

BENCE NANAY

Taking Twofoldness Seriously: Walton on Imagination and Depiction

What experience are we supposed to go through when looking at Malevich's painting, *The Red House*? The two best-known accounts of this experience were given by Richard Wollheim and Kendall Walton. Wollheim's answer is that the experience is a specific mode of perception—seeing-in: we see a red house *in* the surface of the painting.¹ Walton, on the other hand claims that the surface of the painting is a prop for what he calls “a visual game of make-believe.”² On looking at the painting, we imagine our experience of the painting to be of the red house.

These two accounts sound very different indeed. However, Walton repeatedly insists that his theory does not contradict Wollheim's, it rather complements it, specifies in more details what the experience that constitutes representational seeing (which he also calls seeing-in) is supposed to be.³ Wollheim, on the other hand, denies that Walton's theory is consistent with his.⁴ It seems that one of them must be wrong.

In this paper, I would like to analyze Walton's latest attempt to explain why his theory is consistent with Wollheim's.⁵ More precisely, I will limit my attention to the notion of twofoldness. Two arguments will be made. I will aim to point out that (1) Walton's notion of twofoldness is, in spite of what Walton claims, very different from Wollheim's. (2) Walton's notion of twofoldness is inconsistent with the rest of his theory of depiction.

1

The most important feature of Wollheim's concept of seeing-in is the twofoldness of this

experience. If an agent sees *x* in *y*, she is visually aware of both *x* and *y* simultaneously. As he puts it: “The seeing appropriate to representations permits simultaneous attention to what is represented and to the representation, to the object and to the medium.”⁶ Walton repeatedly argues that his theory is consistent with the twofoldness claim.⁷ Moreover, he continues, his theory can be regarded as an attempt to fill in the details of the rather general and vague notion of twofoldness Wollheim is using. He writes:

Seeing-in is an experience characterized by what [Wollheim] calls “twofoldness”: one sees the marked picture surface, and one sees the subject of the picture.... These are not two independent experiences, he insists, but two aspects of a single one. It is hard to know what this means, and Wollheim offers little explanation.... I propose that my theory goes some way towards showing how two different intentional contents can be combined. The experience is a perception of the pictorial surface imagined to be a perception of... whatever is depicted.⁸

In other words, according to Walton, his notion of twofoldness can be seen as an interpretation and explication of Wollheim's. Of course he uses this notion as a key concept in *his* theory of depiction, which is very different from Wollheim's, but, at least according to Walton, his notion of twofoldness is consistent with Wollheim's. So let us see what Walton's notion of twofoldness is.

Walton claims that seeing *x* in *y* is imagining one's experience of *y* to be of *x*. The two “folds” of the twofoldness of this experience are

the experience of *y* and the (imagined) experience of *x*. In order to understand what this notion amounts to, first we should exclude an obvious interpretation.

Walton's notion of twofoldness is not one between seeing an object and *visualizing* another object. In response to one of Wollheim's criticisms,⁹ Walton emphasizes that imagining seeing the represented object does not mean looking at the painting and visualizing the object, because visualizing an object would constitute an experience that is separate from the actual perceptual one, and this would contradict the twofoldness claim.¹⁰ It is not enough for the visual game of make-believe to imagine the object I see to be another object. It is also needed that the agent imagines the *experience* of one object to be the *experience* of the other object. The two "folds" of the twofoldness are not *x* and *y*, but the experience of *y* and the (imagined) experience of *x*. He writes: "not only is the actual object of a person's perceptual experience in fact different from what she imagines it to be and not only does she know this to be so, it is likely that the actual intentional content of her experience is different from what she imagines it to be."¹¹ The question we now have to ask is the following. How can Walton give meaning to the phrase "intentional content of one's experience" without equating it with the perceived object?

Without going into the Byzantine details of the debate on the nature of the content of experience, a widely accepted notion of the content of experience needs to be found. Christopher Peacocke proposes to "use the phrase the *content of experience* to cover not only which objects, properties, and relations are perceived, but also the ways in which they are perceived."¹² I suggest that we should accept this terminology, which I take to be the generally accepted one.¹³ Using this terminology does not imply taking sides with Peacocke's theory of perception.

Rephrased in this way, Walton's position can be summarized as follows. Seeing *x* in *y* means imagining the experience of *y* to be of *x*, which involves imagining the way one perceives *y* to be the way one would perceive *x*.

