

§II.B.2. Pictorial Imagery and Imagination.

Before we go on to consider possible problems of quasi-pictorialism as a theory of imagery it is worth asking whether, if it were correct, it would do much to illuminate imagination in its other, more interesting aspects. There is little or no discussion of this point in the cognitive psychology literature, certainly not by Kosslyn. However, most philosophers up until rather recent times have tended to assume both that imagery is in some sense pictorial and that it does (through "association of ideas" or whatever) form the substrate for imagination in its wider rôles in perception and in creativity (1). But whether these assumptions are in fact consistent with one another may be doubted. Consider the following argument of Ryle, directed against pictorial theories of imagination in general:

It is part of this doctrine that the picture that I see is not, as snapshots are, in front of my face; on the contrary, it has to be not in physical space, but in a space of another kind. The child, then, who imagines her wax-doll smiling is seeing a picture of a smile. But the picture of the smile is not where the doll's lips are, since they are in front of the child's face. So the imagined smile is not on the doll's lips at all. Yet this is absurd. No one can imagine an unattached smile, and no doll-owner would be satisfied with an unsmiling doll plus a separate and impossible simulacrum of a smile suspended somewhere else. In fact she does not really see a Cheshire smile elsewhere than on the doll's lips; she fancies she sees a smile on the doll's lips in front of her face, though she does not see one there and would

be greatly frightened if she did. {2}

In the light of our previous discussions of pictorialist imagery theories it might at first seem that Ryle's shot has missed his target. Although what he says may be true of the ideas of Locke and his successors it is not true of the images of Kosslyn or even of the professed enemy, Descartes (or, come to that, of Lucretius, Hobbes or Köhler). The images proposed by these thinkers ~~are~~ in physical space, they are in the brain. Of course, the image of the smile is still not in the same place as the lips which are supposed to be smiling, but this will not matter to the quasi-pictorialist, since for him all normal perception is mediated through images formed in the "visual buffer" {3*}. Thus we could have the image of the doll's face formed in the buffer by purely perceptual processes, with perhaps a suitable image of smiling lips produced from memory or 'imagination' and 'pasted over' the appropriate place (an alternative might be a distortion in the matrix of the visual buffer giving the lips in the perceptual image an appropriate curvature) {4*} The theoretical apparatus can be left implicit (and thus rendered less offensive to modern philosophical sensibilities) by putting what is essentially the same point from a subjective point of view. Just as the doll is seen 'out there' so also, it has been suggested, could the image of the smiling lips be seen as projected 'out there' at the same place as the actual lips are, covering them up {5}.

My own 'introspections' seem to confirm that

imagery can be thus 'projected' into the world in front of me, and there is some experimental warrant for this, even to the extent of the image obscuring part of the scene 'behind' it {6}. Certainly quasi-pictorial theories are well able to account for such effects (rather more easily, it may seem, than they can deal with the subjectively internal or placeless imagery which Ryle plausibly seems to regard as the norm, and which I myself certainly seem to experience much more commonly {7}). However, I think it is extremely dubious if this sort of explanation can really account for the sort of phenomena to which Ryle has drawn our attention. Consider the doll being unexpectedly snatched away, or even slightly moved. Would an image of a pair of smiling lips be left before the child's eyes, even momentarily, floating in mid air where the actual lips had been? Surely not {8*}. Yet the quasi-pictorialist account which we have just sketched would clearly predict this. We could not possibly know to move or erase the imagined smiling lips image until **after** we had perceived that the rest of the face had gone, until after the perceptual image was absent from the visual buffer. This just does not seem to square with experience. What we are really dealing with here is surely not a case of pictured lips being superimposed over a percept, but rather it is a case of the **actual** doll's lips being seen **as** smiling, just as we can see the lunar maria as the man in the moon, or Hamlet could see the shape of a camel, whale or weasel in one and the same cloud. If the cloud blew away would the weasel remain?

Perhaps, though, the child with her doll, since she has formed no inner picture, is not really applying her imagination at all. "Imagine" can, after all, be used to mean no more than "believe falsely" (9), and Danto (10) thereby suggests that the child is simply "deluded" about the smile on the doll's lips, making the example quite irrelevant to discrediting such pictures. But this will hardly do. The child surely does not believe, falsely or otherwise, that she actually sees the doll smile. As Ryle notes, she would be justifiably terrified if she did. Perceptual imagination and imaginative play just cannot be assimilated to belief.

