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The Mind's Eye and the Human Eye

*Anything that relieves reponsible prose of the duty of
being, while placed before us, good enough, interesting
enough and, if the question be of picture, pictorial
enough, above all in itself, does it the worst of services,
and may well inspire in the lover of literature certain
lively questions as to the future of that institution.*

—Henry James,
Preface to *The Golden Bowl*

IT IS DIFFICULT TO DECIDE whether Henry James actually
approved of the illustrations his publisher persuaded him to
accept for the complete edition of his works. As the creator of
figures and scenes which "are as nought from the moment they fail to
become visible appearances," he was reassured "to see such powers
as he possessed approved and registered by the springing of such fruit
from his seed." At the same time, he regarded illustration as a
dangerously competitive process, and as the author of a text "putting
forward illustrative claims by its own intrinsic virtue," he was
reluctant to share the responsibility for reducing his reader to a state
of hallucination with an illustrator. He accepted pictures therefore on
the understanding "that they would be expressions of no particular
thing in the text," and since he ruled out any attempt to keep
dramatic step with the events represented in the text, the illustrations
were to remain "at most small pictures of our set stage with the actors
left out."

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With the invention of cinematography, it is no longer possible for a novelist to secure an agreement of this sort. It would be nonsensical to "leave the actors out" of a film, and the idea of a movie that failed to keep some sort of dramatic step with its suggested matter is a contradiction in terms. Instead of supplementing the text, moving pictures threaten to replace it altogether, and unless the author forbids the adaptation of his own work, the best he can hope for is the right to veto anything that gets it wrong. But this, of course, is not the point at issue. When James objected to illustration, it was not because he thought that the artist would get it wrong, but because he recognized that there was no conceivable way a pictorial representation could "get it right." Apart from the fact that language can express meanings that are inexpressible in any other medium, there is an important sense in which even its visual effects are distinctive. That is to say, leaving aside the peculiar resources of tense, metaphor, irony, and indirect speech, for which, as I hope to show, there are no conceivable counterparts in illustration, the experience of *visualizing* something as the result of reading a *description* of it is altogether different from *seeing* it in the form of an actual picture.

Unfortunately, this distinction is not always given the credit it deserves. On the contrary, we consistently blur it by thinking of the imagination as if it were a display of internal pictures. So that, as Gilbert Ryle points out, when someone says that he is visualizing something—his nursery, say—"we are tempted to construe his remark to mean that he is somehow contemplating not his nursery, but another visible object, namely a picture of his nursery, only not a photograph or an oil painting, but some counterpart to a photograph, one made of a different sort of stuff." The reason why we think like this is as follows. The verb to *see* is transitive, which is another way of saying that we cannot *see* without seeing *something*. We *see* our nursery, say, or Helvellyn, and as long as the nursery or Helvellyn are out there to *be* seen there is no difficulty. But when we *visualize* something (or, as we say, "see" it), there is of course nothing out there to intercept our gaze. But since we assume that "seeing" in quotes has the same transitive (accusative) requirements as *seeing* without them, we find ourselves stipulating the existence of a substitute, something that resembles the absent object without actually being it; hence *mental* pictures, seen not by the real eye, but by the mind's eye.

The invention of movies and televison allowed us to extend this pictorial metaphor so that when someone claims to be visualizing the scenes that are represented in a novel we are also tempted to assume that he is running film or some counterpart to a film in the privacy of his own head. Now, the problem is that if we do subscribe to the theory that visualizing a description is another way of looking at a film version of it, then a real film ought to do just as well, if not better; and the acceptability of any particular version would, as I have already said, boil down to a straightforward question of whether it had got it right. But there is more to it than that because, as Ryle points out, the fact that the cognate concepts of picturing, visualizing, or "seeing"—in quotation marks—are both useful and intelligible does not entail the existence of internal images that we look at. In fact, there are many good reasons for rejecting the idea of internal images, one of which is conveniently brought out in an argument developed by Richard Wollheim.

