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### **The Spectator in the Picture**

§1 Pictures are marked surfaces which convey a certain content, or, put another way, which represent something or other. When we appreciate pictures, we are aware of them both as marked surfaces and as representing certain things, and our appreciation reflects that dual awareness. Thus there are at least three sorts of reason we might give for appreciating a picture. We might cite the way the surface is marked, or the content the picture conveys, or the way the latter emerges from the former. Here I want to concentrate on the second sort of reason, valuing the picture for what it represents.

There is a superficial, but nagging, problem concerning the value of pictures *qua* representations. It stems from the fact that every picture fundamentally conveys the same sort of content. For every picture represents some object or objects, in a suitably broad sense of the term; the properties those objects enjoy; and states of affairs of which those objects form constituents. Further, all these aspects of the represented world are represented from a certain perspective on them. I intend this last notion to be purely spatial - there is a point, spatially related to those points the picture depicts, from which the picture presents those other points and the items which occupy them. For convenience, I will say that all the features of pictorial content mentioned so far constitute a scene. Thus my claim is that, fundamentally, pictures represent scenes.

Why should this make problematic our appreciating pictures for their content? The difficulty is not that it turns out that every picture represents the same thing, and that there can thus be no reason to value any one picture over any other. The differences between the various scenes different pictures represent provide ample room for preferences between them. Rather, the problem begins with the question whether pictures can represent anything other than scenes, anything in addition to the features of the world listed above. For if they cannot, one might wonder why we should bother looking at the pictures rather than devoting our visual attention to scenes themselves, either the very scenes the pictures represent, if they are available, or scenes suitably similar to those represented. It seems that at least in answering this question, our appeal to the pictures having the content they do will be of limited use. We must either resort to mere considerations of convenience, as we can if it is not even the case that some suitably similar scene is to hand; or appeal to the other two kinds of reason for caring about pictorial art - the qualities of the marked surface, and the way those qualities give rise to the picture's content.

I do not say that this problem goes deep. But deep or not, it can be side-stepped if pictures are indeed free to convey contents other than the mere representation of scenes. Consider the situation if, in particular, they can represent scenes along with reactions to them, on the part of some implicit observer of the world depicted. These reactions might be of thought or of feeling. They must concern the scene, but might also involve broader currents of ideas or affective disposition. Were this possible, appeal to what a picture represents could readily explain the interest of the picture over the corresponding scene. When we confront scenes face-to-face, while we may react to them ourselves, we never confront a representation of some possible set of reactions. Thus looking at pictures offers, as looking at the things depicted would not, the chance to explore how someone else might react, to

be initiated into another sensibility.

Many have been tempted by something like the thought just articulated. Certainly art historians have sometimes appealed to related ideas. In this paper, I want to consider the best developed account of the putative phenomenon. It is that offered by Richard Wollheim in chapter 3 of *Painting as an Art*.<sup>1</sup> Wollheim thinks that some pictures contain an internal spectator, an implied viewer of the depicted scene, through whose eyes we are to see it. His account of quite what this involves is both detailed and illuminating of the aesthetic interest of the phenomenon. So, if right, it provides part of a solution to the problem of pictorial value outlined above. Only part, because Wollheim thinks that only a subset of aesthetically valuable pictures contain internal spectators. For those outside of that set, we would need to explain their value in other terms. This in no way diminishes the interest of Wollheim's view, since the problem is unlikely to admit of a single solution of any kind, let alone one appealing to the sort of idea sketched above and which Wollheim's account makes precise. However, before I can expound Wollheim's view, I need to provide some background. More precisely, I need to say a little about the more basic forms of pictorial content, as Wollheim understands them.

§2 According to Wollheim, there are two such forms of content. I will call them depictive and expressive content. Roughly, the former is a matter of what the picture depicts, the latter a matter of any emotions or moods it expresses. Each essentially involves a particular perceptual response on the part of viewers of the picture. For depictive content, the relevant response is "seeing-in". For expressive content, it is what Wollheim calls "expressive perception". Both perceptual responses are distinguished by their phenomenologies. Seeing-in essentially involves both an awareness of the marks on the surface before one, and an awareness of some absent object, the item depicted. Expressive perception involves one's visual experience being "permeated" by emotion, or some other affective state. Both these perceptual states can occur in response to something other than a picture. We can see things in damp patches on a wall, and expressively perceive low-lying marshland (seen in the flesh) in the light of some emotion or mood. Since there is in these cases no depictive or expressive content, such content requires more than simply that the appropriate perceptual response be elicited. What is further required is that the response be subject to some "standard of correctness". That is, something, usually the intention of the artist, dictates that it is right to respond to the picture with some particular response of the given type, and not another: right to see one thing, rather than another, in it; or to see the picture in the light of one emotion, and not another.<sup>2</sup>

A picture's depictive content is simply, to use the terminology of §1, a matter of the scene the picture represents. Since Wollheim thinks that paintings can also exhibit another kind of content, what I am calling expressive content, we might wonder whether the problem posed above is not already partly

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1. Thames and Hudson, London 1987. All numbers in square brackets below refer to this edition.

