes it apparent that the term derives its evaluative implications from the conversational context, i.e. that the term does not have any inherent evaluative content, but rather implies an evaluative verdict through the particular way it is used in conversation.

the one I am making) that wants to challenge suppositions about the fundamentally evaluative nature of the aesthetic. As we saw, for traditionalists like Zangwill the descriptive capacity of substantive aesthetic terms is always already engaged in the task of determining (subvening) aesthetic merit. Contrastingly, for a cognitivist like Goodman the question of the aesthetic merit of an artwork is always secondary to questions about its capacity to advance our understanding of the world.

One of the main problems with trying to bring Goodman and Zangwill's two very contrasting views to enter into a productive philosophical conversation is that the metaphysical assumptions at the root of each of their respective views differ vastly from those of the other. Goodman is a self-proclaimed nominalist (another fact he is famous for), and this means that he mostly avoids talk of aesthetic properties (or any other properties, for that matter)¹⁹ – a practice which Zangwill, on the other hand, (as should be clear from the previous section,) has no scruples about. Now, without getting involved in any deep metaphysical debates, it is necessary to note that nominalism is not the most commonly held, nor the most conventional, philosophical position. So for the sake of the argument presented here, I will do what many commentators do with Goodman: assume that his core insights, especially those regarding expression in art, do not depend on his nominalist mode of articulating them.

Under the next heading (section 3.1), therefore, I will elucidate on Goodman's theory of expression in art using his own terminology. For thoroughness' sake, this will include situating his account of expression within the wider concerns of his semantic theory of art. In tandem with this exposition, I will try to translate the suggestions central to Goodman's theory of expression into terms that are more congenial to the relatively conventional (i.e. non-nominalist) metaphysics implicated in Zangwill's account of the aesthetic. This should be helpful for the comparison thereafter (in section 3.2) between Goodman and Zangwill's respective takes on expression, which will ultimately result in some challenges to Zangwill's determination account of substantive aesthetic properties.

3.1 Symbol systems, varieties of reference and Goodman's view of expression

Goodman's main contribution to aesthetics came in the form of his book *Languages of Art* (1968)²⁰, which had the apt subtitle: "An Approach to a Theory of Symbols". In it, he develops his view of some of the central features of how not just artworks, but any and all human artefacts generate meaning by participating in symbol systems. A symbol system, in brief, consists of a range of characters (which comprise a symbol *scheme*) along with everything these characters (in the symbol scheme) refer to. Natural languages like English, for example, are symbol systems. Their symbol schemes have a great number of characters (words) that can each refer to things on its own, or be combined into complex symbols that, likewise, refer. In natural languages, what a word or phrase or sentence refers to is usually determined by conventional semantic rules. But not all symbol systems are like languages,

¹⁹ The reason being that nominalism of Goodman's brand does not sit comfortably with asserting the existence of abstract entities like properties.

²⁰ The first edition appeared in 1968 with Bobbs-Merrill as publisher. For the rest of this paper, references to *Languages of Art* are to the second edition of 1976.

and reference is not always determined by semantic rules. Artworks (paintings, sculptures, symphonies, plays, etchings, etc.) are also symbols, and participate in *other* kinds of symbol systems.

Given that art is thus subsumed under the symbolic²¹, understanding it will involve understanding the role and the workings of reference in these symbol systems. “Reference” in *his* sense, Goodman (1981b: 121) stipulates, “is a very general and primitive term, covering all sorts of symbolization, all cases of *standing for*.” There are, however, several forms of reference on which Goodman’s writings expound²². The two most important, however, and really the only two that bears any theoretical burden in Goodman’s understanding of art, Beardsley (1978: 96) notes, are undoubtedly *denotation* and *exemplification*.

Denotation is fundamental to Goodman’s conception of a symbol system; crudely formulated, for something to belong to a symbol system it either has to denote something, or it has to be denoted by some other symbol. Importantly, denotation is not restricted by Goodman to linguistic description. Any symbol, whether verbal or pictorial or what have you, *can* denote something, and does so when it is applied to that thing as a label. Depending on the symbol system at work, the *word* “water” can be a label for all existing water or for a particular glass-full; a *picture* of Barack Obama, in different contexts or symbol systems can label the individual man or the category of Presidents of the USA; *road signs* can label things, *passages of music* can be labels, even a bottle of mayonnaise can be a label (for a soccer player, for instance, in a discussion of last night’s game at the breakfast table). There are infinitely many different kinds of denotative symbols and there is technically no *a priori* restriction on what can or cannot stand for what. Restrictions only apply once we start fixing the rules of correlation between characters in a particular system and their referents.