The most obvious distinction between pictures in front of the mind's eye and pictures in front of the real eye is brought out indirectly by Wollheim in an essay appended to his new edition of *Art and its Objects*. Now, although he does not explicitly address himself to the nature of mental images, the argument that he develops about physical representation inescapably draws our attention to the peculiarities of mental ones. He recognizes that there is a form of seeing that is appropriate to representation and identifies a requirement that he calls the two-fold thesis. This can be applied to representational objects such as paintings, drawings, photos, and of course movies, but is interestingly inapplicable to the pictorial experiences of the mind's eye. What the two-fold thesis says, in effect, is that in looking at a physical representation, a picture and so forth, my attention must be distributed, though not equally, between two things: between the medium that affords or sustains the representation, and whatever it is that the representation shows. So that in looking, for example, at Rembrandt's *Polish Rider* in the Frick museum, there are two intentional objects. I can see the young horseman, but I can also see Rembrandt's paintwork.

This disjunction is analogous to the one previously pointed out by E. H. Gombrich, who distinguished between seeing canvas, on the one hand, and seeing nature, on the other. According to Gombrich, however, the seeing of one actually precluded the possibility of seeing

the other. To reinforce this claim that the two forms of vision alternate with one another, he drew an analogy with the amgibuous figures, such as the famous Duck/Rabbit, in which the seeing of one aspect requires the complete extinction of the alternative. Wollheim argues that Gombrich has given us an inappropriate and misleading analogy, because while we would all acknowledge that seeing the duck rules out the possibility of seeing the rabbit, the proper appreciation of a painting requires the two aspects to interpenetrate rather than alternate. Wollheim's argument is that the painterly virtues of an artist such as Manet would be unrecognizable if in looking at his pictures we had to alternate visual attention between the material features on the painting and the object that the painting was representing.

Now in a sense, this disagreement between Wollheim and Gombrich does not really influence my argument, although the question of optical illusions is relevant and worth considering. As far as I'm concerned, what Wollheim's two-fold thesis reveals is a distinction with regard to vision which seems hard, perhaps impossible, to apply to mental images. The point is that the divided attention that Wollheim rightly insists is appropriate to the seeing of material representations such as pictures is almost unintelligible in the context of mental images. It is impossible to attach any significant meaning to the idea of switching one's attention from the object of one's imaginings to the medium that affords them their visibility. It may seem unfair to compare mental images with paintings, in which the brushwork is such a conspicuous part of the medium. After all, we would hardly expect mental pictures to betray visible signs of handiwork. A more reasonable comparison might be made with paintings in which the artist has systematically effaced all sign of his brushwork and by means of liquid glazes provided the viewer with an apparently unmediated view of the object itself. Yet Wollheim's disjunction still holds true, because close examination almost immediately reveals the inherent properties of the medium no matter how inconspicuous the artist tries to make it. Impalpable and invisible though the painted surface might seem, there is always some point at which the visible artifact hosting the illusion becomes self-evident to the spectator. Even when the representation is made vanishingly diaphanous, as it is in the case of a faithful color transparency, there is always some perceptual procedure capable of driving a wedge

between the picture and the objects that are to be seen *in* it. The most diaphanous representation shows non-pictorial properties in ways that are inconceivable in the case of mental images. For example, apart from the blemishes one learns to overlook in a photograph, it inevitably has a determinate size, which is an inescapably visible property of the format without the slightest pictorial significance.

We may see Helvellyn in a three-by-four-inch snapshot just as clearly as if it were shown in a huge fifteen-foot-by-twenty-foot projection. The Helvellyn that we are seeing has not changed size. While it makes perfectly good sense to ask how large the *picture* is, such a question is completely meaningless when it comes to picturing Helvellyn in our mind's eye. We can't ask the question: how large does the picture look? We can only ask the question: how large does Helvellyn *seem*?

To summarize these points: although mental images and photos are like one another in that they afford us visions of things that are not literally *there,* they differ in an important respect. The intentional objects that we see in a picture are afforded by something that *is* literally present—an intermediate physical object with all sorts of determinate properties of its own, some of which enable it to fly under a flag of pictorial convenience (and not necessarily one flag). The determinate properties of the picture may be such that they afford mutually exclusive visions. For example, three intersecting lines can host the image of the inside corner of a room or the outside corner of a cube. A symmetrical pattern of black and white patches can yield the impression of a white vase seen against a black background or two black profiles facing one another against a white background. What makes these visual experiences so striking is the fact that the alternation of aspects is visibly afforded by something that is neither, but is merely a series of patches on the page. And even when the visible properties of the hosting format are used up, so that they vanish without perceptual residue into one another, the viewer is still left with the subliminal assurance that there is a non-pictorial substrate shared in turn, cox and box, by each of his alternate visions. For obvious reasons, the visibility of the hosting medium is inversely proportional to the number of properties it lends to each or any of the visions it affords us. In the case of a natural object such as a cloud, only a few of its visible properties are on loan to alternative appearances since most of its visible assets are tied up in representing