2. Since I discuss these two forms of content largely to set them aside, what I say is very brief. For more on depictive content, see [ch.2 §B] and, for critical discussion R.Hopkins *Picture, Image and Experience* Cambridge, CUP 1998 pp.14-20, 37-8; M.Budd "On Looking at a Picture" pp.259-80 in J.Hopkins and A.Savile, ed.s *Psychoanalysis, Mind and Art* Oxford, OUP 1992. On expressive content, see [ch.2 §C] and R.Wollheim "Correspondence, Projective Properties & Expression in the Arts" in *The Mind & Its Depths*.

solved. If pictures need not merely depict scenes, but can also express certain emotions, then, even setting aside all but the content of pictures, encountering them offers satisfactions which looking at the corresponding scenes would not. However, this conclusion is too hasty. Since Wollheim accepts that expressive perception can occur not only before pictures, but when we confront objects in the flesh, it seems that nothing yet said guarantees a difference between encounters with pictures and encounters with the scenes they depict. Of course, objects encountered in the flesh don't have expressive content, for all that we may perceive them expressively. The necessary standard of correctness is missing. But since our response to expressive content is just expressive perception, it is not yet clear how this difference could provide a reason for valuing the painting that is not also one for valuing the object painted.

However that may be, Wollheim provides the materials for a quite distinct solution to the problem of §1. For he thinks that, in addition to depictive and expressive content, pictures can exhibit a third kind. It is this proposal I want to consider.

**§3** In chapter three of *Painting as an Art*, Wollheim makes the following claim, which I have broken into components for ease of discussion. Some pictures,

- (1) represent<sup>3</sup> (have as part of their content) [101]
- (2) someone viewing the depicted scene
- (3) more or less from the point from which it is depicted [102,183]
- (4) with a repertoire of psychological states and dispositions to think, act and feel -
  - (a) at a minimum that repertoire involved in being an embodied viewer [130], but perhaps
  - (b) some more distinctive psychology
- (5) who is distinct from the person in the gallery looking at the picture [183-5], but
- (6) with whom that person imaginatively identifies, with the result
- (7) that the viewer of the picture is left responding to the picture differently, in ways both perceptual and affective, and thus understanding the picture in a new way. [129,183]

How does Wollheim argue for this position? Naturally enough, he appeals to examples, offering insightful readings of particular paintings by supposing them to contain an internal spectator. But how more precisely does he do that? Which features of these paintings does he appeal to in seeking to render plausible his claims about them? It is here that the seventh and last aspect of his view, as I characterized it, rises to prominence. For therein, according to Wollheim, lies the point of a picture's containing an internal spectator. (7) describes the function of the spectator in the picture, and the best way to argue that there are such spectators is to show them doing what they are supposed to do.

Given (7)'s importance, it is worth making as clear as possible. Wollheim says that the "function of the spectator in the picture is that he allows the spectator of the picture a distinctive access to the content of the picture" [129]. But what is the content thereby accessed? Is it content of the two central kinds

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3. Wollheim denies that the implied spectator is "represented" [101]. However, what a picture represents, in his sense, is what I am calling its depictive content. As I use the term, representing is the genus, the species of which include depicting, expressing, and any other kind of content a picture may have. Thus for me the implied spectator is not depicted, but is represented.

Wollheim has already described, depictive or expressive content, or is it something new? In proposing that there are internal spectators Wollheim precisely suggests that there is a third form of pictorial content, but access to that can hardly be what he has in mind. For the function of representing an internal spectator cannot be that it provides a new form of content for the viewer to grasp, on pain of trivializing talk of function altogether. The grasp on the picture which recognition of the internal spectator permits must thus be a grasp on other aspects of the picture's content. And it doesn't really matter what these are - depictive, expressive, or of other, not yet characterized, forms, provided that grasping the content in question requires imaginative identification with an internal spectator of the depicted scene. The role of the internal spectator is as a route to other content, content that would not otherwise be grasped, and the justification thus provided for supposing there to be such spectators is not hampered, but helped, by supposing that content of many different forms is thereby made accessible.

However, if the internal spectator is itself to form part of the picture's content, then the route to other aspects of the picture's meaning which it provides cannot be one which the viewer takes merely on a whim. It might be that viewers respond to certain pictures by imagining in the way described above, but that will be of no more than psychological significance unless those responses are "licensed" [129] by the intentions of the artist. This complicates the case which Wollheim must make, but not unmanageably. He merely needs to show that, if we do respond to his chosen paintings by imagining in the ways listed above, and thereby come to see the picture in a new and satisfying light, then it is likely that the artist intended it so to be seen, and intended that we take this route to seeing it that way. And, of course, if the route is the only way to that content, then any evidence for the artist's intending the picture to have that content is also evidence for his intending us to use that route to retrieve it.