Moreover, denotation is not restricted to literal labelling. Within a particular system, “[a] symbol may denote metaphorically what it does not denote literally. [...] The two are distinguished by whether the application conforms to or involves redrawing an initial classification.” (Goodman, 1981b: 126) In sum, denotation is a form of reference that runs from a label to what it applies to, whether the label is linguistic or not, whether it applies literally or metaphorical.

Exemplification, on the other hand, runs in the opposite direction to denotation; whereas a label *denotes* the object it applies to, it may be *exemplified by* that object. Exemplification is a much neglected form of reference that Goodman brings into prominence and uses to ground his theory of expression in art. It can be characterised as follows: if an object exemplifies a label, it both possesses *and* refers to that label. An object may possess many labels, but only exemplify (refer to) some of them.

²¹ Goodman (1976: xi) warns in the introduction to *Languages of Art* that “symbol” or “the symbolic”, in this sense, “carries no implication of the oblique or the occult. The most literal portrait and the most prosaic passage are as much symbols, and as ‘highly symbolic’, as the most fanciful and figurative.”

²² The best primary source for Goodman on reference, which draws together comments on the topic that are otherwise dispersed throughout *Languages of Art*, *Ways of Worldmaking* (1978), and probably some other texts, is his “Routes of Reference” (Goodman, 1981b).

The classic example (Goodman, 1976: 53) of swatches of cloth in a tailor's booklet remains the best illustration. The swatches function as samples that exemplify some, rather than other, of the labels that apply to them. A particular swatch of cloth may for instance have several labels that apply to it literally, such as "round", "of a coarse weave", "chequered", "small", "yellow", "less than an ounce in weight", etc. But while it possesses all of these, it normally exemplifies only "coarse", "chequered" and "yellow" rather than "round", "small" and "less than an ounce in weight". The swatch is not an aid for deciding on the *shape* or *size* or *weight* of the material one wants to buy; it is an aid for choosing the material's *texture*, *pattern*, *colour*, etc. In terms of properties rather than labels: the swatch exemplifies those of its properties that it serves as a sample of.

Exemplification, in other words, entails possession of as well as reference to a label or property. To borrow Textor's (2008: 344) formulation: exemplification occurs when "a sample is a symbol that stands for the property it is a sample of." An object may *have* many properties, but is only a symbol for some of them.

But why is all of this relevant for our discussion of the expressive properties of artworks? Because, on Goodman's account, expression in art can be analysed as *metaphorical exemplification*.

"A symphony that expresses feelings of tragic loss does not literally have those feelings; nor are the feelings expressed those of the composer or spectator; they are feelings that the work has metaphorically and refers to by exemplification." (Goodman, 1981b: 126)

In Goodman's view, therefore, and this is an important point, expression in art is a matter of *reference* or *meaning* – specifically exemplificational meaning. The expressive properties of artworks are, not unlike representational properties in Zangwill's account, *meaning*-properties.

3.2 Defending expression as exemplification

There are potential problems with this account of expression as metaphorical exemplification – problems a defender of Goodman would need to circumvent. Derek Matravers (2005: 448) gives a succinct summary of the two most common lines of attack on Goodman's theory of expression – the first of which concerns his view of metaphor, the second his notion of exemplification. Firstly, there is the fact that Goodman's view of metaphor, which is by his own admission (Goodman, 1976: 71, footnote 21) rather closely based on Max Black's metaphor-theory, is at odds with the Davidsonian view of metaphor which is more popular in analytic philosophy. The gist of the dispute seems to hinge on the fact that while on Goodman's view, metaphorical descriptions can have meaningful content that exceeds the literal meanings of the words used to formulate them²³, the possibility of such content in a metaphor is denied by Donald Davidson²⁴.

²³ For Goodman's view of metaphor, see his "Metaphor as Moonlighting" (1979).

²⁴ See Davidson, 1984.

Although, in response to this dispute, I am inclined to defend Goodman's view of metaphor against Davidson, luckily it is not necessary for the purpose of this paper. What we want to use Goodman's theory of expression for is a comparison with and critique of Nick Zangwill's account of expressive aesthetic properties. But Zangwill (1991: 59-60) has argued elsewhere that, even on the Davidsonian view of metaphor, metaphorical aesthetic descriptions may well draw our attention to very real aesthetic properties that otherwise defy description in language. This means that Zangwill's own view of metaphor does not imply anything like the criticism Matravers levels against Goodman. While Goodman's view of metaphor might need a defence against Davidson, it needs nothing of the kind against Zangwill.