the cloud in its official capacity. Which is the reason why Hamlet has such an uphill struggle persuading Polonius to see whales, weasels, and camels. Admittedly, Polonius has more urgent things on his mind at that moment, but if we compare that scene with the one in *King Lear* when Edgar, in the guise of Poor Tom, persuades his blind father to see the view from a non-existent clifftop, we will immediately recognize that seeing absent things with the naked eye, even in such an amorphous and unpromising candidate as a cloud, is quite unlike seeing absent things with the mind's eye where there is nothing, formed or unformed, in which to entertain the vision.

If Edgar's commentary works—and Gloucester's absurd behavior a moment later shows that it must have done because he falls flat on his face on the grass—it seems reasonable, though not necessary, to assume that he has in some way seen the cliff or at least the vertiginous view. The reason why I say it is not necessary to assume that he has visualized the view, is that it is possible to grasp the point of a visual account without having to go through the labor of envisioning it. In fact, when Francis Galton asked his friends to recall the appearance of their breakfast table, he was surprised to find that some of them could itemize and list everything that was on the breakfast table, but refused to concede that they had a visual image of what it was they were listing. This has obvious relevance to the problem of how we understand a novel, how it is represented in the reader's imagination, and whether in fact it is visualized at all.

Let us assume that Gloucester does cooperatively visualize, just as it also seems reasonable to assume that Edgar himself has to visualize the scene in order to create such a vivid, visual description of it. In parenthesis, I should say that this last consideration was the reason why on the three occasions that I've staged *King Lear,* I've always asked the actor playing Edgar to close his eyes when he comes to the line "How fearful 'tis to cast one's eyes so low" to emphasise the helpfulness of extinguishing the vision of present things when trying to visualize the appearance of absent ones. And this is reinforced when Edgar can be seen to open his eyes again with the words "I'll look no more."

If our own reaction to Edgar's speech is anything to go by, the vista in his mind's eye is very vivid. I was going to say it springs into existence, and yet that is the very thing that it cannot do, because the description is inescapably consecutive. We then have to ask what sort

of visibilia occupied the as-yet-undescribed parts of the picture. In fact, the question of what one could be said to imagine halfway through a vivid description is no less problematic than the question of what one sees when it is finished. If mental images were as pictorial as our language about them implies they might be, it should be possible to say something at least about the visible properties of the as-yet-unmentioned features. If, as we often say, it is left rather vague, then why should we be at a loss when it comes to say what the vagueness itself looks like? After all, this is not a problem in the case of real pictures. There are many ways in which pictorial information can be represented vaguely in a picture, and yet it is impossible to equate any of these forms of pictorial vagueness with the so-called vagueness of mental images. Perhaps I can explain what I mean by analyzing some of the ways in which real physical pictures can show vagueness.

There was a controversy surrounding one of the most talked-about paintings in the Venetian exhibition—Titian's *Flaying of Marcias*. It was claimed that the canvas was unfinished, although some experts insisted that as far as the idea of finish or conclusion could usefully be applied to Titian's late work, the painting was to all intents and purposes complete. In their view, it was no less complete than other works of the same period he was happy to relinquish to his patron, and yet for modern spectators unfamiliar with, or unfriendly to, Titian's later style it seemed incomplete, slapdash, and, you might say, vague in the sense that it was not easy to see all that it supposedly represented. I am not referring to iconographic problems, since these arise in paintings that are more self-evidently finished and detailed, but to the crude perceptual problem of how much visual information you can glean about the various objects Titian tries to represent. We have to take it on trust, for instance, that Apollo is using a knife rather than a blunt twig to skin the impudent victim, and it is only by referring to Winternitz's essay on the iconography of musical instruments that we can infer just how many strings the viol in the other corner of the picture might have. In other words, the painting is indeterminate with respect to certain features of the objects it represents. And yet the smudginess of the canvas, which seems perceptually hospitable to some and maddeningly noncommittal to others, is at least visible in its own right, being, as it is, a determinate property of the painted surface. This is something that I cannot

imagine in the case of the mental image, which is not vague because of some smudginess but vague because it has unmentioned features. Since I began by raising the question of an unfinished description, perhaps it would be fairer to compare the incipient mental image with a painting that is unarguably incomplete.

