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Visualizing and visualizing representations

Visualising and the dependency thesis

When we visualise, are we always the best judges of *what* we are visualising? Apparently not, as otherwise it would be difficult to explain how there could be a debate about what we are visualising when we set out to visualise (for example) a tree. One side of the debate claims that we are presented with the *visual experience* of a tree and the other side claims that what we are presented with is simply *the visual appearance* of a tree. More formally, the former affirm, and the latter deny, the following claim (which, following Mike Martin, I shall call ‘the dependency thesis’):

If S sensorily imagines an F (or the F) then S sensorily imagines from the inside perceptually experiencing an F (or the F) *in the imaginary world*.ⁱⁱ

I shall assume we have a grasp of what sensory imaginings are. As intimated above, I shall focus on the case of sensory visual imagining; that is, of visualising (indeed, in what follows, by ‘imagine’ I mean ‘visualise’ – in some contexts the use of the former term aids clarity). In this paper, I shall look at a move in the debate that features a topic dear to the hearts of some aestheticians: namely, an analogy drawn between visualizing and our engagement with representations – particularly, with theatre and film.

The contemporary debate began when Bernard Williams, in his paper, ‘Imagination and the Self’, expressed scepticism about the dependency thesis. In response, the thesis has been strongly defended by Christopher Peacocke and Mike Martin, while Williams has been supported by Richard Wollheim, Paul Noordhof, Rob Hopkins, and Dominic Gregory.ⁱⁱⁱ The debate is subtle and elusive. However, I can make some fairly crude moves to make apparent why those opposed to the dependency thesis appeal to an analogy with theatre and film. Here are two good reasons to support the dependency thesis. The first is that the same ‘visual imagery’, that is, what appears before the ‘inner eye’, can be used in two different imaginative projects: when we visualise, from the inside, seeing a tree and when we visualize a tree. To quote Dominic Gregory, ‘How is that possible? How can a single visual image, in showing how things look, characterise a [perception] on one occasion, and a tree but no [perception] on another?’ (Gregory 2010: 738). An obvious and ready-to-hand explanation is that these are not two different imaginative projects but rather a longer and shorter description of the same project. The second imaginative project (visualising a tree) just is the first (imagining, from the inside, seeing a tree). The second argument for the dependency thesis is that visualising is always from a point of view; when we visualise a tree, we visualise it from, for example, the front or from above. Why should visualising always be from a point of view? Again, an obvious and ready-to-hand explanation is that visualising a tree is imagining, from the inside, seeing a tree. As seeing is always from a point of view, visualising would simply inherit this feature (Peacocke 1985: 24, Martin 2002: 408-10).

Williams’s analogy

These arguments rely on there being a smooth, perhaps irresistible, passage between what is visually present to us in seeing and what is visually present to us in visualising (differences can be put down to differences between face-to-face seeing and imagined seeing). It would be a powerful tool in the armoury of the sceptic endeavouring to rebut these arguments to be able to appeal to a case, independent of visualising, in which some state of affairs is visually present to us, but in which we have no inclination to say that we are seeing that state of

affairs. Such a case can, arguably, be found in perceiving plays and films. That is, we are held to stand to the content of our visualisation (the visual imagery) in a way analogous to how we stand to the theatrical or filmic representation. Note that I am not saying that the earlier arguments establish the dependency thesis, nor that this analogy (even if it is successful) rebuts it; triumph or failure depends on the details. I am only providing a crude sketch as to why the analogy is needed, and what would need to be true for it to play the role the sceptics hope for it.

The analogy was introduced in Bernard Williams's paper.^{iv}

We as spectators are not in the world of the play itself; we – in a sense – see what is happening in that world, but not in the same sense as that in which we see the actors, or as that in which the characters see one another or events in the play. For if I see Othello and Desdemona, then I see Othello strangle Desdemona; but that will not entail that I, as part of my biography, have ever seen anyone strangle anyone. (Williams 1966: 36)

The thought can be put like this. In the theatre, I do not *see* a strangulation; nonetheless, I experience this visually. Analogously, when I visually imagine a tree, I do not imagine *seeing* the tree; nonetheless, I experience this visually.