To make his case, Wollheim discusses various paintings by Friedrich, Manet and Hals. His treatment of these pictures is as subtle and interesting as the more theoretical claims they exemplify are provocative. But do the two sets of claims, the readings of the paintings and the theory that prompts them, interlock as tightly as Wollheim would want? Must we, if we are to make sense of these examples, accept the theoretical machinery on offer? Or can we accommodate the phenomena with rather less? These are the questions I want to examine. I consider two positions antagonistic to Wollheim's, to see how his examples put pressure on them, and at precisely which points.

**§4** I start with the position which gives least ground to Wollheim. According to this view, there is no need to suppose that any picture has a spectator in it, nor to appeal to any imaginative engagement on the part of the external spectator, in order fully to account for pictorial content. For, this view claims, depictive and expressive content, together with the standard modes of access to those contents, seeing-in and expressive perception, unaided by imaginative identification and the like, can accommodate all the salient phenomena. What grounds are there for rejecting this minimalist position?

At this point, of course, we must turn to examples. Let's consider Wollheim's chosen Manets (figures 1 & 2). These, I think, are in one respect his strongest examples, but in another his weakest. Their strength lies in the fact that they obviously possess some feature which we need to work to accommodate. Their weakness is that it is not clear that we need internal spectators to do that work.

If I allow myself to simplify enormously Wollheim's rich and subtle discussion of these paintings [ch.3 §§C-D], and if I try to frame the phenomenon he adduces in the most neutral possible terms, the result is this. Manet's single figure pictures, like his group portraits, show people who, although generally vital and engaged with life, are temporarily distracted from it, and from the contact with others which forms its core. They are preoccupied, momentarily beyond reach. Now, why might these pictures pose a problem for minimalism?

Suppose the minimalist were forced to deny that the momentary distractedness of Manet's figures could be part of the content of the paintings at all. That denial would be sufficiently implausible to cast serious doubt on her view. We could force it on the minimalist if we could argue that momentary distractedness is not the sort of property which can be seen in a surface. For then the distractedness cannot be part of the paintings' depictive content, and since it is hardly plausible that it is part of their expressive content, minimalism could not place it in content at all. However, this approach is handicapped by the fact that, as Wollheim himself notes [64-7], what can be seen in a surface is pretty much tied to what can be seen face-to-face, and the fact that it is highly debateable what this latter limitation amounts to. Wollheim himself, in criticizing Lessing, appeals against an unduly restrictive conception of the possible contents of vision [65], and it is arguable that any conception broad enough for Wollheim would also allow that we can see the very features Manet attributed to his figures.

Happily, another, and better, reply is open to Wollheim. He need not say that the represented distractedness constitutes a sort of content beyond those minimalism recognizes, provided he can persuade us that the only route to that content lies along paths not open to the minimalist. That, after all, was the strategy which emerged from our discussion of the role of the internal spectator. And it will certainly bite against the minimalist, since her claim is not just that depictive and expressive content are the only kinds of pictorial content there are; but also that seeing-in and expressive perception, unaided by imaginative identification, are the only licensed means of recovery of a picture's contents. How might we pursue that strategy here?

In answering this question, let me, so as not to prejudge the theoretical dispute to follow, speak loosely for a while. To see the distractedness of the characters in the pictures, we must discover the difficulty of engaging with them. Moreover, and here is the crux, that discovery can only be made by attempting, and failing, to engage the figures visually. We come to see the momentary absence of the woman with parrot, or of Mademoiselle V. in her Espada costume, through, continuing to speak casually, seeking out her gaze and failing to find it. Moreover, in so failing we realize that this is no accident of how the character stands to us. To move around her, aligning our line of sight with hers, would no more guarantee the contact we seek. It would merely leave the glassy stare directed at us, rather than passing nearby.

Now, this talk is unacceptably casual, and it is a serious question, which will be our central concern in what follows, how best to articulate the points it might be making. But unless such talk is rejected as altogether meaningless, its appropriateness forces us to abandon minimalism. For the only clarification available to the minimalist is quite implausible. She must construe talk of unsuccessful attempts at visual engagement as meaning failure to see something or other in the marked surface. For since expressive perception is clearly not what the last paragraph confusedly describes, seeing-in

must be its topic. And since seeing-in is a way of seeing the picture, a way of making visual sense of the marks on the canvas before one, it does not leave room for engagement, or unsuccessful attempts to engage, with the figure depicted. But this way of taking the above is quite inappropriate. The attempted visual engagement is not a matter of trying to see something in the canvas. It is not even a matter of trying to see therein some aspect of a figure already partly made out. Seeing the figure in the marks is a prerequisite of trying to engage with her, not what one thereby seeks. Thus the minimalist can make no sense of the phenomenon here, and so much the worse for her.