There is a small panel by Michelangelo in the National Gallery in which several figures remain to be painted. They are recognizably blocked in *Terre Verte*, and although it's impossible to say for certain what these expectant silhouettes would have looked like if Michelangelo had finished them, the picture preserves, in a way that mental images conspicuously do not, the spatial relationship of both the existing figures and the forthcoming ones. A comparable principle applies to mutilated pictures, in which the absconded fragment is visibly conspicuous by its absence, and the visible properties of the non-pictorial repair affords the viewer a reminder of what might have been. Now, perceptual excuses like this simply cannot be applied to the supposed vagueness or incompleteness of mental images. It is not a question of poor resolution, smudginess, or vagueness, because although the identity of objects may be lost in a blurred physical picture, their spatial relationships are preserved. In the case of mental images, it is usually the other way round. On cross-examination, subjects can often list the items of a scene they have imagined and still make serious mistakes about their relative positions. When items are omitted from the report there is no mention, or indeed experience, of a visibly vacant slot. These findings are so inconsistent with the rules of material images that some people have been led to argue that mental images or mental representations have much more in common with language than they do with pictures. In fact, since the early 1970s, when the controversy about mental images became a major issue in the psychological community, a line has been drawn between those who uphold the so-called *imagist* position and those who argue that our mental representations are essentially *propositional* rather than pictorial.

In the effort to see exactly what is at stake in this conflict, we have to understand just what the opponents mean when they refer to images and propositions respectively. It is claimed, for example, that images represent objects analogically. This is another way of saying that the structural relationship between their parts corresponds to the visible relationships between the parts of the object represented. It is,

in other words, a relationship based on visible resemblance, though not necessarily a perfect one. For example, there may be visible discrepancies some of which are intended, and some not. Here are some intentional ones:

An architect builds a scale model of a new site and as long as the client makes an intelligent allowance for scale he can identify a visible relationship between the proportions of the model buildings and the proportions of the buildings that will eventually spring up on that site. When the enterprise is complete, he will recognize the model as an image of it by virtue of the fact that there is a one-to-one mapping from points on the model to points on the completed building. In other words, there is a visible resemblance between the two entities. Apart from the question of scale, there may be an equally intelligible discrepancy with respect to color and texture.

The architect may, as Sir John Soane did, construct his model out of boxwood or out of some material from which the viewer is not intended to read off the appearance of the visible surfaces of the finished buildings. In which case, the architect may have to persuade the client by showing him a small sample of the textured concrete with which he intends to clad the surface. The image of the projected building may have to be provided in installments, and it is up to the client to integrate these installments in his imagination. All the same, both the boxwood model and the small concrete sample are canonical instances of visual images in the sense that a subset of their visible properties physically resembles a subset of the visible properties or whatever it is that they are understood to represent.

Now, the upholders of the imagistic position insist that mental images represent by virtue of the same principle. And although they laugh off the suggestion that they are sponsoring a theory of pictures in the head, it is rather hard to see exactly why they are not. The experimental evidence that has recently been aduced in favor of the imagery position makes fascinating reading, despite the fact that it is not easy to get a complete conceptual grasp of the result. And as opponents of mental imagery imply, it is possible to explain many of the results without having to make the logically embarrassing assumption that the mind's eye is scanning pictorial representations of reality.

Apart from the purely introspective experience of imagery, there is evidence that seems to imply that the imagination is visual insofar as it seems to compete for the psychological resources that would otherwise be employed in processing real vision. For example, it has been shown several times that when subjects are asked to retrieve and report certain features of an imagined scene, their eyes move as if they were scanning a physical image. Now we cannot pretend that they are scanning a mental image with their physical eyes; that would be nonsense. But there is, perhaps, a coherent analogy to be made with the conjugate movements of the physical eyes. Everyone knows that the eyes are yoked together to make up a coherent gaze when following a moving object. It is less well known that the synchrony is not the result of both eyes seeing the same object and therefore following it synchronously. If that were so, you would expect one eye to stay still as soon as you closed it, whereas of course the movement of both eyes is more or less unimpaired even when one eye is closed and the other eye is following the object: the blind eye seems to behave as if it were tracking an invisible object, or you might say an object in front of its mental eye. Now it is tempting to argue that something analogous is happening in the case of the eye movements that accompany imagination. (I say analogous, because I am not suggesting that the physical eyeballs are synchronized to the paired movements of non-existent eyeballs.) What I am saying is that the evidence is not inconsistent with the idea that real sight and mind sight share the same spatially organized system, and that the nervous activity of scanning activates the functional movement of the real eyeball.