Williams then ups the ante a little.

The cinema provides more complex considerations of the same sort. Here the point of view from which things are seen moves. This point of view, relative to the actors and to the set, is in fact that of the camera ... In many films for some of the time, and in at least one film for all of the time, it is the point of view of a character ... In most conventional films most of the time, it is [not]. What then is it? We cannot say, at least without great care, that it is our point of view; for we are not, in the usual case, invited to have the feeling that we are near to this castle, floating towards its top, or stealing around these lovers, peering minutely at them. ... In the standard case it is not anyone's point of view. Yet we see the characters and action from that point of view, in that sense, or near it, in which we saw Othello. (Williams 1966: 36-37)

In his celebrated reply to Williams, Christopher Peacocke rejects the analogy:

It is in the nature of the sensory imaginings with which we are concerned that to imagine something is, in part, to imagine an experience from the inside; while it is not in the nature of theatrical [or filmic] representation that to represent something theatrically is, in part to represent an experience from the inside. ... the director has a degree of freedom which the imaginer lacks; the director may intend the spectator to appreciate that an experience of the type he enjoys is to be taken as occurring in the represented world, and may equally intend him to appreciate that no such experience occurs. (Peacocke 1985: 29)

Peacocke's argument appears to be that the director is able to push the audience into either imagining that they are seeing what is going on, or simply to sensorily imagine what is going on. In visualising we can only do the former. There is nothing in visualising to equate to the latter; nothing to equate to 'the proscenium arch or the jump cut', to quote Mike Martin (Martin 2002: 408). However, even if we grant that cinema is able to engender these two different experiences, it begs the question to assert that visualising is a matter of the first and not the second (Noordhof 2002: 445).

A fly in the ointment

The sceptic about the dependency thesis holds that visualising a tree is like seeing a tree in a film; in both cases we are simply presented with the sensory appearance of a tree, and in neither case do we imagine seeing the tree. However, Williams introduces a fly into the ointment which has not been picked up by later contributors to the debate. This is what he says:

These clues notoriously run out at the crucial stage. One reason that they run out is that in both theatre and cinema we really see *something* – something which we might say... *represents* the characters and the action. (Williams 1966: 37).

This suggests an altogether different reason why the analogy seems so apt. It is not that visualising a tree is like seeing a tree in a film, but that visualising a tree is (sometimes, at least) like seeing a film of a tree.

Let F stand for some object (where that object is not a representation)^v. Let us call the phenomenal content of seeing an F face-to-face, 'SF'; the phenomenal content of visualising an F, 'VF'; and the phenomenal content of seeing a representation of an F, 'RF'. Proponents of the dependency thesis maintain that VF is V(SF). Williams's analogy is that VF stands to F in a way analogous to that in which RF stands to F, so (provided we think RF is not R(SF))^{vi} we can rest content with simply VF. The fly he introduces suggests a different possibility; that, in fact, VF is V(RF).

Note that this is *not* what Williams is claiming. For him, the fact that in seeing a representation 'we really see *something*' is a *problem* for the claim he wants to make (namely, that VF stands to F in a way analogous to that in which RF stands to F). That is why it is a fly in the ointment rather than just more ointment.

I want to defend the claim that the content of our visualisations can be, to a greater or lesser extent, affected by our experience of visual representations. Furthermore, there are occasions in which when set out to experience VF, a better description of the content of our experience is V(RF). If this is correct then the assumption made in the objection above (that the phenomenological contents of VF and V(RF) are similar) could cause a problem. If *sometimes* what we take to be V(F) in fact is V(RF), how do we know which times? In those cases where the phenomenal content of our visualising bears no marks of it being V(RF), on what grounds do we decide whether it is V(F) or simply V(RF) that is not marked as such?^{vii} I shall put this more general point aside in what follows.