Walton insists that looking at a picture constitutes a *perceptual* game of make-believe.¹⁴ The emphasis is on the word 'perceptual.' The

perceptual nature of the game of make-believe is what differentiates the game of make-believe that novels trigger and the one that pictures do.¹⁵ If I read *L'Éducation Sentimentale*, I imagine seeing Madame Arnoux, but I do not imagine my looking at the pages to be my experience of her. I do not imagine the way that I perceive the pages to be the way that I (would) perceive Madame Arnoux. If I look at the Malevich painting, on the other hand, I do imagine the way that I see the painting to be the way that I (would) see the red house.

After this brief analysis of what Walton means by twofoldness, I would like to examine whether it is, as Walton suggests, an elaboration on, or even consistent with Wollheim's original concept.

II

What characterizes the experience of seeing a painting, according to Wollheim, is the twofoldness between being aware of the represented object and being aware of the way it is represented. The former is the recognitional, the latter is the configurational aspect of the experience.¹⁶ Thus, if I see *x* in *y*, I am simultaneously aware of the represented object, *x*, and of the way it is represented, namely, in *y*.

To go back to the example of the Malevich painting, on looking at it, I am supposed to be simultaneously aware of both what I see, that is, the represented object: the red house, and the way it is represented. This latter includes being aware of the strong brushstrokes the painter used for the yellow and the green horizontal stripes, or the black paint visible under the red of the house, for example. Of course, one can be aware of all these details only if one is aware of the surface of the painting.

The difference between Wollheim's and Walton's notions of twofoldness is clear enough. If I see *x* in *y*, then Walton would say that I am simultaneously aware of my experience of *y* and my (imagined) experience of *x*. Wollheim, on the other hand, would say that I am simultaneously aware of *x* itself and the way I see *x* (in *y*).

But possibly this difference is just a difference in the terminology they use, and they really mean the same thing. I do not think so.

Wollheim claims that if I see x in y , one of the two things I am supposed to be aware of is x itself. As we have seen, however, Walton talks about imagining one experience to be another experience. The two “folds” of the twofoldness are these two experiences: the experience of y and the (imagined) experience of x . Walton insists that this latter experience is *not* the (imagined) awareness of x itself, otherwise, as we have seen, imagining seeing would amount to visualizing, a conclusion he explicitly wants to avoid.¹⁷ On the other hand, what figures in Wollheim’s notion of twofoldness is precisely the awareness of the object seen, x itself. I do not see how these two accounts could be reconciled.

The way the two theories deal with the question of point of view also highlights the differences between the two notions of twofoldness. Walton criticizes Wollheim for not attributing enough importance to a necessary feature of representational pictures: the fact that they always represent something from a certain point of view.¹⁸ When he examines how the question of point of view could fit into Wollheim’s theory, he assumes that for Wollheim, “a picture’s depictive point of view consists in what a suitable spectator sees in it.”¹⁹ He devotes only a short footnote to the possibility that “perspective is a matter of how [the represented object] is depicted.”²⁰ In other words, he assumes that the point of view is part of the recognitional, and not the configurational aspect of the experience of a painting. Then, he continues to argue, correctly, that it is implausible to claim that the point of view is a feature of the represented object; a claim he attributes to Wollheim.

I find it quite surprising that Walton should attribute this view to Wollheim. It clearly follows from Wollheim’s theory of seeing-in that the point of view an object is represented from is part of the way this object is represented, and not of the represented object itself. The point of view is part of the configurational, not the recognitional, aspect of our experience.²¹ For Walton, on the other hand, it is part of one’s (imagined) experience of the represented object, and not part of one’s experience of the surface. For Wollheim, seeing the represented object as being represented from a certain point of view is to be contrasted with seeing the represented object itself, whereas for Walton, it is to be

contrasted with seeing the surface. Very different folds of the twofold experience indeed.

To sum up, it seems like Walton’s notion of twofoldness is very different from the one Wollheim uses, so it can hardly be used to explicate the latter. It needs to be emphasized that this difference is not a purely verbal one. It seriously influences, for example, how Walton can deal with the problem Wollheim considered as the strongest argument in favor of the twofoldness claim. Wollheim’s point is that we could not appreciate the great masterpieces of art unless we were aware of what is represented and the way it is represented at the same time.²² This constitutes a strong argument in favor of Wollheim’s notion of twofoldness, but it is less clear how Walton’s notion relates to this argument. Without trying to answer this question, however, I would like to go on to discuss the plausibility of Walton’s notion of twofoldness.

We have seen that Walton’s concept of twofoldness is very different from Wollheim’s. This would not be a problem, of course; everyone can define twofoldness the way it pleases him or her. In what follows, I aim to point out that Walton’s concept of twofoldness is inconsistent with the most important claims of his theory of depiction.