Other evidence in favor of this view comes from a famous experiment at the start of the century when a researcher with the (charmingly appropriate) name of Perky found that subjects facing an illuminated screen often confused things they were imagining with faint images thrown, unknown to them, onto the screen by the experimenter. What would happen is that they faced a ground glass screen, and were then asked to imagine a banana while unpredictably a real image of a banana was sometimes thrown onto the screen. They could then find it quite difficult to discriminate between the image that they were putting in front of their mind's eye, and the image which was being supplied by the experimenter in front of their real eyes. This research has been extended and sophisticated by two

American investigators who showed that when subjects were asked to visualize something while facing an illuminated screen, their capacity to detect a visual stimulus on the screen—a little flash, for example—was recognizably impaired, whereas their efficiency in detecting an auditory stimulus at the same time was affected much less. This must have meant that visual resources were being used up whilst employing their mind's eye.

These experiments have implications comparable to ones discovered by Lee Brookes of McMaster University in 1968. Brookes showed that when subjects were asked to recall certain specified features of a geometrical figure, their response was much faster when they reported the items verbally than when they had to identify these features visually by pointing to the alternatives on a wall chart. Apart from the fact that both the results of these experiments and the conclusions drawn up from them have been disputed, they do not by any means prove the coherent spatiality of mental images. In fact, interest in imagery was quite indolent until two sets of experiments proved, or seem to prove, that mental images could actually be rotated and scrutinized as if they were to all intents and purposes spatially integrated pictorial representations in front of the real eye.

The experiment that set the alarm bells ringing was first published in 1971 by Roger Shepherd and Jaqueline Meltzer, although the preliminary results were privately circulated in a short paper entitled *On Turning Something Over in One's Mind.* The experiments went something like this: subjects were asked to judge whether paired projections of block-like figures were identical or not. The results indicated that the experimental subjects were mentally rotating the image of these remembered figures until they were in a position that was favorable to make a reliable comparison of their two shapes. In fact, the time taken to arrive at an assessment of identity or otherwise increased in relation to the size of the angle by which the two figures were out of register when they were first presented to the real eye. The rate was the same regardless of the plane of rotation. It took just as much time to achieve rotation in the plane of the screen as it did in the fore and aft axis. Here, it seems, was incontestable evidence in favor of a spatially organized pictorial representation inside the imagination.

Meanwhile, at MIT Stephen Kosslyn and his associates were carrying out experiments whose results led them to conclude that

mental images played an important part in the retrieval of visual information. Kosslyn's experiments were inspired by the introspective reports of people who often insist they have to form an image of a room or a house before they can say how many chairs or windows there are in it. Kosslyn designed an experiment to test this informal situation. In one experiment, he asked his subjects to memorize a picture of a motor launch. He then asked them if there was an anchor or a flag at the prow. Having fixed their attention on the prow or the front end of the craft, he then asked them questions about the furnishings on the bridge and on the stern, respectively, and found that the speed of their answers was proportional to the distance between the prow and the target about which he then questioned them. The mind's eye, it seemed, was scanning a mental image and taking longer to go from prow to stern than it did to go from prow to bridge. He also tried to see how altering the size of the mental image influenced the speed of the report. He invited some of his subjects to visualize an animal as if viewed from close up and then as seen from far away. He then asked them to report the presence or absence of certain features such as whiskers, claws, or a split upper lip. The results he obtained were once again consistent with the idea that a pictorial image was being looked at. The reports were recognizably and repeatedly faster when the subject was asked to report a larger image than it was when he was being asked to visualize and report a smaller one. He obtained the same results when the size of the images was manipulated indirectly. Instead of asking the subject to visualize the animal as large or small, he invited them to imagine the particular creature alongside an elephant or a fly and found that it was easier to retrieve certain requested features from an animal whose image was proportionately enlarged by being put alongside a fly, than it was when the target creature was shrunk proportionately by being placed alongside a much larger animal like an elephant.