To get a grasp of the problem, let us consider Wollheim's classic discussion of visualising. Wollheim uses an example from Gibbon: the entry of Sultan Mahomet II into Constantinople in 1453 (I shall refer to this as 'the scene'). In stentorian mode, he merely asserts a 'fundamental distinction' in visualising, 'corresponding to a big divide between two modes of imagination' (Wollheim 1986: 74). The first he calls 'centrally imagining' the scene; that is, we imagine it 'from a point of view within the scene' (that is, visualising in accord with the dependency thesis). The second, which he calls 'acentral imagining', is imagining the scene visually but from no point of view within it. Proponents of the dependency thesis, of course, deny that acentral imagining is possible. They hold that in setting out to imagine the scene visually we imagine seeing the scene – which entails imagining the scene from some point of view in it. Thus, we might hope that Wollheim provides some argument for the reality of acentral imagining. What he does, in fact, is put forward an example.

In visualising the Sultan's entry into Constantinople, I could visualise it from no point of view – from no point of view, that is, within the historical scene. In that case I would visualise the Sultan and his train of viziers and bashans and guards as they passed through the gates of St. Romanus, paused at the hippodrome, and then rode on to Santa Sofia – and this pageant would be presented to me, or I would represent it to myself, as stretched out, frieze-like, the far side of the invisible chasm of history. (Wollheim 1986: 73)

What is it to represent to oneself the scene 'stretched out, frieze-like, the far side of the invisible chasm of history'? Wollheim's talk of friezes might be a nod to Williams's analogy and thus to be taken along the lines that Williams was proposing; as an attempt to persuade us that our acentrally imagining the scene is *analogous* to our seeing a frieze of the scene. We could explicate the analogy in the following way. Actually viewing a frieze (a visual representation) of the scene would involve two perspectives: the perspective the viewer has on the depiction (call this the V-perspective) and the perspective within the depiction – whether the object is depicted from the front, side, or back (call this the P-perspective). Although (necessarily) the viewer occupies the V perspective he or she does not occupy the P perspective. The crucial point, which underpins Williams's analogy, is that neither the phenomenal content of actually viewing a representation of the scene nor the phenomenal content of acentrally imagining the scene involve a perspective within that scene.

However, and this is the crux of the issue, this seems a clear case where the argument looks in danger of being undermined by Williams's fly. Why is the appropriate description of acentral imagining 'visually imagining the scene but from no point of view within it' and not 'visually imagining a visual representation of the scene'? When I attempt to imagine in the way Wollheim suggests, the image that comes into my head (and always has since I first read the passage 35 years ago) is of the Sultan and his procession laid out, literally, as a frieze; more specifically, as being something like Mantegna's great *The Triumphs of Caesar*, except with people in turbans rather than in helmets. The phenomenal content of my visualising has much about it that belongs to Fifteenth Century Venetian painting. If we cannot rule out the second description there is no argument against the dependency thesis. Proponents of that thesis do not deny (of course) that we can visually imagine visual representations; they will merely hold that doing so involves our imagining seeing visual representations. That is, they will argue that this is simply another case of visualising being imagined seeing and nothing in Wollheim's example would count against that.

Visualising and visualising representations

So far my concern has been whether Williams's analogy provides independent reason to test the dependence thesis. Along the way, I claimed (albeit on the slender evidence of my own experience) that sometimes, when we set out to visually imagine an F what we do is imagine a visual representation of an F. There is a background reason for thinking that this might happen quite generally. The human mind tends not to do any more work than it has to; given some task, it will, if it can, take shortcuts or employ heuristics.^{viii} Suppose that I am asked to visualise a cavalry charge at Waterloo. Even if I had little idea of how such a thing would look (beyond that of a number of moustachioed gents, in coloured uniforms, riding hard on horses) doing so from scratch would be a considerable endeavour. Instead of putting itself to such work, it makes sense for my cognitive systems to cast around my memory, come up with a suitable image – a passage from a suitable film, or Lady Butler's famous picture of such an event – and use that as the basis for my visualising.

The claim I am putting forward comes in weak and strong versions.^{ix} The weak version holds that there are occasions when we set out to visualise an F, and the phenomenal content of our visualising is influenced by previous exposure to representations of and F.^x The strong version holds that there are occasions when we set out to visualise and F, and the phenomenal content of our visualising is that of a representation of an F.