The second common line of criticism against Goodman's theory of expression concerns his notion of exemplification. According to Matravers (2005: 448), Goodman does not provide any kind of illuminating criterion to decide between which labels or properties an object merely possesses, and which it exemplifies. Beyond pointing to the fact that the particular symbol system in play has a role in which labels or properties are exemplified and which not, or citing the sample-character of an exemplifying object, Goodman seems to leave the notion of exemplification somewhat under-explained.²⁵ The point in question is that it is unclear what determines that (1) a particular object has a sample-character, and (2) that it is a sample of a particular set of its properties rather than another arbitrary set.

This point has recently been revisited by Mark Textor. Textor (2008: 349) argues that Goodman gives a circular account of exemplification: "an object exemplifies a property if it possesses and displays it. Which properties does the object display? Those that it exemplifies!" Goodman's idea of an object "displaying" certain of its properties rather than others is less than illuminating. What does it mean for something to "display" one of its properties? "Theoretical work is needed to make the notion of exemplification fruitful," Textor (2008: 349) explains, given these unanswered questions. But he has a useful suggestion at hand for remedying this state of affairs. In the rest of his analysis, he goes on to show that the reason for the problems with Goodman's version of exemplification is that it is presented as if it were an intention-independent form of reference.

"Goodman talks frequently as if a sample or work of art itself calls attention to some of its properties. But works of art don't call attention or make manifest properties, people do so."
(Textor, 2008: 351)

What is required for the notion of exemplification to make more sense is a link to someone's intention. And this link can be established without too much trouble and without logical anomaly. Textor (2008:

²⁵ In one place, Goodman (1981b: 121) offers the rationale that his theory is concerned with the "routes of reference" rather than the "roots of reference". But the problem persists: explaining that exemplificational reference is directed from an object to the property it exemplifies does not help us to understand how such reference actually comes about.

354) gives a strict definition of his own intention-dependent version of exemplification, but it is somewhat too long-winded to merit reproduction for our current purposes. In short, therefore, the important insight it expresses is this: that an object can only become a symbol for (i.e. exemplify) one of its properties when there is someone – let us say the person P – who intends for it to do so, and when that intention is realised by an audience/recipient that perceives both the object in question and P's intention.

So, at this point it seems as if there is at least one way in which to get past Matravers' complaint that exemplification is enshrouded in mystery – thanks to Textor's intention-dependent version of exemplification. The important question this raises is, can such an intention-dependent version still do the work that Goodman originally employed it to do in the context of his theory of expression? I can see no reasons why it could not. Much of the spirit of Goodman's original suggestions remains, two things especially: exemplification is a relation of symbolic reference that runs from an object to one of its *properties*²⁶; in the case of expression, the property exemplified (*melancholy, joy, euphoria, nausea, etc.*) admits only of metaphorical description. If we accept that Textor's reworking of exemplification is sound and that it fills the gaps left in Goodman's version nicely, then we can have Goodman's correspondingly adapted theory of expression up and running smoothly.

3.3 Implications: the aesthetic status of expressive properties?

What if we accept Goodman's proposal that expression in art entails exemplification (of course, not without making provision to include Textor's insights about the intention-dependence of exemplification)? How does the Goodman-Textor view compare with Zangwill's ideas about expressive properties?

Zangwill's outlook on expressive properties seems to be along the lines of what Derek Matravers (2005: 449) calls the "Local quality theory" of expression. On this account, expressive qualities are thought to be "logically independent of acts of expression" (ibid.) and located squarely in the artwork itself. The view captures something of our intuitions about objects of art: that they somehow embody our emotions objectively within themselves. On either side of the Local quality view, there are alternatives that respectively suggest that the source or locus of emotion in art lies with the artist (the "Expression theories"), or with the spectator (the "Arousal theories").

For the following reasons, Goodman's theory, or perhaps rather Textor's adapted "Goodman-theory", seems to me to present a workable and very promising midway between the Local quality theory and the Expression-theories. In step with the Local quality theory, the Goodman-theory retains the close connection between the expressive property and the object that possesses it. Expressive properties are local to their objects in both these accounts. But on the other hand, the Goodman-theory also keeps step with *one* version of the Expression theory: by stipulating that the connection between an

²⁶ The realist's equivalent of Goodman's nominalist articulation of exemplification: from an object to one of its *labels*.

expressive quality and the object that possesses is consolidated or secured through the *intention-dependent* relation of reference (exemplification) between them.²⁷ This means that the artist/author/creator's intentions *can* (but do not have to) come into play in the establishing of expressive relations of reference between an artwork and its properties.