It could be argued, and indeed the anti-imagists have argued, that these results have nothing to do with imagery as such, and that the order to visualize something *large* is automatically interpreted by the subject as an instruction simply to form a *list* of features, and that it is by consulting this list, rather than by looking at a picture, that the subject succeeds or fails in his task. I do not think this will be an appropriate place to describe all the controls that Kosslyn and his

associates introduced to meet these objections, but having made systematic and ingenious allowance for them, he still obtained results that favored the idea that images were being looked at by the mind's eye. In the last fifteen years or so, Alan Pavier at the University of Western Ontario has also obtained results that stress the functional importance of visual images, although his theory features an elaborate reciprocity between visual and verbal representations.

The opponents of imagery have not been persuaded by any of these findings. As far as they are concerned, there must be an alternative explanation that avoids the unacceptable philosophical implications of a mind's eye which has to be conceded if these rotations and inspections are indeed pictorial events. This implies that there has to be a mind's brain to recognize what the mind's eye tells it, and so on in an infinite regress. What they offer by way of an alternative explanation is a theory that says that any information expressed in a pictorial format can be represented much more productively in a propositional form, and although these propositions may yield images, these are a by-product and not essential to the mental work of the subject.

The idea of a proposition is derived in the first instance from the pioneer work of Gottlob Frege, for whom a proposition was something that was expressible as a sentence, though not necessarily to be identified with the features of any particular sentence. Unlike pictures or images that represent objects, propositions express assertions *about* objects and about the relationship between them. Unlike pictures, they can be true or false, and their truth value is to some extent invariant under paraphrase. The opponents of imagery insist that a propositional representation can do everything that a pictorial one does and more. It may be unrealistic to regard these alternatives as mutually exclusive. As I have already mentioned, Alan Pavier found it impossible to interpret his experimental results without assuming the co-existence of a verbal and a pictorial code cooperating with one another. In fact, without such a reciprocity it is quite hard to explain the way in which mental images tend to assert so much more than they visibly show. In the case of dreams, for example, what one sees in the intentional sense is often at odds with the visible appearance. Here is a dream that illustrates what I mean. It is reported by the nineteenth-century physician McNish who was, incidentally, a close personal friend of James Hog, the author of *The*

Confessions of a Justified Sinner. McNish dreamed that he saw Versailles, and that it was

an immense architectural creation of the gothic ages with a hundred and ten thousand minarets sprouting up and piercing the sky with their pointed pinnacles. The whole was as visibly unlike reality as possible. And yet this never occurred once to my mind, and while gazing upon the visionary fabric it never occurred to me for a moment that it had ever appeared other than it now did. It was the same now as when I previously beheld it.

I assume that everyone is familiar with this sort of paradox, and that we all recognize how hard it is to give a coherent account of such experiences. Perhaps I can reinforce McNish's example with a dream of my own.

I recently went to Cambridge to deliver a lecture, and in my apprehension I had rehearsed my arrival in a series of increasingly alarming dreams. About four nights before, I dreamed that I was parking my car in what I knew to be Trinity Lane, although it was from its visible appearance also a narrow side street behind the Santo in Padua. At the end of the lane, I could see the master of Trinity waving hospitably at me, and he was the actor Michael Horden. Now there was no sense in my dream that Horden, the actor, was playing the part, or that he had popped in between the election or anyone else's hopes. As far as I was concerned in the dream, Horden and the master were one and the same, in spite of the fact that I also knew, simultaneously, that the master and Sir Andrew Huxley were identical. The rest of the dream was so humiliating, for which I blame neither Sir Michael nor Sir Andrew, that I shall draw a veil over it.

The fact that one can dream of something without its necessarily looking like what one knows it to be means that there is at least one class of mental images whose members have what pictures and photographs do not, namely, intrinsic propositional content. For someone who knows what Versailles actually looks like, the only way in which a photograph could justify its claim to be a photograph *of* Versailles, is by resembling it; whereas when a *dream* image of Versailles comes before the mind, such a resemblance does not appear to be necessary. Admittedly, self-contradictory images of this sort are confined to dreams, and there is no conceivable way in which someone who knows that Versailles looks like could even try to visualize it as a Gothic pile; but this does not mean that ordinary

mental imagery is devoid of propositional content altogether. On the contrary, to visualize something, as opposed to simply seeing a picture of it, is to see it under some form of description, and this is especially noticeable when it comes to visualizing something as a result of reading a description of it. In that case, the description under which the image is experienced is determined to a large extent by the description that generates it.

This article is an extract from the author's forthcoming book, *Subsequent Performances,* to be published by Faber and Faber.