The weak version is surely undeniable. I have never had a direct visual experience of the Taj Mahal. When I set out to visualise the Taj Mahal, the phenomenal content of my visualising draws on the many visual representations of the Taj Mahal to which I have been exposed in my life. It is difficult to see how knowledge of the appearance of the Taj Mahal, which I draw on in my visualising, could have a different source. Although the claim is uncontroversial the implications of the claim have not, as we have seen, been fully appreciated. My experience of visual representations differ in certain respects from my face-to-face experiences. In particular, in my visual experience of representations I am not occupying a P-perspective on the Taj Mahal. The fact that the phenomenal content of my visualising inherits this feature changes the significance of Williams's analogy. What looked to be an interesting insight – that we can stand to the phenomenal content of our visualising in a way analogous to how we stand to a filmic representation – might simply reflect the fact that, because of the influence of visual representations, we do not occupy a P-perspective on the phenomenal content of our visualising.

We might look to other properties of visual representations that characterise the phenomenal content of our visualising. Let us assume, what I take to be true, that the phenomenal content of our visualising represents objects as being three dimensional. However, this leaves open a range of options. The first would be that we experience them as being three dimensional in the way we experience the world as being three dimensional. This would seem the right description if we are visualising the world as we imagine moving through it, but it is not clear it is the right description otherwise (Williams 1966: 38). The alternative is that we experience them as three dimensional in the way we experience depicted objects as being three dimensional. This seems the right description at least some of the time. However, if some properties characteristic of our experience of visual representations characterise the phenomenal content of visualising, then why not all such properties?^{xi} In particular, looking at a picture involves the two perspectives described above.^{xii} To count as visualising a representation, surely both perspectives would need to show up in the experience. Of course, both experiences could; we get both the V-perspective and P-perspective if we imagine ourselves, in a gallery, looking at a picture. I am going to assume that, in the more typical cases in which we are visualising a representation, the two perspectives do not show up as two perspectives. Which is absent? Clearly, the V-perspective is not showing up; if we imagined the scene with the V-perspective and not the P-perspective, we would simply be imagining the scene and not a representation of the scene. So, what accounts for the absence of the V-perspective?

Recall my speculation as to why we end up imagining representations; that is a short-cut to the kind of visual imagery we want. All we want is that kind of visual imagery; any extraneous elements will simply make the short-cut longer. If Wollheim asks us to imagine the scene from no particular point of view within it, we succeed if we imagine a representation of the scene. We adopt the canonical viewing position: the right distance from the picture, from straight in front. This invites a number of questions, to which I will give all-to-brief answers. First, does this entail the dependency thesis? No, for as we have seen, opponents of the dependency thesis do not deny that when we visualise an F, we do so from

some point of view (Noordhof 2002: 439). Secondly, does this mean there is a viewers' perspective after all – albeit the default one? Not necessarily; we can imagine something from a point of view without imagining that point of view being occupied by a viewer. Thirdly, what if our only memory of a representation of the scene is of that representation from a funny angle? Would our visualisation then be from that angle, rather than from the canonical position? This is an interesting question. If I had only ever seen the Mantegna from the right, would this show up in my visualising of the scene? I will not speculate; however, I do regard it as an open question.

What, then, of the stronger thesis: that there are occasions in which we set out to visualise an F and the phenomenal content of our visualising is not merely influenced by our previous experience of visual representations of F, but is best described^{xiii} as a visual representation of F. Or, more bluntly, we set out to visualise an F and we end up visualising a picture of an F. There are two possible scenarios. The first is that we end up visualising some actual picture of an F and the second is that what we end up visualising is best described as a picture of an F, even though what we visualise is not some actual picture of an F. Both seem to me to be possible.