§5 We must, it seems, abandon minimalism. But must we therefore adopt Wollheim's account? There seems to me to be one, and probably only one, tenable position lying between the two. This accepts that we must add to the minimalist's resources. To make sense of talk of attempted visual engagement we must, like Wollheim, appeal to the imagination. We must accept Wollheim's claims that appreciating some pictures requires us imaginatively to engage with the depicted scene; that that imagined engagement is, at least in part, importantly visual; and that the artist's intentions license such imaginings. What we will try to resist, however, is his suggestion that in such imaginings we identify with some represented other, an internal spectator. Rather, the imaginings in question exclusively concern us, the viewers of the picture. It is ourselves we imagine engaging with the scene.

This is a position Wollheim himself discusses [102, 185]. There are the materials in what he says for three, perhaps interrelated, objections to the proposal. They exploit the apparent unsuitability of the external spectator for the allotted role on three counts: her psychology, her location and her identity. Let me briefly state each in turn.

The first objection focuses on Wollheim's insistence on the importance of repertoire. If some paintings need to be understood by seeing the depicted scene through the eyes of someone with a specific psychology, there are two reasons why that person should not be the external spectator. For when the external spectator imagines herself engaging with the depicted scene, she is likely, on the one hand, to import too much of her own psychology, in the way of either the peculiarities of her own psyche or those of her age. Such aspects will be at best irrelevant to understanding the content the artist imbued the picture with, and at worst a hindrance to it. But, on the other hand, the viewer is also likely to bring too little to understanding of the picture, in the way of those distinctive positive aspects of repertoire which, Wollheim claims, are integral to some pictures. She will, in short, be bound to see the depicted scene through her own eyes, and it is unclear then what point there could be to the imaginative engagement, since it can only reinforce the way she sees the picture when relying on seeing-in and expressive perception alone.

The second "objection" is more of a question. It demands clarification of the imagined spatial relation between the external spectator and the depicted scene. Imagining engaging with that scene presumably requires imagining being located in the same space as the depicted things. So does the viewer of the picture imagine the depicted object as in the space she in fact occupies, or does she imagine herself in the space the object is represented as occupying? Until this question has been answered, the proposal is incomplete.

The third objection presents Wollheim's "basic reason" for rejecting the proposed view [185]. This is that if appreciating a picture requires the viewer to imagine something about herself, and if her so

imagining forms part of the picture's extended content, then that content changes from one viewer to the next, and in ways that the artist, in ignorance of who would see the painting, could not possibly have anticipated in his intentions for the work. But then the picture's content would alter without the artist's intentions licensing this change, and that is to infringe a fundamental principle governing pictorial content of any kind.

§6 Since it presents the least difficulty, let us deal with the question of imagined location first. Wollheim makes it plausible that the imagined engagement with the depicted scene which we are taking to be important to some pictures need not be limited to imagining that scene from the point from which the picture presents it. In the context of the Manets, I noted the possibility of imagining moving so as to try to meet the figure's gaze, and Wollheim suggests [162] that, for at least some pictures, such imagined movement would be in the space represented as surrounding the distracted figure. If the current proposal is to accommodate such phenomena as this, it should be that the external spectator imagines herself in the represented space, when imagining engaging with the objects which occupy it.

However, this way of resolving the second difficulty may only seem to highlight the third. That, at least, seems to be Wollheim's view [note 35]. So let me try to tackle the issue of content change next. First let us step back, to see what the core of the problem might be.

The key difficulty here seems to be this. As I noted earlier (§3), the external spectator's imaginative responses to the picture will have nothing to do with its content, unless those responses are licensed by the artist's intentions. But on the current proposal the key response essentially involves the spectator's identity - she is to imagine herself engaging with the depicted objects. Since the artist can have no knowledge of who the spectators will be, the response cannot be underwritten by artistic intention in the way content requires. So the proposal, the accusation claims, is inherently unstable: either the spectator's imaginings have nothing to do with the picture's content, or they concern, not the spectator herself, but a, quite distinct, spectator in the picture.

If this is the heart of the problem, there are grounds for hope. For we find the same pressures at work elsewhere in the pictorial realm, and there they do not prove irreconcilable. In the case of depictive content, as in that of imaginative engagement with the depicted scene, for there to be content the spectator must respond in accord with the artist's intentions. She must see in the picture whatever it is the artist intended her to. But here, as there, the artist can have no knowledge of who will see the painting, and therefore whose response his intention needs to concern. The problem which confronts the proposed middle way of accommodating imaginative engagement with the depicted scene finds an exact parallel in the realm of depictive content.