III

Walton claims that when we see a red house in the painting, we are simultaneously aware of our experience of the surface and our (imagined) experience of the house. I aim to examine whether it is possible to interpret the phrase ‘experience of something’ in this claim in such a way that would be consistent with the framework of Walton’s theory. To recall, Walton explicitly says that this term is not to be identified with the perceived object: imagining my experience of y to be of x is not imagining y to be x . Imagining my experience of y to be of x must be something else.

Earlier, I used Peacocke’s terminology to differentiate between the perceived object and the way one perceives it. If imagining my experience of y to be of x is not imagining y to be x , then, using Peacocke’s distinction, it must also entail imagining the way I see y to be the way I (would) see x .²³ This would be consistent with

the examples Walton gives for perceptual games of make-believe. Listening to the music of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, I imagine the way I hear the flutist playing in the pit to be the way I (would) hear Papageno playing his magic flute.²⁴

The question is, of course, how the phrase 'the way one perceives something' should be interpreted. I will examine two options Walton could consider.²⁵ First, if it is the experiential character (or perhaps, the qualia) of perceptual experience, which would be the obvious interpretation of the phrase 'the way one perceives something,' then we face the following question. Walton claims that we imagine one experience to be another, in such a way that we are simultaneously aware of both the way we experience one and the way we (would) experience the other. But is this possible?

Consider the following example. A glass of milk has gone slightly off. While drinking it, however, I try to imagine that the milk has not gone off. There are two possibilities. If I succeed, the original bad taste is gone, which means that the twofoldness of this experience is gone too. What we have is a clear case of auto-suggestion, which I suppose does not have anything to do with representational seeing. If, on the other hand, I do not succeed, that is, if the milk still tastes terrible, then I did not manage to imagine my actual experience to be of a glass of fresh milk: the game of make-believe just did not happen.

Hence, if what Walton means by 'the way one perceives something' is the experiential character of one's perception, then he loses the twofoldness of the experience. But probably he means something else, something less experiential. This is the second option Walton could consider for interpreting the term 'the way one perceives something.' Such interpretation is suggested by one of Walton's examples, the perception of live recordings. "If the recording is of an actual concert performance . . . , in hearing (directly) the sounds from the speakers, I am hearing, indirectly, the actual performance. I imagine my experience to be one of hearing the performance directly."²⁶ Here, according to the theory of perceptual make-believe, one is supposed to imagine the experience of hearing the concert indirectly to be another experience: that of hearing the concert directly. Under this interpretation,

the twofoldness claim seems unproblematic. The two experiences in question, however, have the same experiential character and they have the same object as well. Thus, imagining one to be the other is hardly a perceptual act: I hear *y* and imagine hearing *the same thing*.²⁷ Since the direct and the indirect hearings are perceptually indiscernible, I do not see how it can be a case of a *perceptual* game of make-believe. The same argument could be run in the case of the perception of photographs and films.²⁸

Hence, Walton faces a dilemma here. He claims that an important aspect of the perceptual game of make-believe is twofoldness. But he has to give up either on the perceptual character of this game of make-believe, or, he has to dispense with the idea of the twofoldness of this experience.

It is important to point out that none of the arguments presented above is intended to undermine Walton's general theory of make-believe. All my arguments are orthogonal to the question of whether Walton's theory of depiction *without his twofoldness claim* is consistent or not. What I aimed to show was that if his theory of depiction is consistent, then he has to give up on the idea of the twofoldness of this experience.²⁹

BENCE NANAY

Department of Philosophy
University of California, Berkeley
Berkeley, California 94720

INTERNET: nanay@uclink.berkeley.edu

1. Richard Wollheim, "Seeing-as, Seeing-in, and Pictorial Representation," in *Art and Its Objects*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 205–226. See also his *Painting as an Art* (Princeton University Press, 1987) esp. pp. 46–75, and "On Pictorial Representation," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 217–226, esp. pp. 221–224.

2. Kendall L. Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts* (Harvard University Press, 1990) esp. chap. 1, pp. 11–68.

3. Kendall L. Walton, "Depiction, Perception, and Imagination," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 60 (2002): 27–35, esp. p. 33. Kendall L. Walton, "Reply to Reviewers," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 51 (1991): 423–427, esp. p. 423. Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe*, pp. 300–301.

4. Richard Wollheim, "A Note on Mimesis as Make Believe," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 51

(1991): 400–406, esp. p. 404. Wollheim, “On Pictorial Representation,” esp. pp. 224–225.

5. Walton, “Depiction, Perception, and Imagination,” pp. 27–35.

6. Wollheim, “Seeing-as, Seeing-in, and Pictorial Representation,” p. 213. Wollheim gives a slightly different definition in “On Pictorial Representation,” p. 221, and in *Painting as an Art*, p. 46.