What is needed for the first scenario is that the phenomenal content of what we visualise has (a) all kinds of properties that are peculiar to our seeing visual representations and (b) that it matches some actual picture of an F. For example, I could set out to visualise Charles I. What comes to mind is an image of a bearded man, wearing armour, on horseback with my eyeline roughly level with his boot. The image has certain odd properties: the horse is strangely proportioned, and the sight-lines are wrong - I can, for example, see both the sole of his boot and the top of his shoulder. Of course, one would have to fill in many more details but if they all fall correctly the right thing to say here seems to me that, whether I realise it or not, what I have visualised is van Dyck's equestrian portrait of Charles I (familiar to visitors to London's National Gallery). Although this is an instance in which we have both (a) and (b), there might be other instances in which (b) is sufficient.^{xiv} For example, I might set out to visualise the side of my house. Later, I might be startled to find that what I visualised matches exactly (say) the image on the front of the estate agent's brochure for my house. The apt description of what I have done is that I visualised the image of the front of my house – at least, I can see no reason to rule out this being the apt description.

The circumstances in which it is appropriate to describe what we end up visualising as a picture of an F even though it is not some actual picture of an F are when we have (a) and not (b). That is, we set out to visualise F and what comes to mind is an image with (say) a set of painterly properties – perhaps in a certain style, or a certain characteristic palette, or even displaying craquelure – but which does not match any actual painting. This covers the case described above; of Wollheim's account of Gibbon prompting me to visualise the scene replete with the kinds of properties peculiar to seeing Mantegna-like paintings. However, what I visualise does not match *The Triumphs of Caesar*; for a start, the people are Ottomans in turbans, rather than Romans in helmets.

This second scenario brings out a possible dilemma for my account.^{xv} What I am seeking to decide – let us grant – is that most apt description of what it is that is being visualised. To the extent that the phenomenal content of our visualising has (a), it is not of an F, but of a picture of an F. To the extent that the phenomenal content of our visualising does not have (a), it is not of a picture of an F, but of an F. In either case my search is over, as deciding the most apt description is unproblematic. Answering this dilemma will, I hope, clarify the

claim. It is not quite right to say that I am seeking to decide the most apt description of what it is that is being visualised. The issue is rather that someone, in setting out to visualise an F, ends up with a phenomenal content that has (a). This is a way of visualising an F, and if they do not realise the character of what they are visualising, they might be mistaken about, or puzzled by, the phenomenal content.

Dreaming in black and white

Let me try to support this with an example. The thesis that when we visualise something what we are visualising sometimes at least carries some of the properties of a representation of that thing supports a derided (although in some ways attractive) solution to a well-known puzzle. This concerns a kind of visualising, which, unlike those we have been considering, is outside our conscious control: that is, dreaming. Eric Schwitzgebel reports the following research from the forties and fifties.

Tapia, Werboff and Wonokur (1958) found that only about 9% of a sample of people reporting to the hospital at Washington University in St. Louis for non-psychiatric medical problems reported having colored dreams, compared with 12% of neurotic men and 21% of neurotic women. Middleton (1942) found that 40% of his college sophomores claimed never to see colors in dreams, 31% claimed rarely to do so, and only 10% claimed to do so frequently or very frequently. ... De Martino (1953) found that only 17% of his undergraduate respondents claimed to see colors in their dreams at least once a month. (Schwitzgebel 2002: 650)

Matters change considerably from the early sixties onward.

A report by Kahn, Dement, Fisher and Barmack (1962) asserted that when subjects were awakened during REM sleep and questioned about the incidence of color in their dreams, 83% of dreams were described as having some color. Herman, Roffwarg and Tauber (1968) using a similar method, found that colored dreaming was reported after 69% of REM awakenings in their subjects. Berger (1963) found that between 40% and 71% of dreams to contain color. Padgham (1975) found that about 50%. Snyder (1970) even suggests that all dreams may contain color. ... Today, few researchers are interested in the incidence of color in dreams: for the most part they seem to take the presence of color for granted. (Schwitzgebel 2002: 650-51)

The puzzle is to explain the contrast.^{xvi} Why, in the forties and fifties, did people overwhelmingly report that they dreamed in black and white – something which changes, from the early sixties onwards, to reports that they dream in colour? Of course, you will not need reminding that in the forties and fifties film and television were in black and white; coloured films and television gradually spreading among the relevant population from the early sixties, to now near ubiquity. The answer to the puzzle that most readily springs to mind is, surely, that the phenomenal content of dreaming at least inherits some of the properties of the visual media with which the dreamer is familiar. The nocturnal visualising of one's day at work takes the form of a visualising (or a visualised seeing) of something with the properties of a representation of one's day at work. If this is what is happening, then, obviously, characteristics of the films and television programmes with which dreamers are familiar will show up in their dreams.