Now, of course, in the depictive case content could be set merely by the intended responses of a subset of viewers, a set small enough and accessible enough for the artist's intentions explicitly to concern each of them. At the limit, one might suggest that the only response essential to content is the artist's own. But it seems to me quite clear that this is standardly not the case, and in some instances (such as where the artist himself is blind) could not be so. So the problem remains, at least in the standard cases - how can the artist's intention govern the responses of those of whom he has no knowledge?

The solution here is quite simple. The key intention on the artist's part is, in a sense, open-ended. He intends whoever sees the picture to see therein what he has depicted. This is perhaps a little simplistic. It may be that a better specification of the intention is that the depicted scene be seen in the surface by whoever (i) sees the picture, (ii) is in general capable of seeing things in surfaces, and (iii) knows what the depicted objects look like. But we need not quibble over details, it is the form of the intention which matters here, not its filling out. Again, no doubt the intention need not be completely successful, for the picture to have depictive content - no matter if not every suitably qualified viewer in fact gets the pictorial point. As long as some do, the picture depicts what those people see in it. But, again, quite how to negotiate the complexities here is incidental to our concerns. For the point is that, if something like this solution to the problem works in the case of depictive content, a parallel solution will work in the case in hand. The intention licensing the external spectator's imaginings about herself is this: whoever sees the scene in the picture is to imagine herself seeing that scene face-to-face, and engaging with it (in whatever ways the particular picture renders appropriate). This is an intention the artist can have, and which can be more or less fulfilled by the responses of the various viewers of the picture, without placing impossible demands on the artist's knowledge of those viewers.

I hope that Wollheim would accept something like this account of the intentions governing depictive content. He may even accept that something parallel does indeed hold in respect of imaginative engagement with the depicted scene. Where he will balk, I suspect, is at the claim that this amounts to a solution to the third problem facing the proposal in hand. For, after all, the person who sees the appropriate things in a picture does not enter into its depictive content, only what she sees in the surface does so. Open-ended intentions are fine for picking out the set of people whose responses determine a picture's content, but not for determining that content itself. And when Wollheim offers his "basic reason" against letting the external spectator do all the work here, it is as reason for thinking that "the spectator of the picture could not conceivably be part of the picture's content, hence could not conceivably be the spectator in the picture" [185]. So has the problem really been solved?

It has, provided that we are clear about one further difference between Wollheim's account and my own. It is no part of the current proposal that there is a spectator in the picture, or, more particularly, that there is an internal spectator identical with the external one. Rather, my view attempts to accommodate the phenomena without multiplying the varieties of pictorial content, properly conceived, at all. Imaginative engagement with the depicted scene is licensed by the artist's intention, and is essential to grasping certain aspects of pictorial content, such as the distractedness of the Manet figures. Such licensed imaginings may make various novel aspects of content available to the viewer; and their doing so may be essential to those aspects being part of the picture's content. But, for all that, the imagined engagement is not itself represented, not even in an extended sense.

Is this aspect of my disagreement with Wollheim merely verbal, a dispute over whether to use the word "content" to describe licensed imaginings? I don't think so. Wollheim's original objection was that if the external spectator were the spectator in the picture, an important principle governing content would be infringed. I have not merely dodged that charge by eschewing claims about pictorial content; I've tried to show how the imaginings essential to understanding the picture can be licensed by an open-ended intention on the artist's part. If the resulting account of the pictorial phenomena remains unacceptable, because there is some further principle it infringes, we have yet to be told what that

principle is.

§7 All this leaves the first, repertoire-based, objection quite intact. In effect, that objection had three elements. It suggested that the external spectator's imaginings about herself would import irrelevant features of her psychology into the attempt to understand the picture; would omit key positive elements of the distinctive psychology through which the picture is in fact to be understood; and would as a result of these twin faults undermine the point of imaginative engagement altogether, reducing it to a mere repetition of that contact with the picture which seeing-in and expressive perception, unaided by imaginative engagement, already afford.<sup>4</sup> These are serious charges. What can be said to rebut them?

The first thing to note is that, even if the twin accusations of irrelevant egocentricity and inadequate empathy could be proven, it would not follow that there was no point to the imaginative engagement the position describes. For even if the external spectator imagines engaging with the depicted scene while having precisely the psychology she in fact enjoys, the forms of engagement her imagination allows for readily outstrip those available in seeing-in and expressive perception alone. That this is so is, indeed, the lesson of our discussion of the Manets. The imagined unsuccessful attempt to engage visually with the depicted figures deepens our sense of how they are, in ways that the comparatively passive processes of seeing-in and expressive perception, when unaided by imaginative engagement, cannot provide. Since that discussion made this plausible without appealing to any particular psychology for the imagined protagonist, any normal external spectator could expect these benefits even if she did import her own psychology into the imagined scenario.