Part of the appeal of Goodman's theory of expression, as well as of his whole project of developing a theory of symbols, is that, in "abstract[ing] from the psychology of artists and audiences, and from the historical context of artworks" (Robinson, 2000: 213), Goodman managed to fashion a conceptual framework and tools that sometimes with just a little tweaking, can be made to fit *and* productively contribute to any of a very wide range particular theories in aesthetics (or the theory of knowledge). On some matters, however, no amount of tweaking will force a consensus or induce co-operation from his theories. One such matter is the view that beauty (aesthetic merit) is and should be accorded the central or highest place in aesthetics. On this he disagrees strongly with thinkers like Zangwill, a fact which becomes evident when Goodman's theory of expression meets Zangwill's determination account of the category of the aesthetic.

Central to Goodman's view of expression in art, is the insight that expressive properties are in the first analysis, *meaning-properties* – in the same sense that Zangwill takes the *representational* properties of artworks to be "*meaning-properties*". What points in the direction of this insight, is the fact that expression, in the Goodman-Textor account, is definitely an intention-dependent form of reference. Recall that in Zangwill's own account of them, ascriptions of representational properties are subject to intention-dependent norms or standards of correctness.²⁸

For Zangwill (1998: 83), this intention-dependent normativity that regulates representational judgements, is indicative of meaning-properties. As we find the same kind of intention-dependent norms operating on judgements asserting exemplificational reference, we can say that at the very least those expressive properties that are *exemplified* by their objects²⁹ pass the test for being considered "meaning-properties". But Zangwill also claims that whereas "Representational properties are a matter of *meaning* – substantive properties are not." (Zangwill, 1998: 83) Moreover, at the same

²⁷ This is an agreeable spinoff of Textor's contribution on the *intention-dependence* of exemplification. Textor shows that exemplification can only come about with the aid of someone's *intentions*. But notice that it does not have to be only the artist/author/creator of the work whose intentions can be a source of exemplification. An art critic's comment or pointed finger; a gallery owner's talk about the art market; an intentional juxtaposition of two prints in an art-history book; a hypothetical artist that is dreamed up in our contemplation of a still life... any one of many persons or contexts may provide the "intention-dependent evidence" that can make a certain painting stand for one of its expressive properties.

²⁸ See section 2.1 above.

²⁹ It is important to be careful with terminology here, as there are two senses of the term "expression" at work. As I use it, and Zangwill too, "expressive properties" refer to those that are picked out by metaphorical descriptions in terms characteristic of human emotion (e.g. *melancholy, joy, euphoria, nausea*, etc.). Such properties need not be exemplified to qualify as "expressive properties". From here onwards, I distinguish between "*expressive properties*" in the sense explained here, and "expressed properties", which is the narrower category of *exemplified* expressive properties.

time he wants to maintain that expressive properties are part of the class of substantive aesthetic properties (i.e. fulfil the primary function of determining/subvening the beauty or ugliness of their objects.)

This is where the contradictions start to crop up. It seems that recognising the meaning-property-character of expressive properties, even only in the particular instances of their appearance when they are exemplified, entails an admission that they sometimes function differently to just “determining aesthetic merit”. Is it so far fetched to suggest that the primary function of expressive properties could be to stand in a relation of exemplification to their objects – in fact, to be expressed! – rather than to co-determine aesthetic merit? The claim suggested is not that expressive properties can have *no* role in determining their objects’ beauty or ugliness. Recall, however, that for Zangwill, functioning to determine aesthetic merit is part of *what it means* to be an aesthetic property. What I am suggesting is that exemplified expressive properties (i.e. “*expressed* properties”) are already sufficiently characterised by their function as a *meaning*-property; that in the case of expressed properties, having to determine aesthetic merit sounds more like an addendum than like a “*raison d’être*” (cf. Zangwill, 1998: 85).