Here an objector might appeal, once again, to a point discussed above. If our dreams inherit the property of being in black and white, why do they not inherit other properties of filmic

representations? Of course, it would help if there were more characteristics of films and television programmes with which dreamers are familiar that show up in their nocturnal visualisings. This invites greater empirical research into whether such characteristics are manifested. For example, average shot lengths have decreased over the years; from about 12 seconds in the 1940s, to about 2.5 seconds today (Cutting, DeLong et al. 2010). What those in television call ‘the grammar of advertising’ (very short shot lengths, cuts not fades, sharply contrasting perspectives) that were once unheard of are now commonplace. If the research had been done, would these changes be reflected in our dream reports?^{xvii} Of course, one will never know. However, given the results reported by Schwitzgabel above, it would be foolish to rule it out.

Schwitzgabel himself finds it implausible that the prevailing technology of the day causes our dreams to change – rather, it causes the reporting of our dreams to change. He says

Every day a person sees her house and family in full color. It would be odd to suppose that whether she dreamed about them in color would be depend on what she sees in the cinema or on the television screen. (Schwitzgebel 2002: 653)

But would it be so odd? Whatever the neurobiology, when asleep, some happening somewhere in the brain causes visualising to occur. If the point made above about heuristics is correct, then we will (sub-personally) cast around the memory for something which has the characteristics to fit into this slot. What are those characteristics? I shall mention two.

First, even if they are bizarre – in the sense of incongruous, uncertain, and discontinuous – dreams have some kind of narrative form (Sutton 2011: 527). Secondly, it has long been recognised that people have two sorts of dreams (Sutton 2011: 537). In dreams of the first sort, we do not appear as characters. Rather, we see the dream world ‘from the inside’ – through our own eyes, so to speak. In dreams of the second sort, we do appear as characters; we see ourselves as others would see us. I shall label these the ‘internal perspective’ and the ‘external perspective’ respectively.^{xviii}

The slot we need to fill, what we are being prompted to visualize, has narrative form and can be observed from either an internal or an external perspective. Schwitzgebel’s suggestion that we would naturally reach for our unvarnished visual recollections of our house and family will not do as such recollections have neither narrative form nor can be observed from an external perspective.^{xix} Film and television representations, however, fit the slot perfectly; they have narrative form, and can be viewed from an internal or external perspective. Much in the way that I used my memory of Mantegna, and simply substituted turbans for helmets, we borrow from our memories of film and television, and substitute in our own content. As with the Mantegna, the form comes with certain characteristics: depending on what kinds of things you watch, black and white or colour, with either long or short average shot lengths.

Schwitzgebel adduces the experimental results as part of a broader project designed to show the unreliability of introspective reports.

Though I remember a dream or two many mornings—and sometimes they have seemed quite vivid—I cannot tell you whether those dreams are in color. I doubt that my difficulty here stems from any exceptional ineptitude at the task: the historical swings in opinion about dreaming in black and white suggest that incompetence of the sort I feel is quite widespread, despite the considerable self-confidence people usually exhibit when questioned along these lines. My suggestion is that people’s self-

confidence in this matter is misplaced. We don't know the phenomenology of dreaming nearly as well as we think we do. (Schwitzgebel 2002: 657)

Whatever the unreliability of our introspective reports (a topic to which I will return presently) this does not address the issue raised by the experimental results. What needs to be explained is the stark contrast between the proportion of those who reported their dreams as being in black and white in the forties and fifties and the proportion of those who reported their dreams as being in colour thereafter. The claim that introspective reports are generally unreliable does not, in itself, address this. Although Schwitzgebel speculates that 'it is largely the reporting of dreams that changed rather than their content' (654), he does not endorse any account of how or why this happened. The closest he gets is to say that the earlier reports arose from 'an infelicitous but natural comparison between dreams and the flourishing black and white media of the time' (654).