However, there are anyway grounds for scepticism about the two more basic charges. Taking that of irrelevant egocentrism first, it is simply untrue that the external spectator's imagining herself engaging with the depicted scene will inevitably leave her imagining engaging with it idiosyncrasies, contemporary *Weltbild* and all. Pace Wollheim's observations about the plenitude characteristic of central imagining [129], imagining may be indeterminate in many and varied ways, including the nature of the imagined protagonist. The viewer of the picture will exploit such indeterminateness in imagining engaging with the depicted scene. Moreover, she will do so for good reason. For since the point of such imagining is to understand the picture better, and since the spectator is fully aware that peculiarities of her person or time can only obstruct her in that goal, she will set aside those of her features which are likely to be thus obstructive. In deciding quite what to set aside, she has just the same resources at her disposal, and just the same opportunity to make use of them, as Wollheim's imaginer, seeking an internal spectator as the target of his imaginative identification. Since in this respect the two positions seem evenly matched, the charge of egocentricity comes to naught.

What of the last accusation? This claims that the external spectator will be hampered from imagining a protagonist with that distinctive positive repertoire which is, in some cases, "inscribed" [130] into the

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4. In discussing minimalism, we conceded for the sake of argument that the distractedness of the figures could be seen in the paintings, and argued that it could be so only through imaginative engagement with them. This is why I here contrast imaginative engagement, not with seeing-in and expressive perception *tout court*, but with seeing-in and expressive perception unaided by imaginative engagement.

painting. Again, however, it is very hard to see why this should be. For, along with indeterminacy, imagination exhibits what we might call autonomy: it is free to represent things as they in fact are, or as they are not. Exploiting this, the external spectator can imagine herself engaging with the scene while having a repertoire she does not in fact possess. Nor can the problem be that in practice she will never grasp what repertoire it would be appropriate to attribute to herself, if not the one she really displays. For, again, her position in this respect precisely matches that of Wollheim's external spectator. The two put the epistemic resources available to them to work in the context of different imaginative projects, but the resources, and the demands made on them by the project, are in each case the same.

§8 What has emerged is that there is no substance to any of Wollheim's objections to the position lying between minimalism and his own account. That middle position is at least tenable. But if so, there are at least some grounds for thinking that it is the position we should adopt. Let me explain.

Suppose I ask you to imagine what it is like to be crushed by an enormous weight. You might, I suppose, do this by imagining the experiences of some other person meeting that fate, and then imaginatively identifying with the sufferings that person undergoes. But it would be far more natural simply to imagine yourself being crushed. And, I suggest, this is because, quite generally, where an imaginative project requires us to imagine certain experiences, attitudes or actions, we normally imagine ourselves in those situations, rather than someone else in them, with whom we then identify. My claim is not that we cannot do the latter. I am not promoting some form of the thesis that imagining necessarily concerns oneself.<sup>5</sup> I claim only that doing what I have described is the default option, that which, as a matter of psychological fact, we go in for, unless we are coaxed into doing otherwise.

Given this, we should expect this default to hold when we engage with pictures, and in particular with those pictures Wollheim discusses. There too what we naturally imagine, if we imagine anything of this sort at all, is simply ourselves confronting the depicted object. As I have argued, imagining in this way allows us to reap the benefits, in terms of a deepened understanding of the picture, which form Wollheim's central concern. So why think that we reap those benefits by any means other than those we standardly deploy when imagining experiences, attitudes, etc. quite generally? Unless something particular to our confrontations with these pictures drives us to imagine in the more complex way Wollheim has described, we will just do what we normally do.

Of course, our psychology might be quirky, so that we do in fact respond to pictures with more complex imaginings, to everything else with more straightforward ones. Equally, it could be that the painters of the pictures Wollheim discussed intended us to imagine in the complex, identification-involving, manner. But there is no reason to believe that the first possibility here holds, and little more reason to accept the second. It is far more likely that our psychology is uniform, in this respect, whatever prompts our imaginings. Equally, it seems likely that the artists of these pictures were like us in this regard. For them too, imaginings concerning themselves provided the default. If so, it is likely that, having themselves responded to their canvases in this way, they intended and expected us to do

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5. For critical discussion of this thesis, see B. Williams "Imagination and the Self" in his *Problems of the Self*, Cambridge, CUP, 1973.

just the same.

**§9** Faced with the challenge the compromise position presents, Wollheim might try one last response. This would be to suggest that there is no difference of substance between it and his own view. True, when he provided arguments against that rival, he presumably considered it to differ from his position, and in objectionable ways. But any success I may have had in arguing against those objections perhaps just serves to show that there aren't really interesting differences between the two positions after all. Let's consider this response.