7. Walton, “Depiction, Perception, and Imagination,” p. 33. Walton, “Reply to Reviewers,” pp. 423–327, esp. p. 423. Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe*, pp. 300–301.

8. Walton, “Depiction, Perception, and Imagination,” p. 33.

9. Wollheim, “A Note on Mimesis as Make Believe,” pp. 404–405.

10. Walton, “Reply to Reviewers,” pp. 424–425, esp. p. 425.

11. Walton, “Depiction, Perception, and Imagination,” p. 32. Original emphasis.

12. Christopher Peacocke, “Does Perception have a Nonconceptual Content?” *Journal of Philosophy* 98 (2001): 241. Original emphasis.

13. See, for example, Colin McGinn, “The Structure of Content,” in *Knowledge and Reality*, ed. Colin McGinn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999) pp. 111–151; John Searle, *Intentionality* (Cambridge University Press, 1983); John Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind* (MIT Press, 1992); Fred Dretske, *Naturalizing the Mind* (MIT Press, 1995), pp. 30–32; Jerry A. Fodor, *The Elm and the Expert* (MIT Press, 1994); and Gareth Evans, *The Varieties of Reference* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).

14. Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe*, pp. 293–296, esp. p. 296.

15. Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe*, pp. 293–294.

16. Wollheim, “On Pictorial Representation,” p. 221.

17. Walton, “Reply to Reviewers,” pp. 424–425, esp. p. 425.

18. Walton, “Depiction, Perception, and Imagination,” pp. 29–30.

19. Walton, “Depiction, Perception, and Imagination,” p. 29.

20. Walton, “Depiction, Perception, and Imagination,” p. 34, n. 15.

21. The point of view a chair is represented from is part of the way it is represented, that is, part of the configurational aspect of representation. I can change the point of

view without changing anything about the recognitional aspect of representation (that is, about what is represented). Richard Wollheim, personal communication (in-person conversations in Berkeley, California), November 2001, September 2002.

22. Wollheim, “Seeing-as, Seeing-in, and Pictorial Representation,” p. 216.

23. Walton could argue at this point that I can certainly imagine flapping my arms to be my flying without actually imagining the way I flap my arms to be the way I am flying. Thus, the same is true for seeing: I can imagine my seeing Y to be my seeing X without actually imagining the way I see Y to be the way I see X. I argue elsewhere that the assumed similarity between “imagining my flapping my arms to be my flying” and “imagining my seeing Y to be my seeing X” is only a superficial one and that the semantic structure of “imagining seeing something” and “imagining doing something” is in fact very different (Bence Nanay, “Imagining Seeing,” manuscript). I am grateful to Jerrold Levinson for pushing me on this point.

24. Walton, “Depiction, Perception, and Imagination,” p. 32.

25. They are the two possible interpretations I could find support for in Walton’s text. Of course this does not mean that these are the only logically possible interpretations of the term ‘the way one perceives something.’ However, it is hard to see what else could be suggested as a possible candidate.

26. Walton, “Depiction, Perception, and Imagination,” p. 35, n. 42.

27. It may be true that I hear the concert as indirectly transmitted, while imagining hearing the concert as directly transmitted, but if that is the case, then there is nothing experiential about my imagining. Hence, it is not clear why we should think of this example as an example of *perceptual* make-belief.

28. Kendall L. Walton, “Transparent Pictures: On the Nature of Photographic Realism,” *Critical Inquiry* 11 (1984): 246–277. Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe*, pp. 330–331.

29. I am most grateful to Richard Wollheim for repeated discussions of the question of representational seeing and twofoldness as well as comments on an earlier draft of this paper. I am also grateful for the comments of Jerrold Levinson, Susan L. Feagin, Felicitas Becker, and an anonymous referee of *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*.

UNCORRECTED PROOF

Author Query Form

Journal: The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism

Article : 006

Dear Author,

During the copy-editing of your paper, the following queries arose. Please respond to these by marking up your proofs with the necessary changes/additions. Please write your answers on the query sheet if there is insufficient space on the page proofs. Please write clearly and follow the conventions shown on the attached corrections sheet. If returning the proof by fax do not write too close to the paper's edge. Please remember that illegible mark-ups may delay publication.

Many thanks for your assistance.

| Ref. no: | Query | Remarks |
|-----------------|---|----------------|
| 1 | AU: In note 13, please provide publisher locations for both Clarendon Press books. In notes 1 and 13, please provide Cambridge locations. In note 21, please provide the form (phone, in-person, email), the locations, and the days of the Wollheim communications. CE | |