Thus, we have two different explanations: influenced by the media around them either people in the forties and fifties did generally dream in black and white, or they reported their dreams as being in black and white. A parallel contrast can be found in the general case: influenced by the media around them either people visualise a representation, or they report the phenomenal content of their visualisings as having the properties of a visualisation. I cannot see any way to adjudicate between these alternatives; which one endorses depends on one's broader views about the determinacy of visualised contents and the reliability of reports of visualised contents. The possibility I am arguing for in this paper assumes that our visualised contents are at least somewhat determinate and that our reports are at least somewhat reliable. That is, the experience of visualising something must be determinate enough, and our reports reliable enough, to allow the question of the best interpretation of our visualising to be raised. Clearly, however, it must not be so determinate and so reliable that the question of best interpretation admits of an easy answer.

Visualising and first-person authority

Whatever pushing, shoving, gently cajoling I do with dodgy claims about mental heuristics, one might think my claim faces an insuperable problem. It is best stated with respect to intentional visualising, although I think an analogue of the objection can be constructed for the dream case. Here it is as presented by Paul Noordhof.

If the image may successfully serve the imaginative project the imaginer had in mind, then it is rational for the imaginer to self-ascribe the intention he or she actually had and, hence, attribute to the image intentional properties corresponding to the intention. (Noordhof 2008: 431)

Thus if I set out to visualise the Sultan entering Constantinople what I visualise is just that, not a representation of the Sultan entering Constantinople.^{xx}

I must admit to not finding this at all compelling. Consider this from Moritz Schlick.

In fact, I can easily imagine e.g. witnessing the funeral of my own body and continuing to exist without a body ... We must conclude that immortality, in the sense defined, should not be regarded as a 'metaphysical problem', but is an empirical hypothesis. (Schlick 1936: 356)

As Williams says, we need not (should not) accept Schlick's self-ascription of what he is visualising.

In default of an independent argument that [he is watching his own funeral] is a coherent description of anything, we have only too readily to hand another account of the experience which, I suspect, was the one that Schlick reported in this way: namely, that he was not imagining himself watching his own funeral, he was *visualising his own funeral*. And what that proves in the way of logical possibility, if it proves anything, is only the logical possibility of *his funeral*, which is not in dispute. (Williams 1966: 40)

Noordhof's argument is directed against holders of the dependency thesis. It supports his claim that if people intend to visualise an F it is wrong to hold, of the result, that it is a visualising of a seeing of an F. On the other hand, the very fact that there is a dispute about the dependency thesis suggests that self-ascriptions of visualised content are not authoritative.^{xxi}

The view I am putting forward explains the limits of our authority in our self-ascriptions of the content of our visualising. The sub-personal ransacking our memories for a form that will fit some slot is not governed by our intentions, hence we need not be consciously aware if we have come up with some form, or, if we have, what form we have come up with. However, our intentions do govern the overall project; what it is that we are imagining. Hence, although we are not authoritative about the form, we are about the content; that which we 'paste into' the form. Thus, while it is open to discussion whether Wollheim is visualising the Sultan entering Constantinople or a representation of the Sultan entering Constantinople, it is not open to discussion whether it is Mahomet II he is visualising and not, say, Suleiman the Magnificent.^{xxii}

That, then, is the end of my Wollheimian meditations. I hope to have provided grounds for thinking that, at least some of the time, when we set out to visualise something what we visualise inherits the properties of a representation of that thing or even, more strongly, that we visualise a representation of that thing.

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ⁱⁱ This is from (Noordhof 2002: 427). Noordhof himself was following (Peacocke 1985: 22-23).

ⁱⁱⁱ (Williams 1966, Peacocke 1985, Wollheim 1986, Hopkins 1998, Martin 2002, Noordhof 2008, Gregory 2010).

^{iv} It is still invoked by sceptics: Dominic Gregory makes the same point using an analogy with photographs (Gregory 2010: 744).