If the thought that the two positions are really one has any force, it derives from the aesthetic importance of the phenomenon which the two views attempt to describe. The idea must be that, whether we imagine a repertoire and patterns of engagement for an internal spectator with whom we identify, or whether we imagine ourselves equipped with that repertoire and engaging with the depicted object in those ways, is all the same from the point of view of reasons for appreciating the picture. Either way, our experience of the picture is complicated and deepened. Either way, the satisfactions which pictures offer, merely through representing what they do, are multiplied.

In effect, the response encourages us to divide the elements in Wollheim's thinking into two groups. On the one hand, there are those elements which the middle position accepts - that licensed imagining goes on; that it is imagining someone, with a certain psychology, engaging with the depicted scene; that it leads the viewer to understand the painting differently. Roughly, these were elements (2), (3), (4) and (7) in my original exposition (§3). On the other hand, there are those elements the middle position rejects - that the imagined protagonist is someone other than the viewer of the picture, and that these imaginings form, in whole or part, some novel form of content for the picture. These rejected elements I labelled (1), (5) and (6) above. The response's claim is then that this division between the elements is also the dividing line between those of Wollheim's claims which capture the aesthetically important aspects of our imaginative interaction with the paintings he discusses, and those which are of no consequence for pictorial aesthetics. So the middle position and Wollheim's view agree on everything that is of aesthetic significance and disagree only over the theoretical - and aesthetically irrelevant - details.

**§10** To assess this response we need, of course, to consider the aesthetic issues Wollheim's discussion raises. I suggest that the best way to do this is to return to the problem framed at the beginning of this paper. That was to explain how a picture's representing what it does can be of aesthetic interest. Although this is not a problem Wollheim explicitly addresses, it is not unreasonable to ask how far his views help us to solve it. For he is certainly concerned, in *Painting as an Art*, to offer an account of what there is to value in painting, and the problem merely provides a way of focussing one aspect of that question. I will argue that Wollheim is too optimistic about the extent of our imaginative engagement with pictures, and thus that he is not as well placed to solve the problem of §1 as he might have hoped. At the end, I will relate these claims to the issue between Wollheim's view and the middle position, and in particular to the question whether their differences matter to the aesthetics of painting.

Before beginning, it will help to introduce a last piece of terminology. In considering the aesthetic

issues, we are, for now at least, prescinding from the dispute between the middle position and Wollheim's view. It would help, therefore, to be able to talk about our imaginings in a way neutral between those two positions. We can do this by adopting Wollheim's term "the protagonist" for that person, whatever their identity, we imagine engaging with the depicted scene. Wollheim claims that the protagonist is a spectator internal to the picture, the middle position claims that he is the viewer of the picture herself. But both accept that there is a protagonist, and that he is imagined engaging with the depicted objects.<sup>6</sup>

From the perspective of the problem framed in §1, one element in Wollheim's view is particularly important. This is the claim that at least some pictures "inscribe" a distinctive positive psychological repertoire for the protagonist. (This was (4b) in my original summary). As I noted from the first (§1), one way to solve the problem is to appeal to the idea that pictures can represent, not just scenes, but reactions to them, and thus, as I put it, "initiate us into another sensibility". Now Wollheim's views offer a way to give substance to that solution, but only if he makes the claim about a distinctive positive repertoire. If some paintings require us to imagine some protagonist engaging with the depicted scene, they may indeed allow us to explore sensibilities other than our own, but only if the psychology of the protagonist we are imagining is substantially different from ours.

It is not that, without positive repertoires, Wollheim can offer nothing by way of solution to the problem. He can certainly provide something, just not nearly as much. For, as I noted in discussing Wollheim's repertoire-based objection to the compromise view I favour (§7), imagined engagement can enrich our understanding of a picture, even if the repertoire imagined as guiding that engagement is just that of an embodied viewer. We have an example of such engagement in the case of the Manets discussed above. There the imagined protagonist is just someone, embodied and sighted, but little more. To the extent that we find illuminating Wollheim's careful discussion of these examples, a crude summary of which I offered in §4, we have reason to consider that he has provided part of an answer to our initial problem. By imagining a protagonist in the depicted space, trying to catch the subject's attention, we discover an aspect of the depicted woman, her momentary absence from life, which would otherwise lie hidden from us. What the painting thus offers us through these imaginings is a subtle way of grasping one of Manet's points. The point grasped is of aesthetic interest, but so, quite plausibly, is the particular process of recovering it. Only a very narrow notion of which satisfactions count as aesthetic could lead one to deny this.