It still remains possible, of course, that imagination of this sort really has little to do with image production; that the word "imagine" is really used to refer to the activities of two quite separate mental faculties whose verbal association, however venerable and persistent, may be thoroughly misleading. In this spirit, Flew's dictionary of philosophy (11) recommends a clear distinction be made between "imagination" and "imaging". Of course, both terms have their uses, but the only justification I can see for offending against traditional usage and Occam's razor by erecting a real psychological distinction upon them is to save pictorial accounts of 'imaging' from arguments like that of Ryle.

It may also be worth noting that Wittgenstein, at more than one point in the *Investigations*, is someone who

specifically links images (not just imagination) with this notion of "seeing as" or seeing an "aspect" (12*). 'Seeing as' and 'aspect seeing' (and their equivalents for other perceptual modes) have, of course, a very broad significance, since they are involved in all perceptual recognition. To recognise the sugar bowl is to see this thing as a sugar bowl; to recognise it as Wedgwood is to see another aspect of it. We would not usually dignify such feats as exercises of the imagination, except, perhaps, when we make a mistake; but the very possibility of making mistakes in such things points up the continuity of cases like these with more exotic cases like the 'smiling' doll, which we clearly would call imaginative. In fact we are dealing here again with the Aristotelian 'common sense', the fallible *phantasia*, the faculty which perceives "likeness and unlikeness, sameness and difference", and allows the mind to get in touch with "existence". According to Budd, Wittgenstein's great interest in the capacity to see aspects (which we have just seen him link closely with imagery) arose precisely because he saw it as lying at "a crucial point in our concept of the mind (...) the juncture of the sensory and the intellectual" (13). Ryle's example, then, points up two things: the continuity of this unfamiliar Aristotelian notion with our everyday conceptions of "imagination"; and the inadequacy of pictorialism (Descartes notwithstanding) in accounting for it.

We have not yet considered the use of "imagination" to designate the faculty responsible for poetry, art in

general, and other forms of creative thinking. This might be yet a third distinct faculty, but again, it is surely best to avoid such multiplication of entities if possible. Imaginative play is perhaps, after all, only Art writ small, and might it not be a particular skill or assiduity in 'seeing as' which allows the artist (or, indeed, the creative scientist) to recognise aspects of reality unremarked by 'the herd'. Certainly for Coleridge, who did more than anyone to crystallize the notion of creative imagination for English speakers, imagination was in the first place the central perceptual power ("primary imagination"), from which the creative power, "secondary imagination" is derivative {14}. This is also true of the German thinkers from whom Coleridge drew so much {15}.

But if imagination as the creative faculty links naturally with its function in aspect seeing, "seeing as", it is also clear enough that the Romantic thinkers who talked of creative imagination thought they were thereby referring to the 'imaging' faculty {16}. Possibly they were mistaken in this; certainly it would be very crude to depict creativity as the production of particularly interesting mental imagery, which the artist then paints or the poet describes; but surely only a pictorial theory of imagery could tempt us to such a caricature. Be that as it may, there is an enormous amount of anecdotal evidence {17}, plus a small amount of experimental evidence {18*} to suggest that conscious mental imagery, as studied by contemporary cognitive psychologists, is frequently

implicated in creative thinking in the arts and the sciences.

It seems a probable conjecture that the great interest shown by these contemporary psychologists in 'imaging' is at least in part motivated by its apparent links with the broader connotations of "imagination" (19). My argument has been that if a pictorial theory of imagery is to be adhered to then these links must be severed; imagery becomes rather a dull topic, it will not help us to understand imagination or empirical knowledge. The fact that there is reason to believe in the reality of these links, conversely, gives us some reason to think that pictorialism must be false. We must now consider how quasi-pictorialism stands up as it has generally been presented, as a theory of 'imaging' alone. If it does not stand up then perhaps imagery is important after all.

§II.B.3 Are Quasi-Pictorial Theories Incoherent?

The idea that even 'imaging' involves mental pictures or copies of sensory impressions has come in for a great deal of criticism from twentieth century philosophers and psychologists. As we saw in §I.B.2-3, J.B. Watson, in 1913, went so far as to cast doubt on the reality of the very phenomenon of imagery, and almost everybody, not only those directly adhering to the Behaviorist movement in