^v This caveat is standard in the debate: see (Peacocke 1985: 22).

^{vi} Unless countermanded, in what follows I shall simply talk about visualising an F (VF), remaining agnostic as to whether this is in fact imagining seeing an F (V(SF)).

^{vii} Kendall Walton makes a similar point concerning our knowledge of whether it is simulation or memory that is operating when we imagine ourselves in counterfactual situations: 'If you imagine missing your plane and then find yourself being tremendously upset in imagination, there may be nothing in your experience to indicate whether memory traces which would not come into play should you really miss your plane play a role in your imaginative experiment' (Walton 1999: 137). Similarly, as I will go on to explore, what makes it the case that a particular case of visualising is V(RF) rather than V(F) is its etiology.

^{viii} There is a large literature on this. For a start, see (Gigerenzer and Todd 1999). Thanks to Carolyn Price for the reference and for discussion of 'fast and frugal' heuristics generally.

^{ix} I would like to thank Hugh Mellor for pressing me on this and also for the thoughts on the three dimensionality of images below.

^x If my visualising something is caused by my experience of x that might well make it the case that I am visualising x, even if I believe I am visualising something that is not x. I go into this (in a footnote) below, but I will ignore it here.

^{xi} If I understood him correctly, this point was made to me by Craig French.

^{xii} I shall ignore the possibility that some images require us to imagine having a point of view within the image (Wollheim 1987: 101-186).

^{xiii} A weaker position is possible but still interesting: that it is not 'best described as' but rather there is no reason to rule such a description out.

^{xiv} (b) does not entail (a) as the representation imagined might not deliver properties that are peculiar to our experience of visual representations as opposed to being common to our seeing visual representations and seeing face to face.

^{xv} I owe this to Jon Robson.

^{xvi} David Davies and Andrew Fisher independently pointed out that in the later research, unlike the earlier research, people were woken from REM sleep which casts doubt on the comparability of the result. Schwitzgebel has other data – including replicating a 1942 study – which convinces me that, nonetheless, there is an interesting systematic difference between earlier and later reports {Schwitzgebel, 2002 #989: 651}.

^{xvii} I can report my own experience, which is that they have. Increasingly, my dreams have taken on the characteristics of middlebrow detective series; something distressing in its own way.

^{xviii} There is an analogous distinction in work on experiential memory. The labels there are the ‘field perspective’ and the ‘observer perspective’.

^{xix} While admitting that dreams have narrative form, someone might object that, as dreams are from either the internal or the external perspective but not both, I have a weaker case for dreams that are narrative and internal than dreams than I do for dreams that are narrative and external (as representations are both narrative and external). However, this depends on how closely dream structures mirror episodic memory structures. Sutton has said of the latter: ‘Many or most personal memories are accessible from either field or observer perspective, and we’ve seen the perspective can often be switched; this suggests that the difference in perspective is one of form rather than content, and that the same underlying (complex and distributed) representations can animate occurrent memories involving either perspective’ (Sutton 2010: 33). If that is the case for dreaming, then what fits the gap is something with narrative form that can accommodate both perspectives.

^{xx} The classic discussion of this is (Wittgenstein 1958: 39).

^{xxi} Here is another instance. In replying to critics who claim that a persona is not part of their experience of expressive music (as he claims it is), Jerrold Levinson says ‘people are often not entirely aware of what is implicated in a perception or experience they are having’ (Levinson 2006: 201).

^{xxii} At least, if the latter is open to discussion it is only because Wollheim is suffering from false beliefs. Here are two examples. First, if, contrary to fact, some other Sultan had conquered Constantinople and Wollheim believed it was Mahomet II, and Wollheim was simply imagining the entry of some grand Oriental personage into Constantinople, it would be moot whether his intention to visualised Mahomet II entering Constantinople had been successful. Second, if the phenomenal content of Wollheim’s visualising is causally derived from the appearance of Suleiman, an appearance which Wollheim has mistaken for the appearance of Mahomet II, once again it will not be clear that he has visualised Mahomet II. For discussion of the latter, see (Williams 1966: 29-31, Peacocke 1985: 26-27).