However, as I have said, the inclusion, in the case of some pictures, of positive repertoires for the protagonist would greatly increase what we could offer by way of solution to the problem. And it is a disappointment, therefore, that the claim that some pictures do indeed inscribe a positive repertoire is precisely the claim Wollheim does least to establish. For many of his examples do not press at the crucial point. The discussion of Hals [ch.3 §E], like that of Manet, makes no mention of a substantial repertoire. Instead we are again here in the realm of Wollheim's limiting case, the protagonist who is simply an observer, albeit not a "disembodied eye" [130]. If Wollheim is to push us beyond that realm, the burden of his argument must fall fully on his discussion of Friedrich, and in particular on the case of *Afternoon* [138-40]. Wollheim's treatment of this picture is intricate, but - and I can do no more than

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6. I talk of the protagonist as "he" simply for grammatical convenience. Obviously, on either Wollheim's view or my own, the protagonist might be masculine, might be feminine, or his gender may simply be irrelevant to the imagined engagement with the depicted scene the picture invites.

assert this here - it seems to me to leave key questions unanswered.

My claim is not that it would be impossible to inscribe a positive repertoire into a picture. It is hard to convince oneself either that such a thing could be done, or that it could not. As Wollheim himself notes, any such inscription must depend on the way the scene visible in the canvas is depicted [164]. Given this, deciding whether such inscription is possible would require us to settle obscure questions about the way in which possessing a distinctive repertoire might alter how the world is seen to be (how the affective "permeates" the perceptual), and about whether such alterations in the seen world can be captured in the depictive content of a picture. My claim is rather that Wollheim has not argued convincingly that inscription of a distinctive positive repertoire ever occurs. Even if one were to decide on theoretical grounds that a positive repertoire could be inscribed, this would still leave open the issue whether any actual paintings do inscribe such things. And surely pictorial aesthetics is centrally about why we should value the art painting is, not about reasons for caring for it as it merely might be. So what is needed, for Wollheim to complete the solution to our problem which he has begun,<sup>7</sup> are clear examples of such inscriptions. I do not know whether such examples are there to be had. In this respect, then, my discussion of Wollheim's contribution is inconclusive.

**§11** Where does all this leave matters? Insofar as Wollheim fails to establish that pictures ever do inscribe positive repertoires, his discussion in chapter three of *Painting as an Art* does not live up to its promise of solving the problem posed in §1. As I noted in the last section, even without positive repertoires, Wollheim can contribute something to that solution; but making good the claim about positive repertoires would take us a long way towards a satisfactory response to the challenge §1 posed. But the question how far Wollheim's discussion satisfies the demands of aesthetic inquiry connects with the earlier dispute between his position and the middle view developed in §§5-9; and this in two ways. I will close by outlining them.

First, the less imposing the aesthetic consequences of Wollheim's observations about our imaginative responses to the paintings he discusses, the larger loom the supposedly "theoretical" differences between his position and the middle view. The earlier response on Wollheim's behalf (§8) sought to belittle those theoretical differences in the face of the views' shared consequences for the aesthetics of painting. But the fewer and less significant those consequences, the harder it is to share that perspective on the situation. The theoretical differences regain some of their prominence - and they, of course, favour the middle position.

Second, although the issue whether positive repertoires are ever inscribed is logically distinct from that of whether we should prefer the middle position to Wollheim's view, psychologically the possible positions here come in pairs. If one accepts Wollheim's more extensive theoretical machinery, one is more likely to be optimistic about the prospects for inscribing a positive repertoire. For, having accepted that sometimes we engage in licensed imaginings about an implied internal spectator, it is natural to take the issue of the nature of that spectator, and in particular his psychology, to be open. A distinctive positive repertoire then seems as live a possibility as any other. If, on the other hand, one

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7. I noted in §1 that this solution could at most be partial. My point here is that even this partial solution is, as it stands, incomplete.

prefers the leaner framework I have defended, the land looks to lie quite differently. The imaginings some pictures provoke in their viewers concern those viewers themselves. Of course, they know, in imagining engaging with the depicted scene, to set aside their foibles and idiosyncrasies. Equally, it is not ruled out from the first that they are to imagine themselves with distinctive dispositions, of thought or feeling, which are not in fact theirs. But the rest point, as it were, is that the viewer imagines herself engaging while having only features common to all viewers. If she is to imagine otherwise, she must be given clear signals as to what she is to incorporate. Inscription of a positive repertoire is not excluded, but we will want firm grounds, in any given case, for thinking that it occurs.

So Wollheim's theoretical extravagance, as it seems to me, encourages optimism about what there is to appreciate in pictures, my parsimony prompts a more pessimistic view. Of course, neither attitude is a substitute for argument on the matter of whether positive repertoires are in fact inscribed. But, in the absence of the convincing examples for which I wait, perhaps limning the temptations particular positions expose us to will help keep our heads clear for the argument, when it comes.<sup>8</sup>

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8. Thanks are due to Malcolm Budd, Dudley Knowles, Philip Percival, Monique Roeloffs, Anthony Savile, and Richard Wollheim.