

Abell, Catharine and Bantinaki, Katerina eds, *Philosophical Perspectives on Depiction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, pp. xii + 241, £40.00 (hardback).

Experiencing a picture usually involves experiencing what the picture represents or, in other words, experiencing a picture involves seeing in the picture what the picture represents. In seeing the Mona Lisa, for example, one also has an experience of Lisa or, in other words, one sees Lisa in the Mona Lisa. Since five eighths of *Philosophical Perspectives on Depiction* focus on seeing-in, the first part of this review will do the same, before discussing the other three papers separately.

The naivest account is that seeing-in is a kind of illusion: the experience of seeing a thing in a picture is the same as the experience of seeing that thing face to face, except that it is not veridical. So seeing Lisa in the Mona Lisa, for example, simply involves the illusion of seeing Lisa face to face. But this theory is implausible: except in the case of *trompe l'oeil*, one usually experiences the picture surface veridically, without experiencing any illusion of seeing the picture's subject face to face.

This suggests that seeing-in is two-fold or, in other words, that seeing-in is a complex experience with two aspects: the first aspect is a veridical experience of the picture's surface, whereas the second aspect is an experience as of the picture's subject. Seeing the Mona Lisa, for example, is an experience an aspect of which is an experience of paint on canvas and another aspect of which is an experience as of seeing Lisa face to face. This characterisation of seeing-in faces a number of problems.

First, the two aspects of an experience of seeing-in cannot be just the same as the experience of seeing the surface and the experience of seeing the subject, because these two experiences are usually incompatible: the Mona Lisa cannot simultaneously appear to be Lisa and appear to be a canvas. But if the aspects of seeing-in are not the same as the experiences of seeing the surface and seeing the object, then the nature of the two experiences requires further analysis.

In her contribution, Katerina Bantinaki takes up this problem by arguing that matter constitutes pictures, like other ordinary objects, in virtue of its having a certain form. Just as some pieces of wood, for example, constitute a table in virtue of a certain

arrangement, the paint and canvas of the Mona Lisa constitute a picture of Lisa in virtue of their arrangement. And just as the experience of the table isn't just of its wooden parts, an experience of the Mona Lisa isn't just of paint and canvas.

In his contribution, John Dilworth also sheds light on this problem by arguing that all visual experiences have a double content. If one is looking at a coin at an angle, for example, the basic content of one's experience, according to Dilworth, is ambiguous between seeing an elliptical coin straight-on, and seeing a circular coin at an angle. Because one knows that coins are circular, one is able to disambiguate the experience, so that the derived content of the experience includes that the coin is circular.

The basic content of the experience of a picture, according to Dilworth, is about the picture's surface, whereas the derived content is about the picture's subject. Because Dilworth argues that all experience has a double content, the virtue of his suggestion is that it explains how it's possible that the experience of a picture has two aspects, one concerning the surface of the picture and one concerning what it represents. The vice is that it says little about how seeing-in differs from simply seeing.

Second, if the second aspect of the experience of seeing something in another is just the same as the experience of simply seeing that thing, then the experience of seeing something in another cannot differ aesthetically from the experience of simply seeing that thing. But seeing something in another does differ aesthetically from simply seeing it: the experience of Van Gogh's *A Pair of Shoes*, for example, differs aesthetically from the experience of a pair of shoes.

This suggests that the second aspect of the experience of seeing-in is not the same as the experience of simply seeing, but is "inflected" with the experience of the picture's surface. In his contribution, Robert Hopkins elucidates this metaphor by arguing that experiences of seeing-in are inflected if and only if what is seen-in includes properties which can only be characterized in terms of what they are seen-in. Some properties seen-in a painting can be characterized only in terms of properties of the painting.

Bence Nanay takes up the same theme in his contribution and offers an analysis of inflected seeing-in along the same lines as Hopkins'. But whereas Hopkins argues that

accounts of seeing-in according to which its components are separate experiences or aspects can't accommodate inflection, because inflected properties would then figure twice over in the composite experience, Nanay argues that they can, since one need not consciously attend to everything one's experiences represent.

In the background to questions about seeing-in is the question of whether depiction is analysable in terms of seeing-in. If so, then seeing-in should be a necessary and, in combination with an appropriate standard of correctness, jointly sufficient condition for depiction. The Mona Lisa is supposed to depict Lisa, for example, because we see Lisa in the Mona Lisa and because, since Leo intended Lisa to be seen-in the Mona Lisa, it's correct for us to see Lisa in the Mona Lisa.

It's often objected that seeing-in is not necessary for depiction, because in the case of *trompe l'oeil* one seems not to see in the picture what it represents, but seems simply to see what it represents, without being aware of the picture's surface. The position Nanay argues for is well placed to avoid this problem, because according to him, one always represents in perception both the surface of the picture and what it represents, but in the case of *trompe l'oeil* one only consciously attends to the latter.

In his contribution, John Brown emphasises that what is seen-in a picture is often not what it depicts. Moreover, Brown emphasises that this is often intended by the artist and that "full and nuanced" appreciation of the picture requires it. It's not emphasised by Brown that the point that what one correctly sees in a picture is not always what it depicts undermines the position that seeing-in, in combination with an appropriate standard of correctness, is sufficient for depiction.

The remaining three essays take up different themes. Dominic Lopes argues that in the presence of a picture one can use a demonstrative such as 'that' to refer literally to what it represents. In the presence of the Mona Lisa, for example, it's literally true to say 'that's Lisa'. Catharine Abell argues that while photography is epistemically more reliable than other kinds of depiction, this is not an essential feature of photography, but results from the way photographs are usually, but not necessarily, produced.

In his contribution, John Kulvicki illustrates a fairly different approach to questions about depiction. Kulvicki, following Nelson Goodman, takes depictions to differ from description in virtue of belonging to different kinds of symbol systems. In the essay in this volume, Kulvicki argues that depictive symbol systems which are actually used don't compete with each other syntactically or semantically; syntactic properties correspond to the same semantic properties in every depictive system, and vice versa.

While the eight essays are focused on very specific topics, they are accompanied by an introduction which helpfully sets them in the context of broader questions about the definition and nature of depiction. It points out that "...the philosophy of depiction is usually thought of ... as a sub-discipline in aesthetics. This is like conflating the philosophy of language with the philosophy of literature." Reading the essays in this volume should dispel this misapprehension.