It may look almost like a trivial point to have argued at length: that out of the full variety of substantive aesthetic properties and all their instances in particular situations, only one obscure little corner – the expressive aesthetic properties – sometimes, and then only sometimes, transgresses Zangwill’s mould of the category of the aesthetic. But the response to this protest is double: firstly, if the notion of a meaning-property can indeed be used in this way to extricate *expressive* properties from Zangwill’s previously intact, beauty-centred category of the aesthetic, then it is to be expected that there could be other substantive aesthetic properties too, that admit of some non-evaluative instances. And secondly, by showing up just a little handful of (intuitively speaking) aesthetic properties that escape the determination-account, the *point* of the determination account is seriously compromised. Saying that beauty is important in aesthetics is not saying anything. It is the more consequential claim at the root of Zangwill’s theory, that beauty is *all*-important in aesthetics, which will have been dealt a blow.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Beardsley, M. C. 1978. "'Languages of Art' and Art Criticism". *Erkenntnis*. 12(1): 95-118.
- Bender, J. 1987. "Supervenience and the Justification of Aesthetic Judgment". *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. 46(1): 31-40.
- Budd, M. 1999. "Aesthetic Judgements, Aesthetic Principles and Aesthetic Properties". *European Journal of Philosophy*. 7(3): 295-311.
- Davidson, Donald. 1984. "What Metaphors Mean". *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- De Clercq, R. 2002. "The Concept of an Aesthetic Property". *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. 60(2): 167-176.
- De Clercq, R. 2005. "Aesthetic Terms, Metaphor, and the Nature of Aesthetic Properties". *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. 63(1): 27-32.
- Eaton, M. M. 1994. "The Intrinsic, Non-Supervenient Nature of Aesthetic Properties". *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. 52(4): 383-397.
- Goodman, N. 1976. *Languages of Art*. 2nd Edition. Indianapolis: Hackett.
- Goodman, N. 1978. *Ways of Worldmaking*. Indianapolis: Harvester.
- Goodman, N. 1979. "Metaphor as Moonlighting". *Critical Inquiry*. 6(1): 125-130.
- Goodman, N. 1981a. "Replies". *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. 39(3): 273-280.
- Goodman, N. 1981b. "Routes of Reference". *Critical Inquiry*. 8(1): 121-132.
- Hopkins, R. 2006. "How to Form Aesthetic Belief: Interpreting the Acquaintance Principle". *Postgraduate Journal of Aesthetics*. 3(3): 85-99.
- Kim, J. 1999. "Making Sense of Emergence". *Philosophical Studies*. 95(1/2): 3-36.
- Kivy, P. 1975. "What makes 'Aesthetic' Terms Aesthetic?". *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*. 36(2): 197-211.
- Levinson, J. 1984. "Aesthetic Supervenience". *Southern Journal of Philosophy. Supplementary Volume*. 22(S1): 93-110.
- Levinson, J. 1994. "Being Realistic about Aesthetic Properties". *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. 52(3): 351-354.
- Levinson, J. 2001. "Aesthetic Properties, Evaluative Force, and Differences of Sensibility". *Aesthetic Concepts: Essays after Sibley*. E. Brady and J. Levinson (eds.). Oxford: Clarendon.
- Lyas, C. 2005. "Sibley". *Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*. 2nd edition. B. Gaut and D. M. Lopes (eds.). London. Routledge.
- Mackinnon, J. E. 2000 "Scruton, Sibley and Supervenience". *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. 58(4): 383-392.
- Matravers, D. 2005. "Art Expression and Emotion". *Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*. 2nd edition. B. Gaut and D. M. Lopes (eds.). London. Routledge.
- Robinson, J. 2000. "Languages of Art at the Turn of the Century". *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. 58(3): 213-218.
- Scruton, R. 1974. *Art and Imagination*. London: Methuen.
- Sibley, F. 1959. "Aesthetic Concepts". *Philosophical Review*. 68(4): 421-450.
- Sibley, F. 1965. "Aesthetic and NonAesthetic". *Philosophical Review*. 74(2): 135-159.

- Sibley, F. 1974. "Particularity, Art and Evaluation". *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society. Supplementary Volume*. 48: 1-21.
- Textor, M. 2008. "Samples as Symbols". *Ratio*. 21(3): 344-359.
- Wicks, R. 1988. "Supervenience and Aesthetic Judgment". *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. 48(4): 509-511.
- Wicks, R. 1992. "Supervenience and the 'Science of the Beautiful'". *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. 50(4): 322-324.
- Wollheim, R. 1998. "On Pictorial Representation". *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. 56(3): 217-226.
- Zangwill, N. 1991. "Metaphor and Realism in Aesthetics." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. 49(1): 57-62.
- Zangwill, N. 1992. "Long Live Supervenience". *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. 50(4): 319-322.
- Zangwill, N. 1994. "Supervenience Unthwarted: Rejoinder to Wicks". *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. 52(4): 466-469.
- Zangwill, N. 1995. "The Beautiful, the Dainty, and the Dumpy". *British Journal of Aesthetics*. 35(4): 317-329.
- Zangwill, N. 1998. "The Concept of the Aesthetic". *European Journal of Philosophy*. 6(1): 78-93.